

# BANNER

November 2014 | [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)

<sup>18</sup> Speaking of Jurassic Ark

<sup>38</sup> These Bones Can Live!

<sup>22</sup> Telling God's  
Story . . .



<sup>20</sup> We Need  
Not Fear the  
Dinosaur



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# BANNER

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# Keep It Clean

**IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF GOD'S UNFATHOMABLE WORK OF CREATION**, what's a few billion years? Nothing to get uptight about, according to "Creation and Science," an excellent Christian Reformed Church study report whose recommendations were adopted by Synod 1991. It encourages Reformed believers to take their Bibles and their science books, place them side by side, and explore various scenarios for how and when God got our globe spinning. These all confess that it wasn't eternal "stuff" roiled by mere chance that originated all things, including us. Our all-knowing, all-powerful, loving God created the whole shebang *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). The details are insignificant enough that we can engage in some fun discussions over those, as long as we keep it clean.

By "clean," I mean that "young earthers" and "old earthers" need to be very careful *not* to start bad-mouthing each other. That unnecessarily breaks "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), to which our risen Lord calls us. Our "young-earthers" are not flat-earth idiots. And our "old-earthers" are not evolutionistic liberals who carelessly place us on the slippery slope to denying Christ's physical resurrection. Such scurrilous charges are direct violations of the ninth commandment.

So what does a respectful, useful conversation on this issue look like? We invited two Christian Reformed folks to have at it here in *The Banner* ("Speaking of Jurassic Ark," p. 18; "We Need Not Fear the Dinosaur," p. 20). As Christians united by Christ's Spirit, Scripture, and our creeds and confessions, we can do such things and do them well.

Our culture offers few good models for how to carry on this kind of conversation. Most public discussions these days are acrimonious, take-no-prisoners debates intended to annihilate the other side. That's not how we ought to speak with each other on non-salvation issues.

Let's keep things in perspective here. Because Scripture is God-revelation, it concerns itself primarily with telling us the *Who* and *why* of creation. Science concerns itself more with the *how*, *where*, and *when*. So let's be a bit humble about our own interpretation of Scripture, just as we are about our scientific hypotheses. Like science, our biblical interpretation is *not* God's Word itself. It is our fallible, human attempt at grasping what is too high, too wide, and too deep for us.

All this to say, when you read these articles, by all means have fun following their evidence and arguments—and I do mean, have *fun* with it. But more important, note the tone of their conversation. Especially in a day of blistering media attacks and bloggers' rants, we need to learn to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) in a way that builds up the Body. DuMez and Buurma model that for us.

So if it's not a salvation issue, then why discuss this stuff at all? We may cease this conversation only when we have arrived together at a solid, reasonable answer that we can offer to our science students who hit secular universities. When caught unprepared, so many of them needlessly experience a deep crisis of their faith.

We owe them much better than that. So let's keep this conversation going—with all due respect. ■



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

In the grand scheme of God's unfathomable work of creation, what's a few billion years?

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# The Journey of a Lifetime

**T**HE CALL CAME EARLY Sunday morning from the nursing home. Mom wasn't doing well. As her children, we discussed whether we should take turns sitting by her side so we could be with her until she passed. I said I could leave now and spend the day. I quickly packed a bag and hurried out the door to travel from Kalamazoo to Grand Rapids.

As I write, sitting by her bedside, Mom lies sleeping, struggling for breath. I look down at the bag I've brought with me and set by my feet. It must weigh at least 10 pounds. In my hurry to leave, I grabbed a Bible, a hymn book, my favorite devotional, a book to read, and some CDs featuring quiet hymns. Was I thinking I needed to pack a lifetime of spirituality into a handbag and a few hours?

I recall a family camping trip we took in 1962 across country—from Michigan to Washington State. My mom was responsible for packing for seven people and three weeks on the road. She success-

fully packed for everyone else, but realized after we left home that she had forgotten about herself. Our family pictures of that vacation show her in the same clothes every day. Packing can be such a disappointment if you do it wrong.

As I glance at the bag that I so hurriedly put together earlier this morning, I know none of it is really needed today. God has prepared my mom for this journey to heaven since her birth. He didn't plan hastily and without care.

He deliberately placed her in a family with a strong Christian heritage. He generously gave her his faithfulness. He replenished his forgiveness as needed and clothed her with peace, love, and hope. He blessed her with his Word on her heart—and she blessed us with his song on her lips. No disappointment with the planning for this trip! She has been packed and ready for this journey for a lifetime.

My mind wanders as I imagine myself standing a few feet behind her as I would

at a store as she waited for the cashier to give her a total. Only this time, after 97 years, I picture her at an imaginary ticket booth where she asks for "One ticket to heaven, please. It's been reserved for me."

I patiently watch as she digs into her little embroidered change purse and lays out the exact change. She always paid in exact change. I peek over her shoulder to see what she has meticulously counted out on the counter. "This was a gift," she says, pushing it forward confidently. The coins spell out G R A C E—all that she ever needed in this life and the next. ■



Esther Kruis Brower is a member of Comstock Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Mich.



"All shall be well,  
and all shall be well,  
and all manner of thing  
shall be well."

— JULIAN OF NORWICH

# Ten Benefits of Family Bible Reading

**Family Bible reading has become one of the casualties of busy schedules.**

**WHEN I WAS A CHILD** growing up, it was common for families to read aloud from the Bible every day after the main meal. Beginning with a story Bible full of pictures, I was gradually exposed to the wide sweep of Scripture—from the pen of Moses to John’s visions in the Revelation. There is no substitute for this Story.

Though my husband and I carry on this practice with our own children, we’ve noticed that family Bible reading has become one of the casualties of busy schedules. I’d like to suggest that reading Scripture after a meal is more than a dry tradition. In fact, I can think of at least 10 benefits of reading the Bible together on a daily basis.

1. It underlines the importance of the Bible apart from all other books.
2. Hearing Bible stories often allows them to become a part of us. Internalizing the essential stories about God’s dealings with his people grounds us firmly in faith.
3. The shared activity of reading the Bible together builds a bond between all who take part in it.
4. It gives children a greater awareness of history in general and of ways of life that preceded cars and computers.
5. Bible reading naturally leads into a discussion of what we believe and

how we live it out in our daily lives.

6. The Bible contains a rich and unique vocabulary. Parents can explain unfamiliar words so that they become part of a child’s own vocabulary.
7. Children will be able to understand the biblical references that occur throughout Western literature.
8. Bible reading exposes children to different cultures and helps them to appreciate the variety represented by various biblical characters.
9. The Bible does not hide real-life problems and issues. Reading it together as a family will help children overcome the stereotype that the Bible is simply “a book of rules” or a fantasy story.
10. Reading Scripture sets a model of literacy at home. Children see that reading is valuable and when fluent enough can be asked to take a turn as well.

During a summer road trip, our family tried audio versions of the Bible and listened to a narrative chunk each day while driving. Using innovative formats of Scripture now and then, including the film *The Gospel of John*, *The Singing Bible* CDs, or dramatized audio versions will accomplish most of the same goals as reading, as long as listening to them remains a shared activity.

When the family is pressed for time, I urge you to skip dessert—not Bible reading! ■



**Harriette Mostert** worships at Community Christian Reformed Church in Kitchener, Ontario. She teaches part time and

reflects on everyday things on her blog [www.providenceplace-harriette.blogspot.com](http://www.providenceplace-harriette.blogspot.com).



## Holy Land Tour

I commend Mr. Klompeen on his firsthand observations drawing attention to the hardships experienced by the Palestinian population in Israel (“Lessons of a Holy Land Tour,” Sept. 2014). Without minimizing these daily hardships I wish to point out that the plight of the Palestinians has not all been Israel’s fault. Much of their misery has been due to the lack of wise leadership and the regular inciting to violence by the surrounding Arab states.

Before the Six Day War of 1967, Palestinians in Israel enjoyed full rights of citizenship in addition to exemption from military service.

Once the Palestinians make a public declaration recognizing the historic rights of the Jewish people to live in their ancestral land and denounce all forms of violence, then perhaps negotiations can lead somewhere.

—Rev. Issa Saliba  
Oshawa, Ontario

The article “Lessons of a Holy Land Tour” gives a biased and inaccurate view of what is happening in Israel. Instead of saying our representatives in Washington should be informed that we disapprove of the Israeli government’s policies toward the Palestinians, he should ask, Why is Washington supporting Hamas, a group dedi-



# TTERS

cated to the destruction of the Jewish state rather than the only pro-American stable ally in the Middle East?

—*Chet Geels*  
*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

I endorse the article by Don Klompeen (“Lessons of a Holy Land Tour”). There were all too few Bonhoeffers in Europe, including The Netherlands, during the 40s and 50s of the previous century. Too many denominations and pastors waited too long to expose the extreme dangers of national socialism and thus became implicated in the atrocities of World War II.

If one truly loves Israelis, not only Palestinians, denominations and pastors would speak out against the dangerous games the Israelis, aided by many governments, including our own, are playing. Our lack of involvement contributes directly to the radicalization of so many of our young people.

—*Simon Wolfert*  
*Surrey, British Columbia*

While I agree that more can and should be done for the Palestinians (“Lessons of a Holy Land Tour,”) this article is far too one-sided. While many Palestinians are undoubtedly peace loving, the few “bad seeds” are ruining peace for everyone else. Israel finds itself in a battle for its very survival, and having a Palestinian contingent within its borders is an invitation to suicide. The best solution remains two states, which Israel has consistently agreed to but at the same time required a clear acknowledgment from the other side that Israel has a right to exist.

—*Alan Miller*  
*Sayville, NY*

Obviously the writer (“Lessons of a Holy Land Tour”) intends to make a positive contribution. [But] my Jewish and Palestinian colleagues, with whom I was

deeply involved in the peace process working through all the opinions expressed and evaluating all the proposed actions, from conflict to conflict, were dealing with an issue that was complicated far beyond the concept any Holy Land pilgrim could conceive.

—*Sidney DeWaal*  
*Lake Chapala, Mexico*

I appreciated “Lessons of a Holy Land Tour.” Basic to the current problems is the fact that the Israeli government allows the illegal taking of Palestinian lands. The governments of the U.S. and Canada are giving Israel unqualified support (probably the only nations in the world to do so). I would love to see some healing in the Holy Land.

—*Martin Vegt*  
*Vernon, British Columbia*

## Outreach

I found the answer to the question “Do we take the salvation of our neighbors seriously enough?” (FAQ, Sept. 2014) less instructive than the question itself. The heart of the question was, “Have we forgotten what’s at stake?” not, “Should we scare unbelievers with the threat of hell?” It is the same predisposition of brushing aside the reality of a Christless eternity that undermines our devotion to reaching the lost in contemporary western culture. Heaven is for real, but so is hell. I can only imagine how bad living apart from God must be, given the high cost he paid to rescue me from that fate. This truth should inspire all believers to ache for the lost as Christ does.

—*Don Weshouse*  
*Dorr, Mich.*

## Worthwhile Watching

I’ve been a trooper for 14 years and I can say what I have seen has changed

me (“A Christian Critic’s Take on the Movies,” Sept. 2014). We don’t need to expose ourselves to everything. I find explicit sexuality and violence extremely offensive and destructive. We need to grow in our relationship with Christ, stand up for what is right, and not deceive ourselves by thinking we can handle it. Don’t be afraid to walk out; we can discuss movies without seeing them. Perhaps we can even say, “You have said why this movie is important to you, now let me explain why Christ is important to me.”

—*Dawn DeVisser*  
*Ovid, Mich.*

## Church in Society

I agree with Doug Vande Griend (“The Role of the Church in Society: Two Perspectives,” Aug. 2014) that the church, in its institutional aspect, should not presume to speak with one voice on political, scientific, and economic issues. I disagree with Kathy Vandergrift’s call for the institutional church to take stands on political, scientific, and economic issues. Here’s the bottom line: Vandergrift would be more welcome in a church run on Vande Griend’s principles than Vande Griend and I would be in a church run by Vandergrift’s principles.

—*Raymond P. Opeka*  
*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

[MORE ONLINE](#)

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## Is Your Church Breaking Copyright Law?

**W**hen you're in church singing from the shiny new *Lift Up Your Hearts* (LUYH) hymnal you're holding in your hands, it's all good. All the copyrights and permissions you need are included. Singing from the screen? Maybe not so good. *Lift Up Your Hearts* is the hymnal published in 2013 by the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America.

Many of the churches contacted by *The Banner* were not aware that copyright permissions are not included in the purchase price of the digital version. And they aren't happy about it. This despite the fact that it is noted on the LUYH website in various places, including on the order page.

"There are some people who believe that the religious exemption copyright law allows churches to do whatever they want as long as it is for worship," said Diane Dykgraaf, program coordinator for the CRC's worship ministries office. "I don't know anyone in the business or an author or composer who interprets it that way. The religious exemption specifically refers to 'performing' music in a worship service. Anyone can stand up in front of church and sing a song, play it on an instrument, or even teach the congregation and have them sing along. But as soon as you reproduce it in any way, you are bound by copyright." Projecting the song is considered reproducing it.

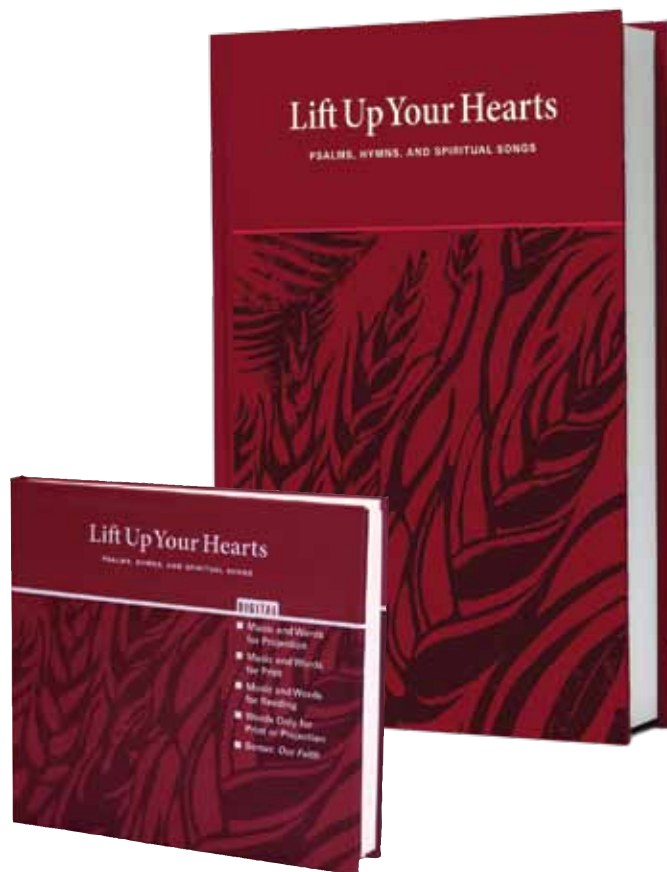
The good news for churches who have LUYH for projection is

that many, many of those 800-plus songs are covered by CCLI, an aggregate license most churches purchase. Add on OneLicense, another popular license, and the list of songs with permission grows even longer. Throw in LicenSing and songs that are in the public domain, and there are only about 40 remaining songs requiring individual permission. LUYH's website contains lists of all the songs covered by various licenses but no single master list. Some churches are creating their own.

What complicates the matter is that some songs have several

copyrights: words, music, harmonies, and in one case, the descant, have separate copyright holders. To help churches, all this information, including how to read the credit lines for songs, is provided on the website. Contact information for songs that require contacting individual copyright holders is also provided.

But not all copyright holders are listed there. According to Dykgraaf, that is because they could not find contact information for them but still wanted to give them credit for their work. "If I couldn't find it, I don't expect



Need to know more? <http://www.liftupyourheartshymnal.org/>; [permissions@crcna.org](mailto:permissions@crcna.org); [hymnal@crcna.org](mailto:hymnal@crcna.org); 616-224-0727.



churches to find it," she said. "In some cases, there are persons who do not want their royalties and do not want to be contacted. In other cases, authors or composers have died, and we couldn't find family members."

Where there is contact information, the editors have provided sample letters on the LUYH website for seeking permission. "You may not even receive a response," Dykgraaf said. "A reasonable response time would be two to three weeks. Then just save a copy of the email or letter proving that you've requested the permission. That's pretty much all you can do."

If getting permissions is difficult, why didn't the editors just leave out those songs? "It would have made my life a lot easier here to go only for the easy and obvious ones," said Dykgraaf. "But we may have been forced to leave out some good songs. This is especially true for the global music. We were committed to offering the songs of the global church to our worshiping church, but these can be extremely hard to trace and contact. There are language barriers as well as communication issues."

Some churches only seek copyright permissions when they know they are going to use the song in worship. Others write to copyright holders seeking general permission. In most cases, permission is given freely with no request for payment. Some churches who also have the pew hymnals just sing a song from the book instead of projecting it if a song isn't covered under one of the licenses.

Reaching many of the individual copyright holders is not that hard. "I do realize, however, that it's another thing for busy church staff to learn and to carry out," said Dykgraaf, "so I'm always sympathetic."

—Gayla R. Postma



Grace and Gabi Soerens dance The Twist at the Fall Kick-off.

## Back to the 1950s for Minnesota Church

Dancing and singing 1950s favorites such as "Jailhouse Rock" were part of the annual Fall Fest at Calvary Christian Reformed Church in Edina, Minn.

Approximately 175 people, from infants to 80-year-olds, dressed in poodle skirts or white T-shirts with jeans to celebrate the kickoff of the ministry year with a 1950s theme. Kim Attema, event organizer, said, "We enjoyed picking out this year's theme and the activities that went with [it]. Loved picking out the music to go with the event."

Volunteers dressed in soda jerk hats served hot dogs, fruit, and ice cream sodas. Tables were draped with black-and-white checkered tablecloths inspired by a 1950s diner.

Each ministry group within the church hosted a table with a game of their choice. "This is a chance for people to find out the different ministries we have available. It also is a great way for our community to find out what we have to offer," said Attema.

—Amy Toornstra



Grace and Gabi Soerens in the 1950s pink Cadillac.



Emily Bosch takes a shot at one of the ministry table games.

## De Moor to Retire from *The Banner*

In September Rev. Bob De Moor informed the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church of his intent to retire as editor of *The Banner* effective August 31, 2015. At that time he will go from half time to full time parish ministry at West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta. *The Banner* is the official publication of the CRC.

"I'm definitely anticipating being back full time in the pastorate," De Moor said in an interview. "It was my first love, and it still is."

De Moor has led *The Banner* as editor in chief since 2004 after a year as interim editor. Since 2006, he has divided his time between *The Banner* and his role as pastor of preaching and administration at West End.

De Moor has shared his role at West End with copastor Gordon Pols. Pols's impending retirement prompted the West End council to request that De Moor work full time for West End. "It was understood from the beginning that I would eventually be full time at West End," De Moor said, "and with Gord's retirement, the council felt this would be a good time."

De Moor has been under fire for much of the past year for controversial articles published in *The Banner*. This culminated with Synod 2014 lamenting the publication of those articles and De Moor apologizing on the floor of synod for how the articles were presented.

However, De Moor said his retirement from *The Banner* has nothing to do with that. "I wanted to see that through," De Moor said. "I also wanted to see *The Banner*



Rev. Bob De Moor

put in a good place in the denominational restructuring, and I believe it has found that place."

Rev. Joel Boot, who served as the denomination's executive director until this past summer, expressed appreciation for De Moor's work. "We are very grateful to Bob for his years of service, but also for remaining at the editor's desk during this recent 'storm,'" he said. "It is a gift to the magazine, to the denomination, and to his successor that he acknowledged mistakes, made changes, and saw us through to a better understanding and reconciliation and to continued thoughtful consideration of the issues."

*The Banner* has been through many changes during De Moor's tenure. When he came on board, the magazine was a subscription-based, biweekly print magazine with a static website that mirrored the content in the print issue. It has since moved to a monthly magazine distributed to every household in the denomination with changes in format. Articles are now shorter and more varied



GAYLA R. POSTMA

because of the larger and wider readership *The Banner* serves. The magazine launched a new website in 2011 and continues to look for new ways to communicate digitally. De Moor said that the magazine needs to continue moving forward into other environments such as social media. "Now that people communicate in other environments, *The Banner* needs to be there as well."

As he prepares to take his leave from the magazine, De Moor expressed the hope that *The Banner* would continue to be the kitchen table of the CRC, and that more people—those who are on the periphery and younger people—would be drawn to that table.

He noted that *The Banner* and the CRC as a whole need to tackle the hard issues, to find ways to bless one another and help each other grow. "I do believe that we need to become more humble about what we understand Scripture to actually mean," he said. "We fully believe the Bible is God's Word, but we must realize that both our interpretation of Scripture

and our understanding of creation are human works, fallible human works, so we need a greater humility. We need to become more charitable, listen more carefully to each other, and do a better job of communicating with each other in a way that is useful."

"I continue to love the CRC," he said. "And I hope the church will continue to grow and thrive and will be able to stay together, particularly when we face difficult issues—that we will hold on to each other, celebrate what unites us rather than complain about what divides us."

He also had a word of advice for his successor: "You need to have a thick skin, but you cannot be calloused. You have to let it hurt a little bit. The truth spoken in love can still hurt."

After De Moor leaves *The Banner*, he'll have approximately 16 months until he plans to retire from ministry in December 2016. And after that? "I have no idea," he said. "In God's good time I'll find out."

—Gayla R. Postma



## Noteworthy

**Aaron Au**, a violinist with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra who has performed at Carnegie Hall, was recently installed as a bivocational church planter in Edmonton's Alberta Avenue community.

**L.A. Community Christian Reformed Church**, formerly known as First CRC, celebrated its 100th anniversary in September.

**Jabez Ministries** is a chaplaincy at Grand Rapids (Mich.) Community College led by Peter Gordon. It is specifically geared for students with disabilities.

**Cadillac (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church** used some of its extensive property to create a community disc golf course recently.

—Banner correspondents

Please visit our website at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) for all these stories.

**Aaron Au at Carnegie Hall.**



## IN MEMORIAM



### Rev. Frank Sawyer

1946 - 2014

Frank Sawyer, 68, a scholar with an amazing zest for life, died shortly after he was diagnosed with cancer. He was a Renaissance man in the true sense of the word: theologian, philosopher, linguist, writer, poet, and social critic.

Sawyer graduated from Calvin College. He was awarded a Ph.D. by Theological University of the Reformed Churches in Kampen, The Netherlands, and by the University of Debrecen in Hungary.

He served with Christian Reformed World Missions in Puerto Rico, Honduras, and Hungary, where he taught at Reformed Theological Seminary in Sarospatak. He was widely sought after as a lecturer in Ukraine, Romania, and Slovakia.

Sawyer will be remembered for his love of life, his sense of humor, his compassion for people who are disadvantaged, his profound interest in human interactions, his understanding of God's intention for humanity, and his love for mountains. He also loved painting and fishing.

Sawyer is survived by his wife, Aria, four children and their spouses, and four grandchildren.

—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*.

## British Columbia Youth Re:Activate for the Church

An inaugural youth convention brought over 200 young people, leaders, and volunteers from 11 British Columbia Christian Reformed churches to Gateway CRC in Abbotsford on a recent September weekend.

"For quite some time, a core of youth leaders on the lower mainland of British Columbia have struggled with the question of what to do about youth leaving the church," said Shane Rozeveld, youth pastor at Maple Ridge CRC.

That was the primary motivation for developing a new approach—a gathering called "Re:Activate." The event, which is specific to the CRC, is readily accessible to youth on the west coast.

Organized by a group of seven local youth pastors, the weekend focused on productivity, play, and partnership. Students were invited to explore their relationship with God in everyday life and had opportunities to network with other Christian Reformed youth. Saturday afternoon activities included worship and song, mountain biking, hiking, white-water rafting, and service projects.

This was the first time Katya van der Leek, 16, of Fleetwood CRC in Surrey, attended a big youth convention. "It was an awesome first experience," she said. "It was so cool to be a part of such a big group of youth where we were praising our God through times of worship, learning, community building, and just plain old fun."

Fourteen-year-old Braedon Howard of Living Hope CRC in Abbotsford took the weekend's theme to heart. "I really enjoyed Re:Activate because it gave me a new outlook on all the little things and fun things in life and how we can live out our faith doing all those things."

—Tracey Yan



Participants at BC's youth convention.

KEVIN VAN DER LEEK



# NEWS

## Grand Rapids Event Advocates Full Participation of Practicing Gay Church Members

**D**r. Amy Plantinga Pauw was the speaker at a recent event to discuss allowing gay, lesbian, transgender, and bisexual individuals, including those living in same-sex relationships, full participation in the Christian Reformed Church. Pauw is a professor at Louisville Seminary.

The event, held September 17 at Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, drew an overflow crowd of about 170 people. It was organized by All One Body (A1B), an organization that promotes full participation in church life “by all persons who confess Christ as their Savior and Lord, whether they are single or faithful partners in a committed, monogamous union, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).”

Synod 2011 (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) chose not to reexamine the denomination’s stance on homosexuality adopted in the 1970s. Dissatisfaction with that decision led some members of Christian Reformed churches in Grand Rapids to form All One Body.

Pauw argued that the church was “traditionally inclusive” and did not take into account the fact that marriage, in addition to being a traditional Christian commitment, was also an earthly commitment. She specifically noted that originally celibacy was considered a gift to those who chose a life of ministry. Now pastors enjoy the commitment of marriage in addition to following their call into ministry. The title of her speech, “A Yes to God’s Earth,” summarized



Amy Plantinga Pauw

her opinion that the church was forgetting the broader experience of earthly relationships.

Pauw referenced Romans 1:24-27, where Paul wrote about homosexual acts as contrary to nature. She challenged her audience to also remember what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:14: “Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him,” citing it as an example that context is important to the interpretation of Scripture, and that ideas written then do not necessarily equate to the human experience now.

“The vast majority of marriages are going to be heterosexual,” Pauw noted. She also stated that the role of marriage in life, for both

heterosexual couples and homosexual couples, achieved the same goal—a faithful commitment that produces “creaturely flourishing.”

The evening included a panel discussion with three men, including those who identified themselves as heterosexual and LGBT.

One panelist, identifying himself as a traditionalist, questioned Pauw’s idea of context and interpreting certain Scriptures differently. Agreeing that some things, like hairstyles, did not hold the same meaning for today’s Christians, he observed that sexuality is not necessarily a hairstyle equivalent and is less likely to change over time.

Another panelist, self-identified as gay, noted that he grew up

in the church. He participated as a music director and offered to commit himself to celibacy before being asked to leave his church. It was after that that he met his partner. He expressed a desire to include individuals like him within the church.

Audience members were encouraged to write comments or questions on cards and pass them forward.

“[Does this] open the door to polygamy?” asked one audience member. A panelist responded that that would need another, separate discussion.

Another asked, “Will the church provide resources to those who desire to remain celibate?” The panelist who identified himself as a traditionalist said, “We can work to provide more textual materials, and possibly, if that member talks to a pastor or member of the church, emotional support.”

After the panelists spoke, one pastor extended an apology for a sermon he had preached many years ago that would have been hurtful to the LGBT community. “I am sorry,” he told those present.

Audience members’ questions included skepticism of contextual interpretation mentioned by Pauw in addition to questions about celibacy and creating support groups for LGBT individuals.

The event at Calvin CRC is the first in a series planned for the Grand Rapids area by All One Body. The group also hosts monthly meetings at Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids.

—K. Schmitt

## Work on Welcoming the Stranger Faces Barriers: Canadian Report

A report published by Citizens for Public Justice, a national Christian research organization with historic ties to the Christian Reformed Church in Canada, recently summarized the political barriers private refugee sponsors have been running up against for years. Titled "Private Sponsorship and Public Policy," the report says the top three concerns of the sponsoring groups were wait times and processing delays, cuts to interim federal health coverage, and lack of government consultation.

Ashley Chapman, author of the report, said, "Our goal for the



report is that it will become a springboard for effective advocacy among churches and others in the private sponsorship world."

Since 1978, the majority of refugee resettlement work in Canada has been through private sponsorship of refugees coordinated by a central program with Citizenship and Immigration

Canada. The CRC is part of that work. The Refugee Office of World Renew-Canada has helped roughly 60 CRCs and about 20 other denominations' churches complete sponsorships for an estimated total of 6,800 resettled individuals to date.

Rebecca Walker, refugee coordinator for World Renew in

Canada, was a respondent in CPJ's survey for the report. Public engagement, she said, will be important to bring about change. "In the past, loud voices in the community have been responded to," she said.

A refugee justice task force on which Walker serves is poised to begin the work of local empowerment with the creation of a workshop designed to educate churches on refugee issues and mobilize them for action. Tentatively titled "Welcoming Refugees," the workshop is the product of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue working together with other agencies of the CRC.

—Alissa Vernon

## Running Toward Home

When the road stretched too long and their legs grew heavier with every step, Gil Clelland and Darryl Reckman started reciting names: names of people who worship with them at Sanctuary London. These are folks who drop in for a listening ear or just some respite, friends whose daily struggles are even more daunting than a 100-mile cycle-and-run marathon.

Clelland and Reckman outraced dusk to finish the 100 Miles for Home event on Sept. 20, raising \$25,000. They'd started from Kincardine, Ontario, almost exactly 12 hours earlier on a journey that included cycling for 73.8 miles (119 km) and then running a full 26.2-mile (42 km) marathon en route to their home church in London, Ontario.

Sanctuary London is a community that began in 2011 to



**Gil Clelland and Darryl Reckman, who lead the Sanctuary London street-level ministry, travel one leg of a 100-mile cycle-and-run fundraiser.**

meet hurting Londoners' need to feel safe, wanted, needed, and loved. In partnership with Talbot Street Christian Reformed Church, it brings "home" to those without homes. Sanctuary's ministries, supported also by other churches, include meal fellowship, art classes, creative writing, drop-in time, and worship. Its programs

include a music ministry with a band made up mostly of Sanctuary friends led by new staffer Jeremy Jongejan.

One goal of 100 Miles for Home was to raise money to expand Sanctuary's ministry among its street-level friends. Clelland said the event was also a metaphor for the grind their friends experience as they try to find food, shelter, and belonging.

"I watched their endurance. I watched them in their weakest moments keep going and going

and going," Debra Franke said as a crowd welcomed the pair home at Talbot Street Church. "I know that God was with you, and I saw Christ in you."

The event drew diverse groups of people together to show Christ's love with society's most vulnerable members, Clelland said.

"People who have money, people who don't have money—we're all in this together."

—Deb Flaherty,  
special to The Banner



# NEWS

## CHURCH WORLDWIDE

### Museum of the Bible Aims for Timeless Name, Imagery

Museum of the Bible. That's it.

The name of the museum under construction in Washington, D.C., is official.

"We don't need more to tell people who and what we are," the museum's founder and funder, Steve Green, told Religion News Service.

The high-tech museum, set to open in fall 2017, is four blocks from the U.S. Capitol and three blocks from a global tourism mecca, the Air and Space Museum. The new museum will feature standing exhibits on the history and impact of the Bible as well as interactive features to bring viewers into Bible stories and characters.

It's the passionate project of Green, the Hobby Lobby billionaire who would prefer to be known for his world-class Bible artifacts collection rather than for his victorious Supreme Court fight for exemption from the Affordable Care Act contraception mandate.

The Green family—generations of Pentecostals and Baptists—has long funded Bible scholarship, biblical archaeology, and the drafting of a proposed public school curriculum on the Bible's historic, cultural, and artistic impact on the U.S. and the world.

All are controversial endeavors, particularly given Green's personal commitment to spread the good word about the Good Book. Yet Green insists this is not an \$800 million monument to personal evangelism. He said believers, skeptics, and the "intellectually curious" alike can visit and learn, just as they might at a science museum.

"The Bible can speak for itself, explain itself."  
—Religion News Service



**museum of the Bible**  
The logo for the new Museum of the Bible

### Warm Hearts Help Warm Heads

Every year in September, representatives of Samaritan's Purse have tea with residents of Holland Christian Homes and members of Heritage Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Brampton, Ontario. But they don't come just for the tea. They come to gather precious gifts: more than 5,000 knitted hats to be distributed to children around the world as part of Operation Christmas Child.

This year, more than 5,100 hats were displayed at the tea.

The Brampton knitters call their program Operation Mercy. It was started by Holland Christian Homes resident Jane Douma in 2002. Twelve years and 47,076 hats later, Operation Mercy has grown to include women from other churches. It has become



(L-r) Ruth Bruinsma, Paula Schneider of Samaritan's Purse, and Damaris Vezentan.

a precious yearly tradition they all look forward to. Each year the hats are placed in gift boxes destined for cold countries.

—Jose A. Luna

### Prayer Everywhere in Classis Niagara

From the pew to the street to the sidewalk, prayer is everywhere in Classis Niagara.

"Our classis has been working on developing its vision and mission. We can make big plans for our future and set goals, but without prayer, our plans amount to nothing," said Eleanor Boersma, a commissioned pastor at Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St.

Catharines, Ontario. Boersma helped plan a September service of blessing for the ministries, people, and churches of the classis.

Trinity CRC, also in St. Catharines, has hosted three prayer summits over the past year. Christopher deWinter, Trinity's pastor, said this action of inviting other congregations to join in prayer is a recognition that "we can

only stand together when we start on our knees together."

Elsewhere in the classis, prayer walks are part of The Village Church's monthly community service day in Thorold. This summer the group supported a CRC church plant in Niagara Falls with two Sunday evening prayer walks in that city.

Back at Covenant CRC, a weekly prayer meeting held at the church's nearby ministry site, Lockside Cove, found itself in need of a hospitality coordinator as sidewalk traffic wandered into the former café. Prayer meeting regular Henny Broekema said they welcome those who pass by and offer to pray for them, along with a cup of coffee.

—Alissa Vernon



Small groups of three or four pray together throughout the service of prayer at Covenant CRC.

ALISSA VERNON



# FAQs

## Outreach

**Q** I know that I am supposed to share the gospel with my friends. But I never feel confident to witness to my faith with them because I don't think they will cross the line of faith. What shall I do?

**A** Evangelism is partnering with the Holy Spirit in a chain of links.

Imagine that there are circumstances, conversations, questions, and doubts that your friends will need to experience before they are ready to make a commitment to Christ and cross the line of faith. And imagine that each of these events is a link in a chain leading your friends to that place of commitment. Providentially, the Holy Spirit has placed you in that specific link at that specific time for you to say or do something that will help forge another link in the chain of their faith journey.

This is a profound partnership between the Holy Spirit and you, a partnership between the supernatural and the natural. Personally I find it both mysterious and adventurous, and I experience a profound humility and fulfillment whenever I submit myself to the will of the Holy Spirit. What this means is that your responsibility is never to *make* your friends "cross the line of faith." That supernatural moment of grace and faith is between the Lord and them.

Rather, your responsibility is to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ by engaging yourself in that particular link so that the Holy Spirit may use you as his instrument. This may be just having coffee with your friends and offering a listening ear to their joys and sorrows, or buying them a book that addresses their doubts and concerns. Evangelism requires the community of Jesus Christ, the Body, collectively. How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!

—Victor Ko is a church planter with mosaicHouse in Edmonton, Alberta.

## Evangelism requires the community of Jesus Christ, the Body, collectively.

## Justice

**Q** Can the war on drugs be called a just war?

**A** Using the language of war for policies on drug use is a misnomer that masks serious justice questions about the current approach to drug use in North America.

Many of the questions that need to be explored are captured in the 2012 documentary film *The House I Live In*. It takes viewers inside families, police forces, and prison walls to understand the impact of the "war on drugs" for those involved, as well as presenting hard facts. It also explores the impact for society when the justice system acts unjustly in its enforcement of drug laws, for example, with documented racial bias. This disturbing film is a useful discussion starter for Christians, who are called to be agents of justice in society.

The practical failure of the "war on drugs" approach is generally recognized. Illegal drugs are now cheaper and more available, while overcrowded prisons recycle more than rehabilitate drug dealers. Families struggle with the human costs of young people caught in drug culture, often with few resources to help them. The moral and justice implications, which go much deeper, need more public discussion.

The use of harmful drugs is a complex societal issue with no simple solutions. This is an area that begs for the use of the restorative justice approaches that the Christian Reformed Church promotes. The failure of the "war on drugs" may open doors for Christians to address the justice aspects as well as providing prison ministries and care for individual families affected by the use of drugs.

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

## Faith Formation

**Q** My husband and I pray every day by name for our 12 grandchildren, ages 8 to 21. We're thankful for the faith nurture they receive from their parents and church communities, but we also fear at times for the pressures they face to walk away from the Lord. We do know the power of prayer, but is there more we can do?

**A** I've surveyed hundreds of young adults, asking (among other things) how their grandparents have shaped their faith. Here are some quotes that capture patterns in their responses:

"They gave me unconditional love, encouraging me in hundreds of little ways, showing the heart of Jesus."

"They prayed with me when I was very young, and, as I grew older, told me how they were daily praying for me."

"When I went through my early teens and suddenly thought that they weren't cool, they stuck with me and pretended they didn't see me rolling my eyes at their interest in my life."

"They told me how proud they were of me as a high school worship leader, even though I knew that the songs we led were not their personal favorites."

"I was humbled to realize that bad decisions I made couldn't lessen the love and encouragement they gave me."

In addition, the wonderful vow that we as congregations make at baptisms reminds us that those of us in the grandparent stage of life can be grandparent-like in various ways to many children in our community.

—Syd Hielema is a team leader for CRC Discipleship and Faith Formation Ministries. He is a member of Meadowlands Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ontario. ■

BY MICHAEL DUMEZ

# SPEAKING OF JURASSIC ARK



**“I MAY NOT BE MAINSTREAM,** but I’m still in the water.” That’s how I responded to a fellow Christian school science teacher who suggested that my belief in a recent creation (and a worldwide flood) did not fit with “current science.” I was simply saying that a Christian can read Genesis literally and still be consistent with the observable and verifiable science of today.

Because about half of all evangelical Christians share a literal view about origins, this issue cannot be ignored or dismissed in the Christian Reformed Church or elsewhere.

Some call this issue divisive, but it can be divisive only if we fail to respect the sincerity and credibility of fellow Christians with opposing views. Since we’re in the same theological boat together, let’s promote smoother sailing by examining how we arrive at our views and the implications they produce.

Like many people in the CRC, I graduated from a Christian college. There I adopted an admired professor’s belief that God

used evolutionary methods over millions of years to create. Who was I to question his training and wisdom? Later, however, I read the book *The Genesis Flood* by Dr. Henry Morris. For over 50 years it has been the standard-bearer for Young Earth Creationism (YEC). A 6,000-year-old earth and a literal reading of Genesis 1-11 are its trademarks.

The book provided not only scientific support for a worldwide Flood but also evidences for why the earth may look old but isn’t. Questions about rock and fossil “dating,” dinosaurs, and the historical Adam’s real first sin were also resolved. Evolutionary changes, whether theistic or not, were refuted.

Through continued studies, my confidence in the harmony between the Bible and natural revelation has been growing stronger every year. Conversely, many Christian Old Earth Creationists (OECs), who maintain that “God created using evolution” have come to different conclusions using their own

research. We all agree about the “who and why” but not about “how and when” God demonstrated his greatness.

I will say that my position did not come easily. The secular world pretty much thinks it’s strange or naive, as they say, to ignore all the “evidence” of evolutionary processes. Most of that very same evidence, however, can be interpreted differently to support YEC, so I don’t mind the scorn.

What was harder to deal with was that I often heard Christian speakers promote Old Earth Creationism and at times undermine YEC. I also discovered a very limited understanding of Young Earth Creationism in Christian college graduates as well as in denominational and educational leaders, all after much personal and written communication with them. Yet, as *Banner* letters often illustrate, support for YEC in the general population and the denomination remains very strong. I enjoy having good company in my belief, but it’s undeniable that both “sides” in the church have many supporters.

For certain we should not allow disagreement to lead to division, because that is exactly what the Great Deceiver has in mind.

Starting with the Bible as our ultimate authority, it’s far better to become well informed about both views of creation, to make up our minds, and each be prepared to stand before God with our positions. In heaven some of us might even offer a sanctified “I told you so” with others and laugh about our former differences. I look forward to that time when God will finally

structs to the same level as God’s inspired Word nor use them to determine its ultimate meaning.

- Current science can be conclusive about things that are observable and measurable, but not about creation events that had only one eyewitness—God himself. I will not ascribe authority to science beyond the limits that it has.
- We can never use imperfect science to prove the Bible, but only to support it. God’s perfect Word can stand on its own authority (Prov. 30:5).
- God said that he created birds before land animals (Gen. 1:20, 24). All brands of evolution reverse that order. Other conflicts between God’s creation order and evolution abound. The “how” of God’s spoken order trumps any others for me.
- Fossils need quick burial and pressure (but not time) to form, which the Flood provided. Normal exposure after death would destroy bodies before presumed eons of fossilization time. I’ll believe Genesis 7.
- To me, rock layers, folds, and geologic processes more than testify to a recent creation and a global Flood. Speculative dating methods can never prove a millions-of-years old earth.
- Contrary to what many believe, observable science in recent years has produced growing and overwhelming support for the literal Genesis account. That should surprise no one who believes that special and natural revelation have the same Author who never contradicts himself.

## GOD UNDERSTANDS OUR LIMITATIONS AS WE SEEK TO KNOW HIS WAYS.

give us all the details. For now, it’s imperative that we make and live with our decisions about creation and how they relate to the rest of our biblical perspective.

Genesis is foundational to the whole Bible, so it needs to be examined seriously. God knows our hearts and intentions, and he understands our limitations as we seek to know his ways.

A key factor in the controversy is how much authority God’s special revelation, his Word, has in relation to his general revelation, his creation. I’d like to share a few of my beliefs about this issue, as others have done in similar articles promoting OEC. Readers can evaluate my comments in light of their own beliefs and Scripture. May God be honored by our interest and efforts and be pleased by our patience with each other as we discuss.

- Since Peter (2 Pet. 3:6), Paul (Rom. 5:12-19), and Jesus himself (Mark 10:6) spoke of Genesis as literal, so will I.
- The Bible says that death came “through sin” (Rom. 5:12). It does not describe millions of years of evolutionary change before Adam. If death preceded sin, Jesus’ death was unnecessary, and, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:2, we “have believed in vain.”
- “Current science” by definition changes while God’s Word “endures forever” (Isa. 40:8). I will not elevate human con-

I believe it’s only a matter of time before the terminally ill concept of evolution will meet its demise. Some of its supporters are abandoning it, and I’m glad that I no longer embrace it, theistic or otherwise. I’m confident that my YEC belief is more consistent with the Bible and true science, and I invite others unfamiliar with it to check it out. (The websites *Answers in Genesis.org* and *CreationMoments.com* are great references.)

Wow! That’s more than enough to fill a coffee hour of discussion for those who are interested. My list is not intended to create more controversy but rather to promote contemplation about God’s wonderful creation account and its impact.

If that thinking keeps me from being “mainstream” in the secular or Christian world, it doesn’t really matter. We are all called in Romans 12:2 to be “transformed” in all our thoughts according to God’s words and deeds rather than conformed to anything “current.” That starts with Genesis 1:1.

And it’s not just because I think so. It’s because God said so. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



**Michael DuMez** is a retired Christian school science teacher and a member of First Christian Reformed Church, Oostburg, Wisc.





WE NEED  
**NOT FEAR**  
THE DINOSAUR

**T**HERE HAS BEEN much controversy on the Internet, in the news media and even in the Letters section of *The Banner* on how Christians should respond to some recent scientific discoveries. In just the last few months, we've seen the discovery of a 68 million-year-old dinosaur in Alberta, new evidence from the South Pole of primordial gravitational waves from 13.8 billion years ago, and a planet about the size of Earth found by the Kepler spacecraft in the habitable zone of a red dwarf star 490 light years away.

As Reformed Christians, should we welcome these scientific discoveries, or do they attack the basic tenets of our faith?

Article 2 of the Belgic Confession beautifully describes God's general revelation (the universe) and special revelation (the Bible) as two books written by the same author. As Reformed Christians, we confess that God is infallible in both revelations and that God does not contradict himself.

We also believe that God does not try to deceive us by creating starlight in transit or fossilized remains in the earth. Nor does God hide deposits of pre-processed

coal, oil, and natural gas in the proper geologic strata. God is the Lord of heaven and earth. He is the creator of the natural and the supernatural, and he is both immanent—that is, in the universe—and transcendent—surpassing both space and time.

When there appears to be a conflict between these two revelations it must be in our interpretation. Even careful, conservative, and sincere theologians and scientists make mistakes. When pride and politics enter the mix, from Galileo to global warming, an honest debate can quickly become more about doctrine and ideology than about the actual facts.

# IS THE EARTH 6,000 YEARS OLD OR 4.54 BILLION YEARS OLD? THE HONEST AND HUMBLE ANSWER IS THAT WE DON'T KNOW.

The Bible is God's holy and divine Word, but it's not a book of science. It can't be. The Bible is full of miracles and supernatural events. Science, on the other hand, is the study of natural laws with the goal of predicting what should happen in an experiment and then empirically testing those hypotheses. The realm of science is limited to the natural laws of the universe and therefore it excludes miracles. By definition, a miracle is a suspension of the universe's natural laws that produces an unexpected result. As such, scientists are not allowed to insert miracles into their solutions. Similarly, if a patient dies on the operating table, surgeons will not expect that patient to be resurrected a few days later with all of his wounds healed.

In the Christian life, science and religion are not separated—but we need to make a clear distinction between them.

Ninety-nine years ago, Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity predicted gravity waves. Recently a team of scientists in Antarctica found evidence that these waves occurred less than a trillionth of a second after the Big Bang. Even though they've studied their evidence for years, they know that different teams of scientists, with different equipment and with a different hypothesis, will try to prove or disprove their discovery. Science has to explain the age of the universe without resorting to miracles. But as Reformed Christians, we know that God lives in and above space-time, and that he used both natural and supernatural means to create the universe.

Reformed Christians believe that Christ has both a human nature and a divine nature. We certainly distinguish between these two natures, but we cannot separate them. The same is true for science and theology. Astronomers have

already found an earth-size planet in a habitable zone around a distant star. Next we're likely to find an earth-like planet with liquid water. What will the discovery of a twin earth mean to our Reformed faith? What have we learned from Galileo? We've learned that science does not correct the Bible, it corrects a misinterpretation of the Bible.

Is the Earth 6,000 years old or 4.54 billion years old? The honest and humble answer is that we don't know. The Bible clearly tells us the age of Adam when he died, but it does not clearly tell us the age of the Earth. The dominant scientific theory is that the Earth is very old, but some Christians believe that the Earth just appears to be old and that it's actually much younger.

Archbishop James Ussher confidently calculated that the world began on October 23, 4004 BC. Similarly, Harold Camping confidently predicted the world would end on AD May 21, 2011. Both men used the Bible as fodder for their speculations. Adding something to Scripture to support a personal position denies the authority of the Bible just as much as subtracting something from Scripture that you'd like to ignore.

What is 13.8 billion years to God? For an immanent God existing in space time who experiences a thousand years as a 3-hour watch in the night (Ps. 90:4), 13.8 billion universe years is about 4,723 God years. For a transcendent God (existing outside of space time), 13.8 billion years is still less than a trillionth of a second. The dimensions of time and space are much larger than we can imagine—just like God.

How can Reformed Christians develop a viewpoint that is scientific and also biblical? The Reformation has given us insights that allow us to discriminate

between good theology and bad theology. Many of those insights also work to distinguish good science from bad science.

Many institutions of higher learning have observatories that are open to the public. Go to an observatory and look at the Whirlpool Galaxy cataloged as M51a. When you put your eye to the eyepiece, the scientific explanation is clear. The very same photons that were emitted from this galaxy have travelled unimpeded for 24 million years across 100 trillion miles of space and have at last ended their perilous journey; their final resting place is your retina.

It's a humbling and praise-worthy experience!

Science can provide incredible experiences for you and your children. You can visit a fossil site and hold a 30 million-year-old fossil with amazing physical detail in your own hands. Or hike into a meteor crater that is 50 thousand years old, or marvel at the craftsmanship of sculpted mammoth teeth or cave paintings that are over 30 thousand years old. Visit a science and engineering expo where you can see, touch, and use the latest technology.

Our parents and grandparents lived in a world where science was "on the fringes" and local, close-knit groups were the social norm. Our children live in a world where science is mainstream, and they must engage the world with knowledge of science, technology, engineering, and math.

Young Christians today need a strong and positive engagement of science within a context of faith. So let's leave behind the subjective dogmas of yesterday and any lingering irrational fear of new discoveries. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



**Jake Buurma** is vice president of operations for a nonprofit standards organization. He is a member of San Jose (Calif.) Christian Reformed Church.



# Telling God's Story, Sharing His Love, Serving His Kingdom . . . for 75 Years

by Claudia Elzinga and Nancy Vander Meer



For decades CRC families—and many others—listened to Dr. Peter Eldersveld (l) and Dr. Joel Nelderhood on “The Back to God Hour” every Sunday morning.

**D**ecember 17, 1939. One radio program. One station. One Midwestern city.

By God's grace, that first broadcast of “The Back to God Hour” launched a multimedia ministry that has grown wildly beyond the imagination of its pioneer founders.

Or maybe not. Perhaps the vision of sharing the gospel with people worldwide, using every available modern media tool, was exactly what they had in mind.

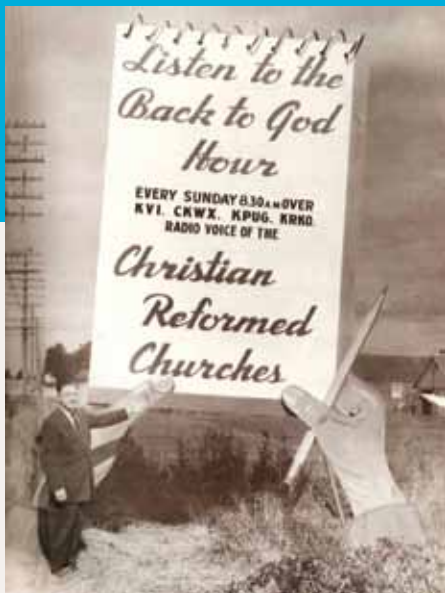
“Since Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) started 75 years ago, our mission has been to proclaim that Jesus is Lord, to help those who want to follow Jesus know him better, and to strengthen the church,” said BTGMI director Kurt Selles.

BTGMI's history goes back to the early 1920s, about the time the “new” communications tool—radio—took root as an entertainment medium in North America. Leaders in the Christian

Reformed Church sensed the potential of radio as a means of spreading the gospel. By the time they put together an official proposal for synod, however, disaster struck: the economic crash of 1929.

But the dream didn't die. These leaders kept praying and studying, and in 1938 synod appointed the first permanent Radio Committee. A little over a year later, the first broadcast of “The Back to God Hour” aired on Chicago's 20,000-watt station WJJD.





**“The Back to God Hour” could be heard on hundreds of stations across North America.**

People responded, and more stations asked to air the program. By 1948 more than 250 stations carried the broadcast. At least 60 percent of the mail pouring in came from non-CRC listeners.

These listeners requested discipleship resources. So in 1950 the ministry created a devotional booklet called *The Family Altar* (now called *Today*). It wasn't long before the subscription list swelled to 40,000 and then nearly doubled over the next four years. This little devotional book has blessed hundreds of thousands of people throughout many generations.

The CRC was convinced of the power of media to proclaim the gospel, disciple seekers and new believers, and grow Christ's kingdom. And the ministry was always looking for ways to be on the cutting edge of media outreach.

In 1953, Dr. Peter Eldersveld, the denomination's first permanent radio

host, used the next wave of media delivery—television—to launch a teaching series called “Law and Love.” And the ministry continued to grow.

## Beyond the Borders

The vision to reach beyond North America opened doors for BTGMI to expand into other languages, first Arabic (1958) and then Spanish (1965).

“In the decades that followed those humble beginnings, Back to God Ministries International's outreach continued to develop ministries in French, Indonesian, Portuguese, then Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and, in 2009, Hindi,” said Selles.

“Today we work in 10 major world languages,” he said. “We still use radio in places where radio remains the primary form of communication. But today more and more we use the Internet and social media channels to deliver our programs.”

To better reflect the worldwide multimedia impact, Synod 2008 approved changing the agency's name to Back to God Ministries International.

“Back to God is really an orchard of ministries that grew from that single program started in 1939,” explains BTGMI ReFrame Media (English ministry) leader Rev. Steven Koster. “This shoot

*You add.  
God multiplies.*

that began as one small tree has really grown into many fruit-filled trees.”

Thanks to faithful prayers and support from the CRC and many individuals, BTGMI's media outreach has been a blessing to millions of people. »

### MeetReFrame.com

“As the English outreach of BTGMI and as a ministry of the CRC, ReFrame Media takes up the mantle laid down 75 years ago,” said Steven Koster, director of ReFrame Media.

“We are a media ministry to English speakers, sharing the good news of Jesus in an increasingly vital mission field at home and abroad.”

Koster noted that many church members are unaware of the vast array of discipleship resources available to them through BTGMI and ReFrame Media.

“People are surprised when we share the list of English programs out there—supported largely by CRC ministry shares—offline and online. Programs like ‘Kids Corner,’ ‘Walk the Way,’ and ‘Spotlight’ are designed to develop lifelong followers of Jesus, sharpen and challenge your witness for Christ, and demonstrate practical everyday evangelism.”

To learn about all the ReFrame program streams, visit [MeetReFrame.com](http://MeetReFrame.com).

### BTGMI expanded into international outreach in the 1950s.



PHOTO BY CLAUDIA ELZINGA

### BTGMI and ReFrame Media provide discipleship resources for churches and individuals.



### Sharing God's Love

Kevin is a new believer who used the Chinese-language *Today* to grow in faith.

A successful iPhone app developer in Beijing, Kevin wanted to receive the daily devotional through his smartphone. Although the Chinese team didn't have the budget for such a project, they had been praying that God would provide the resources. When Kevin contacted them and volunteered to develop the devotional app for free, the Chinese team knew God had answered their prayers.

With this app, people in China can now receive *Today* on their mobile phones and also access other Christian resources in their own language.

Kevin says, "I was energized and filled with joy by this project. What a spiritual journey for me!"



**Today BTGMI's media ministry reaches people where they are, using smartphones, social media, and the Internet.**

People in many countries use BTGMI daily devotionals as a discipleship resource. BTGMI produces and distributes more than three million print devotionals in seven languages annually. In several places, new digital technology is changing the world. More than 500,000 people receive the devotionals by email, social media, and smartphone apps every day.



PHOTO BY CLAUDIA ELZINGA

**"We're touching people's hearts through radio waves," says Oleg.**

### Oleg Gives Back

In some areas of Russia's Far East, satellite radio is the only way for people to receive information. For Oleg, a child living in a military family in 1991, it was even more difficult.

"When my father heard about a radio station within reach," says Oleg, "he got a powerful military receiver and we started listening to Back to God programs on Christian radio."

That's how Oleg came to know Jesus. "Because I listened to Christian radio, I understood that radio is a very powerful tool for proclaiming the gospel," he says.

Today Oleg hosts a call-in radio program for Back to God Ministries' Russian outreach. The program serves as a safe place for Russians to ask tough questions about the Christian faith. The network

covers almost 90 percent of Russia through satellite, reaching people who otherwise might not seek out information about Christianity.

"This is very important for Russian people," Oleg says. "Still now people are not willing to express their thoughts, feelings. But radio is something special. You could be alone in your room and listen to the radio station. You can call the studio and it could be anonymous."

"Our goal is to tell people that there is hope in Jesus Christ. And our second goal is to bring people to local churches."

Every once in a while, Oleg gets feedback from people who have been listening to the program for months or even years—individuals who, like Oleg, didn't know much about the Christian faith.

"Those people are in church now," Oleg says. "They're saved now. It gives great joy to my heart."

### It's About Giving

Several years ago, Pastor Ruswang, listener community coordinator for Back to God Ministries' Indonesian outreach, visited a small community in Jawa Barat, Indonesia, to tell the villagers there about the Savior.

**Agus travels from one listener community to another to repair radios and connect with other Christians.**



PHOTO BY CLAUDIA ELZINGA

### At a Glance: Global Impact of BTGMI

- Active in 140 countries through radio and TV broadcasts, resource distribution, and discipleship centers.
- Reaching people in nearly every country through 35 websites and more than 55 social media sites.
- Nearly 30 million touchpoints with people each year through letters, phone calls, emails, text messages, online interactions, and event attendance.



You add.  
God multiplies.

PHOTO BY HANS MULDER



**Thanks to your support, BTGMI provides evangelism and discipleship resources for all ages around the world.**

Agus, a thin, cheerful man in his thirties who lived in that village, was captivated by the pastor's message. He wanted to know more, so Ruswang gave him a Bible with simple instructions: "Read it."

"I read my Bible, but I didn't understand," recalled Agus. He visited Ruswang in the neighboring village to ask more questions.

Instead of giving him books or sermons, Pastor Ruswang gave Agus a job: to translate Back to God Ministries' radio programs from Indonesian to Sundanese (his native tongue). Each day Agus translated devotions, prayers, and Scripture readings. And each day he learned more about Christ.

For Agus, Christian radio is not just a staple in his home; it is his livelihood. He now works as a freelance repairman for Back to God Ministries' Indonesian outreach, traveling with listener community leaders around the country to offer support to radio stations and individuals.

When asked what he likes most about being a Christian, Agus put it simply: "It's about giving, sharing, caring, loving."

## Looking Ahead

Jerry An is the new Back to God Ministries Chinese program director. He has been instrumental in developing an in-country presence that is changing the future of Christian broadcasting in China.

He notes, "The daily average that people spend on smartphones is more than two-and-a-half hours. Do they have enough good Christian content? Can we share the gospel on smartphones? That really is the biggest opportunity for us."

The Chinese ministry team, together with several other BTGMI language teams, is developing social media and e-magazines to advance ministry by using new media.

An explained, "Social media is growing so fast in China. In China you may not be able to establish a Christian TV or radio station—but you can have it on new media. You cannot establish a Christian newspaper; you can have it on new media. There is plenty of space for us to use today's media. That is a wonderful opportunity for us to embrace."

ReFrame Media leader Steven Koster adds, "We really want to be there for people wherever they are. Whether they are old or young, close to God or not close to God. We want to be there through all kinds of different channels and efforts—especially online. We can reach so many more people worldwide through the Internet than we could through a local radio broadcast or with paper and ink."

When visionaries dreamed more than 75 years ago of how God might use the "new" media tool, radio, they could never have imagined one day reaching millions of people in nearly every country of the world.

"As we look back over the past 75 years, we are so grateful for God's faithfulness," said Kurt Selles. "We are grateful for the countless opportunities we've had to share God's love and to see people come to know Jesus.

"We don't know what the future holds. We don't know how media will change. But God is faithful. We trust him and we remain committed to proclaiming the good news, to helping people grow in their knowledge of Jesus, in order to see the church grow and God's kingdom come.

"Thank you for partnering with us to tell Jesus' story and share his love—to those in our own churches and to people around the world."

You can read more of these stories at [BackToGod.net/75](http://BackToGod.net/75).

### The Church at Prayer

- Praise God for 75 years of media ministry and for his faithfulness in providing resources and gifted media teams who share the gospel with people around the world.
- Pray for people who live in areas of the world where conflict and persecution make their lives difficult. Pray that BTGMI's media outreach in these areas will bring peace and hope through the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for seekers who are hearing the name of Jesus for the first time through media ministry. Pray that God will use BTGMI and its local partners to disciple them and bring them to faith in Christ.
- For monthly prayer updates, visit [BackToGod.net/pray](http://BackToGod.net/pray).



**Claudia Elzinga and Nancy Vander Meer** are staff writers for Back to God Ministries International.





## Signs of God's Provision

**W**e need to remember and celebrate God's provision for his church, particularly in light of the discouraging news we sometimes hear about the future of churches and denominations in contemporary culture.

Here are three reasons why I believe that we are, in fact, being blessed by God.

First, the world is flocking to urban areas. Cities are where we find the next generation of church members and leaders.

Let's look at three dimensions of the CRC compiled from numbers and other data gleaned from the Internet and print resources.

We'll start with Grand Rapids, Mich., Here are three snapshots, each 25 years apart.

- The first, taken from the 1964 *Yearbook*, suggests that things were booming 50 years ago. Eighteen CRC churches were home to 3,726 families. Then a number of things began to happen. "White flight" and the allure of the suburbs drew people away. Immigration slowed to a trickle, and the number of births continued to decline.
- Twenty-five years later, although there were still 18 churches, the total number of families had dropped by more than 40 percent.
- But today, according to the 2014 *Yearbook*, there are 20 churches in that same area, and the total number of families has grown by 11 percent! God hasn't abandoned the city, nor has he abandoned our efforts to be a church engaged in a variety of urban ministries.

A second area of blessing is increasing diversity. Let's use the same 25-year markers to look at churches that are ethnically primarily non-Dutch or multiethnic.

- In 1964, fewer than a dozen ethnic minority churches were organized or on their way to being organized. Nevertheless, there were about 20 ministry efforts led by Home Missions. Those for Chinese believers were found in Chicago, Jamaica (New York), and Crenshaw (Los Angeles). Other ministry

efforts were located in African-American areas of major cities; ministry among Spanish-speakers had begun in Miami, Grand Rapids, Holland (Mich.), Chicago, and southern California. In addition, there were more than a dozen ministries among the Navajo and Zuni.

- Twenty-five years later, many of these efforts had emerged as organized churches, particularly with the advent of Classis Red Mesa. In addition, the 1989 *Yearbook* shows churches for Vietnamese, Hmong, Laotian, and Korean groups.

- Today, another 25 years later, it's difficult to glean the exact number of multiethnic churches, but I counted more than 200, either organized or emerging, that reflect our growing multiethnic identity. It's an amazing progression and evidence of God's provision.

For a third area of blessing, let's look at the CRC and young adults. *Christianity Today* and a host of other sources tell us that young adults are leaving the



church.

That may be the case, but check out the CRC's Young Adult Leadership Task Force blog at [yalt.crcna.org/](http://yalt.crcna.org/). You'll find some very perceptive young adults emerging as leaders in the CRC.

This past summer, the blog provided a list of 20 leaders under the age of 40. Their accomplishments are amazing. They tend to be from areas where the CRC is well established, but they are also found in areas that are centers of innovation and creativity.

Our emerging leaders are where they need to be. But in the words of Matthew van Maastricht, one of the YALT bloggers, we need to care about them, talk to them, and listen to them—not because they represent a critical demographic (although they do), but because of who they are: sons and daughters of the King.

As we seek to better understand God's work among us, his continued provision is evident. ■

*Note:* You can find additional information online at [thebanner.org/together](http://thebanner.org/together).

“We need to remember and celebrate God's provision for his church.”



**Dr. Steven Timmermans** is the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

You add.  
God multiplies.

## OUT AND ABOUT

### Calvin Grad Chooses Social Services Career

Leon Negen enrolled at Calvin College because it offered the urban atmosphere of Grand Rapids, Mich., unlike the small Minnesota community in which he grew up.

Little did he know that God would be calling him to work with people living on city streets, walking alongside them to bring help, hope, and a home in Christ's name.

Negen took an unusual academic path—working for a year after high school building modular homes, attending Calvin for a year and a half, taking a semester in Spain, and then returning home to marry his high school sweetheart. He returned to Calvin as a married student and finished his degree in sociology.

“Going to Calvin was significant for me,” he said. “That’s where faith became mine, where I knew it to be real.”

He wanted to work in a helping profession, and Calvin’s career office connected him to a position at the Christian Opportunity Center (COC) in Pella, Iowa.

“The job wasn’t in a large city, and I needed a map to find Pella,” he remembered.

Negen worked as a director at COC for 13 years, developing programs and serving clients. This work led to larger involvement with social service agencies in Central Iowa and a master’s degree in rehabilitation administration from



Calvin College grad Leon Negen never planned on a career working in social services in Iowa.

the University of San Francisco.

He became a board member of the Bethel Rescue

Mission in Des Moines, Iowa, and within a few years the board asked him if he’d run the fledgling organiza-

### Seminary Welcomes Students with *Letters to a Young Calvinist*

As part of its welcome to new seminarians, Calvin Theological Seminary selected a book to help orient incoming students to the “brand” or “accent” of Reformed thought at Calvin Seminary.

All new students received a free, signed copy of *Letters to a Young Calvinist: An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition* by James K. A. Smith, an author and professor of philosophy at Calvin College.

A friend of Calvin Seminary, Smith was happy to walk over from his office to participate in an afternoon conversation with new and returning students about his book, facilitated by academic dean Ronald Feenstra.

Feenstra started the informal presentation by asking

Smith to comment on some of the big themes of theological education that appear in the book: formation practices, ecclesiology, eschatology, and restoration and renewal.

Keen on the life-giving rhythms of Reformed worship as formation, Smith acknowledged that what he needs the most on a weekly basis is confession, the antidote to spiritual pride.

When asked why restoration and renewal matter so much, he said, “Because you get your whole life back!”

He also said theology can be understood as formation when it’s done for the church, a strong reinforcement of Calvin Seminary’s educational promise to this new class of students discerning their call to serve the church.

tion of three-plus staff with a \$300,000 budget.

Twenty years later, the organization—which merged with another mission and is now called Hope Ministries—employs a staff of 60 and has a budget of \$13 million. It is dedicated to improving the lives of homeless people in the Des Moines area.

“Ultimately, what we’re about is building a life-changing environment around people to transform hearts,” Negen said.

—by Michael Van Denend,  
Calvin College



James “Jamie” K.A. Smith

At the end of the conversation, those who lingered were delighted to learn that two returning students from China (Jin Li and Mary Ma) had translated Smith’s *Letters to a Young Calvinist* for publication by an academic press in China.

—by Jinny De Jong, Calvin  
Theological Seminary

## Task Force on Structure and Culture

Commissioned in 2011, the Task Force on Structure and Culture has brought a number of recommendations adopted by the synods of the past few years. For example, the Task Force, with synod's approval, worked to refine a new set of senior leadership job descriptions as a new executive director and Canadian ministries director have been appointed, and soon, a new director of ministries and administration.

The Task Force also brought the "Five Streams" metaphor to Synod 2013. More and more, these five streams (Servant Leadership, Global Missions, Faith Formation, Gospel Proclamation and Worship, and Loving Mercy and Doing Justice) are helping to shape a culture of collaboration and provide new ideas about structures that may lend improved organization to our ministries and even our governance.

At Synod 2014, the Task Force brought options for structuring our many boards and committees. Feedback was received at synod and beyond. Respondents cautioned against moving toward too much centralization and encouraged greater accountability, depth and breadth of ministry, and focus on local churches.

In response, the Task Force is continuing to explore best structures for ministry delivery. It seeks your prayers for wisdom and discernment as it anticipates bringing a further refined governance model to Synod 2015.



## Plans in Motion for Prayer Summit 2015

Rev. Moses Chung is committed to the power of prayer. He is pleased that the Christian Reformed Church is planning to hold a third denomination-wide prayer summit after a year without one.

If all goes as planned, the prayer summit will be held April 13-15, 2015, at All Nations Christian Reformed Church in Lakeview Terrace, Calif. It will provide pastors, church leaders, and others across the CRC the chance to gather for prayer, presentations, and worship.

"The purpose is to rediscover a heartfelt sense

of reverence of God's majesty as we pray together and to unite as people of God from diverse backgrounds to pray together," said Chung, director of Christian Reformed Home Missions.

The goal will be sharing the experience of humility and trust in God "as people pray together to intercede for the needs of our lives, local churches, our community, nation, and the world," said Rev. Charles Kim, Korean ministry coordinator and one of the ethnic ministry leaders for Home Missions.

Prayer Summit 2012 was initiated by Korean

CRC leaders, who invited denominational leaders to learn and pray together. The next summit was held in 2013.

The goal is for over 800 people from Christian Reformed agencies, regional and classical representatives, prayer mobilizers, lay leaders, and local congregation members to participate in Prayer Summit 2015.

Organizers hope that this summit, like the previous ones, will develop and equip prayer mobilizers to hold prayer summits on regional/classical levels.

Above all, said Chung, he hopes the summit will help the CRC to get a better sense of where the Holy Spirit is leading the church in today's complex world.

—by Chris Meehan,  
CRC Communications





You add.  
God multiplies.

## Honduran Youth Walks a New Path

**L**ester Ordoñez was a high school student in Laure, Honduras, when he started abusing drugs and alcohol.

He experienced great hardship, including the illness and death of his 35-year-old mother and the loss of his 8-year-old brother in a shooting. His choices were taking him down a dark path.

Lester is far from the only young person in Honduras to have faced such struggles. Substance abuse is a reality for youth in the country—especially for those living in communities where employment and job opportunities are limited.

World Renew is working through local Christian partners in Honduras to provide values-driven, biblically based programs for at-risk youth such as Lester.



Lester Ordoñez

“I feel sad to see so many young people on the streets of Laure under the influence of drugs,” said World Renew partner staff Noel Larios.

For seven years, Lester was one of these desperate young adults. His life started to change, however, when Larios and a local pastor invited him to a youth meeting.

“I was very drunk and had also used marijuana,” said Lester. “With lots of doubt, I went to the meeting. I was surprised, because the topic was drugs and

their effects. Suddenly, I felt something in my heart. That day I gave my life to Jesus Christ.”

Six months after Lester was baptized, he helped start an “Impact Club.” It provides a place for young people to come together for fun, fellowship, and spiritual growth while working on community projects and developing skills for income-generation.

Today Lester earns a living by making nylon bracelets and repairing furniture. He has been serving God for three years and is engaged to a woman from his church.

—by Adele Konyndyk, *World Renew*

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

## Helping Kids Play in Haiti

**A**s Regine Orange examined her new neighborhood in Haiti, she saw children walking around with nowhere to play. There were no sports leagues, no playgrounds, and no supervision.

But Regine took a step to bring change.

One Sunday afternoon, Regine invited eight children into her backyard and led them in games and songs. Seeing the children laugh, play, and learn made Regine realize her potential to be a positive influence on young people, and she wanted to do more.

In efforts to develop her outreach, Regine met with Larry Luth, a missionary with Christian Reformed World Missions in Haiti.



Regine Orange

It’s Luth’s mission to enable young people like Regine to become agents of change in their community, especially in communities, he says, “where violence and poverty rob young people of the opportunity to be kids.”

To develop her skills, Regine made the commitment to join a three-year leadership training program with Luth.

Through that program, she discovered new ways to

reach out to young people using a biblical worldview.

During the summer of 2014, Regine was one of three people to begin leading after-school clubs in Haiti. At the clubs, Regine works to empower about 30 students to find creative solutions to problems in their own communities.

“It’s amazing to see transformation take place over the course of the (leadership training) program,” said Luth.

—by Brian Clark,  
*Christian Reformed World Missions*

# Thankful All Year Round

When you read these pages, Thanksgiving will already be over in Canada. In the United States, Thanksgiving is this month. But we don't have to save up all our thanks for just one day!

King David was very good at saying thanks for all of God's blessings. He wrote many psalms about thankfulness. Here are just a few:

- "I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart. I will tell of all your wonderful deeds." —Psalm 9

- "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving." —Psalm 69
- "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love endures forever." —Psalm 106

Feeling thankful to God, to our family, or to other people is good, but "giving thanks" is even better. Here are some great ways to show and tell why you're thankful—at Thanksgiving dinner or all year round.

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

## Thank-You Gifts to Make

When people do things that make you feel thankful, tell them! Thanking people makes them feel great—and it will make you feel pretty good too. Here are three fun ways to thank your pastor, your teachers, your friends, your parents, and other people who do good things for you.

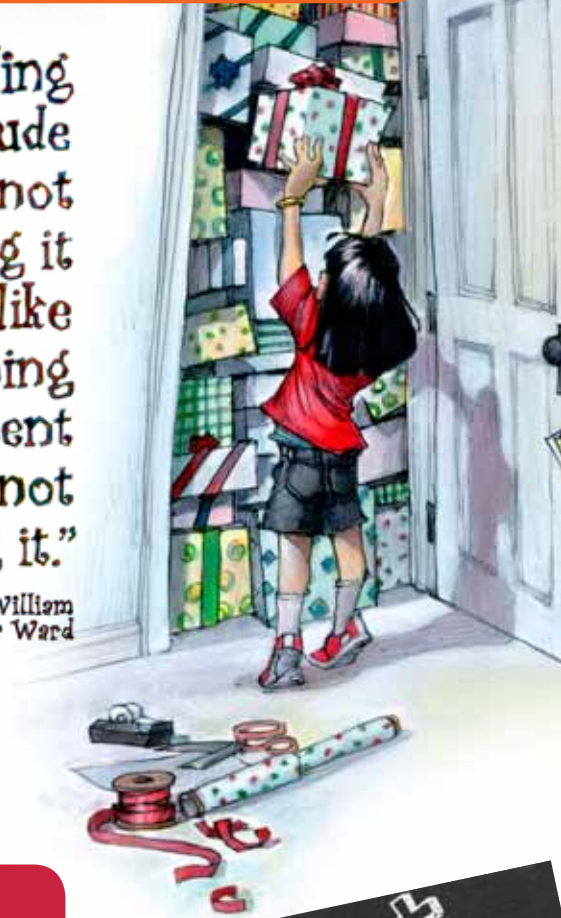
Bake **cookies** and make **paper plate baskets** to put them in (you can find instructions online at [tinyurl.com/platebasket](http://tinyurl.com/platebasket)). Then deliver them to the people you're thankful for.

A **personalized travel mug** makes a very special thank you gift. To find the mug, search the Internet for "design your own travel mug" (dollar stores are another good place to find these mugs). On the paper insert that comes with the mug, write a message of thanks and decorate it. Slip the insert into the space between the two walls of the mug, and you're done!

Buy a **picture frame** that includes a mat. Use colorful markers to write why you're thankful on the mat. Then add a picture of yourself and give it to the person you're thanking. (Your mom or dad would love to get this as a gift on Mother's Day or Father's Day!)

"Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it."

—William Arthur Ward



## "Chalkboard" Placemats

Thanksgiving dinner is a great time to give thanks. Give each person at your table a piece of black construction paper and a white gel pen or a white colored pencil. At the top of each piece of paper, write "I am thankful for . . ." Then fill up the rest of the paper by writing or drawing the things you're thankful for. Put clear contact paper over the front and back of your paper so you can use it as a placemat.





## Bake Some Thankful Rolls

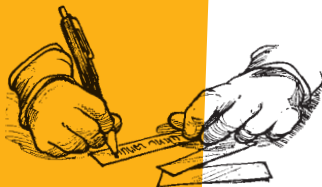
Have you ever eaten a fortune cookie? Inside the crunchy cookie is a slip of paper with a surprise message on it. Here's how you can make your own "Thankful Rolls" with a message of thanks inside!

### Here's what you need:

- Can of refrigerated crescent roll dough
- Small strips of paper (1/2" x 2")
- Ballpoint pen

### Here's what you do:

- Give everyone in your family a strip of paper and ask them to write something they're thankful for on it and sign their name.
- Gently unroll the dough and separate into triangles.
- Lay one strip of paper on top of each dough triangle.
- Roll the dough up, starting with the wide end, not the pointy end.
- Bake as directed. Have an adult help you use the oven.
- During dinner, have everyone break open their roll and read the "thankful note" out loud.
- Close with a prayer of thanks to God for all these good things!



## Thanks from A to Z

What are you thankful for? Can you name one thing for every letter of the alphabet? Give it a try!

A \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_

D \_\_\_\_\_

E \_\_\_\_\_

F \_\_\_\_\_

G \_\_\_\_\_

H \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_

J \_\_\_\_\_

K \_\_\_\_\_

L \_\_\_\_\_

M \_\_\_\_\_

N \_\_\_\_\_

O \_\_\_\_\_

P \_\_\_\_\_

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## Family Gratitude Jar

This Thanksgiving, start a new tradition of gratitude that lasts all year long. Here's how:

- Find or buy a clear glass jar (about the size of a cookie jar)
- Cut a few dozen pieces of patterned scrapbook paper into strips about 2 by 10 inches (5 by 25 cm). Make more strips whenever you run out.
- Whenever you feel thankful for something, write down what you're thankful for on one of the strips of paper and place it in the jar.
- Collect your strips in the jar all year.
- The day before Thanksgiving, make paper chains using the strips from the jar. Make sure the side with the writing is facing out.
- Decorate your house with the paper chains.
- Read the strips on your paper gratitude chains to each other while you celebrate!



**Sandy Swartzentruber** is a freelance writer and a member of Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. She's thankful for good books, puffy clouds, and the color green.





# Plan B

## When did my Plan B become my Plan A?

Only God knows.

You see, I came to the adoption world kicking and screaming; adoption was not my first choice.

Oh sure, in my younger years, before I was faced with the threat of infertility, I spouted that if we could not have children “of our own,” we’d adopt. No biggie! Just flip the switch from “biological” to “adoption.”

But when we didn’t immediately get pregnant as per our plan, when the months turned into years and the word “infertility” dropped like a bomb, adoption lost its appeal. It seemed like a scary unknown. Sure, we’d consider adoption . . . after we’d done everything humanly possible to avoid it.

Our journey with infertility started with the greatest of intentions. *We’ll only take this as far as God lets us. He’s in*

*control. When it starts affecting our marriage negatively, we’ll stop.* We began with God—but somewhere in the midst of multiple infertility treatments and devastating monthly pregnancy tests, I left God behind. Since he wasn’t getting us anywhere, I thought I’d better take over.

Our eight-year journey also took us down a dark path. How could it not? I grieved repeatedly—monthly—while the chances my husband could “fix” this decreased with every passing month. It was excruciatingly hard on us, individually and as a couple. It seeped into every aspect of our marriage.

All that negativity should have encouraged us to quit. But for us it was frighteningly difficult to stop infertility treatments. It seemed like such sad finality to all the turmoil and pain we’d endured. What would we get for all our time, money, emotional upheaval, and discomfort? Nothing? All those hopes dashed? I wasn’t quitting that easily.

My mind played convincing games: *Sure, a percentage of couples do not get pregnant, but the odds increase in our favor with every treatment. We couldn't be the one couple who never gets pregnant, right? We've prayed about this, so we just have to be patient; it will happen! Celine Dion got pregnant after nine treatments; we're not giving up yet!*

So whenever the specialists asked if we'd like to try again or try a new method or treatment, how could we say no? I couldn't.

Along the way, we toyed with the idea of adoption. Well-meaning loved ones would attempt to broach the subject. But I could not consider adoption seriously because the thought that the next infertility treatment could be *the one* was too enticing. It became a part of our lifestyle. I couldn't imagine what we'd do if we stepped off that treadmill. Its rhythm was all we'd come to know: treatment, failure, agony, renewed hope. And then right back where we started. Adoption seemed foreign, an abyss into the unknown. At least with infertility, we knew what we were facing.

Finally, God intervened. Or rather, finally we noticed God trying to intervene. We'd been traveling two hours each month to a new fertility clinic when the specialist did a 180 on us. He'd earlier told us we were not good candidates for IVF (in vitro fertilization). This was not a revelation: we'd already tried three times elsewhere and had figured this out. We were there to explore an alternative treatment, but after six months it became clear that wasn't working either.

The specialist said, "I think we can still get you a baby. Why don't you try IVF?"

In the parking lot, I turned to my husband and said through tears, "So what do you think? Should we try again?" Between heaving sobs, I added, "At least he gave us hope." My husband looked me in the eye and compassionately said, "Oh sweetie, he's not giving us *hope*. He's giving us *opportunity*."

That was our final meeting with the specialist. And the first day of our adoption story.

At last we realized that these specialists were never going to say no to us. If we were desperate enough, we could have continued down the path of treatments indefinitely. And God wasn't going to shout from the mountaintops that we should get off the train either. Likely he'd been trying to, but we hadn't been listening. We had to stop and realize this was no longer God's plan for us. It might be for others, but no longer for us. I had to give up trying to control what our family would look like.

We met with our pastor, prayed, grieved, and closed that chapter of our lives. Soon after, we booked a trip to Cuba to launch our journey into the adoption world. Adoption didn't feel like "the great unknown" anymore. It didn't seem so daunting and ominous. On a catamaran in the middle of the ocean I announced to a hundred strangers, "We're going to adopt!" and it felt like *hope*. For the first time in years, we had real hope.

Infertility treatments offer much promise, and for many, an answer to prayer. For others, the result can be heartbreak and brokenness. It's not for someone else to decide when a couple is ready to close the door and move on to other options such

as adoption. But I'm so thankful we finally got off the infertility train. Adoption is our lifestyle now, and God made it abundantly clear to us.

One year after that announcement on the catamaran, an old friend called. We'd earlier shared with her our dreams of adopting. Now her niece was facing an unexpected pregnancy. Five weeks later, our beautiful girl Jayden was born. Two months after that, we found out Jayden was deaf. God seemed mighty quiet during the dark years of infertility, but now he was speaking loud and clear!

You see, God's provision for Jayden, whose name means "God has heard," was so great that he brought her into a family that already knows sign: I am a sign language interpreter and work in the deaf community. The birth family's adoption practitioner also worked in the deaf community, and the Christian foster parents who cared for Jayden briefly also have a daughter who is deaf. Jayden is a living testimony to how God provides.

I came to the adoption world kicking and screaming. It definitely was my Plan B, something I'll have to contend with when our daughters come to the age when they ask why. But I will be able to share this: God was in control throughout our journey. Always. I do not regret the choices we made with infertility treatments. God's timing is perfect.

So where is my Plan B now? Six years after adopting Jayden, I met a friend at a coffee shop. She and I had shared our infertility struggles—and even though my husband and I had moved on to adoption, infertility never leaves you. My friend had heard about a new herbal infertility remedy that was all the rage. "Do you want to try it?" she asked.

"Oh no," I said. "I don't want to get pregnant anymore. I just want to adopt again. Adoption is our story. The only time I think about pregnancy is when I'm frustrated that our second adoption hasn't happened!"

I left that coffee shop praising God. I couldn't believe how I'd changed. I'd known from the moment we adopted Jayden that I would forever be an adoption champion, but this instinctive response solidified it for me. "Wow, Lord!" I prayed. "When did you change my Plan B to Plan A? Thank you!"

My second prayer was "So, what gives already?" By this time, it had been three years of waiting for our second child. I got into my car, checked my phone, and there it was: a message from our adoption case worker. We got *the call*. Soon we would be the proud parents of another beautiful girl named Alena.

Plan B is our plan now—and it's all in God's good timing. ■

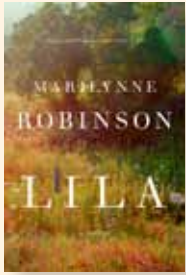
I had to give up trying to control what our family would look like.



**Belinda Lanning** lives in Ottawa, Ontario, with her husband, Steve, and their daughters Jayden and Alena. They attend Barrhaven Fellowship CRC.



## Wrapping Up a Great Christmas



### Lila

by Marilynne Robinson  
reviewed by Phil Christman Jr

America's greatest living writer returns to the Iowa setting of her last two novels—and makes both those books seem deeper and richer than they did to begin with. This time, we get the story of Lila Ames, the drifter who marries John Ames, a kindly pastor. Lila struggles to understand how her simple, kindly, safe marriage can be reconciled with the violence she knows is in the world. Robinson, meanwhile, confines herself to words and allusions her narrator would know and writes some of the grandest prose of her career. (Farrar Straus Giroux)

### The Waiting

by Cathy La Grow with Cindy Coloma  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In 1929, 16-year-old Minka DeYoung felt a “deep and horrid shame” after being sexually assaulted and becoming pregnant. Sent away from her South Dakota farming community to hide her secret, Minka was compelled to give up her baby girl for adoption. As Minka married and raised a family, her faith in God grew, as did her love for her lost daughter. At age 94, she asked God to allow her to see her child. This true story explores the consequences of a violent act in the redemptive light of God's love, goodness, and forgiveness. (Tyndale)



### Manger

edited by Lee Bennett Hopkins  
reviewed by Kristy Quist

If the animals could talk at the manger, what would they say? In this picture book, a collection of poems give different animals' points of view. The sheep wonders at the new Shepherd; the spider weaves a cobweb crown. Even the fish welcome the babe. Poets include Marilyn Nelson, Jane Yolen, and Alma Flor Ada, among others. (Eerdmans)



### The Shadow Hero

by Gene Luen Yang  
reviewed by Francene Lewis

Hank Chu wants nothing more than to work beside his father in the family grocery store, but his mother has other plans for him. She thinks Hank should become the first Chinese superhero. Hank is not so sure. Set in 1940s Chinatown, this rollicking graphic novel explores family obligations, love, the law, and the new opportunities that are open to us if we just watch for them. Teens and older. (First Second)



### What's in a Phrase: Pausing Where Scripture Gives You Pause

by Marilyn Chandler McEntyre  
reviewed by Adele Gallogly

The Bible can trouble us, comfort us, and perplex us—and sometimes a few words can bring us to a stop. McEntyre invites readers to join her in quietly, prayerfully contemplating passages that have caught her attention. In over 50 brief yet pensive reflections, McEntyre utilizes etymology, theology, history, literature, and her personal experiences as she explores the subtleties and possible connotations of phrases such as “in the beauty of holiness” and “fearfully and wonderfully made.” This book embraces the Bible as God's *living* Word—mysterious, powerful, and meant to be engaged. (Eerdmans)





## The Breeze: An Appreciation of J.J. Cale

by Eric Clapton and Friends  
reviewed by Robert J. Keeley

J.J. Cale pioneered what became known as “the Tulsa sound.” After Cale’s death in 2013, Clapton recorded Cale’s songs with some of their friends. On *The Breeze*, Clapton captures Cale’s sound while serving as a wonderful host for his many guest vocalists and guitarists. Clapton lets his guests shine on many songs while supplying the backing band and singing or playing along. This album, like much of Clapton’s recent career, typifies not only a high level of professionalism and musicianship but also shows what hospitality looks like in a veteran musician. (Bush-branch Records)

## Shadow Weaver

by The Choir  
reviewed by Paul Delger

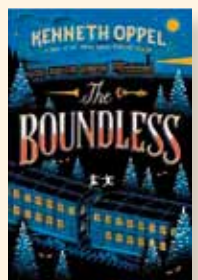
The Choir is one of Christian music’s mainstays, though many don’t realize the band even exists. This Nashville, Tenn., outfit celebrated 30 years in the music business with beautiful work on its 14th studio album, *Shadow Weaver*. The guitar talent steals the spotlight, opening and closing several pieces with definite “wow” moments. But if the listener needs more, the lyrics don’t disappoint and are often profound as they explore common themes such as saying goodbye and suffering. (Galaxy 21 Music)



## The Most Magnificent Thing

by Ashley Spires  
reviewed by Jenny deGroot

A little girl and her dog love to make and unmake things. One day the girl decides she is going to make the “most magnificent thing.” She hires her dog as her assistant. They make plans and gather an odd assortment of supplies. But frustration soon sets in, and the thing they create is not magnificent at all. Patience prevails, and all the wrong parts do, in fact, become right. This is a delightful picture book for children and adults who like to tinker with odds and ends. (Kids Can Press)



## The Boundless

by Kenneth Oppel  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

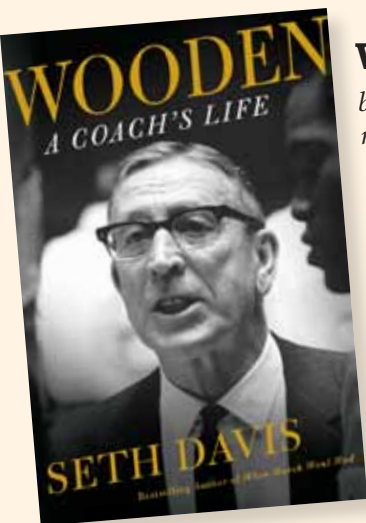
Young Will’s father leads an adventurous life building the Canadian Pacific Railroad. But Will longs for an adventure of his own and eventually becomes a passenger on the *Boundless*, the longest train in the world. After Will witnesses a murder, he survives the onslaught of villains and fantastical creatures with the help of members of a circus community traveling on the train. He also encounters injustice, especially the mistreatment of aboriginal peoples by white people. This fast-paced juvenile novel, which includes a few instances of profanity, combines historical events, fantasy, and subtle social commentary. (HarperCollins)



## The Bees

by Laline Paull  
reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Flora 717 is a sanitation bee and a member of the hive’s lowest caste. Worship of the Queen is the religion of the hive, and Flora’s life is one of loyalty and justice, treachery and temptation. Through a feat of bravery Flora wins access to the Queen’s inner chambers, and she discovers there is a power greater than devotion to her Queen. This discovery changes the hope and future of the hive. Timeless and timely, this novel for adults is a good read for anyone, but especially those intrigued by animal kingdom communities, cultures, and adventures. (Ecco Books)

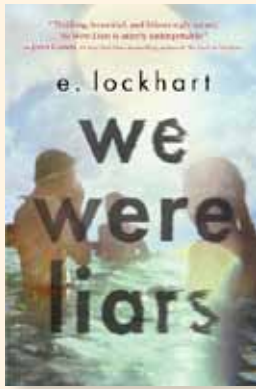


## Wooden: A Coach’s Life

by Seth Davis  
reviewed by Paul Delger

This comprehensive biography looks at the life and career of legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, who died in 2010. Davis praises Wooden for a steady life and dominant coaching success (10 national championships as well as 88 consecutive game victories) but also examines some of Wooden’s flaws. Davis pored over many historical articles, interviewed Wooden himself, and talked to a host of former players, coaches, and athletic officials for this informative and entertaining book. (Times Books)

MORE REVIEWS  
ONLINE



## We Were Liars

by **E. Lockhart**  
reviewed by **Kathryn Hoffman**

Cadence has no memory of the accident she had when she was 15. Two years later, wracked by migraines and loneliness, she returns to Beechwood, the private island owned by her materialistic New England family and the site of the events that led to her memory loss. What happens next will

keep you reading into the night, pulling you through quiet levels of revelation until the final page. Part fairy tale and part mystery, *We Were Liars*, which contains strong language, is for older readers as well as adolescents. (Delacorte Press)

## The Pilot and the Little Prince: The Life of Antoine De Saint-Exupery

by **Peter Sis**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**



Born in France in 1900, Antoine de Saint-Exupery grew up to love airplanes. They had just been invented, and Antoine was inspired to make one of his own. Though it didn't take flight, Antoine's career as a pilot eventually did. He joined the aviation program in the military and flew during World War II. He fled to the U.S. to escape German occupation, and there he wrote his world-renowned book *The Little Prince*. Exquisite illustrations and a wealth of historical details make this picture book a treasure for children and adults alike. (Farrar Straus Giroux)

children and adults alike. (Farrar Straus Giroux)



## Broadchurch

reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

Last fall, BBC America aired the acclaimed crime drama "Broadchurch," a whodunit starring David Tennant and centered on a young boy's murder in an English village. The townspeople hold dark secrets and are under suspicion for the crime. "Broadchurch" is a

creative reminder of how sin is both a complicated personal and corporate matter. Season 1 is available on DVD now. (Entertainment One)



## The Lizzie Bennet Diaries

reviewed by **Francene Lewis**

Lizzie Bennet is a grad student working on her final thesis, a weblog in which she records the emotional ups and downs of the Bennet sisters. This 21st-century video adaptation uses snarky commentary and lively conversation to stay true to the spirit of *Pride and Prejudice*. Through the series, Lizzie, Jane, Lydia, and Charlotte love each other and explore the pain of growing up and moving on. While Jane Austen's novel left much implied, this variation is more frank about sexual concerns. Originally aired on YouTube over two years in 3- to 5-minute episodes, "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries" is now streaming on Amazon or on DVDs from *DFTBA.com*.

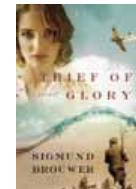
## Words with Wings

by **Nikki Grimes**  
reviewed by **Gwen Marra**

What's your reaction when trouble comes? Fight? Flight? Write poetry? Nikki Grimes captures the heart and words of Gaby, a dreamer, as she deals with the difficulty of her parents' divorce and a move to a new community. This poetic novel written in free-verse form is an excellent example of the power of words. It may inspire young readers to pick up a pen to record their own thoughts and dreams. Excellent introduction to free-verse poetry for kids ages 8 and above. (Wordsong)

## Thief of Glory

by **Sigmund Brouwer**  
reviewed by **Kristy Quist**



Christian Reformed novelist Sigmund Brouwer gets personal

with his latest novel, inspired by his father's childhood experience in a World War II Japanese-run concentration camp in the Dutch East Indies. Young Jeremiah Prins does everything he can to protect his mother and younger siblings in the camp, while his archrival, Georgie, causes him problems everywhere he turns. Much later in life, Jeremiah is still struggling with the long-term effects of that internment. Rich in history and humanity, this gripping, redemptive story keeps readers turning the pages. (WaterBrook Press)





## Our Words Create Worlds: Learning from a First Nations Community

### WHAT'S THE OPPOSITE OF A PROBLEM?

Easy, you might say: a solution.

Lately though, I've been learning from my young First Nations friends that in North America, the true opposite of a problem is a gift.

For the last three years I have directed a summer camp in the northern Ontario First Nations community of Mishkeegogamang. And I've learned over and over again that while I may enter this First Nations community to offer summer programming for young people, I am repaid many times over in relationships, in stories, and in deeper understanding. I have learned much from the people in this community about the complexity and beauty of my own faith and about the history that has birthed such commonplace hostility toward our host nations.

In North America we live in a moment of history directly following decades—even centuries—of government and church policies based on the understanding that North America has “an Indian problem.”

This perspective has led to—and still leads to—all sorts of harm to Aboriginal communities.

Growing up close to the Six Nations reserve, I heard lots of stories about the ways Aboriginal people were problems. Maybe you've heard some of these stories. And maybe you're still telling them. . . .

### Words Create Worlds

The truth is, if you're told something often enough you begin to believe that it's true. Our words create worlds; they color how we see the world. So when we use words like “problem” to describe First Nations people, we create a world that views and treats them as though they are problems.

This past December I returned to visit friends in Mishkeegogamang and to help lead a workshop. I sat in a room with young people I have grown to love and care for deeply. We sat together, and we listened to a simple yet often hidden truth: the people

living in this First Nations community are not a “problem” to be solved but a gift to be recognized. Sitting there I realized that the people in this community need to know this—but that those of us outside that community need to know it too.

In a nation like Canada that is marred with historical wrongs, deep misunderstandings, and constant separation from our indigenous hosts, this is only half the work. The other half begins with each one of us.

So I dare you to become the type of Christian who is able to see gifts even when the dominant story tells us to see problems.

### Learning to See Gifts

I have learned from my First Nations friends that I have been handed a worldview that sees them as problems. Not only is this wrong, it is unbiblical and unloving. And so I have been on a journey to relearn Canadian history and to question the views I've been handed regarding Aboriginal people and culture. Truthfully I see no greater need facing the North American church than to take tangible steps toward reconciliation by realizing the ways we still contribute to perspectives on our First Nations host nations that are oppressive, unloving, and untruthful.

The truth is that North America does not—and never has had—“an Indian problem.” The true problem lies in the fact that we call other people “a problem.”

If there is one thing I have learned thus far it is this: if you waste your energy viewing people as problems, you'll be missing out on the indescribable gift of First Nations communities and the work of healing God longs to do on this continent. ■

**Deanna Zantingh** is a student in theology at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She also works for an organization that focuses on holistic leadership and community development in indigenous communities.

NEXT



The real opposite  
of a problem  
is a gift.

## These Bones Can Live!

**I LOVE THE LORD AND I LOVE HIS CHURCH.** So it grieves me to learn that the Christian Reformed Church declined in membership from 316,000 in 1992 to 245,000 in 2014. Denominational loyalty has also decreased. And the number of pastors separated from congregations via Church Order Article 17 has increased dramatically in the last decade. These are not good signs.

The CRC's rich biblical theology and heritage of scholarship, though wonderful, makes us vulnerable to spiritual pride. We work hard; we give generously. Seldom do we face a problem we think we can't fix. We appoint study committees, assign task forces, attend conferences, and head out on listening tours.

Though all these are good, they mostly produce incremental rather than life-transforming changes. Our efforts have not stopped membership losses or shortfalls in agency budgets. Unless God intervenes, we will soon face a crisis in which some churches' very existence will be in jeopardy. There is a problem. So how do we stop this trend? Where do we look for a road map that can lead us out of this morass?

Perhaps our denomination is in need of revival. Some of us tend to frown at that word. But as a CRC minister for 50 years, I believe that the Bible has some direction for us here.

The book of Nehemiah outlines a pattern that brought revival to God's people. Interestingly, the same pattern brought revival to the disciples at Pentecost.

Nehemiah started with prayer (Neh. 1), followed by the reading of the Scriptures by Ezra "for all who could understand . . . from daybreak till noon" (8:2-3). That led to confession "for a fourth of a day" (9:3), accompanied by repentance and fasting (9:1) and a recommitment to covenant living (9:38; 10:29). The results were changed lives and the restoration of the tithe (10:30ff).

In Acts 1, prayer is followed by Peter boldly preaching the Scriptures, leading worshipers to ask, "What can we do?" As the people recognized and confessed their sins, Peter called them to "repent and be baptized." They committed themselves to Christ. The results were changed lives, generosity—and 3,000 people joining the church in one day (2:41-47).

## Where do we look for a road map that can lead us out of this morass?

We need that fresh breath of vitality today. Among us is a growing assembly of people who long for more prayer and God's empowerment. Major revivals occurred historically when seasons of prayer were followed by passionate, prophetic preaching addressing common sins until they were confessed, forgiven, and their powers were broken. We long for messages that liberate and truthfully proclaim, "Thus says the Lord!"

God's people, seeking holiness, need encouragement and comfort, but they also want to be challenged and confronted to bring about life changes. When God's Word is proclaimed with transparency and humility, it often leads to the confession of personal sins and addictions by individuals, or to the admission of some common corporate sins of the community.

Can we come to God with this? I believe declining churches grieve God too. God desires life. It is not too late. God promises to bless: "These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word" (Isa. 66:2). And "If my people, called by my name, will humble themselves, pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (2 Chron. 7:14-15).

That's God's commitment; it's our assignment. He has promised to show up. Which church, ministry, or agency will lead us in the way of humility, confession, and through surrender to new life? I long for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



**Henry Wildeboer**, a retired CRC pastor, lives in Bowmanville, Ontario. His book *When God Shows Up: a Pastor's Journey* is available at [schulerbooks.com](http://schulerbooks.com) (U.S.) or [essencebookstore.com](http://essencebookstore.com) (Canada).



# ADS

**Deadlines:** December issue is 11/3/14; January issue is 12/4/14. Details online.

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

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

## Denominational and Classical

### Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that **GARETH HARKER** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

### Available for Call

**REV BRUCE VAANDRAGER** The Council of Ada CRC announces that Rev. Bruce Vaandrager has completed his service with our church. We heartily recommend him for a call to pastoral ministry. Contact Pastor Bruce at: 3391 Hidden Hills SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546, [brucevaandrager@gmail.com](mailto:brucevaandrager@gmail.com) (616) 977-2346

**REV KATRINA SCHAAFSMA**, having successfully completed her two-year pastoral residency at Trinity Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, MI, is available for call. Sherman Street CRC, her calling church, enthusiastically recommends her to any church seeking an excellent pastor. Contact her at [katrina.schaafsma@gmail.com](mailto:katrina.schaafsma@gmail.com)

### Call Accepted

**MICHAEL KOETJE** of the Second CRC in Grand Haven, MI, has accepted a call to the Westwood CRC in Kalamazoo, MI. He will conclude his ministry at Second CRC, Grand Haven, MI, on October 19. He will begin his ministry at Westwood CRC, Kalamazoo, MI, on November 3.

## Congregational

**GOSHEN CRC** in Goshen, N. Y. will celebrate 80 years of God's faithfulness on Nov. 14, 15 and 16. Former members and friends are invited to join us on Fri. evening for praise in music, on Sat. evening for a dinner and time of remembrance, and on Sun. morning looking ahead during our celebration service. For more info. visit [www.goshennycrc.org](http://www.goshennycrc.org) or call (845) 294-5817 Please RSVP for the dinner.

## General

**LK ALFRED MINISTRY** 140 Mallard Rd 33850 near Winter Haven & Orlando Rt 17/92. [www.lakealfredministry.org](http://www.lakealfredministry.org), phone 863-422-6442. Preachers: Nov 16-Dec 21 Rev Ed Tamminga; Jan 2015 Rev Dale Cooper; Feb Rev Terry Genzink; Mar 1-15 Dr George Kroeze; Mar 22-Apr 12 Rev Eldert Zwart.

**WINTER CHURCH SERVICES** In Mesa, AZ. Please join us for our 10am Sunday Worship Service at Maranatha Comm. CRC, 6159 E University, Mesa, AZ. We are a winter church and our services start the 1st Sunday of December through the 2nd Sunday of April. For more information contact Lee Ten Napel @ 712-461-2017.

## Birthdays

### 100th Birthday

**ARTHUR L BOSSCHER** Lord willing, 'Art' will turn 100 years old on December 4, 2014. Please join his children and extended family as we joyfully celebrate God's faithfulness to him and through him, to us. An Open House will be held at Sunset Manor, Jenison, MI, Village Dining Room 4-6pm Saturday December 6, 2014. Psalm 100.



**JULIUS H. VANDER SLIK**, formerly of Kalamazoo, will celebrate his 100th birthday at a reception with his children, grandchildren and friends on Saturday, January 24, 2015. Clear in mind and happy in disposition, he is a joyful witness regarding God's grace. Greetings to him are

welcome at Lake Forest Park 2909 S. 25th St., Apt 115, Fort Pierce, FL 34981

**GRAYCE WITVLIET** formerly of Highland, IN, will celebrate her 100th birthday on November 23. She and her family thank God for a century of His goodness and grace. Grayce resides at the Rose Garden, 3391 Prairie SW, Grandville, MI 49418.

### 95th Birthday

**HENRY IPPEL** The Ippel family gives thanks for the 95 years of life that Henry Ippel celebrates on November 16. We praise God for the gift that he is to our family and to all those whom he has encountered. Birthday greetings may be sent to 2121 Raybrook SE Apt 275 Grand Rapids MI 49546

**EARL KALLEMEYN** will celebrate his 95th birthday December 14th with family and friends in Sun City AZ. He has been a beautiful example of God's love sharing his faith with everyone he meets. Thank you Dad, we love you, Happy Birthday

## STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

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13. Publication Name: The Banner; 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2014.

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total No. Copies (Net Press Run) .....	89,365	88,740
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541 .....	57,746	57,183
(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions .....	0	0
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution .....	27,214	26,939
(4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS .....	42	5
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation .....	85,002	84,127
d. Free Distribution by Mail		
(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541 .....	35	35
(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541 .....	0	0
(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS .....	1	0
(4) Free Distribution Outside the Mail .....	5	5
e. Total Free Distribution .....	41	40
f. Total Distribution .....	85,043	84,167
g. Copies Not Distributed .....	4,322	4,573
h. Total .....	89,365	88,740
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation .....	99.95%	99.95%

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete.

Jane E. Hilbrand, Operations Manager

H. Henry Meeter Center

### Scholarships for High School Seniors

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies is pleased to offer the Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards for High School Seniors. Awards are given annually for research papers on a topic pertaining to John Calvin and Calvinism. Awards are payable to student tuition accounts at the following colleges: Calvin, Dordt, King's (Canada), Redeemer (Canada), Kuyper, and Trinity Christian. The topic for 2015 is "John Calvin and Vocation." The first prize is \$3,500 and there are three second prizes of \$2,000. Papers must have a **January 15, 2015**, postmark.

For application guidelines and information on the research paper, please visit <http://www.calvin.edu/meeter> or contact

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## Church Position Announcements

**PASTOR** Manhattan Christian Reformed Church, located in the beautiful Gallatin Valley in Churchill, Montana, has begun a search for a new leader due to the retirement of Pastor Jack Huttinga after 12 years of faithful service. Our vibrant and committed Christian community of 300 souls joins God in His HARVEST. We are called to Honor God, Accept sinners, Restore broken lives, Value vibrant worship, Encourage one another, Step out to serve, and Teach truth. Manhattan CRC has a long tradition of service in the Gallatin Valley. Our community of long term members and young families are seeking a dedicated servant of Jesus to partner with our community as we seek to serve Him in the 21st century. For more information and a community profile, please contact Mrs. Kathy Eekhoff in our church office at [office@manhattancrc.org](mailto:office@manhattancrc.org) or 406.282.7442.

**PASTOR** Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church of Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, is searching for a full time Pastor. The Pastor would be required to carry on with all things required of a Servant of the Lord, in accord with the Word of God as interpreted by the Doctrinal Standards and Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church. The applicant must be a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Interested? Contact Dave at [datuninga@hotmail.com](mailto:datuninga@hotmail.com)

**PASTOR** Luctor CRC and Prairie View RCA, two small, rural congregations in Prairie View, KS, are seeking a pastor who will lead them in a joint effort to develop a kingdom vision and a plan for reaching their communities. Contact Harlan Ponstein at 785-854-7605 or [ponstein@ruraltel.net](mailto:ponstein@ruraltel.net)

**SENIOR PASTOR** Sonlight Community CRC, located in beautiful Lynden, WA, is seeking a Senior Pastor who is gifted in preaching, as well as attentive to the administrative and pastoral needs of the congregation. Sonlight church is an active, dynamic body of believers that is both family-focused and community-minded; desiring Christ-centered preaching and visionary leadership; casual in its style and culture, while eager to grow in discipleship and service; and rooted in Reformed theology, but open to other traditions and styles. For more information about our church and the pastor position, go to [www.sonlightchurch.com/LearnAboutUs/SeniorPastorSearch](http://www.sonlightchurch.com/LearnAboutUs/SeniorPastorSearch) or email [sonlightsrpastor@gmail.com](mailto:sonlightsrpastor@gmail.com).

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR** Dynamic, outwardly-focused church seeks assistance in fulfilling our mission of being joined together as Christ's bridge to the world. The ideal candidate will have knowledge of Reformed theology, pastoral experience, be outgoing, and enjoy

building long term relationships both in the church and in the community. The position is full time with benefits. If you feel God's call to learn more or to be considered for this position, please submit your cover letter and resume to the contact listed below. Bethany Reformed Church in Sheboygan, WI Website: <http://www.bethanyreformedchurch.com> Contact: Tim Kramer, search committee chair, [bethany.church@yahoo.com](mailto:bethany.church@yahoo.com)

**YOUTH DIRECTOR: SHALOM CRC** Sioux Falls, SD. A growing Youth Ministry program is seeking a dynamic full time Director. This person must display a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ to nurture this passion in each young person. The Youth Director needs to exhibit a vibrant leadership in the church that enhances the worship, outreach, and fellowship of each young person attending and will provide accessible authentic support for families with youth. Qualifications: A four year college degree in Youth Ministry or related field. Experience preferred, but not required. Required to believe in and teach the Reformed faith. If interested please submit your resume to: [office@shalomcrc.org](mailto:office@shalomcrc.org)

**LEAD PASTOR** Georgetown CRC, located in beautiful Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada is seeking a lead Pastor for our 160 family congregation. We are a well established, caring congregation that has just completed a mission / visioning process and are looking for a Pastor to help us grow in our Reformed faith, provide Pastoral care and guide us as we seek to implement our ministry initiatives. For more information or to submit a profile please email: [search\\_committee@gcrc.on.ca](mailto:search_committee@gcrc.on.ca)

**LEAD PASTOR** Living Hope CRC is actively seeking a lead pastor. A 450 + congregation in Abbotsford BC, situated in the beautiful Fraser Valley, is seeking a full time inspiring and motivating preacher who relates well to the congregation. This individual will be relationship orientated and be able to relate Gods word to the congregation in a relevant way. We are looking for someone who can provide leadership to staff, council, ministry leaders and the congregation. Please see contact us at [lhcrc.search@gmail.com](mailto:lhcrc.search@gmail.com) for more details.

**PT DIR OF DISCIPLESHIP** First Cutlerville CRC is seeking a part-time Director of Discipleship. If you have a heart for reaching people with the gospel, we're looking for you to help us with outreach into our growing West Michigan community, cultivating intentional hospitality, and enfolding new followers of Jesus into our established congregation. Send resumé or inquiries to [office@fvcrc.org](mailto:office@fvcrc.org) by Dec. 1.

## 90th Birthday

**IRENE FEIKEMA** of Edgerton, MN turns 90 on November 3. Celebrating God's goodness with her will be her 4 children, 13 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. Brent and Wanetta Feikema (Justin, Nikki and Dave Bosma, Shane); Doug and Mary VanderWoude (Brian and Carly, Ben and Leigh, Jenna, Carla); Milo and Cheryl Feikema (Lindsay and Bryce Rieck, Crystal and Bo Kelley, Ashtin and Cory Roebuck); Colin and Darla Feikema (Rita Feikema and husband Gerard Van Halsema, Phillip, Ben). Her 8 precious great-grandchildren are Samantha and Skylar Feikema; Deyten, Lily, and Aubrey Bosma; Reagan, Lane and Nathan VanderWoude.

**CORA VANDER WOUDE** of Lynden, WA will celebrate her 90th birthday on November 1 with her two sons and their families: Len and Teresa VanderWoude (Kay and Toger Koerker, Ava, Lauren), (Pastor Kelly and Michelle VanderWoude, Lukkas, Taylor); and Doug and Mary VanderWoude (Brian and Carly VanderWoude, Reagan, Lane, Nathan), (Ben and Leigh VanderWoude), (Jenna VanderWoude), (Carla VanderWoude). Great is Thy faithfulness!

## Anniversaries

### 65th Anniversary



**HELDER** John and Gertrude (Diekevers) of 2500 Breton Woods Dr. SE #1000, Kentwood, MI 49512 will celebrate 65 years of marriage on November 11. Their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren are thankful to God for these many years of love and faithful commitment to each other.

### 60th Anniversary

**VAN DYKE** Henry & Marcella (Roelofs), Leota, MN 56153 will celebrate 60 yrs. of marriage Oct. 22. Children: Laura (Bob) Bandstra, Milo (Nancy), Tim (Lois), Alan & Kristi Stroch, Cheryl (Carey) Rettig, Rhonda (Pat) DeGroot along with 22 grandchildren, 16 great grandchildren. One daughter, Judy deceased. God is faithful.

### 50th Anniversary

**HOEKSEMA** Calvin and Norma (nee Disselkoen) celebrated 50 years of marriage on August 15, 2014. Celebrating with them were their son, Marc, and daughter-in-law, Christine. They have four grandchildren; John, Drew, Ellie, and Katie. God has richly blessed them through the years. We thank God for our family and his faithfulness.

**TIMMER** Hubert and Tena (Geertsema) of 1802 Lakeview Drive, Zeeland, MI. 49464, will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary with an open house on Saturday, November 22, from 2-5pm. at Third CRC, 10 West Central Street, Zeeland, MI. They were married on November 20, 1964 by Rev. Marvin Beelen. Children and Grandchildren: Sue and Darren DeZeeuw (Andrew, Christine, Michael); Linda and Derek VerHulst (Jordan, Jakob); Bob and Sheila Greaver (Kathleen); Mark and Lisa Timmer (Kyle, Megan, Joseph); John and Becci Timmer (Isaac, Ethan, Ava). We thank and praise our Lord for His many blessings to our family. Come and help us celebrate!

## Obituaries



**BOSMA** Estelle (nee Swaagman) 82 of 10549 Lynn Dr., Orland Park, IL 60467, went to heaven June 26, 2014 after 13 months on hospice at home. Estelle was the beloved wife of Alvin for 62 years and dear mother of Richard (Carol), Joyce (Donald) Beenes, Judi Jasperse, and Jane (Lonny) Staal. Cherished grandmother of 10 and dearest great grandmother of 5. Fond sister of Bernard (late Elinor) and John (late Joan) sister in law of Bernice Bosma, Fred and Janet Huizinga and Andy and Judy Bosma. We praise God for the many blessings he gave us through Estelle.

**BUCKLEY** Marion (Maat), age 98, of Silver Spring, MD (formerly NJ), died peacefully July 29, 2014. Preceded in death by her husband, Edward, she is survived by her children: Gladys Van Der Woude and



Robert & Lynne Buckley, 7 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren, sister Vivan Millar, and sister-in-law Muriel Maat.

**FERINGA** Louise, age 89; September 19, 2014; 2663 Cedar Grove Ct., Jenison, 49428; preceded in death by parents, John (Sadie) Vander Henst, Sr; parents-in-law, William (Pearl) Feringa; brother, Harold Vander Henst; brothers-in-law, Philip Feringa, MD, and Mr. A. Baron; survived by husband, Harold W. Feringa; sister, Mrs. Bernice Baron; brother, John (Tressa) Vander Henst, Jr., and sister-in-law, Mrs. Harold (Nancy) Vander Henst.

**GRITTER** Dr. Roy John, 84, passed away April 10, 2014, of Honolulu, Hawaii and San Jose, California; survived by his wife, Jean Ann (Hollemans), father of Suzanne (Dr. Matthew), Marianne (Passed away July 3, 2014), and Hollianne Gritter, Louanne Ginocchio (Michael and Michael, Jr.) and Julianne Coggan (James and Jeffrey). Brother of Carol Santefort, Rev. Wayne (Joan) Gritter and Berdyne (Martin) Kuiken.



**HOEKSTRA** Grace, 96, of Holland, MI, went to be with her Lord on September 10, 2014. Preceded in death by her husband, James, she loved people and brought laughter into the lives of many. Thanking God for her and her children Jan (Carl) Afman, Gerry (Merry), Marv (Beth), Norm (Nancy); her 8 grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren.

**HUIZING** Styntje (Tini) (Nee Van Nes), of Abbotsford, BC, passed into the glory of her Lord on August 7, 2014 at the age of 83. Tini leaves behind her beloved husband of 55 years, Bert Huizing, her children Chris (Diana) Huizing, Phil (Karen) Huizing, Howard (Sarah) Huizing, Joy (Bart) Saathof, Marlene (Andreas) Kammenos, 17 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

**HUNTER** Linda, aged 99, of Grand Rapids passed away, September 13, 2014; preceded in death by husband, Truman; and daughter Lois Price. Survived by daughters; Marilyn & Art Kraai, Nancy & Ken DeVries; son-in-law Bill Price; 9 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren;

brothers and sisters; Harry & Eunice Lanting, Shirley Vredevoogd, Jim & Clarine Lanting, sister-in-law, Pauline Lanting.

**KIERS** Joyce Anne (77), of Tumwater Wa. passed away July 30 2014. She is survived by her husband Sjoerd, three children Steven, Melissa Wood(Craig) Roger(Denise) and 10 grandchildren

**KINGMA**, Edward, aged 86, passed away September 29, 2014. He is survived by wife, Helen, 2121 Raybrook Manor, Apt 343, GR MI 49546; children, Joyce (Robert) Andriessen, Edward (Nancy) Kingma, and Beth (John) VanTongeren; grandchildren, Rebecca (Michael) Risko, Matthew Andriessen, Kirk (Alexa) Andriessen, Jason (Courtney) Kingma, Stacey (Joe) Van Laan, Erin (Neil) Long, MaryAnne VanTongeren, Mark (Sarah) VanTongeren, David and Kevin VanTongeren; and great grandchildren, Aspen Andriessen, Annika, Malia and Kaia Risko, Ryleigh Kingma, Eloise Van Laan, Titus and Gabriel VanTongeren.

**KRAKER** Donald, 90, Phoenix, Az., went to be with his Savior, Sept.26,2014 A loving husband to Harriet for 68 years, a much loved grandfather to his family. Dawn (Bernie) Kamerman, Jeffrey (Carolee) Kraker, 6 grandchildren, 9 great grandchildren.

**SLAGTER** Ruth, Age 92, Went to be with her Lord on Sept 20th, 2014. Beloved wife of the late Norman: loving mother of Nancy, Kay, Susan, James (deceased), and Sheila. Devoted grandmother of 7, great grandmother of 6, dedicated member of Hope Reformed Church Montevideo, MN.

**VROOM** Betty (Hoekstra) age 82; May 10, 2014. Survived by her husband Bill, children Arnold (Sue) Margaret (Andy) Jim (Michele) Cathy (Stephen) and Sonja (Dave), 21 grandchildren, 20 great grandchildren.



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- We especially encourage applications from women and members of ethnic minority groups. Applicants must be committed to the confessions and mission of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.
- For more information and to submit applications or nominations, visit [calvinseminary.edu/jobopenings](http://calvinseminary.edu/jobopenings).
- Applications submitted by January 1, 2015, will receive preferred processing.

For more information and to submit applications or nominations, visit [www.calvinseminary.edu/jobopenings](http://www.calvinseminary.edu/jobopenings)



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Kristine L. Palosaari, MA, CFRM  
Executive Director  
GEMS Girls' Clubs  
1333 Alger Street SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

**Email:** [kristine@gemsgc.org](mailto:kristine@gemsgc.org)  
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*Dordt College does not discriminate as to age, sex, national origin, marital status or against those who are disabled.*





**VOS** Arthur J., III, age 47, entered heaven on Sept. 18, 2014 after a 20 month battle with cancer. 1006 Apple Lane, Lombard, IL, 60148 Loving husband for 25 years of Kristen Vos, nee Poortenga; best dad ever of Makenzie, Olivia, and Arthur John, IV, "A. J." Vos; precious son of Arthur J. Jr. and Joanne Vos and son-in-law of John and Corinne Pootenga; adored brother of Loretta (Dennis Sr.) Keizer, Ruth (David Sr.) Buikema, and Ardythe (Hank Jr.) Iwema; and brother-in-law of Cheri (Ken) Flory, Cynthia (the late Jim Phillips) Poortenga, Rev. John (Deb) Poortenga and Scott (Linda) Poortenga; much loved uncle, nephew, cousin, and friend of many. He brought love, joy and laughter to all who were blessed to know him.

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**GENEVA CAMPUS MINISTER** The Board of Geneva Campus Ministry (GCM) announces its search for a new Director. GCM is a vibrant ministry of the CRC and the RCA at The University of Iowa. The Board encourages those interested in campus ministry to apply. It will review applications on receipt and begin interviews by 1/1/15. We plan to have the new Director in place July 1 to work with the current Director through July. For more information contact Cary Covington at 319-331-5830 or cary-covington@uiowa.edu

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Vanden Bosches have studied at Jerusalem University College and under the leadership of Ray VanderLaan. For more information, contact Pastor Bill at (616) 826-1927 or [william.vandenbosch@gmail.com](mailto:william.vandenbosch@gmail.com). Register at [www.regonline.com/2015Pilgrimage](http://www.regonline.com/2015Pilgrimage). Arrangements by Witte Tours, a leader in spiritual journeys since 1975.

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# My Neighborhood My Mission Field

**Where is your mission field? Who is God calling you to reach?**

We live in a fast-paced, globalized, secularized world — the task of spreading light and life is great, but so is our God. Home Missions is committed to joining God’s mission in your neighborhood and in your church. Together, we can cultivate community and build relationships on a gospel-centered foundation. With imagination and hope, we can become more and more a missionary people, sharing the message of God’s grace in new ways.

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## Punch Lines

What has made *you* smile lately? Got a joke or funny incident you'd care to share with your wider church family? Please send it to *The Banner* at 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508-1407; or email it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). Thanks!

**W**hile camping, my 3-year-old daughter and I emerged from the washrooms into a misty evening with pouring rain. "Oh, it's raining cats and dogs," I said.

"Yes," she replied. "And it's froggy out too."

—Joy Schuurman

**F**ive-year-old Johnny and his family sat down to dinner at grandma's house after church. The boy loaded up his plate and began eating. His mother said, "Wait, Johnny. You know we always pray before we eat."

"That's OK," said Johnny. "Grandma knows how to cook."

—Robert Lubbers

**M**y daughter, Jacque, has taken liturgical dance classes. We were going to visit my in-laws in another state, and Jacque was going to perform one of her dances at their church. My mother-in-law, a notoriously bad speller, wanted to put an announcement in the bulletin about the dance. She said to me, "I didn't know how to spell 'liturgical' so I put 'interpretive' dance instead." When we got to church that Sunday and opened the bulletin, it read: "We welcome Jacque

Morrison, who will perform an interruptive dance."

—Laurie Morrison

**B**illy: Why does Grandma spend so much time reading the Bible?

Betty: Maybe she's cramming for her finals.

—Sam Bosch

**A**n elderly gentleman was confronted at church by a good friend, who asked, "Why do you have your name tag on upside down? You know we are wearing them to help our new pastor get to know us." The man replied, "I'm wearing it like this so I can look down and tell him who I am!"

—Adrian Vander Starre

**W**hile explaining to my 6-year-old granddaughter, Ruby, why we both need a heart, a brain, and other important body parts to live, I asked her if we also need hair to live. Looking at my

well-receded hairline, she decided, "No, Grandpa. You're doing quite well without it."

—Mike DuMez

**O**ur 2-year-old great-granddaughter, Elise, loves to be read to and to look at pictures. Uncle Eric and Aunt Kendra were coming from Oregon, and she was shown their wedding album so she would recognize them. She looked at all the pictures, closed the book, and said, "And they lived happily ever after!"

—Lois Venema

**M**y daughter's dog, Rascal, had recently passed away. One day my 4-year-old great granddaughter, Lillian, went to visit Nana and Papa. She asked if they knew the address to heaven. "Why do you want to know?" asked Nana.

Lillian replied, "Because I want to write a note to Rascal."

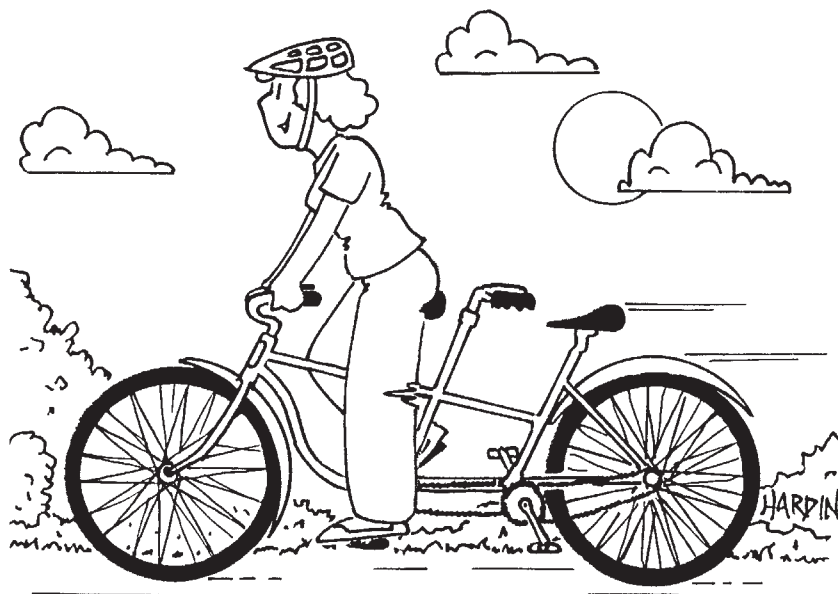
—S. Plat

**N**ot long ago it was our 7-year-old grandson Trenton's turn to open with prayer at dinner. As we all waited quietly with hands folded and heads bowed, his father said, "OK, Trenton, you can start now." Then came the reply: "I am loading."

—Judy LePoire

**M**y young nephew recently started playing tee-ball. He doesn't particularly like this sport and is always complaining about how "lame" it is that kids can strike out when the ball isn't even moving. One afternoon, after one of his games, I asked him what his favorite position was. He thought for a moment, then grinned and said, "I like being the pitcher."

—Emily LaRue



"Wow, honey! I didn't even see that bump—did you?"



# Who better to take the Gospel to

# Africa than Africans?



At one time a diligent student of the Qur'an, Dr. Ousmane Soh became a Christian while attending medical school. In his youth, Dr. Soh argued fervently for the Muslim faith - now he proclaims Jesus Christ to his own people, the Fulani, in Senegal. Who better to minister to the

Fulani, whose dominate religion is Islam, than a Fulani man who is a former Muslim? Dr. Soh is breaking barriers by spreading the Word to the Fulani. Because he once followed Islam and is familiar with Fulani traditions, he is especially equipped to share the Gospel with the Fulani. The Luke Society endeavors to support indigenous medical professionals who minister to their own people by addressing their physical and spiritual needs.



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