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Betrayal and Resurrection

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Cover: "And Peter Wept" by Wayne Forte. Forte, who was born in Manila, the Philippines, is a painter who explores biblical themes. His art combines the classical traditions with a bold contemporary vision that reflects his cultural and religious influences. See more of his art at WayneForte.com.

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One World, One Mission

LIKE MANY CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES, God's Spirit has blessed the congregation I serve by placing the wider world right on our doorstep—and increasingly into our pews. We have received brothers and sisters in the faith from Sudan, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Rwanda. And we are expecting the imminent arrival of others from Zambia. This has brought home to us how, in today's world, we really do live in a global village. That's exciting, if a little complicated, as we learn to enjoy fresh unity in this new diversity.

In many churches like mine, we can no longer distinguish our "Home Missions" from our "World Missions." Our response to Jesus' Great Commission to disciple the nations is now local and global all rolled into one. When our neighbors hail from China and we Skype across continents, we can and should live out that age-old commandment/blessing in new ways.

What holds at the local level also applies to our denomination. Kudos, then, to our World Missions and Home Missions agencies for taking exploratory steps to forming one agency that conducts missions work both at home and abroad (see "Directors Explain Agency Unification Proposal," p. 12). That is a prudent, stewardly, and obedient response to the Spirit's beckoning.

Fortunately this idea in its present form comes from the agencies themselves and is not a bureaucratic ploy to pressure them into something they do not want. It's predicated on the ground-level realization that the marriage of "demographic churn" and technological transformation in recent years presents us with exciting new opportunities that require a reconfiguration of our missions efforts.

No doubt working toward a unified mission effort will take time. There are huge challenges ahead with respect to staffing, policy, funding—not to mention the hardest of all tough nuts to crack: very different cultures within each agency. And the rest of the denominational structure will need to flex as well to adjust to the new situation.

For example, there will be large "chunks" of important denominational work supporting our congregations that will no longer fit in a unified mission agency and will need to be housed elsewhere. Perhaps these could be gathered, along with the other congregational support ministries, into a new "congregational services" unit.

And then there's the question of what such a merger would mean for our other mission agencies—Back to God Ministries International and World Renew—agencies that also already reach out locally and globally.

In the present confusion of several layers of denominational restructuring, maybe a bold move like the union of World Missions and Home Missions could break new ground that would spur further creative realignments in its wake.

It will be a challenge. But we can do it. I know we can—if we get behind this as churches, if agency personnel will not shy away from the inevitable and necessary conflict, and if financial supporters of both agencies will share the vision and fund the new, unified ministry as generously, or more generously, than ever before.

Reconfiguring ourselves to make good on this new opportunity to evangelize a shrinking planet is just too good to pass up. Let's catch the wind of God's Spirit by taking that bold new tack. ■



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

Reconfiguring ourselves to make good on this new opportunity to evangelize a shrinking planet is just too good to pass up.

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Co-illumination

WITHOUT A DOUBT, my most intimate and enlivening experiences of God have come through moments of co-illumination—times where God’s Word in the Bible and his Word in creation have come together and shone a little light on one another.

A couple of years ago I was listening to an epigenetics researcher describe the nature of his work: how science is now proving that parental behaviors—both positive and negative—are, to some degree, passed on to their children, and even to their children’s children. As he spoke, the words of the second commandment began running through my head, “. . . punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me . . . but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me . . .”

Hearing those two words—*epigenetics* and *biblical*—together, I realized for the first time that God really wasn’t being capricious when he issued a commandment that speaks of punishing kids for

their parents’ sins. Instead, he was graciously warning us, “The implications of your choices are not just temporal, they’re generational! You physically pass on behavioral propensities.” In that co-illuminating moment I sensed that God’s timeless Spirit was in the room speaking to us directly, even as he whispered to Moses and inscribed our DNA.

Earlier this year I was interviewing a judge in his chambers for a sermon on his vocation. As he spoke of his preference for giving verbal judgments—so that he could look into the eyes of those he was judging, see their humanity, and sometimes even modify his judgment—all I could think about was the Incarnation and how God always looks at us when he judges. That judge’s *modus operandi* brought to mind times in the Scriptures where God relented or even seemed to change his mind. Even as this Calgary judge is willing to risk verbal engagement and eye contact, so too is God! As we spoke about these things it was as though, for that moment, every square inch of that judge’s chambers belonged to God.

And these co-illuminating moments just keep on coming. Songs of sorrow from a band called *The National* weeping alongside words from the book of Lamentations. The pedagogical passions of an educator powerfully illumining Jesus’ teaching heart. The ever-unique nature of tree branches suggesting that there are many diverse ways to abide in the vine that is Christ. A mechanic’s hands-on desire and aptitude to make all things new imaging a Savior who is making all things new!

God really does speak through two books. He speaks through the Bible and through science, history, math, music, vocation, nature, and all things. And I am convinced that, through his Spirit, God has always meant for us to know him in these kinds of co-illuminating ways.

I can’t think of a more beautiful way to live a life of faith than to experience Jesus everywhere. ■



John Van Sloten is pastor of New Hope (Christian Reformed) Church in Calgary, Alberta. His sermons on God’s truth in creation can be found at www.newhopechurch.ca.



DANIELLE HENRY/FLICKR

In seeking him
they find him,
and in finding they will
praise him.

— AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO,
THE CONFESSIONS

Lament for Israel and Palestine

LE

Even the lamenting
Jeremiah writes that
God's mercies are new
every morning.



BOTH SIDES IN THE CONFLICT between Israel and Palestine claim to be right. Hope and despair have competed for years, and I lament the failures.

I cry for Israel because she does not know what will bring her peace. Most of her citizens support the peace process. Yet the nation is split equally between those who support sharing the land and others who support Israel's forceful land claims.

I cry for Israel because extremists in both groups don't know how to talk to each other. Instead they sabotage the bridge-building efforts.

I cry for Israel because she has found no rest. Even now that she has her own place in the land of her forebears, rest seems to slip through her fingers. And I recall that Abraham didn't do much better on his way to the Promised Land (Heb. 11:8-10).

I cry for Israel because she defines her identity more as the victim/survivor of anti-Semitic sentiments past and present than in the positive expectations of the Creator to be a blessing among the nations.

I cry for Israel because she has become nervous about the presence of sincere Christians among her citizens. It's no wonder she keeps the Christian world—not exactly a “buddy”—at arm's length.

But Israel can no longer act as if no major changes have taken place in Jewish/Christian dialogue since World War II.

I cry for Israel with the hope that she would open her heart and mind to other people and nations and so discover that she is loved and respected.

I cry for Israel because I want her to be a more joyful people. Even the lamenting Jeremiah writes that God's mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-24).

A majority of Palestinian people want peace. How? Negotiations? Terrorist attacks? Gradually she is discovering that violence hurts her own people more than any other target.

I cry for Palestine because the doctrine of revenge holds her in a never-ending cycle of personal and communal destruction. Revenge boomerangs.

I cry for Palestine because she will not find rest in the territory demarcated as her place unless she can see her gain rather than her loss.

I cry for Palestine because most of the Christians among her—well educated and desiring a “normal” life—migrated to a more promising future elsewhere. A minority is trying to survive in a Muslim culture.

I cry for Palestine with the hope that she will be delivered from her anger and set free to live a life that reflects self-respect and dignity in an Islamic environment.

I cry for Palestine because God made rich promises also to the descendants of Ishmael (Gen. 17:20). ■



As president of Jerusalem University from 1993-2001, Dr. Sidney DeWaal was involved in interfaith discussions among Jews, Christians, and Muslims facilitated by the Interreligious Coordinating Council of Israel.



He Lives!

To borrow a line, “my heart was strangely warmed” when I read your editorial regarding synod and the old hymn “I Serve a Risen Savior” (“He Lives within My Heart,” Feb. 2015). My music ministry group The Uplifters provides singalongs to several nursing homes each year. “The Old Rugged Cross” and “I Serve a Risen Savior” are always on the program. How glorious to hear the people so lustily sing, when, for many, their life is drawing to a close.

—Robert S. Hough
Beaver Falls, Penn.

Thanks so much for sharing the story of the great debate of whether or not to include “I Serve a Risen Savior” (also known as “He Lives”) in the gray *Psalter Hymnal* (“He Lives within My Heart”). What a classic story! I love how it shows how music, one of God's more glorious creations, combined with the Holy Spirit, can sometimes supersede human cognition. And I'd also like to thank that delegate for requesting it be sung. I love that old hymn!

—Dan Barkel
Hull, Iowa

Welcome Parolees

The news article “Parolees Find Welcome in Edmonton” (Jan. 2015) spoke volumes. As a person who has been incarcerated

LETTERS

since 1996, I witness daily the return to prison of those who have been released, mostly a result of being “without the presence of supportive, healthy relationships and communities.”

I continue to pray that my denomination (CRC) and all others would develop some kind of prison ministry, visitation ministry, and reentry program so these men and women will have the support and resources to reintegrate successfully into society.

As my release date is approaching in 2016, my pastor and others have stepped out in faith to offer the love and support that would be nonexistent in my life apart from them.

Semper reformanda.

—Michael Casteel
New Castle, Ind.

Hip-Hop and the Heidelberg

As a young boy, I remember walking through the yard or the cattle yard on our farm and not being afraid, because my small hand was in the grasp of my father’s big, strong hand. He was there to keep me safe.

When I study the world around us today, I see Christians around the world and maybe in our own country suffering through more intimidation, more persecution, and loss of life for their beliefs. So it was refreshing to read the article “Hip-Hop and the Heidelberg” (Jan. 2015). What better time to ask our young adults or new believers, “Who’s your Daddy?”

Comfort and hope!

Thank you, Reginald Smith!

—Dave Brons
Edgerton, Minn.

Numbers Game

I have mixed feelings about Jonathan Hill’s article “The Numbers Game” (Jan. 2015). It is possible that the real picture of the “exodus” of young people

from church may not be as dire as we think, but Hill’s stats are not clear. First, he only cited stats for Protestant churches in general, not CRC stats in particular. How does the CRC stack up with the national average? Are we worse or better in young people’s church attendance?

Second, Hill did not specify if these are U.S. or Canadian stats. As a binational denomination, should we not research both sides of the border?

Finally, Hill’s question “Are we really losing these young people, or did the church ever really have them to begin with?” is not comforting. If this is true of the CRC, the question arises as to what kind of spiritual ethos is there that we can fail so miserably with our baptismal vows to these youths.

—Shaio Chong
Mississauga, Ontario

Mr. Hill wants us to ask the question “Are we really ‘losing’ [our] young people, or did the church ever really ‘have’ them to begin with?” (“The Numbers Game”). He says, “Maybe it is time to stop lamenting this so-called ‘exodus’ and instead start to think of it as a blessing in disguise.”

I looked at the CRC *Yearbook* stats from 2011-2014 in Classis Hamilton. In those four years we received 53 people through evangelism, and we ought to praise the Lord for each one. Another 135 were received from other denominations and 217 left for other denominations. 467 members were removed from the church rolls during those four years. . . .

Let’s be careful what we call “a blessing in disguise.”

—Jerry J. Hoytema
Burlington, Ontario

Reformed Churches in Nigeria

I thank Albert Strydhorst for his article (“Reformed Churches Attacked in

Nigeria,” Jan. 2015). These vicious attacks on Christian villages, churches, schools, marketplaces, and homes have given rise to thousands of homeless widows and tens of thousands of orphans.

When in Nigeria, I visited Rev. Caleb Ahima, president of the CRC-Nigeria, and asked him if he had any advice for North American churches regarding Islam. His response: “Teach the young the truth of the Word of God with a sense of urgency. . . .”

The root cause of violent attacks on Christians is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

—Marvin W. Heyboer
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Split

Since we now have read what All One Body is advocating (“Grand Rapids Event Advocates Full Participation of Practicing Gay Church Members,” Nov. 2014), now let us, readers of *The Banner*, read what the consequences have been in the Evangelical Lutheran Church when they implemented what some of their members advocated. Google “ELCA Has Biggest Split in American Church History.”

—Jake Prins
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Covers

Please, can we have better pictures on the front cover of *The Banner*?

—John Vanderheid
Lindsay, Ontario

[MORE ONLINE](#)

Correction

Please note that the last sentence of the final letter to the editor in the March *Banner* was inadvertently cut off. You can find the full version of the letter online at thebanner.org.

NEWS

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Colin Watson Appointed Director of Ministries and Administration for CRC

On February 26, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church appointed Colin Watson Sr. as the new director of ministries and administration for the church.

Watson, 63, told board members that the CRC is functioning in a world of change. "I firmly believe the level of change we are seeing is the least level of

he said. "After that first Bible study, I was hooked. It gave me the language to describe what I was feeling, that Christ is the all in all, involved in every aspect of my life."

The search committee that recommended Watson noted he is highly regarded for his business accomplishments. His business background includes 24 years in telecommunications, followed by seven years in the energy sector.

Watson noted that he is used to being the first person of an ethnic minority in roles that have not been traditionally held by African Americans. "I recognize that my ethnicity makes it more inviting to others who want to seek me out, and I welcome that," he said. "Even though the job does not require a special diversity aspect, it is something I would embrace and celebrate."



Colin Watson

change we will see for the rest of our lifetime," he said. "It's really causing a major impact in ways the CRC will have to deal with."

Raised in what was British Guiana (now called Guyana), Watson came to the U.S. at age 18 to go to college, earning his master's degree in statistics. He is also a graduate of the executive programs of Columbia University and the University of Virginia.

Raised Episcopalian, he joined Madison Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Paterson, N.J., in 1985. "We came because of the service and stayed because of the theology,"



Watson has served in many roles at his home church and in various denominational activities. He spent five years as the executive minister at Madison Avenue CRC. He is currently a consultant with the CRC's Diversity in Leadership Planning Group and a member of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture. He was president of the board of Christian Reformed World Missions and served on the search committees for the director of Christian Reformed Home Missions, the CRC's executive director, and the Canadian ministries director.

"The many opportunities I've had to serve have showed me the breadth of what the CRC is involved with," he said.



Watson lives in Montclair, N.J., with his wife, Frieda. They have three adult children.

The director of ministries and administration is part of the senior leadership team reporting to the executive director. Synod 2014 (the annual leadership gathering of the Christian Reformed Church) authorized the board to both make and ratify the appointment on behalf of synod. Watson will assume his new duties in April.

—Gayla R. Postma

JAMIE BUISMAN

Ceramic Crosses with a Message

From Advent to Easter, the tinkle of 150 ceramic crosses can be heard as circulating air causes them to stir lightly against the sanctuary walls.

The crosses are displayed in Covenant Hope Church, a Christian Reformed and Reformed Church of America congregation in Battle Creek, Mich.

The crosses were created earlier last year by about 30 members of the congregation's Creative Arts Group, who worked lumps of clay into crosses of various sizes and textures as individual as the congregants themselves.

The crosses were hung in the church during Advent for the celebration of Christ's birth and will stay in place through Lent and Easter as continual reminders to the congregation of God's gift of salvation and his continuing work of transformation in people's lives.

Each cross was stained or glazed and then put through the transforming firing process, where it emerged as a work of art. Ministry assistant Niki Van Lente explained, "As the clay went through the firing of the kiln, God himself is our refining, consuming fire, conforming us to the likeness of his Son."

After teaching from the sanctuary walls, the crosses will be sent home with the congregation at Easter to continue sharing their message of God's love and transforming power.

—Anita Ensing Beem



Over 150 ceramic crosses are displayed in Covenant Hope Church.



Louis M. Tamminga

Thank You, Louis!

In this issue, you will find the "In Memoriam" article about Rev. Wesley Van Dyk. It happens to be the final Memoriam written by our venerable friend Rev. Louis Tamminga. After 17 years and nearly 250 Memoriams, Lou, as we fondly know him, is retiring from his role as writer of the denomination's tributes to ministers who have faithfully served the Christian Reformed Church.

Staff of *The Banner* are grateful for the wonderfully warm style of writing Tamminga brought to the role and for his pastoral touch as he dealt with grieving families after the loss of their husbands and fathers.

Louis will continue his writing in the elders' section of *The Network*. *Banner* correspondent Janet Greidanus of Edmonton, Alberta, will now take up the task of writing our In Memoriam tributes.

Thank you, Louis!

—Gayla R. Postma

Preserving Stories of the Dutch-Canadian Immigrant Experience

"We are dealing with treasures," said archivist and library technician Bonita Bjornson, pointing to the stacks of boxes of letters, diaries, old postcards, family portraits, ship passenger lists, and other materials maintained in a locked, climate-controlled room.

The treasures are part of the Gerry Segger Heritage Collection established at The King's University in Edmonton, Alberta, with a \$400,000 gift from Gerry Segger, a member of St. Albert (Alberta) Christian Reformed Church. It is believed to be the only collection in Canada devoted to acquiring, preserving, and sharing historical materials related to the Dutch-Canadian immigrant experience and the traditions of Reformed Christianity in Canada.

Exploring the collection can be a very emotional experience for visitors. Recently a group of seniors from Edmonton's West End CRC traveled together on a school bus to view the collection. The photographs, especially, and the anecdotes shared, aroused much laughter and many tears.



West End CRC seniors gather around a photo at the Gerry Segger Heritage Collection.

Bjornson had difficulty getting people to tear themselves away from two enlarged 1952 photos entitled "Entertainment night at Second CRC," in which individuals were seeing themselves as children or pointing out parents or siblings, many now deceased. Alyce Oosterhuis became tearful when Bjornson displayed the letters that Oosterhuis's mother, Jo Horzelenberg, had mailed from Canada to her family in The Netherlands, beginning in 1952. The letters abruptly ended

when Horzelenberg died unexpectedly at the age of 48.

Such old letters and photographs may not have much apparent value, but, Segger says, "When immigrants pass on, most of our heritage (usually) gets thrown in the garbage."

The collection continues to welcome the donation of archival materials so they can be stored, translated, and made available to be shared with future generations.

—Janet A. Greidanus

NEWS

Directors Explain Agency Unification Proposal

Rev. Gary Bekker and Rev. Moses Chung believe the time has come to unify Christian Reformed World Missions and Christian Reformed Home Missions. They are the authors of a proposal to build one global mission agency, currently under consideration by their respective boards. “Christian Reformed missions can be done better by a unified agency than by two agencies divided by geography,” wrote Chung and Bekker, the directors of those agencies. “The nations now live in our home cities, towns, and rural areas. Moreover, our congregations and their members have an increasing number of world experiences and relationships.”

Connecting ministry with people in ethnic churches in North America with ministries among people in their countries of origin is among the new ways to do missions when we can think about the global and local contexts and their connections rather than “here” vs. “there,” they wrote.

Chung, director of Home Missions, said the structure of two separate mission agencies was created years ago when the world was different. “Because of urbanization and globalization, geographic boundaries have been rendered almost meaningless today,” he said.

Chung pointed to ministry to Chinese people as just one example. “[Home Missions] does campus ministry in North America on campuses where there are thousands upon thousands of Chinese students. World Missions has a long history of missions in China. What if we had a strategy

to work together with these students who have connections and relationships back home? We can disciple them and they will go back home to be leaders in all sectors of their society. It just makes sense.”

They anticipate increased efficiencies, but they say finances did not drive this discussion. In



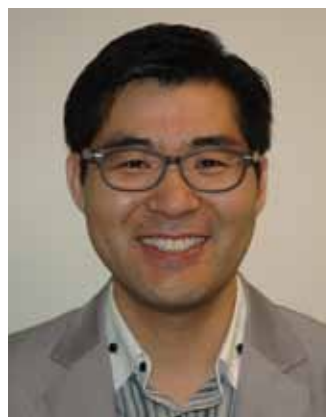
Rev. Gary Bekker

fact, Bekker said they don’t think it will save a lot of money right away. He believes the CRC will get more ministry for the same dollars. Chung noted that as directors they are certainly aware of the decline in ministry shares giving. “But this conversation has been driven by the strategic, abundant, extraordinary opportunities for missions in North America and around the globe.”

New Impetus for an Old Idea

Bekker said that a unified agency is not a new idea. Conversations about building a single agency have been happening for several years. The Board of Trustees and synod (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) have encouraged collaboration between the two agencies.

Now several factors have changed that gave new impetus to the discussion. “We have a new director at Home Missions. We have a new executive director. And both organizations have highly experienced people and also a bunch of younger people who are experienced, committed, smart,” Bekker said.



Rev. Moses Chung

This specific proposal came together quite suddenly. “The timing is a bit of a surprise to [us],” said Chung. “We started a conversation at the end of last year, conversations that started with ‘what if?’ and ‘just imagine.’” He said that when they came back in January, people were sensing that perhaps the time is now. They went to executive director Steven Timmermans to make sure there was openness, and there was. “We judged this is what God is leading us to do,” Chung said. Now they want the church to engage in the discussion and discern with them if this is where God is leading.

How Would It Work?

Bekker said the answer to many questions is, “We don’t know yet.” They want to engage the church

through proper channels to see if it is on board with the “what” and the “why” before answering the “how” questions.

With preliminary approval from their boards, the next step is a more detailed plan to be presented in April answering some of the “how” questions. The “how” questions are many, including issues around incorporation and charitable status, Church Order implications, deployment of personnel, and a timeline for implementation.

If the agency boards approve that more detailed proposal, it would go to the CRC’s Board of Trustees in May and then be referred to the churches for consideration before a decision is made by a future synod.

The stakes are high for Chung and Bekker personally. A new agency would likely have only one director, which could be one of them—or neither. “We are putting our jobs on the line,” Chung said. “We don’t know what the future holds, but we trust that if this is where God is leading, then that’s where we want to go.”

Neither is interested in pushing ahead if the church is not on board. “We invite hard questions,” Bekker said.

Chung concurred. “We invite the church to talk with us, pray with us, discern with us,” he said. “If we can find a way to do that together, we have a future we can’t even imagine.”

—Gayla R. Postma

Young Adult Retreat Gaining in Popularity

The third annual young adult retreat in Woodstock, Ontario, drew about 40 young adults, more than triple the number who turned out the first year. Organized by a team of young adults, the retreat is both spiritual and social, with worship sessions and a speaker, small group discussions, games, volunteering, and shared meals.

The event started with Stephanie Linker. "We really just wanted a place for young adults who are invested in their churches to connect," she said. "We realized we needed a place to find encouragement from people at a similar life stage [as] ourselves. It didn't need to be lots of people, just people looking to get plugged in."

Themes are carefully chosen to be relevant to young adults at



Participants at the recent young adult retreat in Ontario.

any stage, covering topics like finding your place in the church, hearing God, and building community. Times of worship and discussion are balanced by volunteering at a local thrift store—cleaning, sorting, unpacking—and games. "We find it to be a fun time to bond as a group," said Linker, "but also to do something very practically productive."

Response to the event has been positive, shown not only by

its growth each year but by the comments of participants. "It was a great event. I thoroughly enjoyed coming together with a group of people in this life stage and openly discussing a topic very relevant to us." Another said it all: "Hope it keeps going and growing."

—Anita Brinkman

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Theodore Minnema

1925 - 2015

Theodore Minnema, 89, soft-spoken scholar, sympathetic listener, and thoughtful seminary professor passed away on January 18 following a season of declining health.

After four years of military service in the Pacific theater, Minnema attended Calvin College and Seminary and entered ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1953. He subsequently earned a doctorate degree from the Free University in Amsterdam.

Minnema served one congregation in Michigan, after which he was appointed to the Bible department at Calvin College. He was appointed professor of ethical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary in 1974 and retired in 1991.

Minnema was known for his hospitality. Though a man of few words, he was known for his ready responsiveness and his quick understanding. His pastoral heart and quiet sense of humor made his presence always welcome.

Minnema is survived by his wife, Tena, by four children and their spouses, and by 12 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.

Vander Zee Appointed Interim *Banner* Editor



Rev. Leonard Vander Zee

On February 26, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church appointed Rev. Leonard Vander Zee as interim editor of *The Banner*. A permanent editor is expected to be appointed by Synod 2016, the annual leadership body of the CRC.

Vander Zee told trustees that he sees the interim position as one of stewardship. "It's understanding *The Banner's* identity, and through *The Banner* trying to help the Christian Reformed Church better understand its identity and its gifts, as well as its struggles."

He knows the position of editor comes with conflict, and admitted he sometimes tends to shy away from that. But with 44 years in the ministry, he said, he has been through lots of situations of conflict.

That 44 years includes parish ministry in five congregations in Iowa, New York, Michigan, and Indiana. From 2006 until his retirement in 2013, he was editor in chief of Faith Alive Christian Resources, which was the CRC's curriculum and publishing arm. He has also written multiple books and articles.

Vander Zee will assume his editorial duties in late summer. Rev. Bob De Moor, *The Banner's* current editor, retires from the position on August 31.

—Gayla R. Postma

News from the CRC's Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church acts on behalf of synod (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) in between its meetings.

In addition to appointing Colin Watson as the new director of ministries and administration (see p. 10) and appointing Rev. Leonard Vander Zee as *The Banner's* interim editor (see p. 13), the board dealt with several other matters at its February meeting.

- Synod 2014 instructed the board to convene a committee to study *The Banner's* mandate after publication of controversial articles. The committee reported to the board that the ***Banner's* mandate is fundamentally sufficient** and that issues that arose were not the result of a faulty policy. However, it did recommend that the introductory paragraphs be altered. Regarding the synodical mandate to stimulate critical thinking about issues related to Christian faith and culture, it recommended adding the phrase “in a way that encourages biblical thinking about these issues, in line with our confessional heritage.” It also recommended adding a fourth piece to the introductory paragraphs: “to help readers find fresh awareness to seek, learn, worship, and serve as Reformed Christians in contemporary society.” The recommendations now go to Synod 2015.
- The board approved **omitting one print issue of *The Banner***, combining July and August into a summer issue in 2015, to assist in balancing the budget.
- The board approved a **proposed composition, mandate, and process of *The Banner* editor search committee**. That proposal will go to Synod 2015, which will also appoint the members of that search committee.
- The board approved the appointment of a **task force on financial sustainability** to understand the multiple financial means by which the ministries of the CRCNA are supported.

For more, please visit thebanner.org.

—Gayla R. Postma

CRC Members Urged to Respond to Supreme Court Ruling on Assisted Suicide

Leaders of the Christian Reformed Church are urging members in Canada to respond to a recent Supreme Court ruling that struck down the laws prohibiting physician-assisted suicide. In a letter to the churches, members were asked to contact their Members of Parliament and their provincial representatives, encouraging them to craft new legislation that emphasizes palliative care, including aggressive pain management, but that also strongly protects vulnerable people, including those with disabilities.

The letter was signed by several denominational leaders.

The letter noted with particular concern that the court's judgment uses the term “grievous and irremediable medical condition” rather than “terminal illness,” potentially meaning that persons with a serious disability could access assisted suicide, a degree of permissiveness that, the letter stated, does not exist anywhere else in the world.

The Supreme Court has given lawmakers one year to draft new legislation. If new legislation is not in place by then, there will be no law at all. That would put Canada into a similar situation as it is regarding abortion: no law and no restrictions on physician-assisted suicide in the circumstances defined by the court ruling. So the authors are urging CRC members to respond quickly with constructive input rather than a heated response.

“This is also an opportunity to craft real life-affirming legislation,” the letter stated. “We do not believe that a heated reaction will be effective or helpful.”

Mike Hogeterp, director of the CRC's Centre for Public Dialogue and one of the signatories to the letter, said the church's reaction is informed by the abortion debate in Canada 25 years ago. In the 1980s, the Supreme Court also struck

down existing legislation, with an expectation that there would be new legislation. The Christian community was widely divided between those who were willing to make some concessions to have legislation that would provide some limitations and those wanting an outright ban. “The



Mike Hogeterp, director of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue.

results of this ‘all or nothing’ debate are a deeply troubling legal vacuum on abortion and a heritage of toxic debate,” said Hogeterp.

Hogeterp said he accepts that in the CRC some will prefer a stronger response. “In a diverse democracy like Canada, there are great risks in insisting on an ‘all or nothing’ position on euthanasia,” he said, “and strident or venomous language is not respectful and does not contribute to a dialogue that lays out viable legal options to promote life-enhancing legislation, protection of the vulnerable, or the conscience rights of medical practitioners.”

The Christian Reformed Church addressed end of life issues when Synod 2000 (the annual leadership meeting of

the CRC) adopted a resolution urging churches to encourage government allocation of funding for adequate palliative services; encourage government initiatives that allow medical treatment aimed at pain relief even if that treatment may unintentionally shorten life; and encourage government initiatives that promote life-affirming legislation and oppose legislation that endorses

assisted suicide or mercy killing. The authors of the letter are referring church members to that resolution to help them engage with lawmakers proactively and constructively.

In addition to the letter to the churches, Canadian ministries director Darren Roorda and John Kapteyn, executive secretary of the Reformed Church in America's regional synod of Canada, wrote

to the leaders of Canada's four political parties, urging them to "collaborate deeply and consult widely," while assuring them that their church communities are committed to "providing constructive and respectful contributions to this important dialogue."

—Gayla R. Postma

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Archie Vander Hart

1950 - 2015

Archie Vander Hart, 64, pastor, theologian, and scientist, passed away on February 15 after a fierce eight-week battle with cancer.

After earning undergraduate and master's degrees in the sciences, Vander Hart responded to God's call to become a pastor. He served Christian Reformed congregations in South Dakota, Michigan, and Minnesota. He did not reach retirement age.

A man of considerable height and strength, and with a booming voice, family and friends alike treasure memories of his hearty laughter, bone-crushing hugs, and lively wit. As a pastor, he liked children and was known for the art of storytelling. The ministry was for him a deeply personal practice as well as a thoughtful expression of scholarship. He was a frequent delegate to synod and a member of several denominational boards and committees.

Vander Hart was predeceased by his infant daughter, Nanette, in 1981. He is survived by his wife, Sandra Meyer, whom he married in 1994; by three children and their spouses, and by one grandchild. He is also survived by his parents and by three step-children and five step-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Drama Depicts Denominational Tensions Around Justice and Faith



The MT Space Theatre group performed the one-act play *Just Faith?*

What is the relationship between faith and justice? On February 6, a one-act play called *Just Faith?* depicted some of the tensions around those questions in the Christian Reformed Church.

The play was commissioned by the CRC's Justice and Faith Project, a research initiative by the CRC, Institute of Christian Studies (ICS), and the Centre for Community Based Research.

"The Justice and Faith project began in July 2013 to give a better understanding of what 'doing justice' means and to be a catalyst

in thinking about justice," explained Steve van de Hoef, the Justice and Faith Project coordinator for the CRC's Canadian ministries.

After gathering data from over 250 surveys and interviews, the research team commissioned the play to present its research and engage conversation. "The play simply brings the issue to life in a way that no research report ever could, and it really gets people excited," said Ronald Kuipers, director of the Centre for Philosophy, Religion, and Social Ethics at ICS and a member of First CRC in Toronto, Ontario.

The play depicted moments within church life to show the tension of seeing injustices but being unsure of how to act. The discussion explored ways to take action, such as encouraging gifts and goals within church communities. "I think it's important to discern what one's own gifts are, so as to be able to use one's energies well," said Shannon Hoff, professor at ICS.

"Just getting people talking about this already has a mobilizing effect," said Kuipers. "No one on the research team can guide the outcome or force mobilization to take place. Yet one nevertheless sees the Spirit at work."

This first forum was held at the University of Toronto. Organizers plan to hold several more across Canada this year.

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

Board of Trustees Reviews Structure Task Force Report

At its February meeting, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church got a look at the final report of the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture that is headed to Synod 2015 (the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church). The task force will report directly to synod, but the board has the option of sending a communication about it to synod. However, at this meeting, trustees had more questions than there were answers, and no statement was drafted.

Trustee Scott Greenway, who was on the task force, told the board, "It's like wet cement. For lots of questions you'll have, we don't have great answers yet. We're trying to progress in a direction that is in keeping with the feedback we have received all along the way."

Background

As reported previously in *The Banner*, the task force was appointed by Synod 2011, following the abrupt resignation of the denomination's top two administrative leaders. Synod gave the committee the mandate "to conduct a review of the organization, structure, and leadership within the CRCNA" and bring its recommendations to Synod 2012.

In 2012, the task force requested a three-year extension to its mandate to more fully analyze the denomination's administrative structure, which includes the Board of Trustees and various ministry agency boards and advisory committees, in order to recommend a structure that could best enhance the ministry of local

churches and the global mission work of the CRC. The intervening years included recommendations regarding how a senior leadership team might function after a new executive director was identified, and determining how the administrative and governance structure could best reflect the binational nature of the CRC.

Recommendations

The task force noted in its report that the denomination has been discussing administrative structure for 40 years but that, in the meantime, ministry context has drastically changed. "The membership of the Christian Reformed Church is more interested in how denominational offices will assist local congregations to do ministry in their own community as well as how the denominational offices do ministry 'on behalf of the church,'" the report stated. "The very purpose of this denominational structure must be to serve, network, lead, support, and learn from the local congregations."

In its 28-page report, the task force recommended major changes to the denominational governance structure. Its main recommendation is that the current 30-member Board of Trustees become a 60-member Council of Delegates, with one delegate from each of the 48 classes (regional groups of churches), plus 12 at-large members. The current board membership is half American and half Canadian, whereas the Council of Delegates would resemble synod in that the U.S. delegation would outnumber Canadians by a ratio of three to one. The task force noted that the Council

would be a policy governance board with a clear distinction between the role of the Council and the CRC's executive leadership staff.

The report did not specify how many times the Council would meet each year. Rev. Joel Boot, chair of the task force, said in an interview that it would meet once or twice a year, but that no firm decision has been made. That would be part of the three-year implementation being recommended. In between the meetings, an executive committee of 12 (half Canadian, half American) would act on behalf of the Council. Boot said that the executive committee would probably meet three or four times per year, but that too would be determined by recommendations of a transition team.

The task force is also recommending that the boards of the missions agencies (Back to God Ministries International, Christian Reformed World Missions, and Christian Reformed Home Missions) become subcommittees of a Global Missions Committee, which would be a committee of the new Council. The boards of Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, and World Renew would remain as is.

The task force is recommending that the implementation of its recommendations be assigned to a transition committee, which would work out steps and a timeline over three years and address changes required in the CRC's Church Order, bylaws for the various boards, and other key issues that arise in the transition.

Further, the task force is recommending that synod assign a review of the nature, scope, and purpose of classis, and a review of the practices and functions of synod.

Questions

In discussing the report, board members raised many questions. "We've heard questions, and most of the questions aren't answered," said Boot. "We have found that it is easier to set a direction and face the questions in a more leisurely fashion. We thought it would be wise not to answer all the questions or come up with all the details. We didn't think the church or synod could absorb all that at once."

Trustee Bill Veenstra expressed concern at the lack of detail in the report. "We'll have to figure out the details once we've launched the rocket," he said. "I'm increasingly concerned about the amount of stuff we're assuming will have to be deferred to a future time."

Boot responded, "We're saying yes, this is the direction we want to go—things have to be determined before we move forward with it."

Veenstra also asked about process. "Do the churches have time to see this before synod? Are we missing a step here?" Boot responded that the task force brought something similar to both the board and to synod last year. "It was all in the agenda for synod last year. It was our conviction that there will be rough spots but this is not new and the church has had opportunity to see it."

Trustee Jake Kuipers questioned how a representative from

a classis could speak for so many agencies at a classis meeting. "This person becomes the voice for every agency at classis meetings," he said. "That's asking an awful lot of one individual. I don't know that our classes are going to be well served that way."

Trustee Trevor Vander Veen noted that the task force was try-

ing to address the fact that communication has come primarily from agencies to the classes. "This shifts the priority of communication [to] coming from the classis to the [Council]."

What's Next?

Board members did not reach consensus on a response. They

may revisit the matter at their May meeting.

With or without a board communication, delegates to Synod 2015 will take up the report when they meet in June in Sioux Center, Iowa. The full report will be available when the *Agenda for Synod* is published.

—Gayla R. Postma

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Wesley Van Dyk

1945 - 2015

Rev. Wesley Van Dyk, 69, a joyous, caring, and compassionate pastor, died on February 16 of cancer.

Van Dyk entered ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1970, serving congregations in Iowa, Michigan, and New Jersey. He retired in 2011.

Van Dyk was a winsome person and pastor. His scriptural knowledge and oratorical skills made him a fascinating preacher and speaker.

He had a great sense of humor and was known for his friendliness. His parishioners remember him most for his compassion for people who struggled with burdens. Some 20 years ago Van Dyk came to terms with his alcoholism and became a champion supporter of people with addictions, establishing dozens of Alcoholics Anonymous groups. At his funeral, a number of people appeared, testifying to how he had helped them conquer the demons in their lives.

He is remembered as a wonderful father. He loved fishing.

Van Dyk is survived by his wife, Ellen, their two daughters, and one grandson.

—Louis M. Tamminga

West Michigan Church Celebrates Marriage

In February on Valentine's weekend, West Leonard Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., held a celebration of marriage to highlight the blessings it has brought to members.

Organizer Barb DeKorte invited every married couple in the church to write down their story—how they met, what marriage has meant to them—and to submit a photo of their wedding. Seventy-three couples, ranging from a couple who married last December to another married 69 years ago, responded, representing more than 3,400 years of married life. Their stories were collected and produced in a booklet.

"For a lot of people, it was a reminder of how they fell in love in the first place," DeKorte said.

All the wedding pictures were put on display in the church fellowship area.

"Seeing dear friends, now in their 70s and 80s, back in their wedding outfits was a hoot," West Leonard pastor Neil Jasperse said. "We saw all the changing styles of cars people got away in (and) different fads with glasses and clothing. It was a tremendous, positive celebration of biblical marriage."

Some of the messages from the longest-married couples spoke of perseverance in tough times and the importance of serving each other, DeKorte said.

—Gregory Chandler



A display of wedding photos was part of the celebration of marriage.



BY SYLVIA C. KEESMAAT

IMAGINE IT, IF YOU WILL.

God had such high hopes.
God had hovered over the darkness,
breathed over it,
and gathered all the creative energies of life.
God hoped,
and out of the darkness flowered light.
And not only light:
sky and earth,
dry land and seas,
fruit and flowers,
leaves and grasses.
Animals that walked
and animals that flew;
animals that crept
and animals that swam.
The skies, the seas, the earth,
all of it teeming with the creative hopes of God.

BETRAYAL AND RESURRECTION

But there was more:
the earth creatures,
woman and man,
to care for and rejoice
in the earth,
to be company and friends with God.

God had such high hopes.
Hope for enjoyment and conversation,
hope for praise and delight.
God would be with them and nothing could go wrong.

Until the snake and the fruit.
Until the fruit was bitten, chewed, digested;
until evil was bitten, chewed, digested.
The snake knew, the earth creatures knew.
Now was the time for death.

But in the midst of that betrayal,
in the midst of the loss of hope,
in the midst of deep fear,
in the face of death,
God does something that is beyond imagination,
beyond hope.
God gives not death, but life,
not death, but promise,
a promise that one day, one day,
in the midst of death, there will be new life.

Imagine it, if you will.
They had such high hopes.
They had gathered their belongings,
said goodbye to all that they had known,
embarked on a grand adventure.
They were pursuing a dream.
A dream of freedom,
a dream of a community,
shaped by the character of their God.
A dream of food grown by their own hand,
enough to feed their children.
A dream of communal worship.
A dream of life in abundance,
freed from slavery,
freed from the violence that killed their children.
They had a dream.
At first the freedom was intoxicating.
No more slavery.
No more death.
No more long, hot hours in the dusty fields,
unable to stop for a rest,
unable to stop for water.
No more beatings.
At first the days were shaped by stories of promise
and by song.
By a pillar of fire before them at night,
and a pillar of cloud by day.
Their God was with them. Nothing could go wrong.

Until they camped by the edge of the Red Sea.
Who noticed first?
Who cried out
as the dust cloud of the pursuing army
rose in the distance?
How quickly did the news spread throughout the camp:
The Egyptians are on their way,
and here we are trapped by this sea.
God, we thought that you knew where you were leading us?
How deep did the sense of betrayal go?
God, why have you led us out here?
Why didn't you just let us die in Egypt?
Is there some perverse joy you take in raising up our hopes
and then dashing them?
What kind of a story is this, anyway?
We were already living in a story of death.
Now it is also a story of betrayal.

And in the midst of that betrayal,
in the midst of the loss of hope,
in the midst of deep fear,
in the face of death,
God does something that is beyond imagination,
beyond hope.
The waters roll back,
the sea bed is dry,
even the smallest feet walk safely,

overwhelming walls of water
framing dry ground.
A path to new life opens in the face of death.

And death itself?
When the waters roll back,
death is defeated.
The powers of death cease to exist.
Death no longer pursues this group of wanderers
cautiously walking the path to freedom and new life.

Imagine it, if you will.
God had such high hopes.
“If only I could put these people in their own land.
They would worship only me.
They would show all the other nations
what my kingdom looks like:
what it looks like when the hungry are fed,
when the poor are cared for,
when the stranger is welcomed,
when creation is cared for,
and when enemies are forgiven.
What it looks like when I live among people,
on the earth.”

God had such high hopes.
God would be with them, nothing could go wrong.

Until the people turned to the gods of their neighbors.
Until they worshiped their military might,
ground down the poor
and took their land,
ignored the needs of the earth,
enslaved the stranger,
and picked up the spear in the face of the enemy.

Until betrayal became the grief at the heart of God,
and when faced with the choice of death
or the choice of life,
the people chose death.

And in the midst of that betrayal,
in the midst of the loss of hope,
in the midst of deep fear,
in the face of death,
God does something that is beyond imagination,
beyond hope.
God promises water for the barren ground,
a living, pumping heart of flesh
to replace the closed, cold heart of stone.
In the midst of death,
renewal and new life.

Imagine it, if you will.
The disciples had such high hopes.
The kingdom truly seemed to have come.
Where Jesus walked, healing had come, »

sins were forgiven,
the hungry fed,
evil fled.
Even creation rejoiced,
where Jesus walked.

That heady walk to Jerusalem.
The entrance on a donkey.
The cheers of the crowd.
The mounting hope of death overthrown.

If Jesus was with them,
nothing could go wrong.

Until the night of betrayal.
Until the night of death.
Grief became their cloak,
their place of refuge,
as they remembered their own failures,
their own scared flight,
their own denials and fears.

And in the midst of that betrayal,
in the midst of the loss of hope,
in the midst of deep fear,
in the face of death,
God does something that is beyond imagination,
beyond hope.
Jesus is raised, death is defeated,
life becomes the last word,
the heart of flesh that stopped, begins again.
With a steady beat life flowers out of darkness,
death is destroyed,
and new life begins.

Some parts of it we don't need to imagine.
We've all been there.
That place of new dreams, that place of hope.
We've all tried hard to walk the path to freedom,
to leave behind the old slaveries.

We've tried to live in the abundance of creation,
be the people who live in community with God,
be the place of forgiveness and healing,
be a people of hope.

We've tried,
God knows we've tried.

And still we find our feet on that other path.
That path of betrayal,
that path of denial,
that path of fear,
that path of death.
We've held the scabbard when the soldier pulled the sword.
We've tried to look like we were giving the kiss of love
in the midst of our collusion.

We have betrayed
and we have been betrayed.
And there is no health in us.

And we have forgotten,
that in the midst of our betrayal,
in the midst of loss of hope,
in the midst of deep fear,
in the face of death,
God does something that is beyond imagination,
beyond hope.

This story is our story,
the pattern getting clearer with each turning of the page.
If we can see beyond the range of normal sight
to the life that God brings
again and again and again,
in the midst of deep darkness,
in the face of death;
if we have eyes to see new life in the midst of death,
then we will be able to see the promise and hope
of resurrection.

And perhaps if we can see that,
we might also see that
not only did Jesus rise again in the flesh
but we too,
even though we bind ourselves to betray,
we too,
can be the place where new life happens.
And maybe then we can see
that death is not the last word,
not the only word,
that betrayal is not the last word,
not the only word,
that denial is not the last word,
not the only word.

Rather, we might see that
the Word who became flesh
gives us new words:
forgiveness,
hope,
new life,
resurrection.

These words become true
in our flesh,
as we walk the path of new life,
as we, like God, live into a kingdom
that is beyond imagination,
beyond hope. ■



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The Glory Story

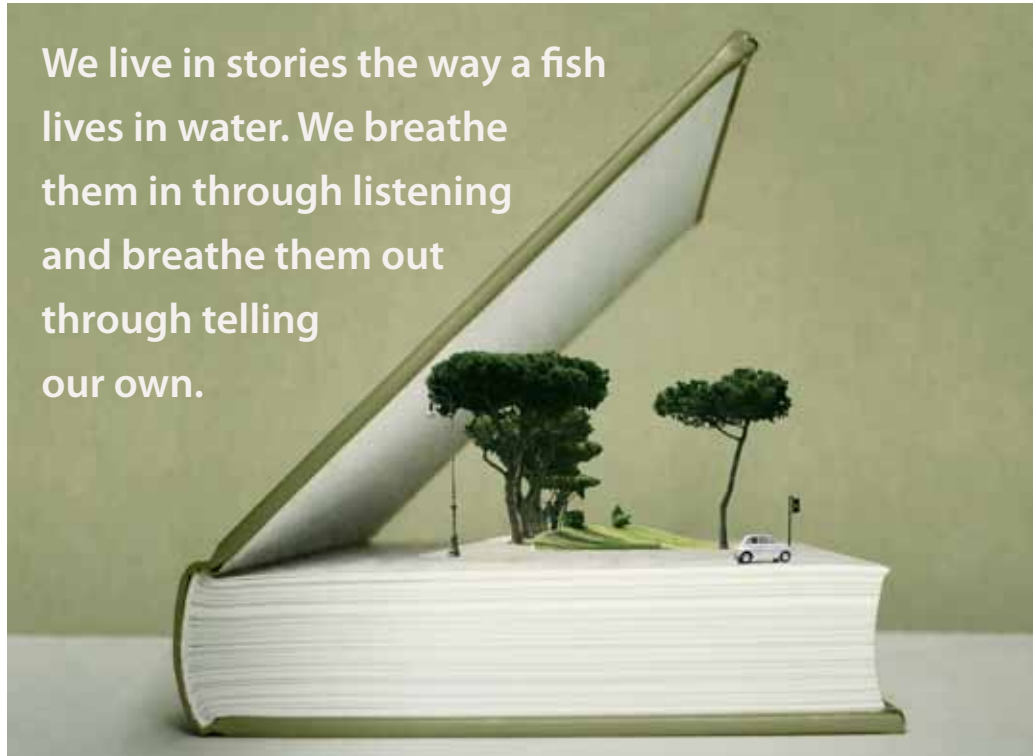
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SI GET OLDER I have a deepening appreciation for stories. One of my favorite Bible stories is the one of Jesus walking on water (Matt. 14:22-33). There's a picture of this story in my office, and I think about it every day. The unnamed artist has frozen the scene with the winds and waves rocking the boat, the storm at the peak of fury. Most of the disciples on the small fishing boat are hunched over in fear; a few reach out with their arms, pleading for rescue. A short distance away from the windswept boat is the ghost-like figure of Jesus walking on the water with the command, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." This picture reminds me of the overarching story of Jesus' redemption and his rescue of the fearful disciples. But it also makes me think about the 12 individual stories of those disciples on the boat. Each of their stories points back to the "glory story" of Jesus Christ.

The book of Genesis begins with the first story ever told, the story of creation: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). Humans were created within this story, and to this day we continue to be storytellers. A typical day is filled with stories from family members, friends, and colleagues. My kids tell me stories about their soccer games on the playground and the ongoing dramas of middle school. At work, over a cup of coffee, a colleague tells me stories about his newborn twin boys. It has been suggested that we live in stories the way a fish lives in water. We breathe them in through listening and breathe them out through telling our own.

Stories connect us with others; they engage our whole being. At a foundational level, stories fill us with insight and understanding. Like DNA, the basic building blocks of the human body, stories provide us with unique points of

We live in stories the way a fish lives in water. We breathe them in through listening and breathe them out through telling our own.



view. Everyone has stories to tell because we all share life experiences. By telling our own stories and listening to the stories of others, we begin to understand who we are. Additionally, we learn from listening to the stories of others how to navigate life. Through their stories, my grandfather and parents have poured into my life the themes of quiet determination and commitment.

Of course, there are broken stories in our broken world. As individuals and families, our stories will always be incomplete as we struggle daily with the effects of sin, such as challenging relationships with spouses or kids, uncertainty within the job market, struggles with addiction. Like the disciples in the story of Jesus walking on the water, we are still in the boat. Cowering in fear. Reaching out for help.

"Community," says Daniel Taylor in his book *The Healing Power of Stories*, "offers us our single best hope for healing broken

stories." That community centers on the redeeming and rescuing story of Jesus Christ. When we are rooted in a relationship with Jesus Christ, we can offer our broken stories as a humble sacrifice. "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught" (Col. 2:6-7).

That picture in my office reminds me that Jesus is coming toward the boat, that he seeks to use our broken stories. In a world that continues to fragment, Jesus weaves together our individual stories—whatever the winds and waves in our lives—into his overarching story. ■



Chris Hamstra is a professor at Davenport University. He worships at Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Some of his best stories come from growing up in Colorado.

Being ‘The Bridge’ in Niagara Falls

by Scott Meekhof

Pastor Allen Kleine Deters stands in downtown Niagara Falls.



The city of Niagara Falls, Ontario, home to the world-famous waterfalls by the same name, is nestled along the Niagara River, which flows from Lake Erie into Lake Ontario along the border between Canada and the United States.

“Niagara” is said to come from the Iroquois word for “point of land cut in two,” and the city’s proximity to rivers, lakes, and the border means there are a lot of bridges there.

These bridges inspired the name of “The Bridge,” one of the newest church plants in the Christian Reformed Church.

The church’s mission is to be a bridge connecting people to Jesus and to each other, said Rev. Allen Kleine Deters, who

is partnering with Christian Reformed Home Missions; Classis Niagara; Providence CRC in Beamsville, Ontario; the Village Church in Thorold, Ontario; and others in this venture.

“We want to show Niagara Falls a whole new idea of what church can be. We want to make the community part of our DNA, not just be a Sunday event.”

Niagara Falls, Ontario, has one of the highest rates of poverty in the Niagara region, and there is definitely a need for transformation, said Kleine Deters. “We’ve identified a kind of ‘parish’ area—basically, downtown Niagara Falls.”

In 2008, Classis Niagara planted The Village in nearby Thorold, working to connect with Canadians who think of

church as boring or irrelevant, who have never been to church, or who have been hurt by the church in the past.

The Village’s outlook didn’t stop with their own community. They wanted to reach seekers throughout the Niagara Peninsula.

“It has been one of our core values from day one to partner in planting another church,” said Mike Collins, pastor of The Village. “The kingdom of God is in and beyond the walls of our city in Thorold.”

So for the last several years, said Collins, his church and churches in its classis set aside money to plant more churches in the Niagara region.

Since February 2013, a church planting team from Classis Niagara had explored

You add.
God multiplies.

“We want to show Niagara Falls a whole new idea of what church can be. We want to make the community part of our DNA, not just be a Sunday event.”

establishing a new faith community in the region.

Then, in October of that year, the classis made a unanimous decision that God was directing them to start a church in the Niagara Falls area.

“A church is needed in places like Niagara Falls,” said Collins. “We now have the privilege of extending our reach through The Bridge as it begins to be a gospel presence in that area.”

Kleine Deters and his wife, Freda, heard God’s call and moved to Niagara Falls, Ontario, in August 2014.

They live close to a dividing line between the middle-class parts of the city and the more impoverished areas, he said. “Just down the street from us, we start heading into an area of empty storefronts, vacant buildings, dilapidated motels. Some old motel rooms are home for entire families.”

He said social services provide a bare minimum of support and don’t do enough to help people deal with growing poverty, substance abuse, and other issues.

The Bridge is doing what it can to help address these problems, working in partnership with Diaconal Ministries Canada to start conversations in the community.

Using a framework called the Community Opportunity Scan, the pastor meets with local stakeholders, community members, social services officials, business people, members of government, and others.

Building relationships and asking questions of the community gives a better perspective of the needs and will allow the church to better partner with the community, rather than barging in with preconceived notions of what a church should be like, he said.

“We do a lot of networking—we’re in the community trying to get the flavor

of what church is like in Niagara Falls,” Kleine Deters said.

Members of The Bridge are serving the neighborhood in various ways throughout the week, and they come to the pastor’s house each week for teaching, worship, and a meal.

“Already in the short time we’ve been here, we’ve built enough relationships in the downtown area that we’ll have a place to meet, a local cigar shop, which is good because we’re about to outgrow our house,” Kleine Deters said.

He said the cigar shop is a perfect spot that has couches and tables for fellowship and learning.

Kleine Deters said he is building a core team for The Bridge, which is training to look at the needs of its community, identify ways to connect, and become partners in the community.

Over the next year, The Bridge plans to expand into what he calls solid missional communities, raising up leaders to help the church be a part of the community, empowering them to reach more parish areas within the city, and meeting each week to celebrate what God is doing all week in Niagara Falls. »

Please pray . . .

As they engage in ministry across North America, Home Missions leaders ask you to pray

- for open doors and open hearts in the community.
- that pastors, leaders, and congregations make connections and develop reputations for loving like Christ.
- that God reveals many ministry opportunities.
- that planting teams, communities, and clusters grow and that God brings people with the right gifts and passions.
- for pastors and campus ministers who raise funds, especially those who are bivocational and have jobs in addition to responsibility for leading their ministries.



Pastor Allen Kleine Deters
with his wife, Freda, and
their dog Sophie.

» More than anything, though, he wants to see God shape The Bridge.

“We have some vision and direction—we’re grassroots, we’re community focused, but really we are trying to be what God wants us to be in this city.”

Kleine Deters said that nearly 30 years of ministry experience has given him the

tools and skills to build this church from the ground up.

But there is something else beyond the skills and experience: Kleine Deters said he and his wife have missional hearts.

“We’ve always lived like this,” he said. “We’ve always had worship in our home, people staying with us; we’ve always

worked to get to know people and build relationships.” ■



Scott Meekhof is communications coordinator for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

God’s Call to Campus Ministry

Campus minister Steve Kooy says God spoke to him in a powerful way in October 2013 through the words of Matthew 9:35-37:

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”

“I remember praying, ‘Yes, God! There is so much work to be done—what are we going to do about it?’” said Kooy, campus minister at Geneva Fellowship at



Pastor Steve Kooy

Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

Geneva Fellowship is one of more than 30 campus ministries supported

by Christian Reformed Home Missions. At the time that Bible verse spoke to him, Kooy said, the ministry was going incredibly well.

Many students were growing in faith and participating in groups called “huddles,” discipleship, and worship.

“I felt so excited about what God was doing, but also stretched,” said Kooy.

Taking into consideration Queen’s University’s 17,000 undergraduate students and 4,500 graduate students, it’s not hard to see why.

Going on to the next verse, Matthew 9:38, Kooy was troubled. That verse says, “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Kooy said that’s not what he wanted. “I was hoping God would infuse me with some superpower so I could do more and have a greater personal capacity for ministry. But that’s not what God was suggesting in this verse.”

So he decided to try things God’s way and prayed for more workers. He asked his wife, his students, his board, his classis, and everyone else he knew to pray for more workers.

And they came. In 2014, Kooy was joined by five leaders with hearts for campus ministry. Mimi Kashira-Haws, Paul Hanash, Evelyn Reid, Nancy Smith, and Steve’s wife, Julia Kooy, all joined the ministry.

“In the end, I did get a superpower—I got a super team of five staff and 21 student leaders, each with gifts to build God’s kingdom in powerful ways.”

God is blessing Geneva Fellowship like never before, with events filled to



A group from Geneva Fellowship.

capacity, mentor relationships growing, students being baptized, and support pouring in, said Kooy.

One student said, “Thank you for listening to me and praying with me. I cannot tell you how thankful I am the Lord used you to reach me in a time I really, really needed it.”

Kooy gives God the credit for providing the leadership and support necessary to invest in the lives of so many students.

“It’s exciting to see thriving ministries like Geneva Fellowship, especially as we continue to start new campus ministries and expand into more academic institutions,” said Mark Wallace, Home Missions Catalytic Leader for Campus Ministry. ■

—by Scott Meekhof

You add.
God multiplies.

A New Church in the Neighborhood

About six years ago, Jeff Heerspink, a commissioned pastor at Northern Lighthouse Ministries Christian Reformed Church and the leader of a “cluster” of church leaders in Lincoln, Neb., stood across from St. Paul United Church of Christ in downtown Lincoln.

Located in the Everett neighborhood, the UCC building and congregation were in decline, as was the area around them.

Heerspink felt led to pray that Northern Lighthouse, a congregation that ministers to prison inmates and to those released from prison, could one day plant a church in that building.



Exterior of F Street Church.

F Street holds a farmers' market during warmer months as an outreach.



A few years later, Heerspink said, he learned that the historic church was for sale. During those years of waiting, a cluster of Nebraska CRC leaders had formed and encouraged Heerspink to contact the church.

The building was valued at more than \$3 million, but the small congregation remaining there accepted an offer of \$260,000.

Classis Heartland, with the assistance of a generous donor, provided funding, and the F Street Neighborhood Church was born.

The first public worship service was held in June 2014.

This ministry, however, is much more than the church—F Street seeks to be a light to the neighborhood and to all of downtown Lincoln, said Heerspink.

The Everett neighborhood is in transition. Although more than 40 percent of its residents live below the poverty line, local businesses and organizations are investing in the area.

What's more, it is in a prime downtown location only a few blocks from the governor's mansion, capitol building, and the University of Nebraska.

All around are people from many nationalities and walks of life, including young professionals, older middle-class folks, and impoverished families.

To reach its neighbors, F Street has cultivated partnerships and innovative ways to reach out.

The church hosts a farmer's market every week, where they accept food stamps as a way to serve low-income

families. They engage the neighborhoods with events and block parties.

They have entered into partnerships, and a number of community organizations meet in the F Street building.

F Street and Heerspink, along with members of the cluster of churches working together, have also built a partnership with area Reformed Church in America congregations to form a Kingdom Enterprise Zone (KEZ).

Kingdom Enterprise Zones are part of what is called the Church Multiplication Initiative; they are geographic areas in which the CRC and RCA are collaborating to start churches, often churches that have a fresh focus for ministry.

With the backing of the RCA in 2014, Heerspink hired a pastoral and teaching team of two leaders to serve at F Street. These leaders had already been serving at Northern Lighthouse; the support of the RCA allowed them to play a big role in planting the new church, said Heerspink.

He said this arrangement is an example of ministry that can happen through cooperation.

“We could not have started this church without the partnership in the way we did,” he said. “The Reformed churches in this area have been invaluable partners—financially, in prayer, and in service.”

Jerry Holleman, Home Missions regional leader, said the efforts of many people have helped to make F Street a successful ministry.

“We're praising God for something that started out as a wild dream and has resulted in this fantastic ministry,” Holleman said. ■

—by Scott Meekhof

Time to Get Out of the Boat

Change. How do you feel about change? Does it energize you? Make you uncomfortable? Or both?

Often our desire for change, even genuine desire, is offset by our tendency to keep things the same. College students may begin a semester vowing to study more and improve their grades, only to find that the vow to change has fallen victim to the old, familiar patterns of procrastination.

Others may seek to change eating habits or physical activity, knowing that their health depends upon it. But soon they are back on the couch with chips and wings.

The Christian Reformed Church experiences the same dynamic. We want to change, but it's easy to slide back into comfortable patterns and habits. This happens in our pews and projects; in our assemblies and agencies.

This spring, new opportunities for change are unfolding before us, offering new ways of being church together.

One such opportunity comes via the task force appointed by synod to study our denominational culture and structure. After listening to and engaging many people in discussion, the task force is bringing to Synod 2015 a proposal that would change much of the behind-the-scenes work performed by the various boards that oversee your shared ministries.

Currently we have five boards overseeing those ministries. Back to God Ministries International, Home Missions, World Missions, and World Renew each have their own boards, in addition to the Board of Trustees, which acts on behalf of synod. And that's not including Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, which are not part of the proposal.

Could we minister more effectively if this complex and often cumbersome system of boards were changed? Many—including the task force—believe so. The proposal coming to synod would leave out the World Renew board because of that agency's special requirements, including the need to qualify for government grants. But it suggests combining the other four boards into one.

Keep in mind that this proposal is about how the agencies are governed; not about the work they do. Check the *Agenda*



for Synod 2015 for a detailed explanation and rationale. But consider with me this question: Will we approve and embrace this change, or will we succumb to the temptation of the comfortable and familiar?

Another effort at change has been developing momentum apart from the work of the task force on structure and culture. In February, the boards of Home Missions and World Missions decided to explore the possibility of bringing HM and WM together into a mission agency with both a local and global vision and mandate.

Will we accept this change, or will the comfort and certainty of the way we've always done things keep us from changing?

Resistance to change comes from within, through our personal tendencies and our institutional habits. The power to step forward in faith, however, comes not from within ourselves but through Christ.

A half-dozen years ago, my wife and I were wrestling with whether to adopt two orphaned siblings. After some initial enthusiasm, we began sliding back into our comfort zones as we focused on our four biological children, our jobs, and our fairly predictable lives.

But then, just after we had decided to stop pursuing the adoption, the sermon in church the next day was based on Matthew 14, the account of Jesus inviting Peter to get out of the boat and walk with him on the water.

The question asked of us was: What is keeping us from stepping out of the boat? We knew then what we needed to do and we proceeded with the adoption of two Ethiopian brothers. God's love and mercy have blessed us every day thereafter.

What about the CRC? Will we remain in our "boat," carefully structured around separate agencies and ministries and a culture of autonomy? Or will we step out of the boat and, in humility, faith, and prayer, work to build a new culture that better fulfills God's call to service in the world of today and tomorrow?

I believe it's time to get out of the boat. ■

Will we accept change?



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

You add.
God multiplies.

OUT AND ABOUT

No Longer Disenchanted

Yaminah (not her real name) is an assistant university professor in the Middle East. A former Muslim, she became disenchanted with all religions.

Still, she admitted, she had long wanted to connect with “thinking Christians who are serious about their faith.”

Yaminah does not like to listen to radio or watch TV. But one of her female students—also of Muslim background—whom she describes as “bright and brave” told her about a radio broadcast.

“This broadcast helped me better understand the beliefs of Christians,” Yaminah’s student told her.

She also shared with Yaminah links to Christian websites, including the website produced by Back to God



BTGMI Arabic media ministry is reaching young Muslims—and changing lives.

Ministries’ Arabic partner, MERF (Middle East Reformed Fellowship).

That led Yaminah to listen, read, and try to learn more about the Christian faith.

“We must always be in tune with what is going on around us and what people are thinking about, so that our broad-

casts and websites will interest them,” said BTGMI’s Arabic ministry leader.

“This has opened doors for growing numbers of those disenchanted with Islam to open their minds and hearts to us.”

Yaminah listened with interest and, as a result, has embraced Christ.

Yaminah and her student have become partners in ministry. Their mission is to tell others about who Jesus truly is. Their own security requires that they do so with much discretion. ■

—by Kristen Van Stee,
Back to God Ministries
International



Farmers like Reynaldo prepare to work their land using agricultural training from World Renew partners in Nicaragua.

Reynaldo’s Turn to Lead: Recognizing Abundance

When I was a young boy, I remember that there was abundance all around us, but nobody paid attention to it,” said Reynaldo Garcia Blanco, a subsistence farmer in Loma de Cafén, Nicaragua.

“Sometimes the crops we grew were just left in the fields. Now I am learning to make better use of the resources we have.”

World Renew is training farmers like Garcia Blanco, who make less than \$1.25 a day, to recognize their resources and then manage and develop them sustainably.

When Garcia Blanco heard that World Renew’s partner Asociación Cristiana para Jóvenes (ACJ) would provide agricultural training in his village, he got involved.

“Even though I grew corn, beans, and coffee the traditional way, I was also interested in learning new farming techniques,” he said.

As a participant in ACJ’s Farmer Field Schools, Garcia Blanco learned about sustainable agriculture practices like using velvet bean plants to produce green manure to cover crops.

“Velvet bean plants contain nutrients that enrich the soil,” he says.

“When I apply them to my crops, I can harvest a good yield because the compost improves the soil’s fertility. Through the field school, I am putting the natural abundance we have in Loma de Cafén to use.” ■

—by Beth DeGraff, World Renew

Community 'Giant' Honored with Justice Award

For 33 years, the “giants” of Grand Rapids, Mich. have been gathering.

And this year, one of Calvin College’s own is being honored. Michelle Loyd-Paige, Calvin’s dean for multicultural affairs and interim executive associate to the president for diversity and inclusion, is the recipient of the Floyd B. Skinner Justice Award.

A program of the Woodrick Diversity Learning Center at Grand Rapids Community College, the annual awards honor African American leaders “for their exceptional contributions shaping the history and quality of life of greater Grand Rapids.”

Of the group of 13 Giants Awards, the Floyd B. Skinner Justice Award—named after a Grand Rapids civil rights

attorney—is reserved for candidates who “exemplify a concern for peace and genuine respect for people, fairness, and equity.”

Loyd-Paige fits the bill both as a Giants Award winner and specifically as a Justice Award honoree.

As a cabinet member, she influences policy decisions



Michelle Loyd-Paige

that broaden inclusion efforts at the college. As a sociology professor, she inspires students through courses like Diversity and Inequality in North America.

Loyd-Paige’s local involvement has included work with the Women of Color Collaborative, the Angel Community Church Leadership Council, and the Partners for a Racism Free Community Advisory Board.

Loyd-Paige says she was surprised by the award. “I would have thought it would be more likely that I would find gold in my backyard than to be recognized as a ‘giant,’” she said.

“Not because I do not think that my work is important; it is very important work. However, the work that I do is often in the background, working through committees and having small conversations. Being recognized as a ‘giant’ leaves me speechless and encouraged to continue working as one of Christ’s agents of renewal.” ■

—by Amanda Geenhoe,
Calvin College

Sewing and Sowing in Ministry

Stella was unable to sleep. The plans she had for using manure were keeping her wide awake. A student at Pentecostal Theological College (PTC) in Uganda, Stella had recently learned a new technique for growing banana trees. The first step: collecting as much manure for fertilizer as she could. “The goal is for the students to learn a trade that they can take with them when they graduate, as well as be able to teach agriculture to others in their community,” said Eric Ranck, a Christian Reformed World Missions volunteer who serves at PTC.



Stella paid for her and her nine siblings’ education by using her sewing skills.

Before Stella was sowing seeds in her agricultural classes, she was sewing beautiful dresses and shirts.

“My dad had an alcohol problem, and we always struggled with money,” she said. “I had to drop out of high school, but I learned how to sew and worked hard to raise money.”

Stella earned enough to send all nine of her siblings to universities. Then in the fall of 2014, it was her turn.

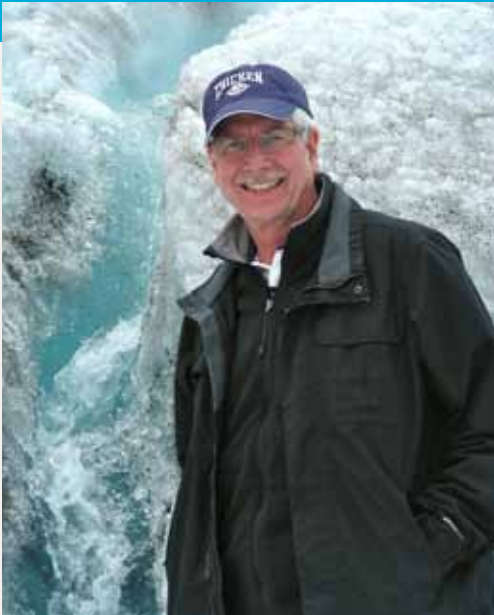
Stella enrolled in PTC’s bridging program designed to help students who have not completed high school. Now she is developing both her ministry and agricultural skills that will help her future outreach thrive.

Although Stella is still deciding on the specifics of her future in ministry, Ranck is confident she will be a blessing wherever she serves.

“I always marvel at God’s work in people when I think of Stella,” he says. “She teaches me to love and extend grace to everyone I meet.” ■

—by Brian Clark, Christian Reformed World Missions

You add.
God multiplies.



Dick Broene

Broene Retires from Cadets

The rain was falling so hard and the lightning cracking so fiercely during the 2011 Cadet International Camporee in Reed City, Mich., that the best he could do was to pray, said Dick Broene.

“God was showing off. He knows what he is doing. I was on my knees in my tent, laughing and praying. I wasn’t afraid of the lightning,” said Broene, who recently retired after serving for more than 32 years as executive director of the Calvinist Cadet Corps.

Deep faith coupled with good humor are hallmarks of Broene’s career. Prayer comes to him freely, as does an infectious smile, especially for cadets.

Even as he retires, Broene will continue to serve as a counselor at his church, Coit Community in Grand Rapids, Mich.

“I am fortunate in that this is what God has called me to do,” said Broene of his position as executive director. “I’ve always said there are probably better people who could do the job, but there has been no better job for me.” ■

—by Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

Refurbishing Seminary Apartments as Ministry

Before Jim Farman was hired to oversee maintenance in the Calvin Seminary student apartments, the work was outsourced.

But with Farman’s background of maintenance know-how and his ability to teach others how to do new tasks, and by hiring and training students, Calvin Seminary was able to create many more student part-time jobs, get better results, and at a cost savings.

About 30 percent of the apartments need to be turned over each year: cleaned, painted, and repaired as needed for the next students and their families to move in.

The facilities team of students, many of them international students, have been taught how to prep and paint trim, walls, and doors, or how to systematically do the “deep cleaning” of appli-

Jiyea Oh, right, and Jinsu Jwang, left, paint an apartment.



Jiyea Oh cleans a stove.

ances, bathrooms, cupboards, and floors.

But the story beneath this story is the formation for ministry that is taking place. These students see object lessons in the work.

“I like to renovate because it reminds me of the need for spiritual renovation in human life,” said one team member.

It’s not lost on them that Jesus, trained in carpentry, and Paul the tentmaker knew what it meant to work with their hands.

They also learn about being and building community. In spite of their diversity of languages, countries, and callings, they are mentored by Farman and his supervisor Jim Lakin to do their work as unto the Lord—as a team. ■

—by Jinny De Jong,
Calvin Theological Seminary

Longer versions of some of these stories are online at thebanner.org/together.

Spittlebugs and Skunk Cabbage

Spring has sprung! Plants are popping up, animals are waking up, and even bugs are showing up. If you go outside and pay attention to the world around you, you'll see all sorts of "spring things." They weren't around in the winter, or they weren't green, or they weren't

hatched yet. And in the summer they're going to be a lot different. They'll hatch and grow and bloom and move.

So right now is the time to go outside and catch creation in its spring clothes. Bundle up if it's a bit chilly out there. Take along a couple of thick newspapers

to sit or kneel on. Prepare yourself to walk gently and sit quietly. Many of these spring things are new and small and a little bit fragile.

But first, read these pages. They'll help you recognize some of the small wonders God has put at your doorstep.

Skunk Cabbage

You'll need to look in soggy places to find skunk cabbage. This plant needs to keep its "feet" wet. It blooms in early spring.

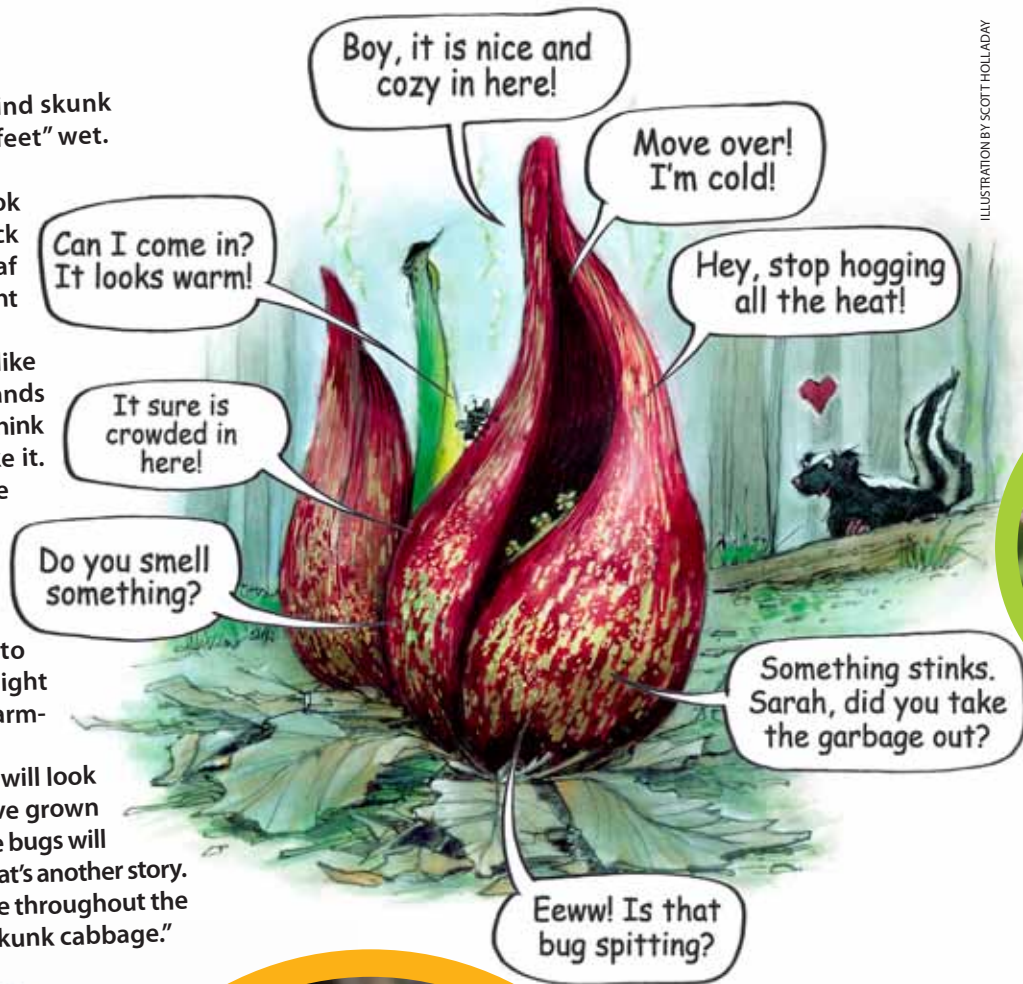
The skunk cabbage flower doesn't look like a common flower. It looks like a thick dark green or brown-spotted green leaf curled around a yellow finger. It grows right on the soggy ground, not on a stalk.

Skunk cabbage stinks. To us it smells like garbage. If you find one, get on your hands and knees and take a big whiff. You may think it's an awful smell, but certain bugs like it. They can smell it a long way off, and the smell invites them to come for a meal of nectar and pollen and for protection from weather.

Unlike most plants, skunk cabbage even makes its own heat! Bugs seem to know that. On a cold spring day you might find many bugs hunkered down and warming up in skunk cabbage.

During the summer, skunk cabbage will look completely different. Its leaves will have grown and its flower will have disappeared. The bugs will have disappeared or changed too. But that's another story.

To see what skunk cabbage looks like throughout the year, do a Google Images search for "skunk cabbage."



Spittlebugs

Have you ever seen “spit” on your grass? It looks as if someone simply spit as they walked through your yard. Try to find a blob of that foamy spit. (If you can’t find it, just use your imagination.)

Take a small stick or a blade of grass and gently scrape away the foam. You’ll discover that it is sticky, almost like glue. Underneath you should spot a small, soft, green insect: a spittlebug.

This spittlebug spent the winter in an egg buried in the ground. Not long ago it hatched, climbed up onto a young plant, and stuck its beak into the tender stem. Now it’s drinking lots of plant juice. It uses some as food; the rest comes out of its back end as sticky foam. Because the bug perches upside down on the plant, the foam rolls down over it and creates instant protection. It’s got a foam home!

Pretty soon this spittlebug will grow a hard shell for protection and move out of its foam home. Then it will be known as a froghopper, but that’s another story.

To see both spring and summer spittlebug forms, do a Google Image search using the term “meadow spittlebug life cycle.”



Doodlebugs

Doodlebugs, also called “antlions,” grow up in areas with loose sand and protection overhead. Often you can find them on disturbed ground under the eaves of a house, garage, or barn. Doodlebugs’ homes look like upside-down anthills. They’re sandy pits instead of sandy mounds. Doodlebugs prey on any little critter that falls into their pit.

When you find a doodlebug home, prepare to “tease” it just a bit. This doesn’t hurt the bug but it shows you just how fast and clever such a little thing can be.

First, take a blade of grass and brush it gently over the outside edge of the doodlebug home. Make the grass blade act like an ant walking nearby. If the bug is awake and alert, it might throw grains of sand up and out of its front door. Watch carefully: in this mini world a little bug is throwing “boulders” at another bug.

Sometimes the doodlebug isn’t hungry or isn’t paying attention. Then you can scoop it out of its house. This won’t harm the critter.

With both hands try to scoop up the whole doodlebug home. Then let the sand sift slowly from your hands. If you’ve got the doodlebug you’ll feel something scabbling around on your hands. It just wants to go home. Put it back gently on the sand.

Then you can watch the bug make a new home. It wiggles itself backwards in circles, throwing the sand into perfect little piles. Then it crawls into its front door, settles down, and waits for a real ant to show up.

An adult doodlebug is called a fish fly. It looks and acts completely different.

To see what a doodlebug looks like, search Google Images using the search term “antlion life cycle.”



That's a Promise

How can we be so sure that summer will bring changes to these spring things? Because God has promised. Unscramble the words below and write them on the lines below in the right order so that the promise makes sense. Check Genesis 8:22 for your answer.

“As long as the night endures, cold and winter, heat and summer, seedtime and day, earth and harvest will never cease” —Genesis 8:22



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



NEW WAY



OLD WAY

DO WE REALLY WANT TO BE TRANSFORMED?

W **E ALL WANT IT. WE ALL LONG FOR IT. WE ALL SEARCH FOR IT:** a meaningful life, one that brings fulfillment and satisfaction. Some call it “the good life.” Others name it “your greatest love” or “your heart’s desire.” It’s the thing for which we are willing to sacrifice and transform ourselves so that we can achieve the vision of life we believe will ultimately satisfy us. For now, let’s just call this thing that we long for and desire “it.”

Our contemporary culture offers a host of glittering images of “it.” These captivating visions range from a life spent fighting for the rights of the oppressed to one that is primarily devoted to achieving inner peace; from a life spent in the pursuit of excellence to one that is dedicated to making sure that our family is financially secure. We see these images of the good life on television and computer screens

NOT ALLOWING OURSELVES TO BE TRANSFORMED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIGHT OF WHO GOD IS AND WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US IS AKIN TO VISITING THE GRAND CANYON AND THEN DUMPING TRASH INTO IT.

and within the pages of novels, newspapers, and magazines. They offer the promise that devoting one's life to this political party, this diet and lifestyle, this job with this salary, or this type of parenting will ultimately fulfill us.

Our own version of "it" may be conscious or unconscious. In either case, it determines the choices we make and the ways in which we seek to be transformed. So the real question is this: According to what—or whose—vision of a meaningful life do we actually want to be transformed?

This question is not new. And it is not to be taken lightly, especially by those of us who claim Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (12:1-3).

Paul understood two things: first, the power of the gleaming visions of "it" that arise in the world, and second, that only in God can we find true fulfillment. Thus, he implored his readers to no longer let those other visions of "it" rule their lives but instead to be transformed from the inside out by fixing their attention on God.

Paul's urging to the Romans is just as relevant to us today. The images of "it" that surround us today are powerfully alluring. They dominate the world in which we live and often creep into the doors of our churches and of our hearts. How many of us think of God as a participant in our own story of achieving our dreams of self-fulfillment—whether it be in having the right appearance, the right job, or simply accepting ourselves as we are? How many of us spend our waking hours considering and working toward our next vacation, or the time when we will finally achieve the ideal weight, or the way in which we can secure

our own future? How many of us seek to transform the world so that we can feel good about ourselves or view our service to God as a tool for getting what we want from him? These are all evidence of different kinds of "its" transforming us, ruling our hearts and minds.

Instead, Paul urges his readers, stop searching for "it" over there. Look to God's mercy, he says, and there will you begin to be transformed. Paul knew that all the other "its" competing for our attention will leave us empty, unsatisfied, unfulfilled.

It is a truth taught throughout the whole of Scripture and Christian history that to be a Christian is to be transformed by God. Your whole goal in life, your satisfaction, and your desires are fulfilled not just by something but by someone outside of you: the God of the universe, who so loved the world that he sent his Son to redeem and renew the world. That "it" is not primarily about you; it is about God.

Sometimes we may get squeamish about allowing ourselves to be transformed, because it requires something radically counter-cultural: it requires acknowledging that we are sinful and that there are things we desire that are wrong. Yet not allowing ourselves to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the light of who God is and what God has done for us is akin to visiting the Grand Canyon and then dumping trash into it. That's not what we're supposed to do! Instead, we should stand in awe of this amazing gift of beauty and then commit ourselves to be stewards of that beauty.

That is what the gift of the full-orbed gospel does to us. We stand in awe of our salvation; we receive it as a gift, and then we allow the Spirit to radically transform us from the inside out.

When we find our "it" in God, not only will we bring ultimate glory to him and find the satisfaction and rest our souls long for, we will also be transformed into God's likeness.

This is the pursuit of holiness, righteousness, and justice that pours from the pages of Scripture—not cold moralism but a living faith. This is a life that is lived by the rhythm of hating what is evil and clinging to what is good. And as we are transformed into God's likeness by receiving the gift of salvation, everything else in our lives will be transformed as well.

Our approach to work, our families, our health—and yes, even our politics—will be transformed as we seek to understand how to live in the light of the full-orbed gospel. Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian, expressed it this way: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine!'" Living out this truth in the world begins by submitting ourselves and our desires to God.

"And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit," writes Paul to the Corinthians. When we find our "it" in God, we will be transformed. And as we are transformed, our lives will reflect God's glory to the world. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Gayle Doornbos is a doctoral student at Wycliffe College in Toronto. She currently lives in Whitby, Ontario, with her husband, Kyle, and attends Hebron Christian Reformed Church.

Reel Encounters

"WHEN I LOOK IN THEIR FACES, I see the face of Jesus." This explained it. Phoebe, a seminary student from Indonesia, cared for our children while we moms were in Bible study. My children warmed to Phoebe instantly, regardless of her "differentness," and loved her dearly. These words about our children on her last day there explained why. She loved them because she saw Jesus in them.

It's a challenge in our everyday lives to look at the people around us, strangers or otherwise, and see the face of Jesus. Recently a spate of documentaries have challenged me to do that by opening a window into the lives of people around the world—people who might easily be overlooked or dismissed.

In *The Drop Box*, Pastor Lee Jong-rak of Seoul, South Korea, couldn't bear to see another baby abandoned in the streets. He built a "drop box" for people who wanted to give up their babies. So far his church community has been able to help more than 600 babies. Many were born with disabilities or to desperate teenagers. The filmmakers make clear that the devaluation of life is not only an issue in Seoul; babies are abandoned in cities around the world, including in North America. Pastor Lee follows God's call to love others as God has loved him. (www.thedropboxfilm.com)

Dordt College professor Mark Volkers and teams of his students put together *The Fourth World*, a documentary that explains the immense growth of slums and gives voice to the difficult stories of those who live in them. Felix in Nairobi,

It's a challenge to look at the people around us, strangers or otherwise, and see the face of Jesus.

Tanya and Selma in Guatemala City, and Jovelyn in Manila open their daily lives and their histories to the camera, giving viewers insight into a life hidden from most. (www.fourth-worldfilm.com)

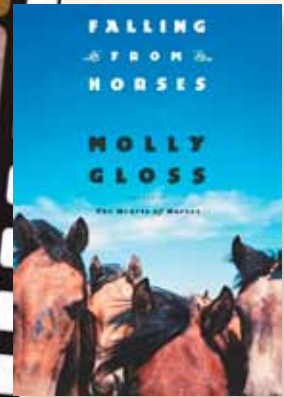
In the U.S. there are 1.6 million homeless youth on any given day. Calvin College grad Kirsten Kelly and her directing partner Anne de Mare followed three different Chicago teens in *The Homestretch*, exploring the reasons for homelessness and different approaches to solving the problem. One woman in particular, Maria, sees a young man at the school where she works and offers him the love she herself needed as a teen. *The Homestretch* is scheduled to air on PBS as part of their "Independent Lens" series on April 13. (www.thehomestretchdoc.com)

The Overnighters is about Jay Reinke, a pastor in Williston, N.D., who opens the church to men who have come to town looking for work in the booming oil fracking industry, finding instead a high cost of living and a shortage of housing. While Reinke's secrecy and personal failings ultimately lead to the demise of the church's "Overnighters" program, his eloquence about the need to show love to the stranger at the gates is powerful and worthy of any adult church group's discussion. (Drafthouse Films)

Any of these films will challenge viewers to show love to the stranger, to find the image of Christ in anyone. Like Pastor Lee or Maria, if we keep our eyes and hearts open, there are ways that we can be a channel of God's peace right now, right where we are. ■



Kristy Quist is the Tuned In editor for *The Banner* and a member of Neland Ave. Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Falling from Horses

by **Molly Gloss**

reviewed by **Francene Lewis**

Bud Frazer is an engaging young cowboy from Oregon who can ride and work cattle. With winnings from the rodeo, Bud goes to California to become a stunt rider in the cowboy flicks. On the bus he meets Lily, who wants to be a scriptwriter. While they search for work in not-so-glamorous Hollywood, they each face barriers to their dreams. This contemporary cowboy story confronts the romantic myth of the West. The reality of life on the ranch and in the movies is complex and often full of tragedy and heartbreak. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt).





Back to the Start

by **Martin Smith**
reviewed by **Paul Delger**

Back to the Start, the new solo album from the former lead singer of the Christian band Delirious?, chronicles Martin Smith's revival in both his music and his God. Smith's voice has a unique, raw quality. His new album consists of various styles, including rock-and-roll, ballads, and dance music, and the instrumentation is diverse, incorporating brass and stringed instruments. Fans will welcome it, while new listeners will understand what made Smith such a strong player in the modern worship movement for nearly 20 years. (Integrity Music)

Ida

reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

Ida is an intimate drama set in 1960s Poland. Anna, an 18-year-old novice, is about to take her vows in the convent where she was raised as an orphan. Her mother superior insists that Anna must first visit her sole living relative, an aunt. Anna's aunt reveals that her real name is Ida, and she is Jewish. Ida's aunt leads her slowly into the darkness of the family's story, dating back to the Nazi occupation. Beautifully directed by Pawel Pawlikowski, *Ida* is sparingly filmed in black and white; the cinematography supports the ethos of the era. On disc. (Music Box Films)



Easter

by **Jan Pieńkowski**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

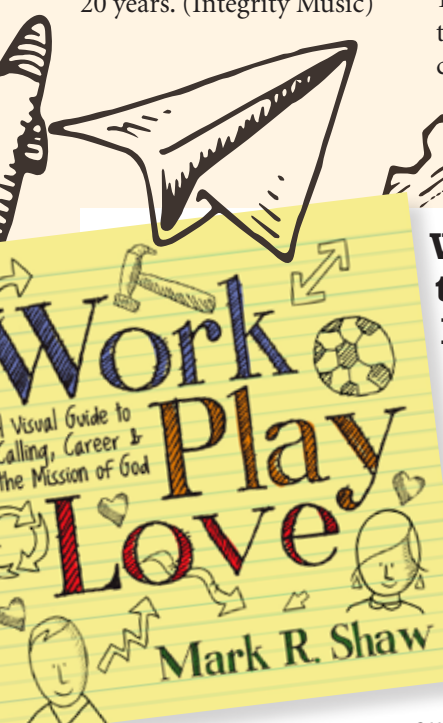
Based on a selection of verses from the King James Bible, *Easter* tells the story of Christ's passion. Stunning illustrations—silhouettes of people against both muted and vivid backgrounds, as well as various vines, flowers, and animals—worshipfully capture the love, pain, and wonder of Christ's sacrifice for humanity. First published in 1989 and recently reissued, *Easter* is an artistic treasure, a picture book worth sharing with a whole new generation of children. (Knopf)



Work, Play, Love: A Visual Guide to Calling, Career and the Mission of God

by **Mark R. Shaw**
reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

Mark Shaw speaks to those for whom the pressures of work frustrate, play exhausts, and nurturing love is challenging. Drawing on Scripture and his experience, Shaw explores ways to seek wisdom and find delight and balance in the commitments and complexities of life. Simple drawings and flow diagrams add to an accessible writing style. Great for any study group, this book will open up dialogue about bringing balance to the work, play, and love in our lives. (InterVarsity)



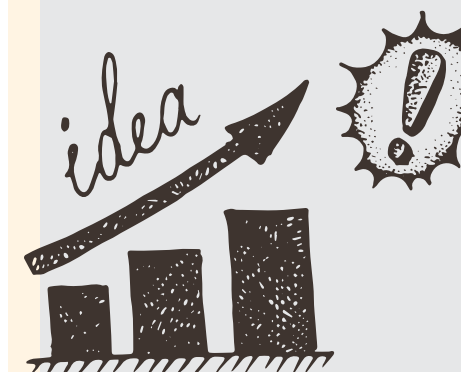
THE LOWDOWN

Painless Reading: Short-term mission teams might find answers they are looking for in *Helping Without Hurting in Short-Term Missions* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. (Moody)

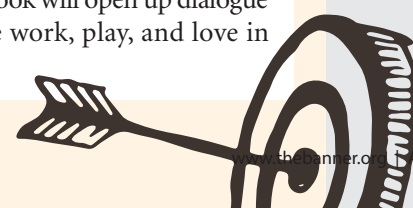
Big Impact: Singer/songwriter and worship leader Jon Guerra sings about big things on his album, *Little Songs*, due out this month. (Essential)

Howling Good: The best-selling historical novel *Wolf Hall* has become a BBC miniseries. It will begin airing on "Masterpiece" on PBS beginning April 5.

Downsizing: Many big movies have come to the small screen; recent releases include *Unbroken*, *Interstellar*, *Wild*, and *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay—Part 1*. You can read reviews of these and more at www.thebanner.org.



MORE REVIEWS ONLINE



Different People, Different Needs

CONTAINED WITHIN THE PAGES of a single book of the Bible are two seemingly contradictory messages. In the first section of Isaiah (ch. 1-39), the prophet warns an overly confident Israel that God will not be mocked. Talking to a people who are taking their covenant relationship with God for granted, the prophet's message is this: "Your game is over; judgment is around the corner" (see Isa. 1:13-17, *The Message*).

Beginning with chapter 40, the tone changes completely, almost as if the author is addressing a different audience. And he is, because things have changed for the people of Israel. As punishment for their insolence, God has allowed Israel to be taken into captivity in Babylon. Far away from their land, their holy city, and their beloved temple, the people of Israel feel utterly alone and desperate. They're convinced that the Lord has abandoned them. But now the message from the prophet is different: "Things are going to change for the better. Even if you have a hard time believing it, the Lord has never forgotten about you, and he is coming to the rescue" (see Isa. 49, *The Message*).

Two seemingly opposite messages in the same book of the Bible. What are we to make of that? Either God has different messages for different people or God has a different message for the same people at different times in their lives.

I thought about this recently while reflecting on what an ideal pastoral care ministry in our church would look like. The temptation, especially when faced with limited resources, is to have a one-size-fits-all strategy, a single message that is usually a reflection of the pastor's personal style, disposition, and focus.

If your pastor really likes books like Oswald Chambers' *My Utmost for His Highest* or Kyle Idleman's *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*, he or she will be more likely to preach from the first part of Isaiah. He or she will be more likely to warn about complacency and pending judgement, more likely to keep the pressure on for people to do better, work harder, and to "be holy, even as I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16).

If, on the other hand, your pastor prefers books like Mike Yaconelli's *Messy Spirituality* or even Nadia Bolz-Weber in *Pastrix: The Cranky Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint*, then the emphasis will be on God's acceptance of all sinners, God's patience, God's unending love and forgiveness. Such a pastor will be more likely to preach from the second part of Isaiah, more likely to reassure people in seemingly hopeless situations, more likely to talk about what it means that Jesus ate dinner with prostitutes.

So what does all this have to do with pastoral ministry?



Before answering the question of what pastoral care ministry in our congregation should look like, we'd do well to remind ourselves that not every member of the congregation is the same. Some of us see the glass half full, others see it as half empty. Some are naturally optimistic, others refer to themselves as more "realistic"; perhaps they are more personally aware of the darker side of humanity.

Some fit the description of God's people in the first part of Isaiah, people who think that somehow their covenant status gives them a kind of leverage over God, almost as if they can tell God what he is supposed to do. Others identify more with the Israelites held captive in Babylon that we learn about in the second part of Isaiah—people who have been beaten down

The place to start any conversation about pastoral care is to recognize that different people have different needs.

by a hard life and frustrated by disappointments and failures, people who feel worthless and hopeless in the face of insurmountable obstacles. I know of both kinds of people in my church, and people of every shade in between. Surely one-size pastoral care does not fit all.

In addition to those differences are the inevitable changes in outlook that come as people get older. Is it merely a stereotype to speak about the unquenchable hope, boundless energy, and a sense of invincibility we often find in younger people, compared with the hopelessness, resignation, and despondency that often come with having experienced some difficult challenges and disappointments as the years pass? Life is not always kind, and many older people long to hear words of reassurance to help them hold on to God. Since most church members fall across a broad age spectrum, surely one-size pastoral care does not fit all.

The place to start any conversation about pastoral care is to recognize that different people have different needs and then to be realistic about the pastoral care resources that are available. What is the pastoral emphasis from the pulpit? Are there people in the congregation with a unique ability to come alongside others in times of spiritual crisis? Are there people in the congregation who have proven skills of empathy, who can interpret seemingly negative comments and complaints, read between the lines, and sense a particular loneliness or pain or even depression? Are training resources such as Stephen Ministries available? Are ministry and small group leaders trained to recognize pastoral care needs? Are members of the congregation encouraged to let their needs be known to elders or designated "safe people" who can respond as needed? Are those people clearly visible for all to find?

Elders need to find out whether the pastoral staff are aware of their own limitations in pastoral style and focus and whether they are secure enough in their own pastoral identity to welcome and encourage lay pastoral ministry. In some cases, professional pastoral staff members are less than ideally suited to offer excellence in pastoral care.

Ultimately it is the responsibility of the elders to oversee the pastoral care of the congregation. Are the elders in your congregation accessible? Are they aware of how well pastoral care needs are met in your congregation? Do they care?

Some elders will tell you that no news is good news: "Nobody seems to be complaining, so everything must be going just fine." But once a perception emerges that the elders are not overly eager to keep their finger on the spiritual pulse of the congregation, fewer people will come forward with their observations and needs.

It is not inappropriate for an elder to ask of as many people as time and energy allow: "How are you doing with God? How is God doing with you? How is your walk? What are you up against? What do you need? How can you best find what you need? And how can we, and this church, help you?"

With that attitude, that spirit, and that willingness to serve, I believe any church can achieve excellence in pastoral care for everyone. And God will smile! ■



John Van Donk is a former Christian Reformed pastor who, after multiple careers in construction, as a truck driver, software sales person, and dairy farm manager, now happily makes his living repairing pool and spa equipment.

What About Hell?

MULLING IT OVER/FICKR



Jesus went to hell, suffered its torments, and came back victorious.

“ABANDON ALL HOPE, you who are entering.” This often-quoted phrase, translated from Dante’s three-part hymnal *Divina Commedia*, is the final part of a longer sentence written on a sign at the entrance to hell. Dante’s journey makes for fascinating reading, with its corrupt politicians being boiled in hot tar, false prophets trying to walk with their heads pointing backwards, thieves attempting to escape, only to be hit by arrows thrown by pursuing centaurs—even popes and religious leaders being tortured for their double lives.

The concept of hell has been present in Christian literature from its beginnings. In fact, it existed even before Christianity came into being. It comes not only from Jewish Scripture but also from the Greco-Roman pre-Christian world. Later Germanic cultures added a few nuances, including the word “hell” itself.

In the Bible we find several synonymous words that spin around the concept of hell. Words like *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* describe certain aspects of the underworld: the grave, the dump, the place for the wicked or, in simple terms, the afterlife. We also read that hell is a place of torment and destruction, and especially of future judgment (see Matt. 5; Mark 9). Whether hell is a place or a state or condition, or whether it has a temperature or dimension or location, is also controversial and much-debated.

But one thing we know for sure. Hell is distance from God, separation from his beatific

presence. In a curious note, Jesus was particularly incisive about hell when he interacted with many religious leaders (see Matt. 23:15) and did not even touch on the topic when he socialized with everyday sinners (see John 8:1-11).

The Apostles’ Creed mentions hell as the place where Jesus descended after his crucifixion and death. Scholars call it the *Descensus Christi ad infernos* (the descent of Christ to the inferior abode or to hell). Interestingly, there is only one Bible reference for such an event (1 Pet. 3:19-20). The point is that Jesus conquered death itself. We may even personify death in animated movies with Greek characters (as in the Disney blockbuster *Hercules*), but Jesus is our true hero because he conquered death. Jesus went to hell, suffered its torments, and came back victorious.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, the notion of hell was used as a deterrent for a society that was highly superstitious and wild. Even today there is a lot of residual memory from those long-ago centuries; in fact, Christians still use hell as a deterrent for bad behavior and sin. (If you do a Google search, you’ll find that the topic of hell is almost twice as popular as heaven.)

So what are we to make of all this? Never mind the endless linguistic, philosophical, and theological debates about the conditional, literal, metaphorical, or purgatorial nature of hell. That road leads to hellish confusion.

Fortunately, God’s grace is superior to any self-projection we might have about hell and its effects—especially for others. We might believe either that hell is literal or that it exists only as a metaphor. But I suspect that every time we do think about hell, we tend to think about it in the context of our enemies. We may even take satisfaction in the vision of eternal punishment for “them,” of their utter destruction in a place that may resemble Dante’s own version of inferno. But in the end, we must remind ourselves that it is not about us but about our victorious brother Jesus and his infinite grace and love for us. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Alejandro Pimentel is an editor and translator for *Libros Desafío*.

FAQs

Relationships

Q Sometimes I just want to run away to someplace where no one knows me. I am 17 years old, a good student with good friends. I get along well with my mother, but my father is always on my case. For instance, he won't let me stay overnight at my friends' houses even when their parents are home. He tells me I am a flirt and that I dress "like a slut," but I don't! My mom says my dad means well and I need to listen to him. What can I do?

A Running away from one's problems usually creates even bigger ones—so running solves nothing. But your desire to run because of your dad's over-protectiveness and hurtful comments is understandable.

It is not unusual for fathers and mothers to become anxious for their maturing children, wanting to spare them the heartbreak they themselves might have experienced as teens. The more "dumb" the mistakes made by parents, the more fearful the control they exercise sometimes, in the hope that their children will be spared the consequences they themselves suffered because of their own foolishness.

Next time your dad makes an unreasonable demand or unfair criticism, understand that he is anxious for you. Although that does not excuse his use of abusive labels, it can help you avoid the trap of becoming defensive. Instead of responding to his criticism by defending yourself, ask him what it was like for him when he was 17. Did he have a lot of rules to follow? Were they the same, and did he think they were fair? Did he obey them?

By now you have probably discovered that engaging in a ping-pong match of argument leads to nothing but anger and hurt feelings. As you work at better understanding your dad's worries, reassure him that you don't intend to make the same mistakes. And thank him for the heads-up.

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

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Church

Q When we exclude folks from membership in the church, are they excluded from the kingdom of Christ? Is it true that "whatever [we] bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever [we] loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18)? Will these people spend eternity in hell?

A I do not draw that conclusion. I think we administer discipline in recognition of our fallibility. We do it humbly. We do it sincerely. In that sincerity, we are declaring an end to a person's membership in the visible church and thus proclaiming that this person is in danger of being out of fellowship with Christ and his people. This is undoubtedly a stern but deadly serious warning.

It is exactly what discipline should be: a final urgent "sermon" that warns a person not to deny our Redeemer's claim on us. On the other hand, we are not able to make "final" judgments about this person's membership in the invisible church, the church as only God can see it. We are not saying that this person's name is most definitely excluded from the "book of life" and, therefore—without question—destined for hell.

There is some comfort in knowing that we do not make that judgment. Only God does. In the meantime, we proclaim the gospel of the one who is the "hound of heaven," who is relentlessly knocking at the doors of our hearts. And we acknowledge with Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 85 that we exercise Christian discipline with God-given authority.

—Henry De Moor is professor of church polity emeritus at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich. He's the author of *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary (Faith Alive 2011)*.

Ethics

Q Do I have to forgive another person for hurting me even if that person thinks she did me no wrong and therefore refuses to apologize?

A In answering your question, I am drawing wisdom from Lewis Smedes's *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve* (1984), which I highly recommend. We should forgive others, even the unrepentant, because we need the healing that forgiveness provides.

Ideally, forgiveness is a two-way street involving repentance by the perpetrator and pardon by the victim. But when the perpetrator is unrepentant, the victim needs to free herself by forgiving. It is natural to feel deep pain and anger when we have been unfairly hurt or wronged. But if we left it there, our anger could become malice that festers and devours us from within, robbing us of joy and immobilizing our spiritual and emotional lives.

When we forgive, we let go of our hatred, not our anger—we should always be angry at injustice and wrongs. But if we let go of malice, we can see our hurtful memories anew—not forget them—and eventually come to the place where we are able to wish well for the person who hurt us. This takes time and patience. But if we don't do so, we allow that hurtful memory to continue hurting us.

Forgiving the unrepentant person does not mean accepting the wrongs committed. And you still need to hold the wrongdoer accountable. Ideally, the person needs to repent for the sake of her own spiritual growth. But ultimately we cannot force someone into repentance.

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

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!

Our 3-year-old granddaughter was wearing a chain necklace. Alarmed that she might hook the necklace on some play equipment, I said, "Aren't you afraid that necklace could choke you?"

She looked at me and said, "Grandpa, I'm not going to eat it!"
—*Wilbur Doeksen*

Quite often when we are reading the Bible after supper, I stop and ask our 6-year-old daughter a question on what we just read. Last night I was reading from Ecclesiastes 1. The verse was, "Meaningless! Meaningless! says the Teacher. Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!" Then I paused and asked, "Brooklyn, what does the teacher say?"

Immediately she responded, "Quit talking, sit down, and do your work."

—*Eric Haan*

A little boy, raised in a Protestant church, attended a concert with his parents in a large Roman Catholic church. As he studied his surroundings, the boy noticed a large crucifix at the front of the church. Quite loudly, he asked his mother, "Who is that guy up there?" The embarrassed mother whispered that this was Jesus who was hung on a cross to die.

The little boy followed with, "What did he do?"

—*Marion Van Soelen*

While teaching my preschool Sunday school class, I thought I had done an exceptional job of telling the story of the man who had been blind from birth. I had blindfolded the children, had them feel objects and identify them, and had them walk around the room. I was pretty sure that when I removed their blindfolds and asked kids what they thought the man saw when he opened his eyes, they would immediately answer, "Jesus."

Instead, without hesitation, one of my students said, "A coyote. Yup. I bet he saw a coyote."

—*Beth TenHaken*

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed a little girl standing in the church foyer, staring up at an enormous plaque

covered with the names of fallen soldiers.

When the pastor came to stand beside her, the little girl asked, "What is this?"

"It's a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service," he said.

Soberly they stood together, looking at the plaque. Finally the little girl asked, "Which service, the 8:30 or the 11:00?"

—*Alvin TeWinkel*

We were driving down a busy road after leaving my parents' house when my daughter, about 3 at the time, noticed many cars going the other way. She said, "Look at all the people going to Grandma's house!"

—*Robyn Lilek*

A little church in the suburbs suddenly stopped buying from its regular office supply store. The dealer phoned to ask why.

"I'll tell you why," replied the deacon. "Our church ordered some pencils from you to be used in the pews for visitors to register."

"Well," interrupted the dealer, "didn't you receive them yet?"

"Oh, we received them all right," replied the deacon. "But each was stamped with the words 'Play golf next Sunday.'"

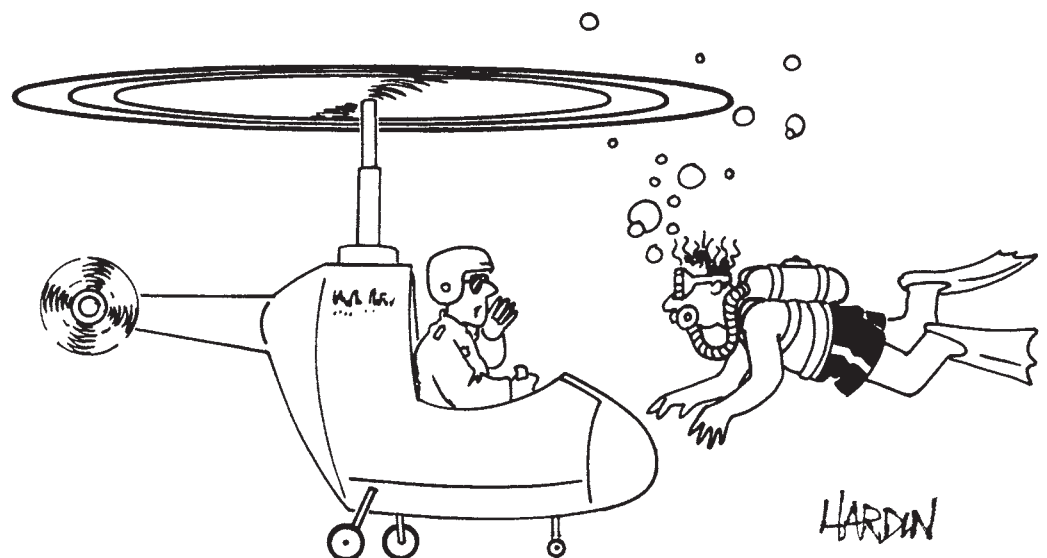
—*Jan Velkamp*

Aworried man went to the vet with his goldfish.

"I think it has epilepsy," he said. The vet took a look and said, "It seems calm enough to me."

The man replied, "Well, I haven't taken it out of the bowl yet."

—*Richard Bylsma*



"I said, 'One of us is hallucinating!'"