

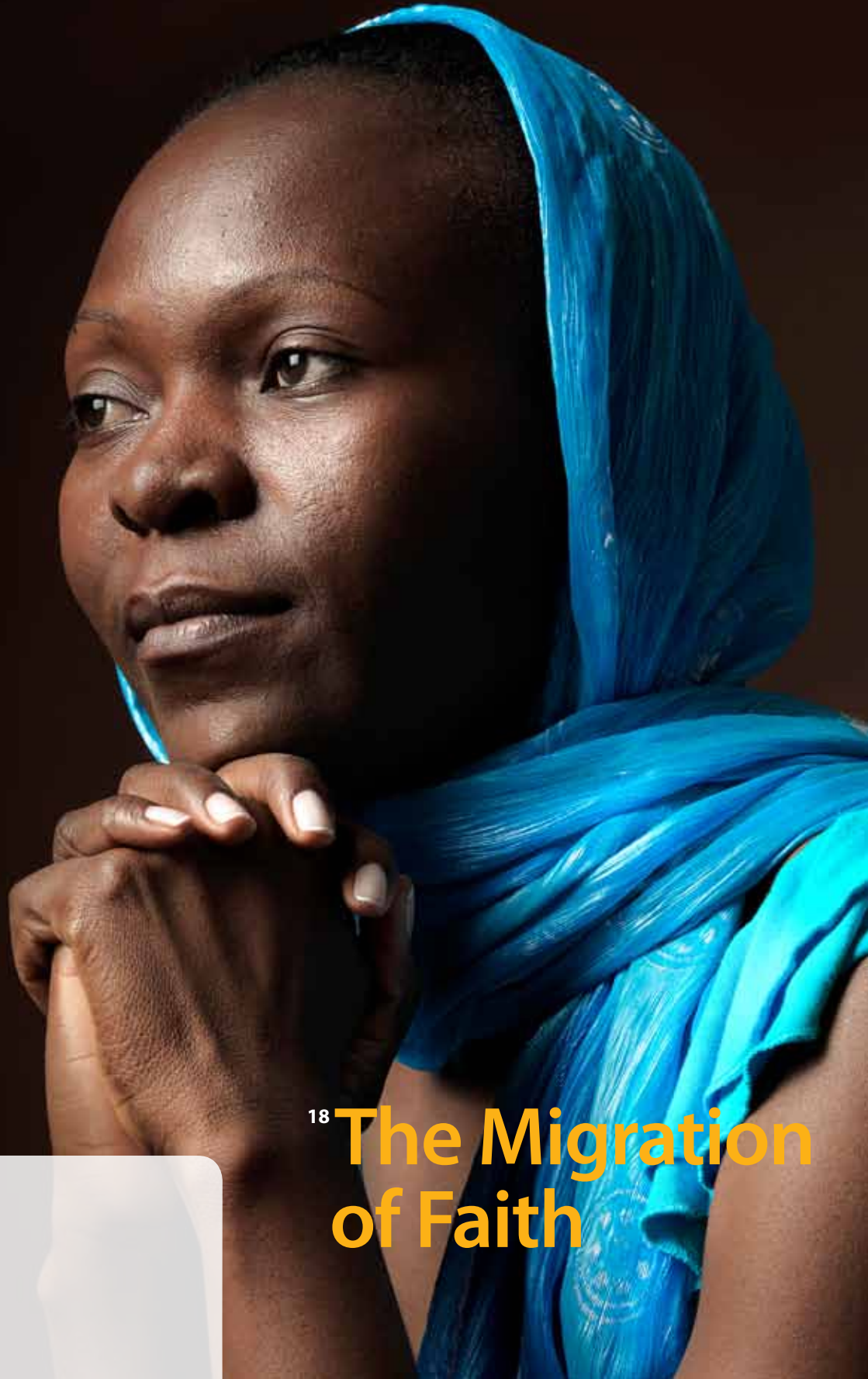
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³² The Numbers Game

³⁶ Hip Hop and the Heidelberg

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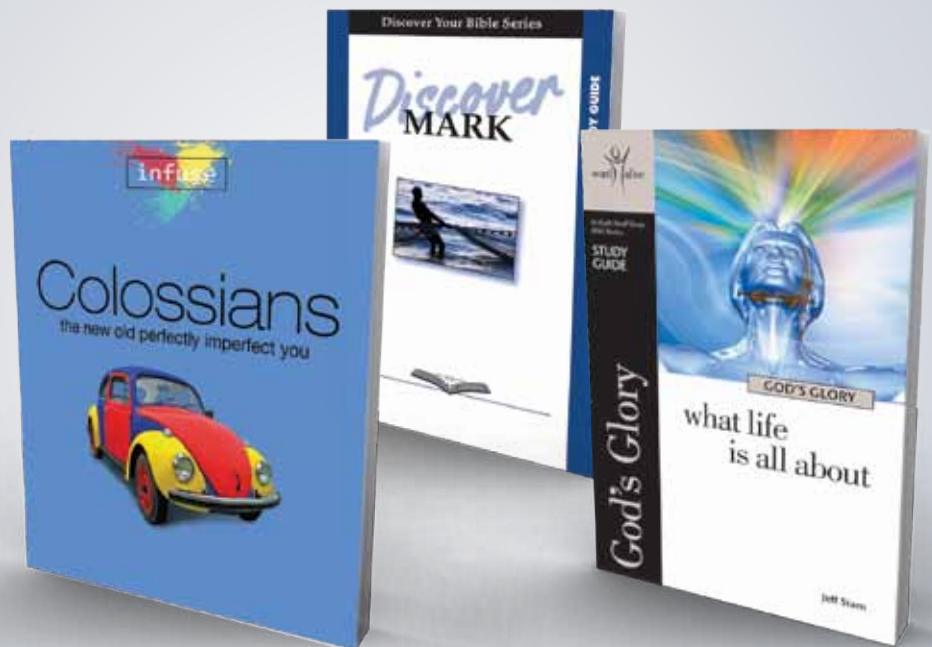


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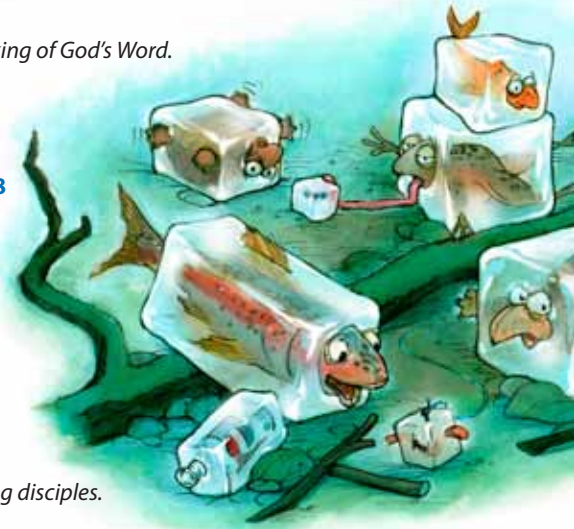
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Show Me the Numbers!

JONATHAN HILL'S ARTICLE "THE NUMBERS GAME" (p. 32) really resonates with me. It's so easy to misinterpret and misapply what statistics are honestly telling us.

I have a related pet peeve: folks who have not done any statistical legwork but who pontificate as if they have. They pass off their own views and observations as if they speak for the whole community.

A while back someone floated an observation that there are too few sermons being preached in our denomination on the subject of Christ's return.

Excuse me? How did this well-intended person come to know that such a lack exists? Through years of faithful worship attendance, a warranted conclusion might be that his congregation could use a few more messages on the Lord's return. But how did he know the same is true for other churches? Did he take a poll? Did he compile lists of many years of messages from a statistically significant number of congregations to back up that claim? Or was the perception from just one congregation extrapolated to an entire denomination? That has as little merit as the observation that all grizzly bears in Alberta walk in single file because the one I saw did.

Pastors often hear that strategy used on matters of taste about which folks tend to feel strongly but which are otherwise hard to argue. Take this example:

"Pastor, everybody agrees that the color of the new carpet is ghastly." As a greenhorn in ministry I used to take such comments at face value. But I've learned to apply some (hopefully) sanctified cross-examination:

"Everybody agrees the color of the new carpet is ugly? Really? Who?"

"Lots of people."

"Lots of people?"

"Yeah, lots and lots of people."

"Like who?"

"Like . . . George . . . and Martha."

"You talked to them?"

"No, but I know they feel the same way. . . ."

"Maybe. And who else?"

"Well, I can't remember just on the spur of the moment. . . ."

Sound familiar?

We need to take such comments seriously enough, rightly concluding that at least one person sincerely feels that way. And she may be in good company. So we should probably poke around a bit to see if her observation is corroborated by others. But we should also risk the discomfort of not letting her get away with such a glaring generalization. Because on more serious matters she might get perilously close to breaching the ninth commandment. A gentle caution might lead to more honesty.

Of course, pastors need that reminder too—just ask my spouse. Especially on the pulpit it's easy to make generalizations that have the ring of truth but nothing substantial to back them up. It's so tempting to raise up straw people just to knock 'em down. That's why we need to keep each other honest in the communal task of unpacking God's Word together. Bless the worshiper who, on the way out, shakes my hand and, with all due respect and Christian charity, asks: "So, you took a poll?"

Oops. . . . ■

It's easy to make
generalizations
that have the ring
of truth but
nothing substantial
to back them up.



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Redeeming Pain

SPEAKING ABOUT his son's suicide, Rick Warren of Saddleback Church said the world is more impressed by how Christians handle adversity than how we handle prosperity. I can relate.

On the morning of July 17, 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight MH 17 was hit by a missile while flying over war-torn Ukraine and blown to bits, killing all on board. Among those who died were my oldest brother, Arjen, and his wife, Yvonne.

They had been holidaying in Europe, enjoying the trip of a lifetime, and were on their way home to Australia. Both healthy and in the prime of their life, they were influential in their families, their communities, their church, and their workplaces. By the world's standards, they were taken far too soon, and someone needed to pay for the injustice.

I first received the news from my grief-stricken uncle just hours after he had dropped them off at the Schiphol airport. My quiet morning in the office was shattered as he relayed the shocking news.

At first there was disbelief. *They could not have been on that flight. Did they really board that plane? How could they be involved in such an awful event on the other side of the world?*

Then there was shock. *I've lost my older brother. The person I grew up with. Someone I loved dearly. A model brother, father, husband.*

Then came grief. Tears for the joyful times we had together and the experiences we were still planning to have together. Tears for the children and grandchildren with whom they shared such a special bond. I was paralyzed by grief.

The next morning the intense grief was replaced by a surreal, unnatural calmness. I felt no rage, no anger at God, no need for revenge. Just a Spirit-filled, deep-seated assurance that Arjen and Yvonne are in a better place, and that God is in control. And a heaven-sent call to speak about this publicly. I had no idea how I was going to do it, just that it needed to be done. I prayed for guidance.

Less than 30 minutes later I received an email from CNN asking me to appear

on "Anderson Cooper 360" that night to talk about the tragedy. In that interview I was able to speak with Spirit-filled calm about how it was not only possible but necessary for our family to forgive the people who had shot the missile.

Over the next few days there were many more opportunities to bear witness to my faith in interviews on TV and radio and in print media. God worked through this tragedy to spread a message of hope to a broken world and to initiate a dialogue of peace.

What an amazing God we serve! What other deity could redeem something as senseless and horrific as a civilian airliner downed in a war zone? And how could my faith be even stronger after such a painful loss? Yet, miraculously, it is. ■



Drew Ryder is a member of Willmar Christian Reformed Church in Minnesota.



Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

A Contemporary Confession

The Three Forms of Unity are historical documents that reflect the precise spirit of their time.

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT our denomination's confessions, also known as the Three Forms of Unity—the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism—are ongoing.

Some believe that we should preserve these confessions as they were written. Others argue that we should adapt them to contemporary times but continue to affirm their authority. Still others argue that we should do away with these confessions altogether and start anew. And some have proposed that we add a fourth document to the Three Forms of Unity, such as the Belhar Confession, to make our testimony more complete.

I propose that we refer to the Three Forms of Unity as the “historical confessions” of the CRC. This implies, of course, that the exact language of each confession be minutely preserved. After all, they are historical documents that reflect the precise spirit of their time. These documents should never be altered, and for that reason should always be referred to as “the historical confessions of the Christian Reformed

Church.” Further, these historical confessions should never be considered normative for our times because their normativity for today would violate their historicity of yesterday.

What would be normative, however, is a Contemporary Confession. Such a new document would be similar to the CRC's Contemporary Testimony *Our World Belongs to God*, but not necessarily identical to it. This Contemporary Confession would be drawn up by the CRC synod. From then on, a synodically appointed standing committee would, upon the instruction of the annual synod, recommend certain modifications, alterations, or additions to the Contemporary Confession as needed.

This process would be repeated at the commencement of each subsequent synod, at which time all the synodical delegates would also subscribe to the Contemporary Confession. The document would then be normative throughout the entire year. Newly elected or appointed office-bearers would also be expected to subscribe to it.

Something to think about! ■



Simon Wolfert is a retired missionary pastor in the Christian Reformed Church who served in Brazil, Toronto, and Vancouver.

He lives in Surrey, British Columbia.



Jurassic Ark

I must comment on the article “Speaking of Jurassic Ark” (Nov. 2014).

If we were to do science on the basis of what a majority believes, we would still think we had a geocentric solar system, and if we were to do theology that way, we would still be Roman Catholic.

It seems little known that many of the early “geologists” were clergy or churchmen in the laity, and that there was an understanding already in the 18th century that Earth was very old. Young Earth creationists often claim that scientists invented the old Earth idea to allow time for evolution, but Darwin didn't publish his *Origin of the Species* until 1859.

—Ken Van Dellen
Grosse Pointe Park, Mich.

The recent cover was enough to tempt me to open [*The Banner*] again, and it was a pleasant surprise to read the article “Speaking of Jurassic Ark.”

—John deBoer
Kingston, Ontario

Suggesting the world is 6,000 years young makes a mockery of both science and the Bible. Good science has long demonstrated the validity of the claim that this world is

TTERS

billions, not thousands, of years old. Credible biblical interpretation makes no scientific claim regarding the age of the earth. Genesis is not interested in making scientific claims; instead, it is focused upon a message of God's power, presence, and providential care for the universe.

To assert that the universe is merely thousands of years young is a narcissistic attempt to place humans at the center of God's chief concern.

—*Bill Lenters*
Chicago, Illinois

We Need Not Fear the Dinosaur

I would like to assure Mr. Buurma and other OEC proponents that I do not fear the dinosaur (“We Need Not Fear the Dinosaur,” Nov. 2014). Nor do I fear space, planets, stars, amoebas, starfish, trees, clouds, or monkeys. All of creation declares the glory of God one way or another—whether in its created splendor pointing to the Creator (stars, planets, diversity of life, etc.) or whether standing as a testimony to his judgment upon sin (thorns, thistles, predatory behavior, Grand Canyon, etc.). All of general revelation (creation) is perfectly consistent with special revelation (the Bible), which teaches clearly that the earth was made recently, in six 24-hour days, and that it has fallen under a curse because of human sin.

—*Aaron Gunsaulus*
Newton, Iowa

I don't think or know much about the age of the earth or about dinosaurs (“We Need Not Fear the Dinosaur”). But I do know it's like a jungle out there—and not just for businesses or birds and other creatures of the animal kingdom. This

precarious existence is the present and daily experience of millions and millions of people in North America and around the globe. Whether this dog-eat-dog world we're living in is due to cut-throat competition, natural selection, or sin is a question I cannot answer. I only hope that our fittest, best, and brightest will be seen defending more than science or the six days of creation.

—*Leonard Van Harten*
Thorndale, Ontario

The editorial “Keep It Clean” (Nov. 2015) said that the CRC study report on Creation and Science encourages Reformed believers to take their Bible and their science books and “place them side by side.” Belgic Confession Article 7 says clearly that “we must not consider human writings—no matter how holy their authors may have been—equal to the divine writings.” Science books cannot be on par with the Bible, God's special Revelation.

—*Ferry Yang*
Neerlandia, Alberta

CRC News

The recent News story about copyright compliance and the CRC's new hymnal (“Is Your Church Breaking Copyright Law?” Nov. 2014) assumes that we are using [the new hymnal] at all. Today's CRC churches conduct worship in many varied ways. Was the creation of a one-size-fits-all hymnal like LUYH a wise investment of denominational resources?

I love modern worship music, but it is readily accessible through other means like CCLI's SongSelect. It is also more culture-bound and generally lacks the

depth and staying power that justifies including it in a hymnal.

—*James Bosma*
Burlington, Ontario

Concerning your News story about Dr. Plantinga Pauw's visit to Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids for a discussion about same-sex relationships and the involvement of gay, lesbian, transgender, and others within the church (“Grand Rapids Event Advocates Full Participation of Practicing Gay Church Members,” Nov. 2014): one factor I find consistently lacking in such discussions of human sexuality is the place of the Fall and consequent influence of original sin in the human constitution. No, none of us are born into this world exactly as God may have intended. I highly recommend an article by my colleague at Calvin College, Richard Whitekettle, which addresses this overlooked issue, at thepublicdiscourse.com.

—*David Crump*
Grand Rapids, Mich.

It is troubling that there are those in our denomination who are advocating the acceptance of immorality and conforming to our sinful culture (“Grand Rapids Event Advocates Full Participation of Practicing Gay Church Members”). The Bible clearly teaches that any sexual behavior (even impure thoughts) outside of heterosexual marriage is sin. I urge Dr. Pauw to teach instead confession of sin, repentance, and a commitment to holy living.

—*Carmen Reitsma*
New Sharon, Iowa

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CRC in St. Louis Fasts and Prays for Ferguson

While most of the country watched the unrest in Ferguson, Mo., from afar, it was close to home—literally—for those at Trinity Christian Reformed Church in St. Louis, Mo. Ferguson is just 11 miles from the church, 80 members strong, some of whom hail from Nigeria, Kenya, India, Russia, and Japan.

During the week of November 17-21, knowing that the

grand jury was about to make a decision on whether to indict Darren Wilson, a white police officer who shot Michael Brown, an 18-year-old black man, the church leadership urged worshipers to read five psalms, fast, and pray each weekday at noon.

"I had coached people and said that just because we pray and want peace in our city, this might be the means that God uses to shake the city so people will start

seriously bowing a knee to him," said Rev. Gilbert Kamps.

On November 24 it was announced that the grand jury would not indict Wilson for his actions. The following Sunday Kamps preached a message titled "Baptism, Advent, and Ferguson" in response. In it, he encouraged parishioners to invite into their homes those who come to assist in the cleanup after the riots.

He also highlighted the need for and possibility of beginning a Christian school and new churches to bring hope to a community where kids are afraid and act out of fear, where there is the loss of the family structure, and few job opportunities. "The only way out of that is establishing hopeful communities," he said. "I'm convinced the way forward is for local churches to have a passion to start new churches in their area."

While members of the church have not been directly affected by the subsequent rioting in Ferguson, Kamps talked about how the congregation responded positively to the call to fast and pray for the community. "On a personal level, treat every person with dignity and respect because you've been treated that way by the Lord Jesus," he said. "Then build relationships with people. One of our best tools is to practice hospitality and invite people to our home from different races, and listen to them. That's what we're trying to do."



Swap Meets Help Tend Creation

Someone's trash can be another person's treasure. That is the idea behind the swap meets at Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa. It is part of the church's Creation Tenders program organized by a group of church members who decided to take a hands-on approach to creation care.

Dave Schelhaas said the idea for the swap meet arose because many people have more things than they need or eventually want. "Realizing that dumping these into landfills contributes to polluting the creation, once a year Covenant members go through their goods and make choices to let someone else have what they might need," he said.

Tanya De Roo participates in the swap meets. The regular event where people can trade goods and services has expanded into a Facebook community where people can share items or places where an item or service can be found. "The most immediate benefit is the savings we have experienced from not having to buy things new," she said. A second, more important, benefit is a sense of community in which some people have needs and others are able to "meet those needs in a tangible way," she said.

Schelhaas added, "The inventory we are encouraged to make of ourselves and our stuff is a good exercise."

—Kyle Hoogendoorn



This year's swap meet took place in September.

KORY FLOCKMEYER

—Melissa Holtrop

At the Corner of Winter Fun and Outreach in Chicago

Combine a highly visible intersection with the cold Chicago winter and what you have is a highly successful ice rink outreach at Lombard (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church.

Corner Ice Rink is open during posted hours at no charge to church members and to those in the community—kids, teens, and families. Activities at the rink range from broomball to hockey to free skate.

The 80'x50' (24x15 m) ice rink is the brainchild of Wayne Postma, a member of Lombard CRC who grew up skating in Ontario, Canada. Postma said he saw the rink as an extension of the church's summer outreach; instead of a traditional vacation Bible school, Lombard CRC offers an evening sports camp.

"Our community sees us as a sports-minded church in terms of how we reach out," Postma said. "My thought was—let's build a rink, post hours on our website, and get some volunteers to maintain it really well so it's attractive both to the community and to people from church."

Postma said around 40 percent of the people who come to the rink have no affiliation with any CRC. Some people are

surprised to learn that the rink is connected to a church.

"I had someone ask me, 'What is this place?'" Postma said. "I told him it's a church, and he said, 'Really? You have an ice rink at your church?' It's a confusing thing with people. It's a bit of a shock factor that the church has an ice rink, but it's fun."

When not on the ice, people can sip hot chocolate and relax in the warming center, a room located at the end of the church. On some cold nights they have fires in their fire pit.

"I've been excited by how grateful our neighborhood has been," said Carrie Tazelaar, who volunteers at the rink along with her husband, Brian, while their children skate at the rink. "Parents are grateful for an outdoor winter activity that's local, and they're very surprised that it's free of charge."

Tazelaar noted that the only donation they will accept is toward the "puck fund," since so



Adults and kids alike enjoy time on the ice at Corner Ice Rink.

many get lost in the snow piled up around the rink.

Given the location, Postma noted that it only makes sense to take advantage of the opportunity.

"To take advantage of your property and attract people to it—if you can do that, you have to go for it," Postma said. "When you pull people together and you're having fun on an ice rink, that's when they really start opening up and are willing to talk to you. If it's used as a conduit for just one individual to come to Christ—then it's all worth it."

—Melissa Holtrop

Pacific Ocean Crabbing Delights Oregon Cadets

A vast blue sky, unseasonably warm temperatures, and the beautiful Oregon Coast was the perfect recipe for a crabbing adventure.

On Saturday, November 8, the Cadet boys' group of Sunnyslope Christian Reformed Church in Salem, Oregon, spent a full day on the Pacific Ocean. Setting up boats in Newport Bay, 16 boys and men learned how to set traps and catch crabs, returning home with a bundle of Dungeness and rock crabs.

Kris Stalaker, head Cadet counselor, has been crabbing since he was a young boy. "It is something I wanted to share. There is value in the hunt-and-gather skills. It challenges me personally teaching them."

Stalaker taught the boys to set up the traps a few hours before high tide when the crabs come out to feed. A few hours later, he helped them pull in the traps, measure the crabs caught, and distinguish between the rock and Dungeness crabs. "The boys were excited to get in the traps. It was neat to see them not fear the crabs."

Connor, 8, said, "I enjoyed pulling up the crab pots the most."

This is the fifth year Stalaker has taken his Cadet group crabbing. "I love to see kids who have not experienced [crabbing]," he said. "Their faces light up and they want to go back and do it again."

—Amy Toornstra



Some of the day's catch.



Cadets enjoyed a beautiful day on the ocean waiting to bring in the crab traps.

The Cadets show off their crab catch.



KRIS STALAKER

NEWS

B.C. Church Reflects on Pastoral Care for People with Same-Sex Attractions

Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church in Surrey, British Columbia, recently hosted an evening discussion series on the topic of pastoral care for people who are gay. Fleetwood's pastor, Tom Bomhof, said it was the right time for their church to have this conversation. "Our members think about these things and wonder how our church should respond," he said.

The group began by studying both the 1973 and 2002 reports on homosexuality from synod (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC), using a conversational guide prepared by Walt Brouwer. Brouwer is an interim associate pastor at Fleetwood.

Brouwer said he prepared the guide for two reasons. "First, I wanted attendees to have an

understanding of the CRCNA position on the matter of same-sex attractions in order to have a framework for the third report that will come before Synod 2016," he explained. "Second, I wanted to help attendees find a greater compassion toward those with same-sex attractions, something advocated by the synodical reports."

Fleetwood member Arlene Van Hove said that the discussions did lead many of the audience "to become more compassionate to those struggling with homosexual identities." She also appreciated the presence of a married gay couple in the group. "It challenged us to be thoughtful and reflective in our discussions," she said.

Fellow church member Brian Woudstra said he attended the



Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church

discussion series because he had never studied the synod reports before and felt that the church had also been ignoring the issue. "I now understand that there is a wide range of opinions on the subject in our church, and I have witnessed that it can be discussed respectfully," he said. "But I have

come to believe that we need to talk even more openly and more frequently with each other, and that our congregation needs to improve pastoral care in this area—not just the pastors, but all of us."

—Tracey Yan

Sunday Schoolers Boost Seniors Housing Project in B.C.



Terrace CRC's Sunday school kids give seniors housing project a thumbs up.

Members of Terrace (British Columbia) Christian Reformed Church have been instrumental in completing an affordable housing project for seniors with low incomes in their small community. The project expanded an existing complex from 18 to 23 units.

The church's Sunday school children raised almost \$400—enough to pay for all the nails in the new building. Church member John VandeVelde volunteered his time as construction manager.

The project was in danger of being delayed when funding from

the province's housing agency fell through. VandeVelde is credited with organizing donations of reduced-cost services from local tradespeople. "He is an amazing man, and this project really would not have gotten off the ground nor been completed if it wasn't for his commitment and dedication," said Anita Struyk, the church's Sunday school coordinator.

VandeVelde downplayed his role. "I wanted to do a service project in my home area, and then this opportunity came up so I signed on," he said.

Volunteers from Terrace CRC, as well as other local churches, also provided a significant amount of free labor. The project came in

ahead of schedule and under budget.

Struyk explained that the Sunday school children raised funds through their weekly Sunday collection. "It's important for kids to raise money for causes that are meaningful and 'real' to them," she said. The children made two field trips to the site: one during construction and one when the building was complete.

When the children were asked why they wanted to help with this project, they responded, "The houses are for old people who don't have any. We did this because we are Christians and we want to help people."

—Tracey Yan

Korean Church Moves to Café in L.A.'s Koreatown

In August 2014, Space E-um Café opened in Los Angeles' Koreatown to serve as a bridge between the church and the local community.

In order to help seniors, people with disabilities, and families with low incomes, Abundant Life Korean Christian Reformed Church sold its church building and moved the congregation to the café, using the building's value to reach out to the neighborhood.

Pastor Dong Il Kim said, "It took almost three years to sell and finally become a church for needy people. There were many blocks, so [it was hard to come to] a final decision. Some members left."



But after the congregation had paid off all loans, they began this new church and café to meet their needs.

Sang Park, an associate pastor as well as a barista, said, "Our coffee is fresh with special coffee flavors, then served with good

Abundant Life CRC's new café in Los Angeles' Koreatown.

quality like other famous coffee shops." The shop hopes to hire some baristas who have disabilities and hold barista classes. —Jonathan Kim

A Meal Brings the Mission Field to Life

A meal featuring dodo (fried plantains that are common in Nigeria) and praise songs in Melanesian Pidgin were just two of the ways the members of Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church in Portage, Mich., learned more about the work of the missionaries they support.

Trudy Eshuis, a member of the church's outreach committee, said they wanted a new way to celebrate Mission Emphasis Sunday.

They decided to host a meal featuring the foods from the places

their missionaries serve—Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Japan, and the United States. They also gave the event a new look and feel by having intergenerational seating arrangements and activities like take-home prayer wheels patterned after the successful program the church had held using Faith Alive's WE curriculum.

Discussion at the tables included questions about other languages people at the table knew, seeing who could name all the missionaries Prairie Edge supports, and talking about what missionaries really do. Rev. Eric and Penny Schering, missionaries in Papua New Guinea, taught attendees songs in Melanesian Pidgin. Al and Jacie Persenaire, missionaries in Nigeria, were also on hand to update the congregation about their work.

This experience, said Eshuis, "turned out to be one of the best mission events we have done. We have finally found a format for a meaningful mission emphasis event."

—Anita Ensing Beem

One of the treats everyone enjoyed was dodo, fried plantains that are common in Nigeria.



IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Douglas Vander Wall

1929 – 2014

Douglas Vander Wall, 84, preacher of grace, competent theologian, and caring pastor, passed away on October 18 of a heart attack.

Vander Wall graduated from Calvin College and Seminary in 1953 and did post-graduate work at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia and the Free University of Amsterdam.

Vander Wall served Christian Reformed congregations in Iowa, Arizona, California, Michigan, Washington, and Connecticut.

Missions and church growth figured prominently in Vander Wall's ministry. He combined godliness with broad theological and biblical knowledge. The Vander Walls were avid travelers. In each of the places they lived, Vander Wall was proud of his splendid garden. He was also a fine golfer.

Vander Wall was predeceased by his wife, Leanne, in 2000. He remarried in 2014 and is survived by his wife, Helen.

He is also survived by five children and their spouses, three step-children and their spouses, and 16 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.

Reformed Churches Attacked in Nigeria

Reformed churches have not been spared the violence that has become the standard fare in news from Nigeria. In October, congregations of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRC-N) were attacked in villages near the town of Wukari in Taraba State. Rev. Yohanna Obadiah was killed in the attacks, along with as many as 30 church members.

Earlier in the year, the Universal Reformed Christian Church (NKST)

issued a press release deploring the “killing, wounding, and maiming of hundreds of people on their ancestral lands” in the east-central states of Nigeria.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America is a sister denomination in full ecclesiastical fellowship with both the CRC-N and NKST (formerly known as Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv).

The NKST has raised the question whether the current conflict

Rev. Dr. Caleb Ahima, president of the CRC-N, (right), with Rev. R.Y. Shamaki, president of the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCC-N).



is related to terrorism in the disguise of search for pasture. The nomadic Fulani people, almost entirely Muslim by faith, have frequently been associated with such conflict. Grazing of their

livestock on the grasses and harvested farms of central Nigeria led to occasional skirmishes, sometimes fierce. But nothing on the scale of recent days.

According to CRC-N President Rev. Caleb Ahima, the “people who are involved in what is happening—the suffering, bloodshed, and the wanton destruction of human lives and property—come in large numbers, no longer with (herding) sticks but with sophisticated weapons.” He said that attacks such as that of October 19 are “against Christians by Islamic insurgents who have invaded the southern part of the state.”

It is clear that northeastern Nigeria, centered around the city of Maiduguri in Borno State, is embroiled in Islamic insurgency under the terrorist group Boko Haram. Boko Haram is infamous for its kidnapping of over 200 teenage girls from their school in Chibok in April and subsequent declarations that the girls had been married off and sold into slavery.

Boko Haram now controls vast swaths of northeastern Nigeria after months of almost daily attacks on towns and villages. The Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN), a denomination that is involved with World Renew and Christian Reformed World Missions in theological and HIV/AIDS training, is a prominent church in

Parolees Find Welcome in Edmonton



Rev. Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning, reintegration chaplain in Edmonton.

“When a man or woman leaves prison to resettle in the community, there’s just one closed door after another,” explained Christian Reformed pastor Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning. Landlords, employers, old friends, and others are afraid to give former inmates a second chance.

Nicolai-deKoning is a reintegration chaplain at The Neighbour Centre’s Open Door Project in Edmonton, Alberta. The ministry seeks to be an open door through which parolees can experience life-giving community and hope for a better future.

Edmonton has more parolees than any other region in Canada because of the large number of prisons, jails, and halfway houses in Alberta, as well as job opportunities that draw former offenders from elsewhere. Nicolai-deKoning said statistics show that approximately two-thirds of parolees will be back in prison within a couple of years without the presence of supportive, healthy relationships and communities. Through the Open Door Project, the chaplaincy ministry has been able to reduce the return rate considerably.

Chris, for example, was incarcerated for several years on drug charges. The story of his journey to prison is a complicated one that includes his own drug use, a family involved in crime, and little formal education. As he prepared to leave prison, Chris attended the Saturday Night Men’s Group and met regularly with Nicolai-deKoning. Two years after being released, and well into a successful career as a boilermaker, Chris still attends the Saturday Night gatherings—now

as a mentor and model to inmates and parolees who are starting the same journey.

Last year, 25 former inmates were mentored and over 50 were welcomed to the Open Door Project’s reintegration support groups. In addition, Nicolai-deKoning and his colleague, who ministers to female parolees, each met one-on-one with over 100 former inmates.

Approximately 40 volunteers contributed over 2,000 hours last year. “Many volunteers who come to our group for the first time spend much of the evening trying to figure out who is a volunteer and who is an inmate or parolee,” said Nicolai-deKoning. “In some ways, that is what the groups and our programs are all about, finding common ground between folks with very different life experiences, creating community among unlikely friends, and moving together.”

Nicolai-deKoning is a member of Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton.

—Janet A. Greidanus

the area. According to EYN's President, Rev. Samuel Dali, 3,000 church members have been killed. In addition, 180 pastors have been displaced and 70 percent of the churches have been destroyed. On October 29, the EYN denominational headquarters was attacked and taken over by the insurgents.

Government officials, security forces, mainstream Muslims, and mosques have also been targeted. Some of the most horrific attacks have been in markets, schools, and taxi-parks, resulting in indiscriminate killing.

Church leaders have urged the Nigerian government to take up its responsibility for protection of citizens. Rev. Ahima of the CRC-N speaks candidly: "The church never encourages violence. We preach peace and we stand by it. (But) if the government does not do anything to stop it, the people will be tempted to take up arms and defend themselves."

Nigeria is scheduled to go to the polls early in 2015, but with large areas of the country in a virtual state of war, the entire election process is in jeopardy.

It is not clear that the violence in the areas of the Nigerian Reformed churches is directly related to Boko Haram. But as David Tyokighir of World Renew in Nigeria writes, there are "different levels of multi-faceted crises leading to colossal loss of lives and property. Hearts are hurting and the suffering is deep."

—Albert Strydhorst, special to The Banner. He served as a CRC missionary in Nigeria from 1994-2012.

Pilot Project Expands Christian Education in Urban New Jersey

A new partnership of churches, schools, and urban ministries has brought Christian education to urban New Jersey students who otherwise might not have been able to attend a Christian school.

Through the Urban Christian Education Partnership program, nine children are enrolled for the first time in the Eastern Christian School

system this fall. "The program is a joint venture between Bridgeway Community Church, Eastern Christian Schools, and New Hope Community Ministries," explained Tom Dykhouse, who serves as head of schools for the Eastern Christian Schools Association. "[It] was founded to help families who desire a Christian education for their children." The students are enrolled in three of Eastern Christian's northern New Jersey campuses.

Phil Beverly, executive director of New Hope Community Ministries, said the partnership not only gives children a Christian education but transforms their families and their neighborhoods. "The families enrolled in this program have renewed their commitment to all of the ministries involved. They have shared with us that their faith has already been made stronger as a result of this opportunity."

Bridgeway Community Christian Reformed Church also started an after-school program called Revive inspired by the New City Kids program in Jersey City, N.J. Students who are enrolled in the urban Christian education program attend Revive for tutoring, after-school care, or to serve as part of the staff.

Anton Brown, lead pastor at Bridgeway, was inspired to start this project after attending a justice conference. He hopes to enroll up to 60 kids through the program within the next two to three years. "We are committed to ensuring that urban students have access to Christian education."

—Callie Feyen



IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Menno Jorritsma

1926 - 2014

Menno Jorritsma, 88, earned academic degrees in engineering, law, and theology, but his joy was the pastoral ministry. He died on November 5 from complications of a stroke.

Born in the Netherlands, Jorritsma spent time in the Dutch military before emigrating to the U.S. After careers in law and engineering, he went into the pastoral ministry in 1963.

Jorritsma served Christian Reformed congregations in Michigan, Iowa, Washington, and Alberta.

Jorritsma considered the ministry a signal honor. He was an ardent reader, and his sermons evidenced thorough study. He and his wife, Ann, were known for their gracious hospitality. Jorritsma spoke easily and sincerely of his love for Christ and of his longing to be with the Lord.

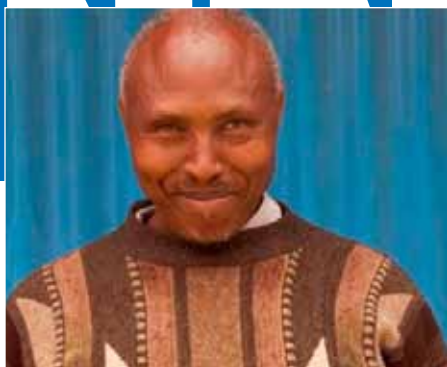
Jorritsma was predeceased by Ann. She developed Alzheimer's, from which she suffered many years. The last nine years of her life she spent in a nursing unit where he visited her every morning.

He is survived by two children and their spouses, and four grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Write for *The Banner!*

The Banner is seeking news correspondents for the area that includes Minnesota, Montana, the Dakotas, and Colorado. If you have a passion for telling stories of how God is at work in the Christian Reformed churches in your area, we'd like to hear from you. We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Please send a resume or letter outlining your news writing experience and some recent samples of your work to Gayla Postma (gpostma@crcna.org.)



Paul is a Kenyan farmer working with one of World Renew's partner organizations.

Kenyan Films Ignite Discussion of Climate Change

Approximately 50 people came out in early November to watch a series of short films demonstrating the effect of climate change on people living and working in Kenya.

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, creation care coordinator for the Christian Reformed Church's Office of Social Justice (OSJ), said the content of the films communicates more than just the science of climate change. "We wanted the videos to focus on stories," he said. "Everyone's heard the science, the statistics, and the predictions around climate change. The videos are a chance to meet people, not statistics; to hear stories, not arguments."

World Renew and OSJ co-hosted the viewing at Wealthy Theatre in Grand Rapids, Mich. The aim, according to organizers, was to promote participation in a global conversation about creation care in accordance with direction from Synod 2012 (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC). A panel of local and global experts joined the conversation.

Meyaard-Schaap also expressed his own hopes and reactions about the films and their message. "The issue of climate change tends to be discussed in grave tones without much hope. The stories in these videos teach us that our response to climate change can actually be joyful and life-giving," he said. "Climate change is a threat, but it is also an opportunity to build relationships and to problem-solve in deeply creative and exciting ways."

Most of the individuals featured in the films are partners or participants in programs currently hosted by World Renew. The videos are available on its website. The edited films and discussion guide will be available to CRC churches in February.

—K. Schmitt

Noteworthy

Joan Brady, a member of Exeter (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church, recently made a presentation to the United Nations Food and Agriculture's Global Dialogue on Family Farming. She was representing both the National Farmers Union, and Campesina, an international farm organization.

Unity Christian High School in Hudsonville, Mich., won the Division 3 state championship in boys' soccer.

Both boys' and girls' cross country teams at **Grand Rapids (Mich.) Christian High School** won their division's state championship.

—Banner correspondents

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



Grand Rapids Christian High's girls' cross country team.

Women in Leadership Refreshed at Ontario Retreat

Since its inauguration two years ago, attendance at the Women's Leadership Retreat in southern Ontario doubled. The retreat provided tools and inspiration for women from 23 churches in differing leadership roles, along with encouragement in their own walk with Jesus.

Elders, Coffee Break and other Bible study leaders, and leaders of GEMS girls' clubs spent a day-and-a-half at a conference center in Guelph for Bible teaching, personal reflection, small group discussion, and worship. "It was the beginning that I needed to re-energize myself and the roles that I have," said Renee Beswitherick, a second-time attendee and a leader/coordinator of Coffee Break small groups at Palmerston (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church.

In 2012, Beswitherick and a co-leader from Palmerston "enjoyed it so much that we really encouraged the rest of



Women leaders from 23 different Ontario churches learn and grow together.

the leaders to attend this time," increasing their contingent to seven. Registration overall increased from 32 to 64.

For retreat facilitator Marian Lensink, the hunger for this kind of specific leadership-building prompted the offering of the retreat in the first place. "I saw lots of leadership efforts around me that were not necessarily meeting the needs of women in lay leadership," Lensink said. "A retreat

provides a different setting where you're pulling away and you have more time."

It met that need for Beswitherick. "It's very easy as a leader to get so busy and caught up in all the things that need to be done," she said. "Sometimes I think we forget about ourselves and the care that we need to put into our own relationship with Christ."

—Alissa Vernon

FAQs

Outreach

Q I never feel confident sharing my faith with my friends and neighbors because I don't know what to say or even how to start the conversation. What baby steps can I take?

A Let living out the Great Commandment pave the way for carrying out the Great Commission! I cannot overemphasize the absolute necessity of this order. So love the Lord and love your neighbors. As long as you focus on loving them out of your love for Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will show you how to share your faith with them. Here are three baby steps: prayer, care, share.

First offer a prayer to the Lord: "Among my neighbors, colleagues, and friends, for whom should I pray? For whose salvation should I intercede? Show me the faces of these people." You can be sure that the Holy Spirit will reveal them to you. Then begin praying for them daily, a simple prayer for their salvation.

Second, show care to your neighbors. You may already have a relationship with them in your social network. It's also possible that the faces the Holy Spirit has revealed to you are those with whom you have very little relationship. Show genuine caring by building a relationship: invite them out for coffee; have them over for dinner; include them in your social activities. As your relationship deepens, you could comfortably ask them, "Is there anything I could pray about for you?" One of the best forms of care is listening as people confide in you their trials and worries. As you devote yourself to prayer, the Holy Spirit will naturally empower you to show care.

Third, be open to opportunities as the Holy Spirit opens doors for you to share what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you. Let people know how he loves you and gives you purpose in life and empowers you to overcome your trials.

Your prayer will lead you to the journey of care, which will open the door to share. Three baby steps.

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

One of the best forms of care is listening as people confide in you their trials and worries.

Justice

Q When religious convictions of a service provider and client differ, which should prevail?

A Public expression of deeply held convictions is growing. While that is positive, it means more cases of conflict, as seen in court cases in the United States and Canada. A doctor who refuses to prescribe contraceptive pills because he considers them immoral, for example, constrains the right of his patient to have such pills. These are challenging issues. Each case needs detailed analysis, but Christians can use some principles to help discern justice:

- Religious freedom is a right, but other rights are equally important if every person is created in the image of God to be treated with dignity.
- A top priority is to find an accommodation that respects the rights of all parties if that is possible.
- Respect for the "other" has priority over asserting self.
- The Bible cautions against playing God in the lives of others. Those with power over the choices available to others have a duty to be sensitive to the power dynamics of employer/employee, professional/client, or buyer/seller exchanges.

As I think through these issues, I wonder about the relevance of another biblical teaching. The test of justice in the Bible is how a society treats those without power. There often is a tension between living out what our conscience says is right and making space for the less powerful to do the same. More discussion of guidelines to deal with such conflicts in a pluralistic society would be helpful.

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

Faith Formation

Q I am tormented by doubts and feel like a fraud. But my congregation perceives me as a spiritually vibrant young mother of three children, a loving wife, and a dedicated servant in the church. It's exhausting.

A The way you describe your doubt shows that it has two distinct dimensions: (1) the character of your faith walk with God includes a great deal of doubt; and (2), this doubt torments you. The exhaustion comes from the second part.

In the last decade a great deal has been written about how we have different faith walks because the Lord wired us in different ways. Some of us are wired for more black-and-white certainty; others are wired for trickier faith/doubt combinations. Faith is complicated, and many of us resonate with the father in Mark 9: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Christian communities are richer places when there is room for different faith expressions to live side by side.

Psalms 131 gives us a wonderful invitation to release our confusions, doubts, and questions as we are held by the Father's arms (though this psalm describes God as a mother). The doubt may not diminish, but the torment might. Philip Yancey points out that the peace of God that passes understanding (described by Paul in Philippians 4) is beyond understanding precisely because it is strong enough to coexist with—while not removing—our doubts.

A couple years ago our small group went through John Ortberg's richly biblical and pastoral book *Know Doubt* together. I recommend it highly.

—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 WESLEY GRANBERG-MICHAELSON

The Migration of Faith



ARRIVING at the Gerald R. Ford airport in my hometown of Grand Rapids, Mich., from a recent trip, I struck up a conversation with my taxi driver.

I asked him what country he was from. “Ethiopia,” he said. Then I asked if he happened to be part of a church. He immediately replied that he was part of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. From my ecumenical experience, I’ve known that this is one of the larger churches in the world with an amazing history in the country of Ethiopia. But I was puzzled by its presence in Grand Rapids, so I asked my driver where he worshiped.

“We built a church on 28th Street,” he replied. “And we have a priest from Ethiopia who serves us. His job is to constantly pray. We—the other Ethiopian Orthodox parishioners in Grand Rapids—support him. In fact,” my driver continued, “today it is my turn to bring him his breakfast, lunch, and dinner.”

A few months ago I attended a conference in Quito, Ecuador, for North American and Latin American church leaders on the theme “Faith, Economy, and Migration.” I gave a presentation on my recent book, *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church*. This was followed by a paper given by an official of the Ecuadorian government, Julian Guaman Gualli, on immigration trends in his country.

Mr. Guaman Gualli was intent on talking with me after the session. He is from the indigenous population of Ecuador—groups that traditionally have been located in the Andes and also in the remote Amazonian regions of the country. In a famous story of martyrdom known throughout the evangelical world and beyond, five U.S. missionaries who attempted to establish relationships with one of these tribes in the Amazon were killed in 1956. Subsequently others, including the widow of one of those killed, continued their efforts, resulting eventually in many of those tribal groups converting to Christianity.

Mr. Guaman Gualli was fascinated and excited by the picture of the religious impact of immigration to North America I had presented. He told me that he was a member of the Evangelical Church in Ecuador and that there were at least six congregations, including his own indigenous tribal group and others—*metizos*—who had established “intercultural” congregations worshipping in New York and Chicago.

At the Pentecostal World Conference held last year in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, I was part of a delegation from Global Christian Forum joining about 3,700 Pentecostals from around the world. We heard some of the world’s best-known Pentecostal preachers, including some unknown in North America.

We listened, for instance, to Rev. Enoch Adeboye, head of the Redeemed Christian Church of God. Founded in Nigeria in 1952, this church is representative of “African Instituted Churches”—denominations begun not by Western missionaries but by indigenous African leadership, often stressing uniquely African cultural characteristics.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God now has an estimated 5 million members in 147 countries, including 720 congregations in the U.S. Its U.S. headquarters is in Floyd, Texas, a town north of Dallas that is home to about 220 people. The Redeemed Christian Church of God has built a worship pavilion to hold the 10,000 people who come for revival meetings and other services. Its U.S. director, Pastor James Fadele, says, “Because heaven is real, God is real. And that is why we want to plant churches like Starbucks.”

I’m told that the late Gerald R. Ford once said that immigration—specifically, the economic need of society for work to be done by those who are here illegally from other countries—was one of the most perplexing problems he faced as president. Since then we have witnessed intensified political debate on this topic in the U.S.

What has been missing from this national debate, however, has been attention to the impact of immigration on the character and vitality of religious practice in our society. Immigration has already reshaped America’s religious landscape in ways we have barely begun to understand. Further, the future nature and vitality of the churches in North America and their relationship to the dramatically changing patterns of world Christianity will be determined largely by our response to the impact of immigration.

The new dimension of our contemporary story, however, is that such immigration is occurring at the same time world Christianity has been undergoing unprecedented changes in its geographical presence. The dramatic shift in world Christianity’s “center of gravity” has been well studied and documented. A few facts bring this into focus:

- For 1,000 years, Christianity’s center of gravity remained in Europe. Then, from 1910 to 2010, it moved from Spain to a point near Timbuktu, Africa—the most rapid geographical shift in Christian history.
- By 1980, more Christians were living in the global South than the global North—for the first time in 1,000 years.

- In 1910, 2 percent of Africa’s population was Christian. Today, one of four Christians in the world is African.
- Latin America and Africa now hold 1 billion of the world’s Christian community, and the numbers continue to grow.
- By 2025, Asia’s present 350 million Christians are projected to increase to 460 million.
- In the last decade, Islam has grown in Asia by 1.7 percent, while Christianity has grown by 2.4 percent.
- On any given Sunday, there are probably more people attending worship services in China than in the U.S.

Statistics like these paint a changing geographical picture of world Christianity. But these changes have to do with far more than just geography. Christianity has now emerged as a non-Western religion. Its dominant expressions are growing today outside the familiar home of Western

Pentecostal gifts and practices but belong to non-Pentecostal denominations.) One of four Pentecostals is Asian, and 80 percent of Christian conversions in Asia are to Pentecostal forms of Christianity. One of three Pentecostals is in Africa. In Latin America, Pentecostalism is growing at three times the rate of Roman Catholicism.

Globally, Pentecostalism is growing at four times the overall rate of Christianity’s growth. Think of it this way: one of every 12 people alive today is Pentecostal. For a movement generally regarded as only about a century old, this is an astounding religious development.

Therefore, the dramatic shift of world Christianity to the global South is accompanied by the rapid growth in forms of Christian practice that place a strong emphasis on religious experience as well as the cohesive value of Christian community. These expressions of faith are

Through the unanticipated patterns of modern migration, world Christianity has come to our doorstep.

culture shaped by the Enlightenment. We are witnessing today the spiritual resurgence of non-Western Christianity.

With this come expressions of Christian worship and practice that focus more on experience and on all the senses, rather than those forms that are more rationalistic. This cuts across denominational traditions.

The most dramatic evidence of this movement is the astonishing rise of Pentecostalism. Modern Pentecostal history, at least in the U.S., is usually dated to the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles a little more than a century ago. The explosive growth of Pentecostalism around the world in the last century, along with the religious transformation of the African continent, are the two most compelling narratives of Christian history in the 20th century, and each continues today.

One of every four Christians in the world is Pentecostal or charismatic. (“Charismatic” refers to those who exhibit

full of spiritual vitality, and they are highly contextualized to local culture.

This is what makes the religious impact of immigration on North American society so fascinating and crucial, especially for the life and witness of its Christian communities. The global trends that are reshaping the future of world Christianity can be reflected in local dialogues and encounters even within our congregations.

The 2010 census suggests that there were 43 million foreign-born residents in the U.S. Of these, 74 percent were Christian, 5 percent were Muslim, 4 percent were Buddhist, and 3 percent were Hindu. The overwhelming religious impact of recent immigration to the U.S. has been on the Christian community.

Hispanic immigration is radically transforming the U.S. Roman Catholic church. Today one of three U.S. Catholics is Hispanic, and this population has accounted for 71 percent of the growth in the Catholic Church since 1960. In some major »

metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, 70 percent of Catholics are Hispanic.

This is not just about numbers. Hispanic Catholics bring forms of Catholic piety and practice that reflect the enculturation of Christianity in Latin America. It's estimated that 54 percent of Latino Catholics identify themselves as charismatic, incorporating the practices of speaking in tongues, spiritual healing, and gifts of the Holy Spirit common in Pentecostal circles.

However, the 23 percent of the U.S. Hispanic population who are Protestant are also having an impact. There are about three times as many Latino Protestants in the U.S. as there are Episcopalians. The vast majority are evangelical or Pentecostal, often found in the storefront churches and chapels that dot Hispanic neighborhoods in U.S. and Canadian cities and towns.

Some Hispanic Christians are drawn to the theology and organizational resources offered by existing Protestant denominations, including the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America, among others. The vibrant spiritual experience and generally conservative theology of Latino Protestants is often combined with strong commitments to social solidarity and justice.

Primarily because of birth rates, the Hispanic population in the U.S. is projected to pass 100 million by 2050. Among other consequences, this means that Hispanic Catholic and Protestant congregations and movements will become a defining feature in American Christianity.

The 2010 U.S. census placed the Asian-American population at 17.3 million. During the previous decade, this population grew by 46 percent—faster than any other racial group—and is expected to reach 40 million by 2050. Sociologists of religion estimate that 44 percent of Asian-Americans are Christian, often reflecting significantly higher percentages than the Christian populations within their various homelands. The impact of their deep piety, such as the intense commitment of Korean Christians to prayer as well as to theological study, is being experienced throughout much of the American

church. Of the roughly 5,000 students at Fuller Theological Seminary, for instance, over 1,000 are Asian or Asian-American.

In addition, the missionary commitment of many Asian Christian communities has an impact even in the U.S. While at the 10th World Council of Churches Assembly in Korea last November, I learned that in 1981 Korean churches sent 511 missionaries to various countries around the world. In 2012 they sent 24,742 missionaries to 169 nations, including the U.S.

Immigration from Africa has increased dramatically over the past 50 years. When John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as president in 1960, only 35,355 African-born residents were living in the U.S. A half-century later, that number had grown to 1.5 million. The vast majority of these are Christians, many coming from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, or other African countries that have experienced the rapid growth of Christianity over the past century.

Many of these Christian immigrants bring a spiritual fervor and missionary zeal that has been forged in non-Western cultures within the African continent. As author Jehu Hanciles reminds us, "Every Christian migrant is a potential missionary." They bring to North America the texture and expressions of Christian faith and practice that are having a dramatic impact on shaping the future of world Christianity.

But where do immigrants worship? For all kinds of obvious reasons, many immigrants are drawn to congregations comprised of those like themselves. They join with others from their country of origin and from their particular denominational affiliation in monocultural congregations. In the midst of all the challenges of adapting to life in a new culture, such a congregation becomes a place of security, strength, and affirmation of identity.

But that is not the only option, and often there are generational differences. Many immigrants are drawn to congregations that are multiracial and in which they are a minority. The question, always, is whether such congregations learn the practice of radical hospitality that allows them to be genuinely transformed by the

presence of those who, in biblical words, are "sojourners and strangers in the land."

The challenge of developing multiracial congregations—that is, churches where at least 20 percent of the group is from a racial-ethnic background different from the majority—is arduous. Statistics compiled from national studies in 2008 indicate that of the estimated 350,000 congregations in the U.S., only about 7 percent met that definition of being multicultural.

But in recent years, the commitment to this vision of congregational life has deepened with expanding resources, networks, conferences, and inspiring examples. The Vineyard Church in Columbus, Ohio, for example, includes immigrants and refugees from 104 nations comprising 28 percent of its 9,000 members. Recently Michael O. Emerson of Rice University, one of the leading authors on and researchers of multiracial congregations, has documented a marked increase in those congregations from 7 percent of U.S. congregations in 2008 to 13.7 percent today. That trend is significant because multiracial congregations are often the portals through which the unique experiences and perspectives of immigrants shaped by non-Western Christianity are shared with others at local expressions of the church.

So, through the unanticipated patterns of modern migration, world Christianity has come to our doorstep.

The dialogue between traditional Western Christianity and emerging non-Western expressions of faith has become critical. There is no more important ecumenical challenge today. And because of global migration, that interchange now can take place in communities and congregations close to home—as the post-Christian West meets the non-Western church. ■



Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson's latest book is *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western*

Church (Eerdmans). He served as General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America for 17 years. Presently he serves the RCA as Adviser on Ecumenical Relationships. He and his wife, Karin, live in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Making Disciples

PRIOR TO ITS INCEPTION six years ago, members of the launch team for mosaicHouse Christian Reformed Church, a church plant in Edmonton, Alberta, visited about a dozen churches in the city. They visited churches of different denominations, shapes, and sizes. These included small, medium, and large churches meeting in conventional church buildings, school gyms, cafes, and movie theaters.

Afterward, I asked everyone on the team to answer this question: “Having been to these churches as visitors, what is one thing that we must do well once we start our own church plant?” It was not surprising to hear their responses: “We must be a welcoming body of Christ!”

The people on the launch team were reacting to the overwhelming impression they’d had when visiting these churches: the lack of a personal welcome before, during, and after the worship service. This was consistent both in small churches where it was very obvious that we were visitors and in larger churches where it was not readily apparent whether we were members or visitors.

Our experiences led us to the conviction that we must instill in our church DNA a specific value: to become a welcoming and hospitable congregation. In essence, we set out to create a certain culture in the life of the church. Here are some of the habits and beliefs we instituted into the DNA of our church plant:

- The Lord Jesus Christ is a welcoming and hospitable Host, and therefore so is his church.
- We do not use the term “visitor.” Instead we use the word “guest.”
- We make a point of recruiting hospitable and welcoming people to serve as greeters.
- During the time of greeting in the service, we encourage people to introduce themselves to those around them whom they haven’t met before. This



Creating an environment of welcome and hospitality is one of the first steps churches can take toward making disciples.

includes getting out of their seats and crossing the aisles.

- We teach and empower the church to avoid saying things like, “Are you new here?” Instead, we offer concrete suggestions like, “Hello! My name is Judy. I don’t believe we’ve met. . . .”
- Everyone wears a nametag—not just guests—so that guests will not “stand out.” Most people feel welcomed and acknowledged if others remember their name.
- Every Sunday we invite our guests to “table fellowship” following the service of worship. To make this happen, we have created four table fellowship teams, each serving one Sunday a month. Their commitment entails setting up tables and chairs, preparing coffee and other beverages, bringing a dish to share, and then after the meal cleaning up and putting away tables and chairs. Our people are asked and expected to serve on one of these teams.

What we have learned firsthand in the process is that creating an environment of welcome and hospitality is one of the first steps churches can take toward making disciples for Jesus Christ.

Now we can joyfully thank the Lord, the divine Host, for helping us create an atmosphere in which a vast majority—if not all—of our guests tell us how much they appreciate our welcome and hospitality.

Carrying out the Great Commission and making disciples can be done more effectively when the church of Christ, following the Holy Spirit, builds a culture in which everyone buys into the vision and chooses to engage in its practices.

And so we at mosaicHouse Church continue to pray for the Holy Spirit to empower us to bear fruit in other areas of making disciples—areas like tithing, communing with the risen Christ in daily Scripture, and prayer. All of these practices help us to live out the Great Commandment and carry out the task of making disciples in the context of weekly house churches and serving the orphans, widows, and immigrants in Edmonton. ■



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

God Is Not White

by Danielle Rowaan



Susie Silversmith shows a friend's daughter around the site of the former Kinlichee Boarding School near Ganado, Ariz.

“**G**od was here before you missionaries came,” Steve Kabetu’s great-grandfather told missionaries who arrived in East Africa in the early 1900s. “What we didn’t know was that he had a Son.”

Today Kabetu serves as Canada director with Christian Reformed World Missions. His great-grandfather was one of the elders who welcomed British missionaries into their village in rural Kenya.

When the missionaries set up a school and asked the elders to send their children, Kabetu’s great-grandfather sent his youngest son, a boy who didn’t seem to be cut out for cattle herding. The boy

excelled at school and soon was sent to England to study. Later, he returned to work with the missionaries in his home village, translating the Bible into the Kikuyu language. Years later, that man’s grandson is digging into how the churches that sent those missionaries also played a part in the colonization of indigenous peoples.

Despite his partnership with the missionaries, Kabetu’s grandfather and his people were eventually pushed onto reserves and required to carry passes and observe curfews. “My grandfather’s message until the day he died was, ‘Please distinguish between the white man who brought news of Jesus Christ and the

white man who came to take your land,’” Kabetu said.

Unfortunately, bad theology was having an effect in Kenya and elsewhere. Formally expressed in a series of proclamations from the Pope when Columbus first landed in the Americas, the idea was that Christians were more fully human than “heathens” or “pagans.” Pagans could not hold title to land and had to be both civilized and evangelized. These proclamations, or papal bulls, are known as the Doctrine of Discovery.

“The Doctrine of Discovery came with entitlement—we own your way of life, all your systems,” said Kabetu.

“When Nieviadomy leads a group in the Blanket Exercise . . . she ‘sees light bulbs go off.’”

Louis Leakey, the famous paleoanthropologist and archaeologist who grew up in the same village as Kabetu’s family, wrote a book about the life of the Kikuyu people before the arrival of the British, illustrating the complexity and sophistication of their social systems. But the British colonial government blocked the book’s publication for 40 years, said Kabetu. “The stated objective for their colonization efforts was based on the premise that the African needed to be ‘civilized,’ regardless of the fact that by that time several communities had been followers of Christ—some of them for decades.”

Kabetu is part of a task force that is studying the Doctrine of Discovery and the impact it has had on the Christian

Reformed Church’s approach to missions and on its members. His family’s story has echoes in North America. The reserves on poor land, pass systems, curfews, »



Steve Kabetu

Doctrine of Discovery

The Doctrine of Discovery is a series of 15th-century papal declarations that gave European kings and their representatives the right to lay claim to any land that they “discovered,” giving theological and legal justification for colonization.

These declarations influenced the development of property law and policy toward Indigenous people in Canada and the United States.

“Theologically, the Doctrine of Discovery has been the handmaid to the idolatrous assumption that God’s presence has been confined to Western civilization—an idea that has all but destroyed the capacity of the major denominations to grow in Indigenous communities,” according to Rev. Mark MacDonald, National Indigenous Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Growing awareness of the long influence of the Doctrine of Discovery has led to a wide range of ecumenical and denominational studies.

Please Pray

- May the Holy Spirit move powerfully to reconnect us and reconcile us as people sharing this land. Give thanks for the ways the Spirit is already at work, both visibly through activities such as the Blanket Exercise and invisibly, quietly changing peoples’ hearts.
- May God grant wisdom to the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force. May their work cultivate the shoots of reconciliation that have been growing.
- Give thanks for the Indigenous Family Centre’s 40th anniversary. Its work on the front lines of reconciliation in Winnipeg is a beautiful model of what can happen when we truly see the image of God in each other.

Stephano Kinuthia Kabetu - London Visit in 1905

At a time when “Kenyans” were learning to be “wary” of the red strangers, a time when planes were unknown in the world and cars only recently invented, one Stephano Kinuthia Kabetu, dared to be different and become the first indigenous Kenyan to travel to the UK, beholding hitherto unimaginable sights, and losing contact with land for a few days, finally finding himself in a land with strange houses, customs, people etc.

He learned the language of the English and back in Kenya, helped translate the Bible to his native Gikũyũ, in addition to offering interpretation services at the courts and his host – Cannon Harry Leakey.



Stephano Kabetu on a ship in London and Right, Kabetu in London in 1905



Stephano Kinuthia Kabetu visited London in 1905.

and government control are familiar to Indigenous people in North America. People such as Michelle Nieviodomy.

Nieviodomy remembers the shame she felt as a Cree child when her elementary school teacher spoke about Indigenous people. "It was hard to even acknowledge my identity," she says. "One kid would make fun of me with Chinese jokes, and I remember thinking that at least it was better than Indian jokes."

Nieviodomy is not alone in this experience. Now working with the Edmonton Native Healing Centre (ENHC), a Christian Reformed ministry in Edmonton, Alberta, she comes across people every day who are dealing with the effects of the Doctrine of Discovery and its dehumanizing theology.

She tells the story of an ENHC social worker who met an Indigenous woman in a park. "The woman had gone through unrelenting trauma and carried all this guilt and shame," said Nieviodomy. When the social worker told her about residential schools and the years of difficulties her people had faced, it was like a burden was lifted. "She realized, 'It's not just me.' It's not about blaming anyone, but when you're in a society that doesn't treat you as equal, you can start to take it on."

Nieviodomy grew up in a mostly white suburban neighborhood. Though her mother tried to connect her to her history and background, "I was stone cold," she



Michelle Nieviodomy in concert.

said. "I had zero desire to know about who I was as a Cree person."

A pivotal moment came one day during history class at university while learning about the Doctrine of Discovery. "I started really dealing with my feelings about my identity and healing through music when I first started working at the Edmonton Native Healing Centre," she said.

A few years ago, she hosted a night of music to share her journey from shame to pride in her Indigenous identity. Called "Moccasins in My Closet," the event featured Nieviodomy's original songs. One song in particular tells about the struggle and celebration of letting the things she had "hidden in the closet" into the light. "It was a kind of coming out event.



There's something beautiful in who we are."

Nieviodomy said that Indigenous gifts and contributions are not valued as automatically as those of white people. "With Native teachers, and those of other races as well, there's always the question, 'Are they going to lead me the wrong way?'"

"I want non-Native people to hear our story and not wonder if they can trust it."

She is excited that the Christian Reformed Church is studying the Doctrine of Discovery. "It makes me feel that the CRC is going beyond talk to step into this history with us together," she said. "This is not just Aboriginal history; it belongs to all of us."

When she leads a group in the Blanket Exercise, an interactive exercise that walks

Doctrine of Discovery Task Force

Born out of the Creation Stewardship Task Force at Synod 2012, the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force has been given the task of developing a shared understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery and its consequences for the Christian Reformed Church.

The task force will also encourage a learning process among CRC members and leaders. In particular, it is encouraging churches and classes to do the Blanket Exercise, an interactive history of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers. For details on the Blanket Exercise, visit www2.crcna.org/pages/publicdialogue_blankets.cfm.

Chaired by Mike Hogeterp of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue, the task force includes Indigenous people and members of other minority communities as well as academics and lay leaders. It will report to Synod 2016. More information can be found at crcna.org/ministries/initiatives/faith-formation/doctrine-discovery-task-force.

You add.
God multiplies.

In My Closet

I feel lost in the world and I cannot define
How I got where I am and who am I now
What happened to me
Turned my world upside down, left me
shaking inside
I look all around and I cannot decide
which way do I go
So confusion set in, I stumble around
Find my way but I'm blind
I just want to go home
But where did that go

Chorus

It's a bit of mess in my closet
But I'm OK
I'm shedding some light oh here in the
darkness
It's a bit of mess but it's alright
It's the first time, it's the first time I'm alive
...

Years and years passed me by
I was barely alive, I was trying to survive
Trying to get back
I didn't know how to deal
I look left, I look right
I look deep down inside of my soul to
unfold
But the memories run cold
I didn't want to feel...

—by Michelle Nieviadomy

participants through the history of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and other Canadians, she “sees light bulbs go off,” she said. “I think this process will create more of those light bulbs.”

In the United States, Susie Silversmith has been deeply impacted as well. At the age of 6, she was sent to Kinlichee Boarding School. The school was not far from her home in Ganado, Ariz., but might as well have been in another world.

“We were training like we were in the military, with strict rules and a lot of punishment,” Silversmith said. “This was to strip the Navajo out of me to become



Susie Silversmith as a child.

a ‘bilaaghiha,’” she said, using the Navajo word for “white man.”

Kinlichee was a very violent place, Silversmith said. One incident involving another student left Silversmith unconscious. But fighting back meant punishment. Sometimes students were ordered to kneel on the cement floor for hours, and Silversmith’s mouth was washed out with soap many times for speaking the Navajo language.

Loneliness plagued her during the nine years at boarding school. “Every time I had a chance I would go to the laundry room. It had a big window; if you sat at a certain place, you would see the road at the top of the mesa. Many times I longed for my parents to come get me.

“I was baptized many times with the Catholic, Presbyterian, Mormons, and other religious groups that came to the boarding school on Wednesdays and Sunday nights to teach religious instruction,” Silversmith recalled. “In the back of my mind, when I think of my parents, they had their own ways of praying for us in their own ceremonial and traditional Navajo ways. And I am thankful for that because there were a lot of bad things happening to us in boarding school.”



Susie Silversmith helps operate Denver Christian Indian Centre in Denver, Col.

Despite this abuse, God reached Silversmith through a Navajo science teacher at her high school. “He would give me short verses to read,” she said. “At the end of the school year he asked me if I was ready to let Jesus come into my heart. My reply was yes because it was not beaten into me like in my earlier years. I wasn’t scared anymore. I am grateful to my Creator God; Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and the Holy Spirit, my helper.”

Talking about her years at boarding school is still hard for Silversmith. She is thankful for the way that God continues to heal and change her. One of her favorite Bible verses is 2 Corinthians 12:9: “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”

“I am a walking miracle,” she said. “We are all Creator God’s children, no matter the color of our skin. We are created by him, and he loves each and every one of us.” ■



JANESSA GRYPMA

Danielle Rowaan is justice communications and education coordinator with Canadian Ministries.

Epiphany: Let There Be Light

As we begin a new year, instead of cluttering it with half-hearted or self-focused resolutions, let's focus our attention on Epiphany.

The Worship Sourcebook tells us that “epiphany comes from a Greek word meaning ‘manifestation or appearance,’ and in church history this word has become closely associated with the revelation of Christ in connection with the visit of the Magi.”

This special occasion in the church calendar has come to represent the bringing of “a vision of God’s glory to the nations of the world.” So, in worship and beyond, we associate Epiphany with joy and light.

Because our faith tradition approaches Epiphany more loosely than some others do, our observances of Epiphany vary widely. I recall, as a worship planner, some of the songs we would consider: “This Little Light of Mine”—a children’s favorite. Other favorites include the classic hymn “How Bright Appears the Morning Star,” the gospel feel of “Jesus, the Light of the World,” and the contemporary song “How Great Is Our God.” Some of us even recall *Godspell*’s “Light of the World.”

Light has a way of drawing our attention while also making clear what is to be seen. The entertainment industry uses light well. But even in more ordinary ways, we are drawn toward light.

When I lived near Chicago, nighttime airline flights showed the city lights. As the plane began its descent, I’d peer intently out the window as street grids and landmark buildings began to take shape.

I remember a student production at Trinity Christian College where, without warning, the theater was plunged into

darkness. The entire campus had lost power. Ever inventive, the drama professor huddled with her actors and actresses. Suddenly they ran out of the theater. But within minutes they were back, handing flashlights to those in the front row who then trained them on the stage, giving the play new life.

The light of Epiphany brings new life. Just as the flick of a switch can transform darkness into light, so it is when Christ’s light comes into our lives.

Some years ago, I was the commencement speaker at Elim Christian School as my son Paul and his classmates were graduating. I chose as a text 2 Corinthians 3:18: “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit.”

I realized that for these graduates, with their various disabilities, the message had to be especially accessible and understandable. So I handed each one a small

mirror and challenged them to reflect the light of Christ, referring to the song “This Little Light of Mine.”

When Christ’s light comes into our lives, we reflect that light, sharing it with others. I’ve started asking Christian Reformed Church members to tell me their stories—stories of the light of Christ reflecting into lives and communities.

Recently I worshiped at the Chinese Church of Iowa City. Pastor Hsieh told me about the opportunities they have to bring light into the lives of students and visiting scholars, sometimes arranging a baptism just before a visitor returns home. His story triggered the memory of a verse in Isaiah: “Nations will come to your light” (60:3).

This New Year, let’s share our stories of light coming into lives and communities as God works in and through the Christian Reformed Church: the congregations, the church-planting efforts, the global missions of Word and deed. Your denominational agencies and special ministries share their stories each month in these center pages of *The Banner*. But your stories are important too. Email them to me at executive-director@crcna.org and I’ll share them further. May the Spirit use them to shed light in additional and surprising ways. ■



Crowds gather in Gondor, Ethiopia, to celebrate Timket, the Epiphany for the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

“As the plane began its descent, I’d peer intently out the window as street grids and landmark buildings began to take shape.”



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

You add.
God multiplies.

OUT AND ABOUT

Studying Small, Serving Large

Armed with a resume that includes impressive undergraduate science research, Calvin College graduate Kathy Hoogeboom-Pot chose not to attend graduate school immediately.

Instead, she and her husband, Justin Pot, also a Calvin grad, headed to Louisiana and Texas for a year to do hurricane-damage reconstruction and assessment for World Renew.

Kathy graduated in 2008 and Justin the previous year.

Afterward, Hoogeboom-Pot chose the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU) for her Ph.D. work and joined a research group there. “My research experience at Calvin made this possible,” she said.

Her husband is managing editor for a website devoted to tech-related topics.

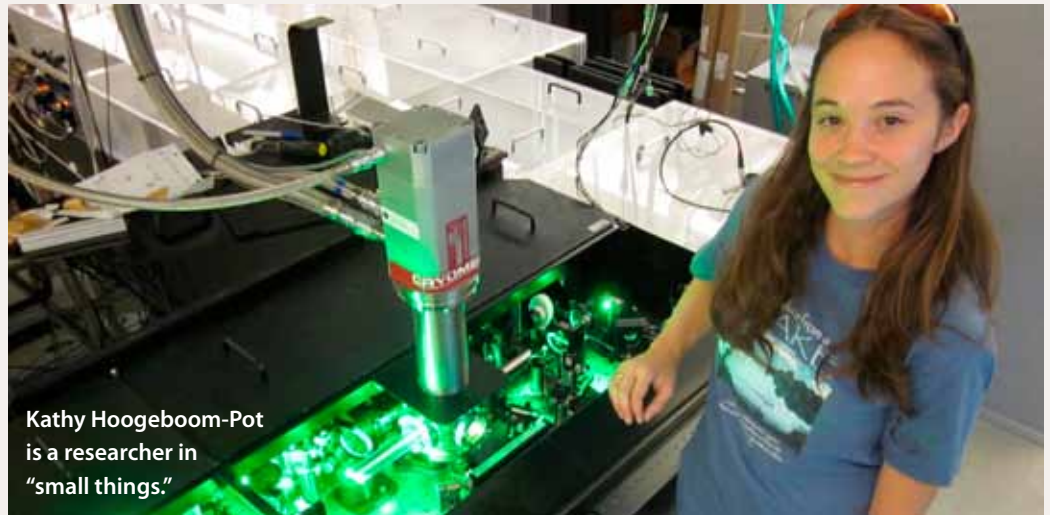
At Calvin, Hoogeboom-Pot was initially fascinated by research observing the rotation periods of asteroids, mapping patterns and characteristics.

Then she worked with Calvin physics professor Matt Walhout, using laser light to slow down krypton atoms and observing them as they absorbed the light.

At CU, she studies small things—or “nanoscale knowledge.”

“My work delves into the question ‘Why do very small systems behave differently than larger ones?’”

Hoogeboom-Pot won an award from the National Sci-



ence Foundation for a video she produced titled “Nanoscale knowledge: Discovering how small is different.”

Her expertise may lead to industrial research or labora-

tory efforts. She is already collaborating with semiconductor companies. “I like to see how things work,” she said.

“When I understand something better,” she said, “I am

understanding how God did it—the inner working of his design.” ■

—by Mike Van Denend,
Calvin College

Today Celebrates 65 Years

Colleen, 81, has read the *Today* devotional for as long as she can remember—possibly for 65 years, as long as the devotional has been in existence.

Back to God Ministries International first produced *Today*, then called *The Family Altar*, in 1950. People listening to “The Back to God Hour” wanted resources to help them learn more about the Bible.

Within months of that first printing, the subscription list grew to 40,000. And by 1990—*Today*’s 40th anniversary—circulation had neared 300,000.

In that anniversary year, stories poured in from around the world. *Today* was blessing families and changing the lives of prison inmates in North America, seekers in Asia, and new believers in Africa.

Currently ReFrame Media, BTGMI’s English-language outreach, only prints about 200,000 *Today* booklets—but not because people are less interested in growing in faith.

Instead, using today’s technology—Internet, email, social media, and smart-phone apps—God’s Word is reaching an additional 314,000 *Today* readers. As these readers share the digital devotionals with their friends, that number is multiplied nearly every day.

Similar devotionals are produced by BTGMI in other languages. ■

—by Nancy Vander Meer,
Back to God Ministries International



Seminarians Talk about Different Cultures

The hardest thing for me about studying at Calvin Seminary is to be away from my family and friends in Brazil. Sometimes I feel like a bird without wings.”

This was one of the comments made by a panel of six international students studying at the seminary. The goal of the Lunch and Learn session, organized by dean of students Jeff Sajdak, was to discuss how the seminary might better understand and celebrate cross-cultural differences.

About 25 percent of seminary students come from one of 20-plus countries outside North America. Improving awareness of and sensitivity to them is important, said Sajdak.

Eric Sarwar of Pakistan said that students in his country are not encouraged to develop critical thinking skills. Other students said this is also challenging because it takes longer to compose their critical thoughts in English, their second language.

One student said that it's hard to ask questions of his professors because of an ingrained attitude that elders must be respected and not questioned. “Please,” he implored, “give us encouragement to ask questions.”



Eric Sarwar of Pakistan talks about cultural differences.

Maintenance supervisor Jim Farman recounted how he and Hyun Kwan Kim, a panelist from Korea, struggled through a project because of the cultural differences in how questions are asked and answered.

In Korea, all affirmative questions are answered yes, regardless of whether that answer reflects a person's true feelings. So when Farman asked Hyun Kwan if he understood a procedure Farman had just

explained, the answer was yes—even though there was still confusion.

Farman said this was a challenge, but their commitment to one another got them to a place of understanding.

When asked what she likes best about United States culture, BoRam Khan of Korea quickly answered: “Ladies first!”

She was delighted and surprised to have male professors invite her to enter a room before them or to open a door for her. “This doesn't happen in my country,” she said.

Students concluded that the best way to learn from one another is through natural interactions. Team assignments in classes and weekly meetings with mentoring groups are two examples.

Another example of interaction was a trip to Angola Prison in Louisiana last January. All heads nodded when one of the students summed it up: “The more time we spend together, the better we will get to know one another.” ■

—by Jinny De Jong,
Calvin Theological Seminary

CRC Prayer Summit to Be Held April 13-15

The Christian Reformed Church is planning to hold a denomination-wide Prayer Summit after a year without one.

The denomination's third Prayer Summit will be held April 13-15 at All Nations CRC in Lakeview Terrace, Calif., providing pastors, church leaders, and others from across the denomination the chance to gather for prayer, presentations, and worship. ■

—Christian Reformed
Home Missions



People praying at the West Michigan Regional Prayer Summit.

You add.
God multiplies.

You Add, God Multiplies

As people called by God, the Christian Reformed Church gathers to praise God, nurture each other in faith, love one another, commit to serve and tell others about Jesus, and pursue justice and peace in God's name."

The statement above is a paraphrase of the mission statement of the Christian Reformed Church. When was the last time you did all those things?

Last Sunday we gathered to worship and praise God, and we practiced hospitality and love in many ways. *Check.*

We occasionally share the Good News with our neighbors and friends, and as a local church we sometimes participate in evangelism. *Check.*

Locally we are trying to do these things. But what about the denomination? How do we together make a difference for God?

I did not have a good answer to that question until about six months ago. Today I have a much better appreciation for the tagline "You add, God multiplies."

In our own strength we are two-dimensional, flat, and linear. But through God's touch our gifts take on a shape and substance far beyond what we ever thought possible.

Last month a missionary from China explained what your Ministry Shares giving is accomplishing. A church of about 4,000 members has three baptism services each year. At each service, 450 people are baptized.

Ministry Shares help to answer "Trudnye Voprosy" ("Difficult Questions") each week on a call-in radio show broadcast in Moscow and St. Petersburg, where a leading Russian author answers questions from a biblical point of view.

In Jenison, Mich., a young woman from a broken home came to a church plant. "I came here because I was tired, and I couldn't carry on anymore," she said.

All these things, and so many more, happen through Ministry Shares gifts from dedicated people and dedicated churches working together to build God's kingdom.

Lives are being changed every day, here at home and around the globe. ■

—by Larry Lutgendorff,
Christian Reformed World Missions

Advancing Education in Laos

From an early age, Locher's parents noticed him carrying his books and showing a great interest in learning.

Because he loved to study, especially math, his parents paid for him to attend school full time, even though this meant the rest of the family would have to work harder in the fields.

When World Renew started to work with communities in a district of Phongsali province, the overall school attendance for school-age children like Locher was 27 percent. In most villages, girls did not attend school.

This began to change in 2008 when World Renew collaborated with community members and the local government to construct schools in target villages. After the schools were built, district authorities appointed teachers,

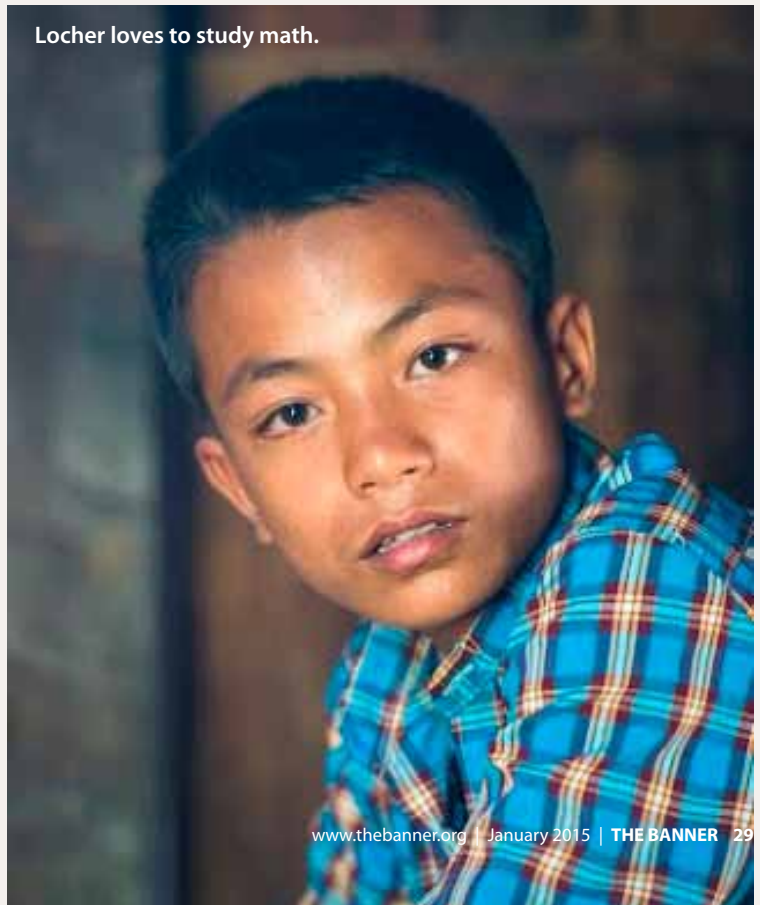
covering their salaries. These efforts increased school attendance to 79 percent during the project's first phase.

For students like Locher, the opportunity to go to school provides them with joy for today and hope for a brighter tomorrow. When Locher's teacher noticed his talent in math, he was sent to a local competition, which he won. He then won a provincial competition and came in second in a national competition.

Locher was awarded a government scholarship to study in Udomxay city. He is the first person in his family to continue with his studies. His parents are proud, and his younger siblings and friends now have a role model. ■

—by Adele Konyndyk,
World Renew

Locher loves to study math.



Winter Weather Wonders

January is a great month for weather watching. The weather can change daily: winter snowfall one day may be followed by bright sunshine the next. And weather changes from place to place: a snowfall in the north might become a rain shower in the south.

But one thing is sure: only God controls the weather! Sometimes the weather brings a magnificent show of

God's power, like an ice storm that coats branches, brings down power lines, and transforms sidewalks into slippery chutes. Other times it's a gift of gentle rain. Always there are wonders waiting for us to discover—if we pay attention.

So keep your eye on the weather. Bundle up and head outside whenever you have a chance. Watch for God's special winter weather wonders.

Fishsicles and Turtle Cubes

Have you ever gone ice skating on a small pond or a lake? First you have to test the ice to make sure it's thick enough. That's because there's water under the ice.

Water is the only liquid that expands as it freezes. As it expands, it becomes lighter and less dense. That's why ice cubes float in a glass of water. All other liquids contract as they freeze. They become smaller and more dense. Their frozen cubes would not float.

Imagine what would happen in a pond if water acted like all other liquids. As the pond began to freeze, huge ice cubes would drop to the bottom. Or else the pond would freeze from the bottom up.

Then what would happen to the fish, snails, and turtles? They'd probably freeze as soon as the pond froze.

By this time of year, you'd have fishsicles and turtle cubes. They wouldn't float. Could they survive? Would we have any pond life?

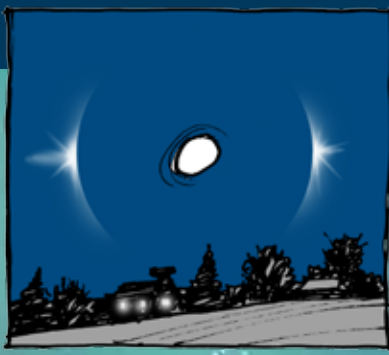
But we don't have to worry about any of those little critters. Thank God for creating water and those creatures who live in the water exactly the way they are.



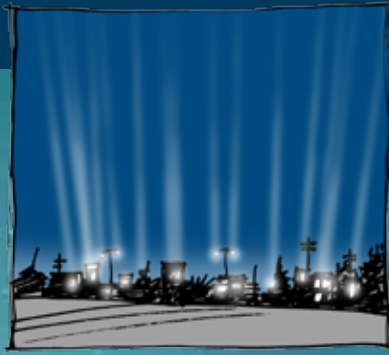
Twilight Series

In most places the sun sets and rises gradually. Northern and southern countries lose their daylight gradually in a series of twilights.

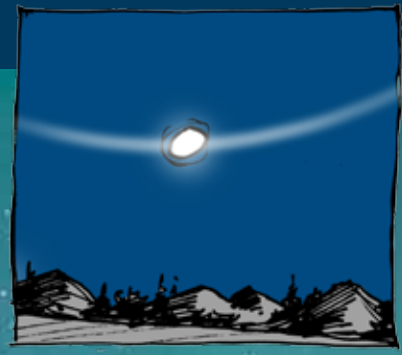
1. The first is called **Civil Twilight**. That's the time just after the sun has sunk below the horizon. Civil Twilight is darker than daylight, but you can still play outside without turning on a light.
2. Next comes **Nautical Twilight**. If you're outside, you can still see outlines of the horizon. You can probably see your snowman. But if you want to play outside, you'll have to turn on a light to see well.
3. The last twilight is called **Astronomical Twilight**. After this, you won't be able to see the horizon at all. You'll definitely need to turn on the lights.



Moon Dogs



Light Pillars



Parhelic Circles

Moon Dogs, Light Pillars, and More

The first full moon in 2015 will be on the night of January 4-5. You should be able to see a fairly large moon a night or two before and after that date. If you have clear weather on any of those nights, bundle up, go outside, and look at the moon. You may be able to see moon dogs or light pillars.

Moon dogs look like two glowing spots, one on each side of the moon. They're caused by ice crystals in Earth's atmosphere. These crystals scatter the light of the moonbeam in certain directions.

Light pillars are columns of light that look like they're beaming up to the moon from Earth. They're caused by flat ice crystals above some bright light on earth. A spotlight that's beamed upward on a cold night could produce a good light pillar.

Parhelic circles are so rare that they don't have a common name. They're white circles of light in the sky at the same level as the moon. They too are caused by ice crystals in the atmosphere.

Thunder Snow and Frost Quakes

Thunder snow is pretty cool. It's a regular thunderstorm, but instead of raining, it snows. So you have a snowstorm with thunder and lightning. Thunder snow is produced by layers of cold air over layers of warm air, topped off with storm clouds. If you experience thunder snow you never forget it.

Another thing you won't forget if you hear or feel it is a **frost quake**. Frost quakes happen at night. They might wake you up with a BOOM and some earthquake-like bumping and rolling. Frost quakes are produced when bedrock freezes quickly, expands, hits other bedrock, and cracks.

Sunrise, Sunset

Have you noticed lately how early the sun sets and how late it rises? These days we have longer nights than days. Will these long dark nights ever end? Of course they will. Remember the long days of last summer? They'll return next summer. They'll balance out the shorter days of winter.

Over all of 2015 we will have equal hours of daylight and of darkness. All the night hours and all the day hours will average out to 12 hours of daylight for every 12 hours of darkness. In winter the nights are longer; in summer the days are longer. Every spot on earth is that way. You can check out the sunrise and sunset times in your part of the world at timeanddate.com/worldclock/sunrise.html.

The Wonder Maker

Psalms 147:16-18 paints a vivid word picture of our creator God—the One who brings us these weather wonders:

He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes.
He hurls down his hail like pebbles.
Who can withstand his icy blast?
He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.

What do those verses tell you about God's power and creative might? Draw a picture or write a prayer of thanksgiving for God, who spreads the snow like wool.



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



BY JONATHAN P. HILL

THE NUMBERS GAME

MODERN LIFE is filled with statistics. From the percentage of Americans who approve of the president to the number of dentists who recommend Trident gum, we are awash in numbers. The ascendancy of social science employed by the media, politicians, and marketers means that our current historical moment requires us to navigate authoritative—and frequently competing—claims to social knowledge.

In the noise of these competing claims, where it often feels as if elites have their own agenda to push, it is easy to become a cynic. Some people, it seems, have decided that the best strategy is to simply tune out. It is not uncommon, particularly among the young, to hear that statistics can be made to say just about anything. And the other extreme, uncritical consumption of statistics, is clearly no better. A healthy dose of skepticism is no doubt warranted.

It's easy to chastise the media, marketers, and politicians "out there." But those of us in the church are producers and

consumers of social science as well—some is good (although rarely excellent), a lot of it not so good. Within the church there's a temptation to adopt the *modus operandi* of marketers and politicians and wield statistical claims as weapons in an ongoing culture war. While this may rally some of the faithful, it often furthers existing divisions and pays little regard to the truth of the claims being brandished.

On the other hand, practicing good social science, even of the basic descriptive sort, can be an important tool to finding out about the world. The end goal should be to uncover what is fundamentally true about the world, regardless of whether it fits with our preconceived notions. Ideally, those in the church should be known for the very highest-quality, most rigorous, most carefully executed statistical analysis. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case.

To illustrate this, let's take a look at one of the most pressing matters the church is dealing with: the next generation of Christians. Young people, we have been told, are leaving the church in droves. We often hear claims that 60

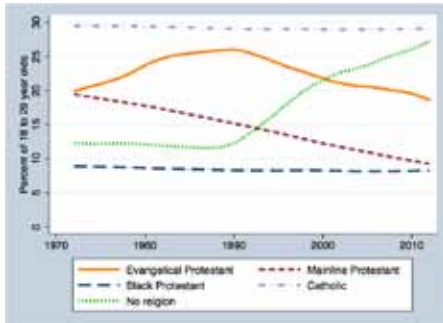
percent, 70 percent, or even 80 percent of formerly churched young adults no longer adhere to the faith of their youth. This, we are also told, is unprecedented in recent history. While no one maintains that the teenage years and early 20s were traditionally the apex of faith, young people born after the 1980s (sometimes labeled "Millennials") are supposedly a new breed of apostasizers. It is alleged that more of them are leaving the church than ever before, and the fear is that they will not return.

Much of the concern expressed in the church has been over the rise of the so-called religious "nones"—those without a religious affiliation. Figure 1 on the next page illustrates this. Starting around 1990, a shift begins to occur. An increasing number of young people stop identifying with any religious faith. Recent estimates put this number a few percentage points shy of 30 percent among those under 30. When we map out the other major Christian traditions, we see that two groups have been on the decline: Mainline Protestants (since the survey first started measuring them in 1972) and Evangelical Protestants (since around 1990).



WITHIN THE CHURCH THERE'S A TEMPTATION TO WIELD STATISTICAL CLAIMS AS WEAPONS IN AN ONGOING CULTURE WAR.

Figure 1. Religious affiliation of emerging adults age 18 to 29



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2012

We immediately assume that the rising number of “nones” is occurring at the expense of these Protestant groups—that young people are leaving the Evangelical and Mainline churches and becoming “nones.” But this standard “exodus” narrative is wrong. A closer look at the data tells a different, more complex, and ultimately more promising story. Let me begin by countering the rise of the “nones” with a few different statistics:

- The percentage of all emerging adults who regularly worship at a Protestant church on Sunday mornings has remained virtually unchanged for the past 40 years (between 12 and 14 percent).
- The percentage of those who pray daily remains steady at slightly higher than 40 percent since the mid-1980s.
- The percentage of those who strongly identify as Protestant has consistently hovered around 15 percent of this age group.

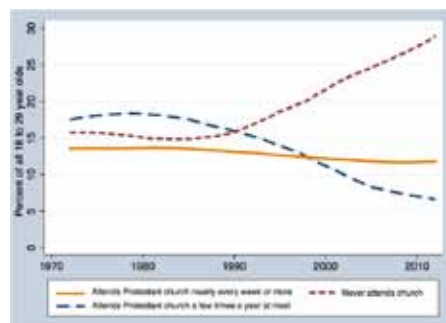
How is this possible? How do we square these statistics with the rising religious disaffiliation of young people? We need to understand that the increase of those who are disengaged from organized religion has not come at the expense

of the committed core of young people who regularly practice and identify with their faith. Rather, it has come almost exclusively from those who are marginally committed.

Powerful social forces have brought about a cultural disestablishment of mainstream religion over the past few decades. Being nonreligious once carried with it a social stigma. Among younger generations, this stigma is rapidly fading. Those who once would have claimed a nominal religious affiliation no longer feel compelled to do so.

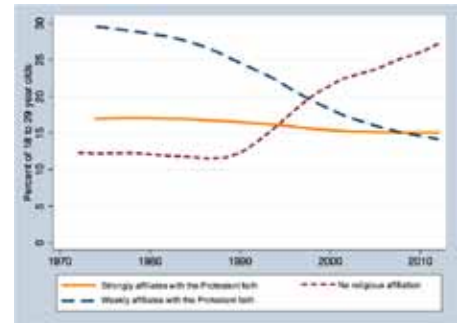
We can see this quite clearly in the three graphs below. The percentage of emerging adults who strongly identify with and practice their faith remains steady across the decades. The decline, as we can see, is occurring almost exclusively among those marginally attached to a religious faith. For all three measures—identity, church attendance, and prayer—the number of emerging adults we might classify as nominal believers is less than half of what it once was. We need to ask ourselves this question: Are we really “losing” these young people, or did the church ever really “have” them to begin with?

Figure 2. Protestant church attendance of emerging adults age 18 to 29



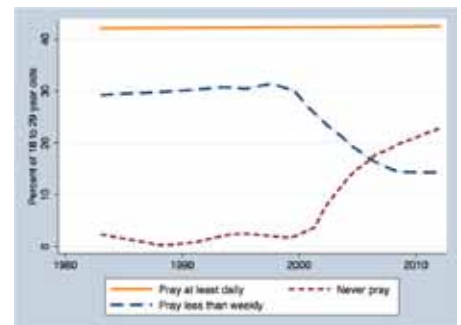
Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2012

Figure 3. Strength of Protestant identity among emerging adults age 18 to 29



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2012

Figure 4. Frequency of prayer among emerging adults age 18 to 29



Source: General Social Survey, 1983-2012

When it comes to the next generation of Christians, perhaps it is time to reevaluate our situation. Maybe it is time to stop obsessing over the numbers and embrace the new opportunities that this “post-Christian” landscape allows. Might the slow disappearance of nominal Christians actually pave the way for a more robust, vibrant, and faithful engagement of the church with the modern world? Does the shifting landscape open up new space for authentic expressions of faith and the spread of the gospel, now less burdened by cultural baggage and compromise?

Maybe it is time to stop lamenting this so-called “exodus” and instead start to think of it as a blessing in disguise! ■



Jonathan P. Hill teaches sociology at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. He is coauthor of *Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults In, Out of, and Gone from the Church* and is a member of Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids.

Building Momentum



IF THERE'S ONE THING that the church in North America likes to wring its hands about, it's the shrinking number of actively participating young adults in our congregations. Questions like "Why are they leaving?" "Where are they going?" and "What can we do?" have spawned hundreds of articles with titles like "Five Reasons Why Millennials (fill in the blank)." Those articles have been circulated through church offices and passed along to councils by concerned parents and family members. However, many of these well-meaning attempts are written by older adults and lean on characterizations and generalizations that don't necessarily reflect the on-the-ground experience of young adults in today's church.

Perhaps that's what makes YALT's Momentum such a breath of fresh air. The blog, run by the CRC's Young Adult Leadership Taskforce, has been delivering straight-from-the-source articles from a diverse group of young adults from across the United States and Canada for almost

The blog delivers straight-from-the-source articles from a diverse group of young adults.

three years now. Instead of nicely packaged, connect-the-dot answers to simple "What do we do now?" questions, Momentum regularly features insightful and challenging posts written by CRC and RCA college and seminary students, young lay leaders, and newbie clergy members. Topics range from big-picture issues like changing church culture and reimagining denominational systems to personal reflections on what it means to live, work, seek justice, and love as a Christian young adult in our increasingly post-Christian society.

What's most refreshing about the blog is that authors are encouraged to write on topics they feel passionate about. So what you get delivered to your RSS reader or your Twitter feed is very real, which is something you don't always get in a church blog culture that is often obsessed with clicks, likes, and page views. The posts come straight from the heart, and many are intended to start a conversation, trigger a new thought, or push back against an established assumption.

So rather than have your opinion swayed by the latest Millennial trend analysis, let Momentum help you to listen well to real voices speaking on real issues facing real people in our church today. (yalt.crcna.org) ■



Derek Atkins works for Discipleship and Faith Formation Ministries in the Christian Reformed Church. He attends Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.



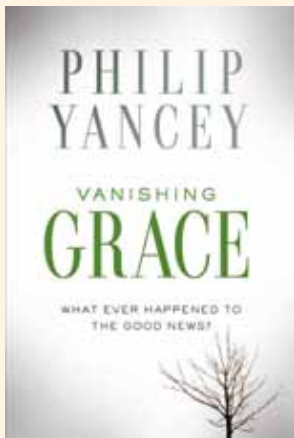
Anomaly

by **Lecrae**

reviewed by **Greg Veltman**

Lecrae is building a bridge between "mainstream" rap and what might be called "Christian" rap. Since rap began as protest music, its honest but harsh lyrics haven't really found a home within the church. Lecrae is clear that he doesn't make "Christian rap," but he is equally clear that he is a Christian. Think of him as a modern-day Isaiah who asks where American Christians are in the conversations about justice. Unlike much "Christian rap" that has come before, Lecrae is musically creative; the rhymes and beats are contagious. (Reach Records)

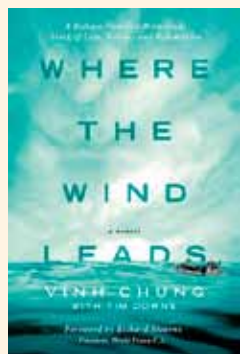




Vanishing Grace

by Philip Yancey
reviewed by Dave Baker

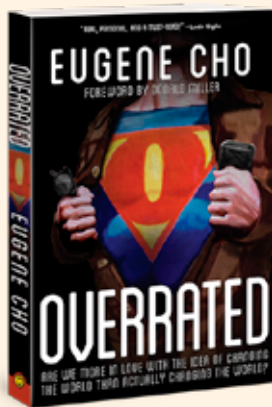
Grace is a common theme in Reformed theology and in Christian literature. Others have written on the subject, but Yancey has a wide variety of interests and articulates his ideas better than most. *Vanishing Grace* is a critique of the cultural landscape from a mainstream evangelical perspective. This follow-up to *What's So Amazing About Grace?* includes quotes from Bono, Kathleen Norris, and Tim Keller, among others. The book is appropriate for small group use, and it should generate some good discussion. (Zondervan)



Where the Wind Leads: A Refugee Family's Miraculous Story of Loss, Rescue, and Redemption

by Vinh Chung with Tom Downs
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Vinh Chung was 3 when his family fled Vietnam in 1979 after the communist takeover, part of a mass exodus of displaced people known as “boat people.” After experiencing unimaginable hardships, the Chungs were sponsored by a Lutheran church in Arkansas. As they faced many hurdles in adjusting to life in America, a local Vietnamese church “became the single most powerful influence” on the Chungs. Told with compassion, love, and humor, the book offers an insider’s view of the refugee experience. (Thomas Nelson)



Overrated

by Eugene Cho
reviewed by Adele Gallogly

Overrated is a call for followers of Christ to examine the attitudes and actions that arise as they attempt to impact the world for the better. Working from Scripture and his own experiences, Cho challenges readers with examples of how efforts to help those in need can sometimes be ineffective in addressing the core causes of poverty—and even harmful to those they are seeking to help. In an era of quick-click charity, Cho emphasizes cultivating a heart of justice out of a deep calling rather than an “emotional idea” by “tak[ing] more time to listen, pray, and allow the injustices of the world to break us in lasting ways, as opposed to wanting to immediately make an impact.” (David C. Cook Publishing)

The Hundred-Foot Journey

reviewed by Sandy Swartzentruber

When the close-knit Kadam family moves from Mumbai to Europe to start a new life, they decide to open an Indian restaurant in a little town in the French countryside. However, just 100 feet away is a Michelin star-winning café whose snooty French proprietress (Helen Mirren) does not welcome the competition. *The Hundred-Foot Journey's* stunning rural setting provides a visual banquet. Paired with soulful acting and a generous dollop of good humor, this gentle film reminds us that culture clashes don't always have to end in conflict and that people who disagree can learn to love each other. On disc now. (DreamWorks)



The Madman of Piney Woods

by Christopher Paul Curtis
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

African-Canadian Benji and Irish-Canadian Red meet at a speech contest and become friends, in spite of their differences. Each senses a presence in the woods near their homes in Ontario. When the boys eventually encounter that presence, they learn that “madness is only one letter from sadness,” and that people are shaped, for good or for evil, by their circumstances. This poignant, humorous juvenile novel portrays the consequences of the Irish potato famine and explores how racist attitudes destroy a person’s life and ability to celebrate the common humanity of all races. Ages 8 and up. (Scholastic)

Calling All Men!

In last month's *Banner*, we presented reports from different book clubs around the CRC. However, all of them came from women, and most reported on book clubs made up of women. Are there any men reading together out there? We'd like to hear from you! Email us at editorial@thebanner.org to tell us about it.

**MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE**

Hip Hop and the Heidelberg

WHAT DOES A TEXT WRITTEN BY TWO DEAD WHITE GUYS who lived in Europe over 560 years ago have to say to today's urban young people?

In 2006, the youth director at my church asked to me to take a 16th-century teaching tool of Reformed theology and translate it for a group of 21st-century digital natives, young people from both the church and the community. Some of them had Bible knowledge; others had none. I had my work cut out for me. Could the Heidelberg Catechism speak to the hopes and fears of young people from the hip hop culture?

What was happening at my church in 2006? That year two church members intervened when a young woman was stabbed in our church parking lot and then hid under a car from her client. Does God have an answer for her? Also that year, my next-door neighbor was using violence to intimidate young people who were not members of his gang. Is there a good word for them from the Heidelberg? A young man who attended Bible study at our church wanted to be mentored—but his family life overpowered his intentions to follow Jesus. Do the words of two young cats from faraway Germany in the distant past have anything to encourage him?

I have spent over 20 years of pastoral ministry in an urban context where issues center on the big questions of life. Hell and heaven, judgment and grace, and salvation are constantly on kids' minds. They wonder if God has any good answers to their hopes and fears. Does God care about their economic life, their relational life, and their spiritual life? Does God care about them at all?

In 1563, King Frederick III asked two young theologians—Zacharias Ursinus and Casper Olevianus—to write a biblically based tool that could be used by preachers and teachers. According to the Preface, the purpose of this catechism was to educate young people in the Word of God so that they could live in accordance with it. Ursinus and Olevianus were called to translate a fledgling faith for their generation.

I was following a trusted path to get sound theology into my young people and speak to their hopes and fears. Most of them proudly wore T-shirts featuring the late rapper, Tupac

These young people understood the need to give the Lord his proper due—in the light and dark places of their hearts and lives.

Shakur, to youth meetings and mission trips. Shakur, who was shot and killed in 1996, has been the prophet for the hip hop soul. Why do young urban people—and some adults—continue to listen to him? In his book *Holler If You Hear Me*, theologian Michael Eric Dyson quotes Shakur in a prison interview: “I’m just trying to speak about things that affect me and about the things that affect our community.” Shakur told the truth about life as it is. I needed a text that was bold and honest enough to do the same. The Heidelberg Catechism—unafraid to tell it like it is—was the right document.

The text doesn't start with bad news. Question and Answer 1 reframes human identity in the context of being embraced and owned by the Father. I translated “What is your only comfort?” to “Who’s your daddy?” to preserve the personal tone the writers stressed throughout the catechism. In a context where many young people have strained relationships with fathers, the introduction speaks to their unconditional acceptance by and connection with their holy Father. “I am the property of Jesus Christ, all of me, body and soul, for all times, in life and death; I am his property because he purchased me with his blood; and then he freed me from the grasp of the devil; I know this because the Holy Spirit assures me that it’s true, and he makes me wholeheartedly ready and willing to live for him.” This version resonated with them.

Question and answer 2 addresses how to acquire this new life in Christ: “How do I get to live this life? I have to understand

how great my sin is; I have to understand the hugeness of what God did to save me; I must be filled with a desire to express my thanks to God for what he done for me.” That was a breath of fresh air, truly good news for my young people to hear. They were eager to learn more about this God who was truly interested in their stories as they found themselves in his story.

The catechism’s three main parts are often called “sin, salvation, and service” (or “guilt, grace, and gratitude”). The “sin” section of the catechism speaks to life as it is lived on the street and in the neighborhood. So question 3, “How do you know your misery?” was recast as “What’s your ghetto report card?” Question 7 was changed from “Then where does this corrupt human nature come from?” to “Naughty by nature.” Question 10, “Will God permit such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?” became “Will we pay the cost to be the boss?”

The “salvation” section introduces God’s rescue plan for us in Jesus Christ. The road of deliverance takes us through many stops on the salvation train. In question 13 we ask, “Do I have enough to cover the cost?” Our response can only be, “Not even close; in fact, our guilt increases every minute, every day.” Question 19 is translated as, “How will the revolution be televised?” It can be viewed from God’s whole story of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation.

The last section has to do with our “service” to the Lord. Once we know how great our sin is and our desperate need for a Savior, what can we do to say thanks for all God has done for us? I wanted young people to not reduce God to a set of “oughts” and “shoulds.” I wanted them to see in the commandments an opportunity to be honest about the sin in their lives, to accept God’s salvation in Jesus, and then live out their grateful responses to God’s outpouring of grace.

Question and answer 86 begins the gratitude section powerfully. The question is long, so I recast it as “Giving God his propers (respect) is good?” In other words, God deserves our

respect. The answer is, “We did not and cannot do anything to be worthy of the salvation that God offers us through Jesus Christ. But we can show our thanks for this salvation by choosing to live by the Spirit, who is constantly changing us to be more like Jesus so that others can know Jesus through us.”

My young people want people to respect them. So does God. Bible texts that concur with the answer are included for an even more powerful witness: Romans 12:1-2; Romans 6:13; Matthew 5:16; Galatians 5:22-24. These young people understood the need to give the Lord his proper due—in the light and dark places of their hearts and lives. Our conversations were engaging, thoughtful, and profound. The Holy Spirit showed up mightily.

So can the Heidelberg Catechism be useful in any context?

Absolutely—if teachers, pastors, and lay leaders are willing to translate the catechism so that it speaks to the hopes and fears of young people in their contexts. I heard the catechism for the first time in 1977. At first glance, I didn’t take to its rich themes. Now I know that it’s a text that’s still relevant to life lived at street level. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE

Introduction: Comfort

Lord’s Day 1

Q & A 1 WHO’S YOUR DADDY?

*I am the property of Jesus Christ, all of me, body and soul, for all times, in life and in death!
I am his property because he purchased me with his blood; and then he freed me from the grasp of the Devil.
I know this because the Holy Spirit assures me that it’s true, and he makes me wholeheartedly ready and willing to live for him.*

You’ll find samples of the author’s “translation” of the Heidelberg Catechism in the web version of this article at thebanner.org.



Reginald Smith is senior pastor of Roosevelt Park Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Letting Go of Fear and Holding on to Love

In your 20s or 30s? We want to hear what's on your mind as it relates to living out your faith in today's world. Please send manuscripts (600 words) to editorial@thebanner.org. (And, no, you don't have to be ordained!)

I AM AFRAID OF SNAKES. This is no secret to folks who know me.

I am afraid of many other things as well. Many of the things I fear are less tangible. I fear failure. I fear being left out. I fear letting people down. Such fears are, I imagine, normal for many of us.

Underneath fear is almost always the love of something good, and there is anxiety surrounding protection of that good. I fear snakes—irrationally, I'll admit—because I love my health and well-being and do not want to lose them to a snake. I am afraid of letting people down at least in part because I want others to be happy. I am afraid of being left out because I know we were created for community.

Our fears and the manner in which they drive our behavior too often go unspoken. We react out of our fear without naming the good that we love and are striving to protect. In many cases, this is at the core of conflict in our churches. We fear that our view of Scripture, our understanding of who God is, even the manner in which we experience and embody our own faith are under attack from those with whom we disagree. Worship becomes a war because we are afraid our own experience of God is somehow less valid than that of somebody else. Theological disagreements become points of division because we are afraid our church and our denomination are losing respect for Scripture as the Word of God.

In the *Banner* article “Renewal,” (Aug. 2014) Clay Libolt suggests, “What [our denomination needs] is clarity about who we are and what we proclaim.” My guess, however, is that we are afraid to do this work. We are afraid to seek clarity about who we

are and what we proclaim because we are afraid it will expose the divisions that underlie our denomination. We are afraid that our denomination will undergo yet another surge of exiting congregants and churches. We fear that clarity will come at the expense of theological rigor and respect for the tradition of our denomination.

The foundation of these fears is love and the desire to protect that which we love. A deep love for our denomination. Deep love for the next generation. Deep love for our traditions and the contribution that our church has made to the broad stream of the Christian faith.

When we react less out of fear and instead articulate what it is that we love, we find ourselves able to have healthy dialogue, to encourage one another, and to be bonded together by our shared experience of God's grace and by what we have in common with one another. This does not result in a wishy-washy, watered-down sense of identity. Rather, when we move from fear to love we find ourselves empowered by the Holy Spirit to live in dynamic unity with one another, united by grace and compelled to bear witness to the world of the God who breaks down our divisions and the One who “reconcile[s] to himself all things . . . by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross” (Col. 1:20).

I commonly end our worship services with a benediction I learned from Neal Plantinga. It promises that God will go before us to guide us, beside us to befriend us, beneath us to support us, and behind us to protect us. It ends with two simple sentences: “Do not fear; God is with us. Do not be afraid.”

This is God's promise to us still, God's promise to us today and always.

God is with us. Do not be afraid. ■

Kory Plockmeyer is the pastor of Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, where he lives with his wife, Lauren, and daughter, Shiloh.

NEXT



The foundation of our fears is love and the desire to protect that which we love.

ADS

Deadlines: February issue is 1/5/15; March issue is 2/2/15. Details online.

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

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

Denominational and Classical

Available for Call

The Council of Third CRC of Lynden, WA announces that **REV. TOM KOK** is available for call. He can be contacted at 802 Bender Place, Lynden, WA 98264, ps37shalom@gmail.com or 360-510-3418.

Financial Aid

CLASSIS GRAND RAPIDS SOUTH invites students from their Classis who are planning to pursue full-time ministry in the CRC (undergraduate or graduate level) and are in need of financial assistance for the academic year 2015-2016 to apply for a classical grant. Applications must be received prior to February 15, 2015. For information and application forms, please contact Rev. Stephen De Wit by phone at 616-452-9686, ext. 105, or by email at stephend@algerparkchurch.org.

Retirement

PASTOR JOSEPH BRINKS With gratitude to God for 40 years of faithful ministry in the CRC, we announce the retirement of Pastor Joseph Brinks. Pastor Joe and his beloved wife Linda have served churches in Michigan, Iowa, and South Dakota. A celebration was held to commemorate their 40th wedding anniversary, 40 years of ministry, along with their retirement as of January 16, 2015. Peace CRC, Menno, South Dakota.

Congregational

Church's 50th Anniversary

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: In March of 2015 the Ridgewood CRC of Jenison, Michigan will be celebrating its 50th anniversary. A celebration dinner is being planned for the Saturday evening of March 21, 2015. We wish to invite all current and former members and other friends of Ridgewood to this event. To make a reservation call 616-457-3850 or send it by mail to 7720 Ridgewood drive, Jenison, MI 49428. Please join us for this event. We would very much like to have you with us. The dinner cost is \$15.00 per person.

General

LK ALFRED FLA MINISTRY 140 Mallard Rd 33850 near Winter Haven & Orlando Rt 17/92. www.lakealfredministry.org, phone 863-422-6442. Preachers: Jan 2015 Rev Dale Cooper; Feb Rev Terry Genzink; Mar 1-15 Dr George Kroeze; Mar 22-Apr 12 Rev Eldert Zwart.

Birthdays

100th Birthday



ANDREW DIEPSTRA plans to celebrate his 100th birthday on February 1, 2015. God has blessed Andy with 3 children, 8 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren. Please send cards to 3460 Saratoga Ave Unit 121, Downers Grove, IL 60515

90th Birthday

LESTER BROUWER, retired farmer from Bunde MN, celebrates 90 years on December 26. Giving thanks with Eva (married 67 yrs) for God's faithfulness. Cards & greetings may be sent to 714 24th St. SE, Willmar MN 56201.

80th Birthday

REV. JOHN VAN TIL - Will celebrate his 80th Birthday and 50th Anniversary in Ministry with an Open House on Saturday, January 31. His family invites you to join us in celebrating God's goodness; 1:00-4:00pm at Bethel CRC, 716 Classic Drive, London, Ontario. Mailing address for those unable to attend: Canada - Brenda Moniz, 245 Jensen Road, London, Ontario, N5V4X4. USA - Elaine May, 2320 Shawnee SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

Anniversaries

60th Anniversary

DOBBENGA John & Joyce (VanderHorst) 6379 Roberts Dr, Victor, NY 14564 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on January 25, 2015. They and their daughter Yvonne & Michael Rhodes & 2 grandsons Steven & Brian share their joy and gratitude to God.

PADDING Orrin & Elaine of Zeeland will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Dec. 3.

Obituaries

BODE Dennis Henry, age 67, of Bay City, MI. Survived by his wife, Cathy, his mother Caroline Bode Kuiper, his brother Ronald (Ruth) Bode, sons Scott and Jason, 6 grandchildren. Preceded in death by father, Henry A. S. Bode.

BOS Jessie, 96, of Holland, MI, on October 24, 2014. She was preceded in death by husband Gilbert and son-in-law Tom. Survivors are children Barb (Tim) Ponstein, Chuck (Karen) Bos, Ken (Fay) Bos, and Mary Eberhard; 9 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren.



BOSMA, John J, age 90, of Grand Haven, MI and Green Valley, AZ, peacefully joined the church triumphant on Oct. 24, 2014. Cherishing him are his family: Bette (nee DeBruyn), wife of 65 years; daughters, Susan & David Hoekema, Jane & Brian Vanderploeg; sons, Tim & Kim Bosma, Paul & Alice Bosma. His

grandchildren are Dulcinea & John Avouris, Katrina & Michael Sink, Janna & Barb Hoekema, Klaas & Krista Hoekema-Boerman, and Oriana, Luke, Lia, Alexandra, Philip, Colin and Kyria Bosma, plus 7 great-grandchildren. His sister is Kathleen Brown; brother, Harris (Jean) Bosma; sister-in-law, Barbara Bosma and numerous nieces and nephews. His brother, Jameson Bosma, preceded him in death. With an adventurous heart of hospitality, John loved God, people, and the great outdoors.

BROENE Herman H., former Chemistry Professor at Calvin College, age 94, died November 18, 2014, wife, Ruth, preceded him in death as well as brothers, Richard and Gilbert; survived by children Mary and Russell Pollard, Jane and Paul Schut, and Thomas and Pamela Broene; sisters-in-law Annette Broene and Elizabeth Waggener.

DEBOER Dr. Willis P., age 91, November 12, 2014; survived by wife, Gertrude, 2111 Raybrook SE #3000; children, Sandra (Don) Bode, Kathleen (Mark Pittman) DeBoer, Patricia (Stuart Henderson) DeBoer, Philip (Laurie) DeBoer, and Steven DeBoer; 5 grandchildren; 7 great grandchildren; sister, Eleanor Zwiier; sisters-in-law, Mary DeBoer, Gertrude Hekman; and many extended family members.

KAMSTRA Betty Louise (nee Smith), age 93 of Grand Rapids, Tuesday, November 11, 2014; preceded in death by husband, John; survived by children, Marianne and Tom McQuillan, Karen and John Lunek; grandchildren Sean and Jamie McQuillan, Nicole and Matt Buckingham, Katie and Jason Tidd, Chris Cooper; and great-grandson, Benjamin Buckingham.



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Available February 2015

HIGHET Edna (nee TenHoeve) aged 89, of Wyckoff NJ and Phoenix AZ; went home to be with her Savior on October 17, 2014. She was preceded in death by her beloved husband Gilbert Highet in 1971, her daughter

Church Position Announcements

PASTOR — The Christian Reformed Church of Neerlandia, AB, 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 datuininga@hotmail.com.

YOUTH PASTOR - First CRC, Red Deer, AB. We are a growing congregation located in Central Alberta. We are seeking an energized full-time Youth Pastor to work alongside our Associate Pastor and Senior Pastor to grow and learn about our diverse congregation. B.A. is preferred and experiences can be varied. If this position interests you please contact us at firstcsrcrt@gmail.com. Visit our website at www.firstcsrcreeddeer.org to learn more about our church and current programming.

SENIOR PASTOR Fellowship CRC, Brighton, ON, is a large multi-generational congregation searching for a Senior Pastor with a servant heart. Providing spiritual leadership for our staff ministry, equipping and training leaders for service in God's kingdom, and preaching God's Word in a relevant and dynamic manner are among the gifts we are seeking to find. For more information, please contact us at bfrc@nexicom.net (www.brightoncrc.org)

PASTOR - KANATA COMMUNITY CRC Kanata Community Christian Reformed Church located in Kanata, Ontario, part of the greater city of Ottawa, has begun a search for a full-time pastor. We are in a redevelopment stage seeking to reignite the flame of hospitality, acceptance and belonging. The successful candidate will share in our desire to be a Christ-centred community, seeking to meet the physical, social and spiritual needs of those inside our community and, through this core strength, enable the congregation to be attractive, accepting, loving, caring and welcoming to those outside the church community. Interested pastors can visit our website at www.kccrc.com and can also request a church profile from office@kccrc.com.

PASTOR South Kendall Community Church in Miami, FL seeks a spiritual leader who is gifted in preaching and can powerfully lead us in bringing many to know God's redeeming grace and transforming love. For information on being part of our multi-cultural ministry, please contact SandyW@southkendallcc.org.

WORSHIP & ARTS DIRECTOR First CRC crown point, in is seeking a worship leader to provide leadership for all aspects of the music & arts ministry of the church. Applicants should have worship leading experience preferably some formal music training, and the ability to lead and develop band members, musicians and vocalists. For more information, please visit our website: www.Cprcc.org and go to the "about us" tab. Or, email jsheeres@gmail.com

PASTOR POSITION at Grant CRC in Grant Mi. We are located in Grant Mi. in rural community in West Michigan. Our Church profile is available from the Ministerial Information Service of Pastor-Church relations @ crcna.org. For email info contact search committee chairman Bob Scholtens bncscholtens@gmail.com

WORSHIP LEADER: Second Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, MI is seeking a part time Worship Leader to lead the music and opening portion of our blended worship style. Have the ability to sing and play piano; other instruments would be a plus. Schedule, lead, and practice with praise teams before services and midweek. Direct choirs 2-3 times yearly. The successful candidate will love the Lord, be passionate, enthusiastic for singing and music. Be organized and have good communication skills. For more information contact us at office@secondcsrc.org

PASTOR NewLife Fellowship CRC of RedDeer Alberta, is seeking a pastor with strengths in preaching, leadership, and relational gifts to join us as we together serve and grow in our relationship with God, each other and our world. For more info, please contact John Langelaar at johnlangelaar47@gmail.com

Kathy Jewell, her grandson Jason Highet and her sister Betty Hopper. She was a devoted mother to Joan Akhtar, Ed and John. Loving grandmother to Aliya & Shaan Akhtar, Andrea & Michael Jewell and Allison Highet. She was a great-grandmother of 3 and great-great-grandmother of 1. She remained a dedicated sister to Marion VanderWeit. She is greatly loved and missed by her family, friends and special pet, Tootsie.

RIEMERSMA Engelen, age 94, of Bellflower, CA went to be with her Lord on Sept. 8, 2014. She was preceded in death by her husband Gerrit. Survived by her children Harley (Ann), Bruce (Connie), Gary (Sammi), Kathi (Gene), Karla (Marlin), 16 grandchildren, 23 great grandchildren, 2 sisters.

WIGBOLDY Sarah (Elders, Barkema, Bonnema) 101 of Ontario, CA went to her lord on Oct. 26. Her family praises God for her godly life, love and example.

Employment

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CLC Network (Christian Learning Center) (Grand Rapids, MI) is seeking a Christian leader who is committed to growing an organization that supports inclusive communities for persons at all levels of ability and disability through collaborative relationships with Christian schools and churches. Visit www.clcnetwork.org to view a complete job description and application information. Applications are due March 1, 2015. Questions? Contact Bob VanWieren, Board President, at EDSearchTeam@clcnetwork.org

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

Volunteers

IDEA 2015 SPRING BREAK MISSION (March 27-April 5 or April 3-12). Spring Break with a purpose—individuals, couples, families, groups. Work and/or kids' ministry in Cancun outskirts; visit Isla Mujeres. \$625/person, plus air. Request Info, info@ideaministries.org Deadline March 1 2015.

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\$100 pp for applications received by February 15. Informational meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2015 at 2:00 p.m., at Witte Tours, 3250 28th St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI. RSVP to Bill by Jan. 26.



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Miscellaneous

CALL FOR ARITFACTS & STORIES for Liberation of Holland Exhibit, The Military Museums, Calgary, AB, opening May 5th 2015. Seeking Canadian military, Dutch civilians that served/lived in Holland specifically in Breskens, Scheldt, Apeldoorn or as part of Operation Manna. Contact: seniorcurator@themilitarymuseums.ca



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Dr. Eric Forseth, Provost
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498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697
Fax: (712) 722-6035
E-mail: provost@dordt.edu
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For more information on opportunities from ChapterNext, the leader among pastor search firms serving Christian Reformed congregations, visit www.chapter-next.com or email info@chapter-next.com.

CALVIN COLLEGE is seeking comments from the public about the college in preparation for its periodic evaluation by its regional accrediting agency. The college will host a visit April 27-28, 2015, with a team representing the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. Calvin College has been accredited by the commission since 1930. The team will review the institution's ongoing ability to meet the commission's Criteria for Accreditation.

THE PUBLIC is invited to submit comments regarding the college:

Public Comment on Calvin College
The Higher Learning Commission
230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604-1411

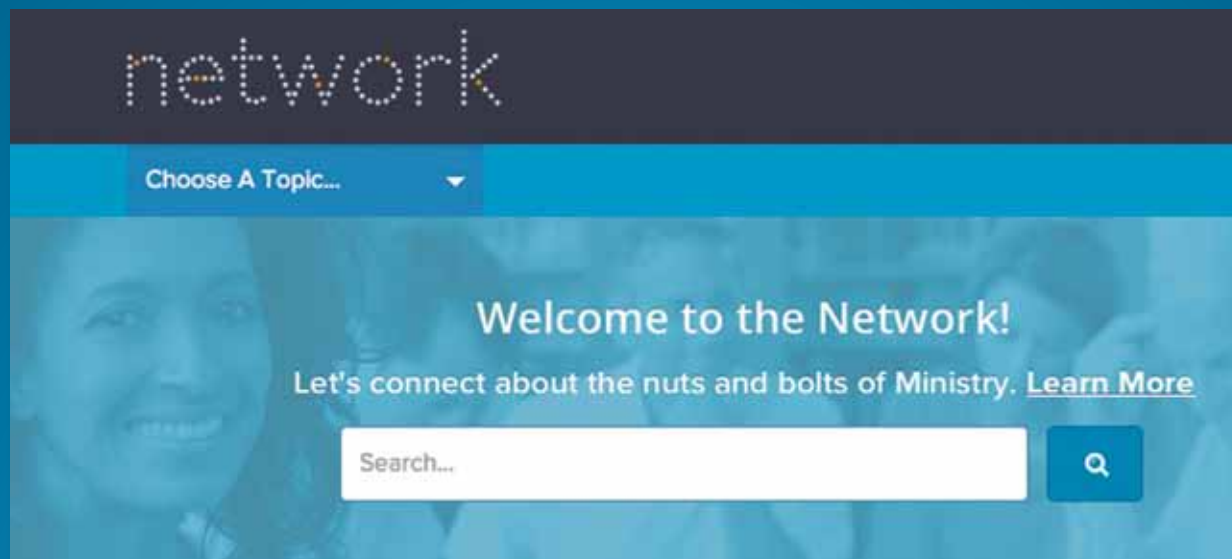
The public may also submit comments on the commission's website at www.ncahlc.org.

Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution or its academic programs. Comments must be in writing.

All comments must be received by March 26, 2015.



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Punch Lines

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

When my grandson was 5, we were talking about the color of our eyes. His are hazel, like mine, while the rest of the family has brown or blue eyes.

"You got the color of your eyes from me," I told him.

Puzzled, he looked at me. Finally he said, "I got mine from God."

A few years later I told his younger brother this story.

"How does he know what color God's eyes are?" he asked.

—*Marjorie Hoekstra*

The deacons were counting the money after the church service. My husband and his fellow deacons were sitting around the table after dumping all the money from the collection plates in the middle of the table.

Our 3-year-old son, Scott, came up to the table and asked, "So who's winning?"

—*Rita Hamilton*

If lawyers are disbarred and clergymen defrocked, doesn't it follow that electricians can be delighted, models deposed, tree surgeons debarked, and dry cleaners depressed?

—*Sue Lauritzen*

A Sunday school teacher was talking about saying grace before meals. One of the children

in her class was Jerry, the young son of the minister.

"Jerry," she said, "what does your father say when the family sits down to dinner?"

He answered, "Dad says, 'Go easy on the butter, kids; it's three dollars a pound!'"

—*Clarence Wildeboer*

The preacher prepared for the service, but only one person—a farmer—showed up.

"What do you think we should do?" asked the preacher.

"Well," said the farmer, "if only one cow came into the barn, I'd feed it."

So the preacher stood behind the pulpit and began to preach . . . and preach. After two hours he concluded his sermon. "What did you think?" he asked.

The farmer drawled, "Well, if only one cow came into the barn,

I certainly wouldn't try to feed it all the hay."

—*John Veltkamp*

We always tell our 3-year-old daughter, Sophie, not to cross the street without a parent.

One day Sophie saw a dead squirrel on the road. Feeling sorry for the squirrel, she said, "Poor squirrel! He should not have crossed the street without his parents."

—*Xiaohong Zhou*

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who wake up in the morning and say, "Good morning, Lord," and those who say, "Good Lord, it's morning."

—*Paul Haagen*

An elderly woman was having trouble working a puzzle, so she phoned her neighbor to come over and help. When asked what

picture was on the box, she told him it was a picture of a rooster.

Arriving, he looked at the pieces on the table. "I don't think we can make this look like a rooster," he said. "So let's just put the corn flakes back in the box."

—*Vern Edewaard*

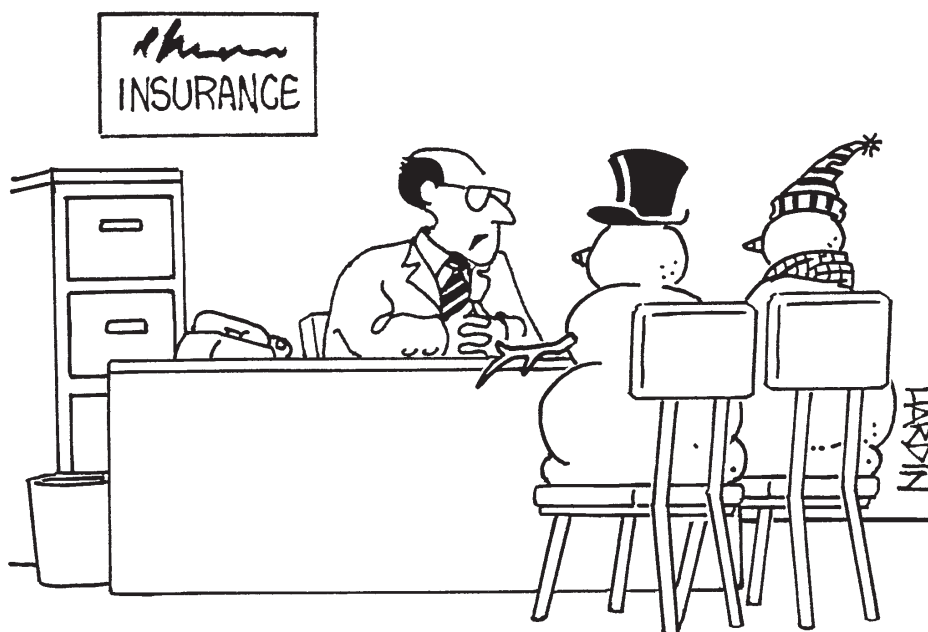
Libby was so happy with her report card, she let everyone know about it by singing, "Amazing Grades."

—*Dick Bylisma*

After I had watched my three grandchildren, my daughter and I were talking in her garage. Four-year-old Kyle asked his mom if she would watch his three toys, as he had to go to the back yard for something. She said, "How long shall I watch them?"

He answered, "About 40 days and 40 nights."

—*Sandy Sall*



"Are you prepared should one of you melt?"

1 Our Faith is Everything

At Trinity Christian College, we recognize that “the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Ps 24:1). As a result, everything that we do — from academics to service to community — integrates our faith.

2 Faculty as Mentors



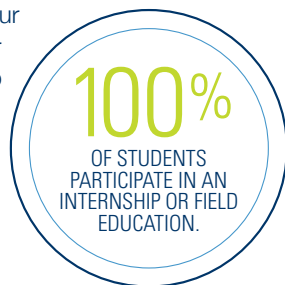
Our 11:1 student to faculty ratio ensures that students receive support and attention. Professors will mentor you as they help you reach your goal of graduating.

Trinity professors live out their Christian faith and integrate faith into the curriculum. 100% of Trinity courses are taught by professors — not Teaching Assistants.

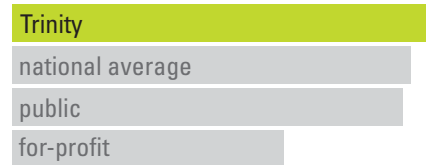
3 Our Graduates Get Jobs

- One factor that contributes to the employment success of our graduates is that 100% of our students receive an internship or field experience before they graduate from Trinity.

- A survey of the 2013 graduates showed that 90% of the jobs gained are in the graduates’ chosen career fields.



4 Student Success



Trinity’s graduation rate is 6% higher than the national average. It is 8% higher than 4-year public institutions. It is 36% higher than 4-year for-profit institutions.

National Center for Education Statistics

5 Campus Life



- There is always something going on. Through our clubs, organizations, sports, and cultural events, you will make friends and find your place.

- 100% of our residence halls have suite-style housing arrangements. (No community bathrooms!) Newly updated lounge spaces offer a place to study, relax, and hang out with friends.

6 Chicago



Trinity’s proximity to Chicago affords access to a variety of internships at companies and organizations throughout the city and its suburbs. Add to that the diverse art, theater, food, and music scenes. For a whole semester of living and working in this international hub of business and culture, choose the Chicago Semester.