

# BANNER

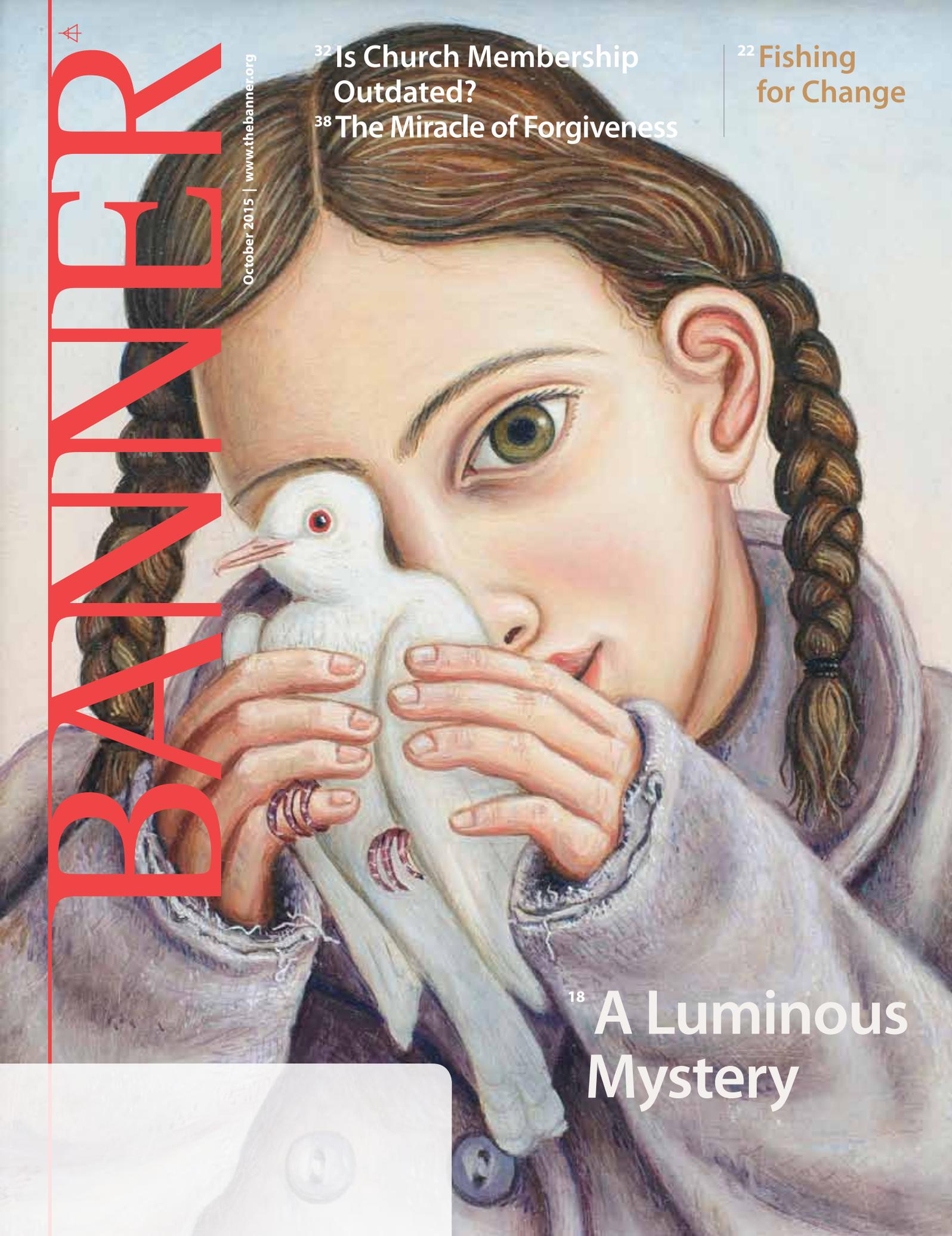
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<sup>32</sup> Is Church Membership Outdated?

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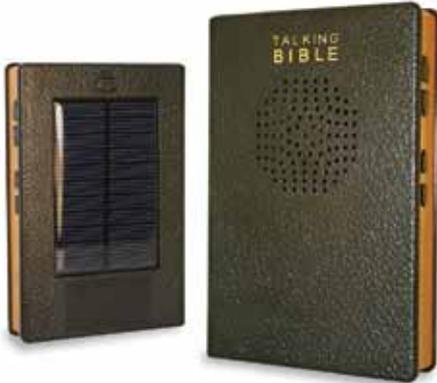
<sup>22</sup> Fishing for Change

<sup>18</sup> A Luminous Mystery





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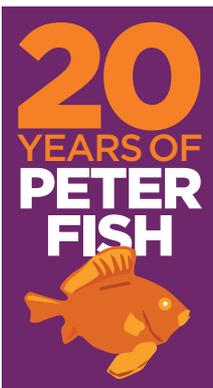
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**Cover:** *Birds Eye View* by Rick Beerhorst. The following artist's statement is from the website [studiobeerhorst.com](http://studiobeerhorst.com).

"My influences include Early American limners, the art of the Middle Ages, as well as religious icons. The faces in many of these portraits are partially obscured; this hide and seek refers to how revelation always comes to us incomplete in bits and pieces. In this way painting also becomes a form of inquiry into the hidden mysteries of life."

©RICK BEERHORST

## Doctrine Still Matters

**Having worked for Faith Alive for six years**, I was drawn to the news story this month (see p. 14) on faith formation resources after the break-up of the Faith Alive denominational publishing agency a few years ago.

Last month, in my first editorial, I wrote that during this year I wanted to help us rediscover our common identity as a denomination. Knowing who we are is essential to finding our way forward. One of the important markers of our identity is, I believe, our commitment to our Reformed doctrinal heritage and teaching it to our children and youth.

Many of us grew up going to weekly catechism classes in which we studied the Heidelberg Catechism, sometimes from 3rd grade through high school. While the methods of teaching may not have been very exciting or effective, generations of CRC members grew up with a basic understanding of Reformed theology.

Why is that so important? Isn't it more important to just know the Bible? Of course, and the news story indicates that the Faith Formation team plans to roll out new Bible study materials.

But the Bible is not enough. From the earliest days, our Christian ancestors understood that we need theological keys to open up the treasures of the Bible. We can't understand it apart from such keys as the Trinity, the humanity and divinity of Christ, providence, atonement, and divine sovereignty. These doctrines are derived from Scripture, and they, in turn, provide the keys to unlocking its truths.

But this is exactly what has been effectively eliminated. A caller who reached out to churches on behalf of the new Faith Formation team was quoted as saying that her contacts indicate a clear call from the churches for *catechism* materials for youth.

A lot has been written about the trend of young people leaving the church as well as the vague and shallow theological concepts many of them have. Numerous studies have shown that the answer is not more mission trips or more active youth groups but deeper involvement in ordinary church activities—and a more thorough theological understanding of the Christian faith.

All of this indicates to me that this is not the time to pull back on producing educational material for youth. Our Faith Formation team needs to be on the lookout for good catechism material already out there and begin developing new materials for our churches.

Traditionally we have used the Heidelberg Catechism as our default curriculum model. It would be wise to create a curriculum that covers the three elements common to all catechisms: the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. The church has always considered that these three elements provide the basic knowledge every Christian needs.

However, the Catechism, for all its solid truth and beauty, employs an outdated question and answer pedagogy. I think we need a brand new approach that offers the same basic material without using the Q and A methodology and sophisticated theological language of the Catechism.

Or we could use the *Contemporary Testimony*, our beautifully written confession of the faith. It deals, biblically and imaginatively, with all the major Reformed doctrines, while also touching on many of the moral issues that we face in our time.

This is precisely the moment when solid new catechism materials are needed more than ever. If you agree, you can help by contacting the Faith Formation team and encouraging them to develop these materials. This is one of the most important

ways our denomination can serve its churches. And I'll bet our churches are willing to pay for it. ■

FOR MORE, SEE  
AS I WAS SAYING



**Leonard J. Vander Zee** is interim editor of *The Banner*. He attends Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

We need a  
theological key  
to open up the  
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the Bible.

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# Music

BY ANNE PORTER

When I was a child  
I once sat sobbing on the floor  
Beside my mother's piano  
As she played and sang  
For there was in her singing  
A shy yet solemn glory  
My smallness could not hold  
And when I was asked  
Why I was crying  
I had no words for it  
I only shook my head  
And went on crying  
Why is it that music  
At its most beautiful  
Opens a wound in us  
An ache a desolation  
Deep as a homesickness  
For some far-off  
And half-forgotten country  
I've never understood  
Why this is so  
But there's an ancient legend  
From the other side of the world  
That gives away the secret  
Of this mysterious sorrow  
For centuries on centuries  
We have been wandering  
But we were made for Paradise  
As deer for the forest  
And when music comes to us  
With its heavenly beauty

It brings us desolation  
For when we hear it  
We half remember  
That lost native country  
We dimly remember the fields  
Their fragrant windswept clover  
The birdsongs in the orchards  
The wild white violets in the moss  
By the transparent streams  
And shining at the heart of it  
Is the longed-for beauty  
Of the One who waits for us  
Who will always wait for us  
In those radiant meadows  
Yet also came to live with us  
And wanders where we wander. ■

From *Living Things: Collected Poems* by Anne Porter.  
Reprinted with permission from Steerforth Press.



# Praying for Christians around the World

Carthage wept when Rome fell.



**A FRIEND AND I WERE TALKING** outside of church about the news. He was bewildered that the Muslim community in the Philippines cared about the Muslim problems in France. I explained that Islamic believers have a highly developed sense of spiritual community. They ignore political boundaries and value spiritual unity more than anything else.

My friend called my attention to the fact that our Christian faith was also born in the Middle East, but we don't have such a transcending relationship. I appreciate Christians having a relationship with the Muslims in their community. I think it reflects the love of God. But I also think we should remember the bleeding Christian church that is suffering like no other group in the world.

We must never forget that we are members of a unified body of Christ. The other day I was reading about suffering in Nigeria. How is the North American church represented there? Are we constantly aware of the needs in areas stricken by Ebola or under attack by ISIS? Do we gather in groups for prayer for the children kidnapped and parents burned in their churches? Should we not be active in relieving the hunger of Christians who are fleeing their homes in the Middle East?

Focusing on the church in North America often leads us to believe that all is well with God's people, and we forget the agonies of the church in North Korea and China who look to us for letters, prayers, support, and Bibles. Are we aware of the requests for prayer and support needed by Christians who are suffering so much? Are our schools and churches teaching the biblical principle that we are responsible for every member of the family of Christ in every land?

There are many resources available to remind us of the church worldwide.

Organizations such as The Voice of the Martyrs provide names and addresses for those who wish to give their prayers an incarnation in letters of sympathy and support. *World* magazine offers a Christian perspective on world news. Open Doors has an active ministry to the persecuted church and provides materials for "Persecuted Church Sunday." Crossroads Bible Ministry reaches out to people in prison.

The website *OperationWorld.org* provides a prayer and information guide that families can use at the supper table each evening.

Finally, our own denominational ministry, World Renew (*WorldRenew.net*) reaches out to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to shelter the homeless in North America and in other lands.

We encourage our churches to join in a National Day of Prayer, but we must also call our churches to a World Day of Prayer. ■



Ted DeRose taught school at the Christian school in Prospect Park, N.J. He now lives in South Haven, Mich.



## Don't Walk Away

Reading the *Banner* editorial "Don't Walk Away!" (July/Aug. 2015) should deeply concern biblical Christians. Unity is found in the received teachings of God as revealed in the inerrant Bible. To seek unity apart from this is idolatry. The examples of denominations seeking the latter should be ample warning of the judgment that awaits those engaging in open rebellion against God's design by calling good what God has clearly called sin. Those who truly love God humble themselves before his truth in his Word.

—Wesley Kwong  
Portland, Ore.

In the recent editorial "Don't Walk Away" (July/Aug. 2015) [Bob DeMoor] encourages the "local option" in the issue of same sex marriage. It seems this is becoming the default street for the CRC. And there is certainly something appealing about this option: everyone is right, no one is wrong. I suggest we walk a more difficult and more faithful way: a biblical-theological trail that connects us deeply with the shape of God's Word, our theological heritage (including previous CRC decisions), and the church's witness for 2,000 years. In the long run, the "local option" is a dangerous road to walk.

—Johannes Schouten  
Burnaby, B.C.

# LETTERS

Dear Editor: First we missed you as our pastor and now we will miss you as the editor of *The Banner*. You have faithfully challenged us for an open discussion on issues of theistic evolution and homosexuality and not tried to sweep this under the ecclesiastic carpet. A big thank you, Bob.

—G. Lieuwen  
Langley, B.C.

## A Modest Proposal

Re “Synod 2015 Launches Denominational Structural Overhaul” (July/Aug. 2015): I propose a change in branding. To reflect Jesus’ leadership style, the denomination could have a chief foot washer instead of executive director, suffering servants instead of directors of ministries, and TIPS (temporarily important people society) instead of executive staff. Would it not be fun to read *Banner* reports of TIPS meetings? More importantly, the suggested titles brand our leadership as followers of Jesus rather than kings of industry.

—Nick Loenen  
Richmond, B.C.

## Mocking God

I support the opinion expressed in Robert Joustra’s article “Mocking God” (July/Aug. 2015). Anyone who wishes to impose a Christian theocracy on America (and there are many walking the halls of Congress) need only substitute “pagan” or “Hindu” or “atheist” or “Scientology” or any other religion and it is clear theocracy of any kind in our fallen world is to be resisted at any cost. Thankfully the framers of the Constitution favored no particular religion and instead established freedom of religion with a religiously neutral government. The recent Supreme Court’s marriage equality ruling may not please you or reflect your understanding

of theology, but that is irrelevant to the Constitution, and thank God for that. It leaves to each individual the right and responsibility to live with integrity within his or her religious context without government coercion.

—James VanderMolen  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Elder as Shepherd

While Louis Tamminga’s statement that Church Order Article 65 gives elders the responsibility for pastoral care of the congregation is accurate in the context of his article (“The Elder as Shepherd,” July/Aug. 2015), he has omitted an important detail from Article 65: all officebearers actually have the responsibility for pastoral care. Therefore, much of the advice he gives applies to deacons, ministers, and commissioned pastors as well.

—Terry Woodnorth  
Endicott, N.Y.

## Ministry Shares

I wonder if the chart on ministry shares (p. 54, July/Aug. 2015) is incorrect. Could the colors and what they represent have been reversed? (*Ed. note:* yes, they were; please see Corrections box on p. 5 of the September issue.)

Also, it would be helpful to know on what type of membership number the shares are assessed. Obviously it is not on total membership of a congregation. Would it be confessing members? Some other designation? Knowing this could help explain the struggle some congregations have in meeting their ministry shares budget.

—Bruce Nikkel  
Pella, Iowa

## Psalms in the Night

Reading the lovely, poetic reflection by Didi Prinzen (“Psalms in the Night,” June

2015) reminded me of the song by Canadian singer-songwriter Carolyn Arends called “Getting Ready for Glory.” Carolyn wrote the song after hearing her grandmother say, “I spend most of my time now memorizing psalms and hymns—preparing for glory.” What a beautiful way to spend the winter time of life!

—Christine DeRuiter  
Abbotsford, B.C.

Thank you to Didi Prinzen (“Psalms in the Night”) for her encouragement to those of us entering the winter of our lives. I was reminded of two important lessons: How God is always faithful and how important it is to encourage our little ones to memorize Bible passages.

—Joyce Steen  
Suttons Bay, Mich.

## Unequally Yoked

Pastor Numan (“Unequally Yoked,” June 2015) suggests that instead of a “No Trespassing” sign on the gate of marriage for Christians, there should be a “gate of grace, where any can enter as long as they respect Christ. . . .” This is a sad misleading for Christians. God does not limit his love, and yes, some unbelieving spouses may choose to follow Christ, and that is a wonderful grace. But we will be most blest as a church and as families if we choose the path of obedience to God. Back to Paul’s words to the widow of 1 Corinthians 7:39: “She is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.”

—Marnie MacLeod  
Houston, B.C.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

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## Chicago Ministry to People on the Street Revived

In one of the toughest neighborhoods in Chicago, Roseland Christian Ministries has revived a key ministry to people living on the streets.

This nonprofit with strong ties to the Christian Reformed Church had operated a drop-in meals program since 1982. But after the recession of 2008, Roseland lost its grant from the Illinois Department of Human Services and ended the program soon after.

"We were so broadsided when we lost state funding that we didn't have the imagination for how to do this on our own on a shoestring budget," said Rev. Joe Huizenga, pastor of Roseland CRC.

Over the past year, the ministry has been coming back to life. It began with an old record store that the ministry purchased to house volunteers. Sprucing up

the 3,500-square-foot space included adding flooring, drywall, trim, electrical wiring, ceiling fans, air conditioning, and updated bathrooms. Volunteer groups from as far away as Atlanta, Ga., helped with the renovation. Using volunteer help kept costs to a minimum. The end goal: a weekly drop-in meals program for people living on the street.

"Serving [people who are] homeless is a vital part of Roseland's DNA, and I'm excited to be part of bringing that back," said Jei Wilson, a long-time Roseland CRC member who recently became director of the ministry. "I know the neighborhood will appreciate it, and the city leans on us for this type of service."

The new drop-in area will have space for about 60 people. Mostly men typically use such a

program, said Huizenga, and the place will provide a church home for "wanderers" and people with mental illnesses. Visitors will have access to showers and maybe even free haircuts. The building will be used for other purposes as well.

What is most exciting to Huizenga are the large front windows of the newly renovated building. All the neighboring buildings look like dark fortresses, their steel bars and metal grates designed to keep people out. This building will extend an invitation to fellowship and food for people on the street while sunshine streams through the windows.

—Roxanne Van Farowe

**Members of the Morning Glory Bible study group at Roseland CRC will meet in the renovated former record shop.**



## U.S. Christian Reformed Churches Advised to Adopt Wedding Policy



**C**hristian Reformed Church executive director Steven Timmermans sent a memo in August to U.S. congregations in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's June decision making same sex marriage legal across the country. (Same sex marriage has been legal in Canada for more than a decade.)

Synod 2016 (the annual general assembly of the CRC) will receive a report from the Study Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance to Churches Re Same Sex Marriage. In the meantime, many are turning to the denominational office for advice.

"The purpose of this memo is to provide such advice, to situate it in our positions on marriage and homosexuality, and to offer it to our churches in the United States," Timmermans wrote.

In considering the near-term impact the court's ruling may have on local congregations, the church turned to material by Carl Esbeck,

a key legal advisor to the National Association of Evangelicals.

Esbeck advises churches, mission agencies, and schools to adopt positions and policies to strengthen their ability to exercise their religious freedom, including adding a statement of faith into their articles of incorporation and bylaws. That statement could be modeled on the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Beliefs of the CRCNA adopted by Synod 2013.

Further advice includes adopting a statement focused on the church's position concerning marriage and same sex attraction. The memo includes a sample position statement drawn from existing denominational positions.

Churches are also advised to adopt a policy about marriage ceremonies conducted by the church and a facilities-use policy clearly defining the facilities as private property, not public accommodation. A church's mar-

riage policy could affirm that the church views marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman and that any marriages that take place on the church's premises must fall in line with that policy.

A sample facilities-use policy could establish that use of the building must be compatible with the mission and identity of the church and that the church's consistory or council has non-appealable authority over a decision whether a use is consistent with Christian theology, doctrine, and witness.

"Our denominational attorneys very much agree that member churches should be responding to the present circumstances through constructive and balanced decision-making, which should include proactively formulating and implementing relevant statements and policies," Timmermans wrote.

—Gayla R. Postma

### IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. John T. Ebbers**

1930-2015

If one had to choose a single word to describe Rev. John T. Ebbers, it would be "encourager." He had the gift of being able to uplift and inspire others with hope, courage, and confidence. Ebbers died on July 6 in Grand Rapids, Mich., of natural causes. He was 84.

Ebbers graduated from Calvin College and Seminary in 1956. He served Christian Reformed congregations in Michigan, South Dakota, Illinois, Iowa, and Montana. He also served on several denominational boards.

Many of the churches Ebbers served had building projects during his time of ministry. Apart from his work, Ebbers enjoyed being outdoors and working in the garden. Among his hobbies were collecting antiques and refinishing furniture. He was a devoted family man.

Ebbers was predeceased by one son. He is survived by his wife, Janet, and by five children and their spouses and 12 grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

*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.*

# NEWS

## IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Peter William Brouwer**  
1929-2015

Peter William Brouwer loved his Lord deeply and sowed the Word faithfully and fervently. Preaching, sharing the gospel, and enriching spiritual lives were great joys to him. Brouwer died on June 13 at age 86.

Brouwer was a patient, loving, and understanding counselor to many. He served the Christian Reformed Church at both the denominational and local levels, including Christian Reformed congregations in Illinois, California, and Minnesota. He retired in 1994 at age 65.

Brouwer will be remembered by his children “for always taking time out of his busy church schedule to be with his family. We have many precious memories of our crazy camping trips and the many amazing vacation spots we visited. Another great joy came from playing any and every kind of game together. He and Mom showed us that fun is also a gift from God and something to be grateful for.”

Brouwer is survived by his wife, Phyllis, and by four children and their spouses, 11 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## Ontario Youth Make Hamilton a Safer Place to Ride

Several youth from New Hope Church in East Hamilton helped to make Hamilton a safer place to bike. On August 29th, the new Gage Bike Park was officially opened. It is the first bike track in the city of Hamilton.

New Hope members Brett Bailey, David Breitwieser, Isaac Neven, and Frieda Sinclair, along with members of their Crown Point neighborhood youth council, came up with the idea of building a BMX-style bike park in Gage Park. They first pitched the idea to Hamilton City Council in April 2014. After the project received unani-



Cyclists of all ages and skill levels try out the new pump track at the Gage Bike Park's grand opening.

mous support from city council, they followed the project along each step and hurdle in the process until it was complete.

Neven and Bailey were both involved with Bikes for Mike, an organization that has given over 1,000 bikes, helmets, and locks >>

PHOTO CREDIT: KRISTA DAM-VANDERKUYT

## Indiana Church Celebrates 150 Years

If you had attended Lafayette Christian Reformed Church's 150th anniversary celebration, you would have heard a lot of stories.

There's the one about the nameless traveling worker who went to Wayside Chapel, built by Lafayette CRC in the 1960s, to pray on his way to work. "Wayside Chapel has served as a refuge of prayer, a needed time with God, and a way to bless many unknown brothers and sisters in Christ," said Rev. Mark Bonnes, copastor of Lafayette.

There's the story of the Ladies Aid, a group that was established in 1914 and raised money to pay off church debt and fund the Christian school through their home-cooked meals. "But it was not their money-raising efforts that spoke volumes," said Rev. Ashley Bonnes, the other copastor. "It was their acts of kindness and

compassion in the duty of writing cards so that the sick and shut-ins knew they were loved, or in the devotionals written to increase the faith of the church, or in the funeral luncheons that were served to those just returning from burying a loved one."

There were stories of the church building itself—what it offered and what it held. "The Big Church" was built 86 years ago, just as the Great Depression began. In 1950, Lafayette Christian School was built; today the school hosts over 300 students. The church still has the Dutch-language Bible donated 125 years ago by Rev. Marcus Marcusse, pastor of the church from 1889-1894. It sits on the church's communion table as "a reminder that what is central to God's people is the Word of God," explained Mark.

Lafayette's history is not without conflict and uncertainty.

There was a split within the church in 1888. "According to legend, someone nailed the doors of the church shut with a sign that said, 'The Gospel is no longer preached here,'" Mark said. "The stories of this church are as long and as complicated as the lives of its people," said Ashley.

However, all the stories point to God's faithfulness. We tell them, explained Ashley, to be reminded of that faithfulness. "We have gathered here to hear the history of this church and to give praise to God. This covenant community is 150 years old, but that is just a drop in the bucket of the thousand generations that God speaks of in his promise. May we all remember God's faithfulness for the future."

—Callie Feyen

Children sign a painting dedicated to the 100th anniversary.



**L-R: Isaac Neven, Brett Bailey, and Frieda Sinclair of New Hope Church in Hamilton, Ont., cut the ribbon to open the new Gage Bike Park.**

to children in Hamilton in the past four years. Since bikes are not allowed in city skate parks, there was no safe place to ride BMX-style.

Gage Bike Park will be a two-year pilot project. Its success will determine whether more spaces like this are built in other city parks.

"This park represents a grass-roots movement. It really sets an example that if you have an idea, it can be done," said Meghan Stewart, project manager for Gage Bike Park. City Councillor Matthew Green commended the youth for their leadership on this project. During the opening ceremony, Green pointed out that this bike park is about more than a pump track. It is about building community.

Frieda Sinclair, a member of New Hope Church, worked behind the scenes over the past year-and-a-half. Seeing so many riders enjoying the track, she said, is more exciting than she could have imagined.

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt



## Alberta Church Celebrates Centennial

"It was a weekend of remembering and hope—celebrating where we've come from, and, at the same time, recognizing the ups and downs of our church community," said Carolyn Aarsen.

Aarsen was referring to the 100th anniversary celebration of Neerlandia (Alta.) Christian Reformed Church.

In the winter of 1914-1915, the Dutch immigrant pioneers who lived in Neerlandia turned their attention to the matter of a church building. Since settling in the area three years earlier, most had been gathering to worship in each other's homes. Nearly all the men in the community helped with the construction of the 24- by 30-foot log church building with a seating capacity of 150. The total cost was \$200 (CDN); \$100 was received from the CRC Church Help Fund.

The memberships of 16 families and two individuals were transferred from First CRC in Edmonton to Neerlandia CRC, which was formally established with 35 confirmed members and 46 baptized members. A hundred years later, membership stands around 600.

On the first weekend of August, hundreds of people gathered to celebrate. The celebrations had begun a week earlier with a number of local carpenters and handymen pitching in to build a smaller replica of that first log church. It took a week to do the basic work, but the most dramatic part—raising the roof, putting in the windows, and finishing off the gable ends—was completed on the Saturday of the anniversary weekend. Many of those attending the anniversary celebrations came to watch the proceedings over the day.

Penny carnival activities were part of the fun, as was a photo booth set up in front of the church with vintage clothing provided for the occasion. At the cemetery, where the first two graves date back to 1915, a trivia game offered the opportunity for sharing family history.

Rounding out the weekend was a Sunday morning worship service that included the participation of several former pastors: Neil Vriend, Jim Mantel, Peter Sluys, Mo Boonstra, and Randy Blacketer.

Aarsen said, "In all of the difficulties and triumphs of our church's history, realizing that God has been and continues to be faithful, our church is still here. It still works."

—Janet A. Greidanus

### IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Jan Dirk Pereboom**  
1925-2015

Jan Dirk Pereboom, 90, delighted in being out in his spacious backyard, enjoying his love of birds, trees, plants, and flowers. He died on June 19 in St. Catharines, Ont., of natural causes.

Pereboom graduated from The Free University in Amsterdam in 1955. He served congregations in the Netherlands, Ontario, and Alberta. He also served as a chaplain with the Royal Netherlands Air Force. He retired in 1988.

As a pastor, Pereboom strongly emphasized the nurture of faith in young people and Christian education. His preaching explored the awesome power of God's grace.

Pereboom loved the life of the church. In retirement he was a devoted member of Jubilee Fellowship CRC and then Trinity CRC in St. Catharines.

Family was very important to Pereboom. He delighted in every single addition to his growing family and made a great effort to include and welcome all of them.

Pereboom will be missed by his wife, Marie, and by six children and their spouses and 12 grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

# NEWS

## No New Children's Curriculum in Development

If you lead a Coffee Break women's ministry or a small group Bible study in your church and you're looking for new adult Bible study materials, there's new material on the way. But if you're on your church's education or faith formation committee, don't hold your breath waiting for new children's curriculum to be published by the Christian Reformed Church. With nothing

Some of those functions have been picked up. For example, new adult Bible study materials are being produced by Christian Reformed Home Missions. The popular *Discover Your Bible* series will have studies on Isaiah and Nehemiah available by Fall 2015 in both traditional and downloadable formats. Studies on Genesis, Luke, Ephesians, Christmas, Easter, and Fruit of the Spirit have been revised and made available in a printable format.

The newly formed Worship Ministries recently produced a

Karen De Boer is a curriculum editor who moved from Faith Alive to Faith Formation Ministries. "Curriculum editorial staff who were still working at the time were deeply concerned about how it would be possible to continue to produce curriculum resources for churches in the future," she said. "We watched [Synod 2013] online from the edge of our seats—hoping, praying, waiting for someone to stand up and say, 'But what about the children? How will we provide resources that help congregations partner with families to nurture the faith of our children?' But no one did."

As De Boer said, "Theology matters, whether you're 3 or 103. How God's story is told with children matters."

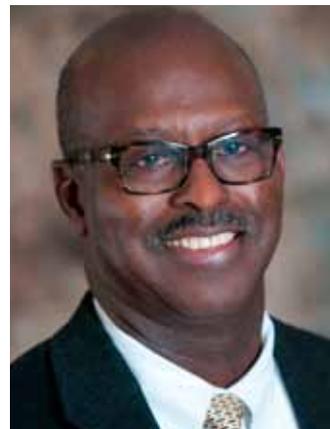
The CRC has historically placed a very high value on good Reformed materials for church education that teach God's story from a redemptive-historical perspective as opposed to a moralistic approach. As far back as 1890, provision of appropriate materials for church education was a regular topic of synod discussion. In the 1800s and early 1900s, Sunday school lessons were published in *The Banner* or earlier in the Dutch-language *De Wachter* magazine. By 1936, church leaders were so committed to having children instructed from theologically sound materials that synod appointed a denominational committee "to draw up a uniform lesson system and edit a Sunday school paper of our own." And by 1937, those materials were received by the churches "with a great deal of appreciation and enthusiasm,"

large-print edition of the hymnal *Lift Up Your Hearts*. And Faith Formation Ministries, another ministry formed in the wake of Faith Alive's demise, is updating and reissuing the *God Loves Me* preschool storybooks.

However, Synod 2013 did not make any specific plans for what is arguably *the* core function of Faith Alive: producing materials from a Reformed perspective for the church education of children.

in the pipeline and the infrastructure to create curriculum dismantled, it could be a long wait.

Synod 2013 (the CRC's annual general assembly) dissolved Faith Alive Christian Resources (the CRC's publishing ministry) as an administrative entity. After five years of financial losses, the ministry was no longer financially sustainable. Synod 2013 noted that core functions of Faith Alive would be housed in different ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. Faith Alive products continue to be sold.



Colin Watson: "Development of new materials has to be driven by congregational demand."

according to the *Acts of Synod* of those years.

That committee was the genesis of a publishing ministry that functioned under different names over the years (Board of Publications, CRC Publications, and finally Faith Alive Christian Resources), producing much-loved children's curricula including *Bible Way*, *LiFE*, *Walk With Me*, and most recently *Dwell*. While *Bible Way* served the church well for more than 20 years, the shelf life of subsequent curricula has become progressively shorter.

Syd Hielema is team leader for Faith Formation Ministries (FFM). "When FFM was formed, we were not given any instructions about curricula, and neither were we told to propose a process for developing guidelines or protocols," Hielema said. "As the mandate for FFM was being finalized this past April, this footnote was added at the eleventh hour: 'At this time we do not yet know to what extent FFM will be called to continue the creating and marketing of curricular and study resources that was carried out by Faith Alive Christian Resources.'" »



**Syd Hielema: "We were not given any instructions about curricula."**

Colin Watson, Sr., appointed as the CRC's director of ministries and administration in July, acknowledged that this is a very important issue and initiated a conversation with staff. "This requires continuing conversation among ministries and congregations," he said.

However, he said, "Development of new materials has to be driven by congregational demand. We have to make sure what we are doing is needed by churches. We no longer have the luxury of saying, 'We are putting out product X or book Y.' We have to work in partnership with congregations to be sure that what is produced meets their current and anticipated requirements for ministry."

The first rumblings of that congregational demand are already being heard. Libby Huizenga, an intern with FFM, spent her summer contacting church leaders as part of FFM's mandate



**Karen De Boer: "Theology matters, whether you're 3 or 103."**

to build relationships with churches, learning about their needs. She said she is hearing from churches that they really like *Dwell* and are content to use it, but they want resources to continue to be updated, to stay relevant. "They don't need to be updated now or a year from now, but there are questions about five years or 10 years from now."

One of the ways being tried to finance updating current materials or developing new resources is crowdfunding, whereby the preliminary funding of a project is done by raising contributions from a large number of people.

Churches and individuals essentially pre-buy a product. That's what worked with the large-print edition of *Lift Up Your Hearts*. For *God Loves Me*, crowdfunding raised \$34,000, about half of the development costs for the product.

In a story for the CRC's website, web manager Tim Postuma said, "Crowdfunding lets churches speak into these publishing decisions. In a very real way they can dictate what gets published." As Postuma wrote on the *Network*, it reduces the guesswork about what churches want or need.

It's one thing to crowdfund something that doesn't have to be produced from scratch, like storybooks and hymnals with existing content, which can be published in a few months. It is quite another to get churches to commit to something that won't be ready for four to five years. According to Ruth VanderHart, recently retired after 44 years as a Faith Alive curriculum editor, that's the amount of time it typically takes to create a new curriculum, even with an existing editorial and development infrastructure.

That raises the question of whether a church finance committee would approve a substantial amount of money to crowdfund something that cannot be reviewed and won't be available for a few years.

And by the time churches identify the need for new curriculum, a years-long wait may drive them to look elsewhere. Huizenga said some of the people she talked to would be satisfied if they could be referred to resources from other publishers that align with Reformed theology and have good pedagogy. The problem is that there are few high-quality

Reformed curriculum publishers around. In fact, many Reformed Church in America and Presbyterian congregations look to the CRC for their curriculum. Other congregations may turn to curricula that have non-Reformed theological content.

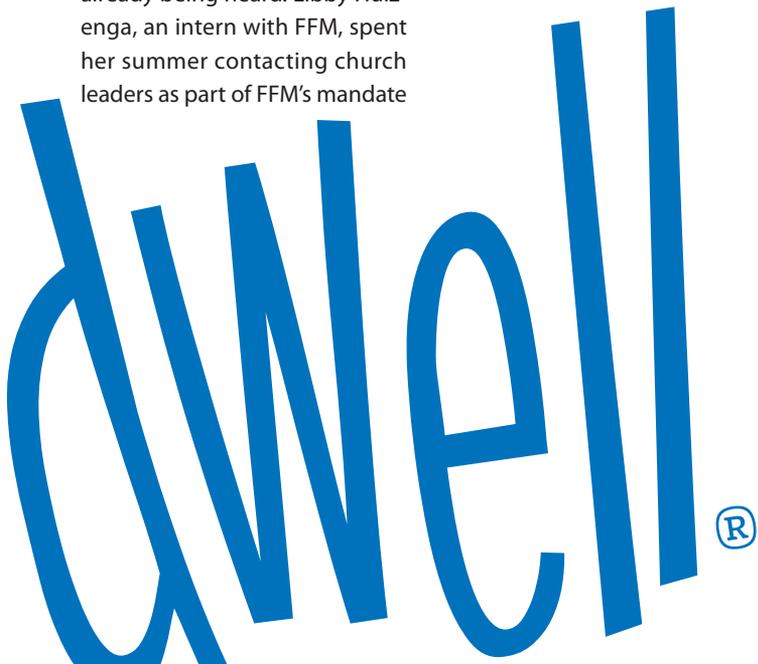
Huizenga said FFM has also been surprised by the number of churches that would also like new catechism resources. "Since these resources are more specific to our context, it's harder to find resources from other publishers," she said. As VanderHart commented, "In getting rid of a development group like our editorial staff, the church lost something. No question about it."

De Boer said that it will be extremely difficult to produce the same volume of curriculum that was produced in the past. However, she said, FFM is hard at work seeking new models of providing resources. FFM recently produced *Welcoming Children to the Lord's Supper Toolkit*, which debuted this spring and which will be followed by the *Profession of Faith Toolkit* and an *Intergenerational Toolkit*, available Spring 2016.

"It's our dream to be able to one day provide the same high-quality, theologically sound curriculum for which Faith Alive continues to be highly respected in the CRCNA and beyond," De Boer said. "I continue to pray that we'll also be able to find funding and staff to [produce] stellar resources."

"I think we'll get there again one day, although the format may be very different," she said. "And that's exciting too."

—Gayla R. Postma



# NEWS

## IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Verlyn David Verbrugge**  
1943-2015

Verlyn David Verbrugge—pastor, editor, New Testament scholar, and author—died on June 21 following a six-month battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 72 years old.

Verbrugge graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1968 and completed a doctorate degree from the University of Notre Dame. He served three congregations in Iowa and Michigan.

Described as brilliant and humble, Verbrugge was passionate about teaching others. As senior editor at Zondervan, he edited over 700 books and resources. His most recent book, which he coauthored, was released just two days after his death.

Verbrugge's children will always remember him as a reliable, predictable, nonjudgmental, and unconditionally supportive parent. He lived out his love for Jesus and the Christian values he professed. One of his children said, "These are the values that Dad passed on to us, and these are the values that we are now passing on to our children, our students, our coworkers and our employees."

Verbrugge is survived by his wife, Lori, and by five children and their spouses and three grandsons.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. James LaGrand**  
1941-2015

Rev. James LaGrand was a courageous and outspoken defender of racial justice and diversity in the church and society. He had great compassion for people who were poor and marginalized. LaGrand died on July 4 of Lewy Body disease at age 74.

LaGrand graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1969 and served Christian Reformed congregations in Illinois, Nova Scotia, and Indiana. He also taught in Nigeria.

He received his Ph.D. after study in England and Switzerland. "I thought of him as one of the most intellectually gifted pastors of the CRC," said a pastor colleague.

LaGrand was fearless and passionate as he worked for the integrity of the church's witness to the gospel, whether in the text of the Heidelberg Catechism, the fight for racial integration, the integration of women in church office, or through disentangling ties between the Christian Reformed Church of North America and apartheid South Africa.

LaGrand is survived by his wife, Virginia, and by four children and their spouses and 11 grandchildren. LaGrand's most recent grandchild was born the day before his funeral. The baby was named Shalom in memory of the shalom for which LaGrand worked so hard.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## 'Card Lady' Brings Encouragement to Ontario Church and Beyond

For more than 30 years, Henny Broekema has made sure that every person—from babies to elderly—at Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ont., receives a handmade card for his or her birthday. This ministry of community-building begun by the former church caretaker in the early days of the church has earned her the name "The Card Lady."

Broekema, 76, and her husband, John, were the original custodians of Covenant CRC at its founding in 1976. While cleaning the Sunday school rooms, she had an idea. "I saw that the Sunday school teachers put the birthdates on the wall. But then I thought, 'Well, that's not fair, what about the brothers and sisters?'" Broekema said, thinking those younger children deserved birthday recognition too. She approached the church council chair for help in tracking down the birth dates.



**Henny Broekema and a collection of her handmade cards.**

"What did he do? He gave me the WHOLE church," she said.

Broekema still recognizes all birthdays. But that's not the only time a handmade card might find its way to a Covenant member's mailbox. "To so many people, cards and phone calls speak volumes," said Karen Fulmer, who received cards from Broekema during a fight with cancer and at other challenging times. "[Henny] is always sending such encouraging verses to people," Fulmer said. "Sometimes you wonder how she thought of that."

Broekema finds the inspiration for her cards from a stack of devotional books and quotable calendars. She always starts off with making a card that speaks to her first. "That's the funny part of it," she said. Broekema will search for a verse or saying and realize, "Okay, that's for me today."

Broekema makes hundreds of cards each year, going beyond the church to supplying Coffee Break conferences as well. "I think this must be God's touch," Broekema said of her desire to reach out in this way. "Because some people say, 'Are you ever getting tired of it?' No. I'm not getting tired of it."

—Alissa Vernon

ALISSA VERNON

# FAQs

## Church

**Q** How is the CRC supposed to minister to members who can no longer attend?

**When my husband, who had Alzheimer's, could no longer attend church, he received a letter stating that his membership was being terminated since he could no longer attend or tithe.**

**A** I had to rub my eyes and read your question two more times before I believed what I was reading! I don't know the elders' side of this story, of course, but I see no reason why you would misrepresent the situation. It makes me sad when you say your husband "had Alzheimer's" because I must assume that he has passed. If so, you have my sincerest sympathy. I find this episode of membership termination totally incredible.

Consistories in the CRC are permitted to declare that someone's membership has "lapsed" if he or she "fails to attend and support the congregation" (Supplement, Article 67 of the Church Order), but only if that person "claims to be worshiping elsewhere." Your husband obviously made no such claim. I'm very curious to know whether the two of you received even one pastoral visit about this matter before the elders took action.

A congregation in the CRC needs to minister in this kind of situation by surrounding those who suffer and their caregivers with Christian love and compassion. I truly hope that there were such caring folk around for you. Sending this letter to your husband does not qualify as caring and appears to be completely unlawful. People need to know that this definitely warrants an appeal to the classis. Consistories are accountable!

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

A congregation needs to surround those who suffer and their caregivers with Christian love and compassion.

## Relationships

**Q** I can't seem to motivate myself to do anything. I've known I wanted to be a medical doctor since I was very young. I worked hard in high school and college but my grades weren't good enough. So now what? My parents have all sorts of good advice, but I just don't care.

**A** Both you and your parents need to understand that you are grieving and in a crisis. Losing a cherished dream in spite of hard work and perseverance is a profound loss, equal to experiencing the death of someone much loved. A loss must be grieved as part of a healing process. Sadness and loss of energy are normal under the circumstances.

A crisis is an opportunity for change and growth. Having your expected future loosened from its moorings in an irrevocable way is painful but can be character building—if you let it. When you are ready (that is, tired of doing nothing) let your good work ethic and tenacity help you to define new goals for your life. Start to dream about your future again, while developing an objective view of your own gifts, talents, and interests. Ask your parents and others you trust what they think you're good at. Explore.

Also pray for help. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to yourself in a new way. Accept the Spirit's comfort and remember that the Spirit is called "our Counselor" for a reason. Pour out your heart while trusting in the Spirit's love for you.

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

## Ethics

**Q** Is it OK for Christians to "fight fire with fire" when anti-Christian forces use lies and dirty tricks to advance their godless agendas?

**A** In a culture that glorifies violence, vengeance, and victory, it's tempting to retaliate. But do we further God's kingdom by "winning battles" or by winning over hearts? In Christian history, "the end justifies the means" thinking has been used to defend the Crusades and other atrocities in the name of Jesus.

Our enemies' failure to act rightly is not license for us to disobey the Lord Jesus. Our call to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44) and to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) is not contingent on our enemies' behaviors. The apostle Paul called us to "not repay anyone evil for evil" and to not take revenge "but leave room for God's wrath" (Rom. 12:17, 19). "Do not be overcome by evil," Paul continued, "but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

I fear that resorting to unjust and unethical means will corrupt our souls. Once we justify even so-called "little sins" like misinforming and misrepresenting, we are allowing sin to infect our hearts. Then we would have lost the war even if we win the battles.

This does not mean we become pushovers. Instead of stooping to the same "dirty" tactics, Christians should oppose deceptions with truth and justice seasoned with grace. Striving to be peacemakers, we must also be ready to suffer for the Lord's sake.

This is not easy. But it might help to remember that the triumphant Lion of Judah is the Lamb who was slain (Rev. 5:5-14). Christ Jesus has already won the victory.

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

BY J. TODD BILLINGS



**THE WORDS OF PSALM 102** stung, but they were nevertheless my prayer. The Lord “has broken my strength in midcourse; he has shortened my days. ‘O my God,’ I say, ‘do not take me away at the midpoint of my life, you whose years endure throughout all generations.’” My wife and I had just celebrated our tenth anniversary and were the proud parents of lively 1- and 3-year-olds. But then I was diagnosed with cancer. A lethal cancer. An incurable cancer.

The psalms of lament soon became a companion to myself and others traveling that journey with me—as all of our emotions of grief, anger, and alienation were brought before the Lord. “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” (Ps. 13:1). After discovering that the cancer had already burned away the inside of my hip, skull, and arm, I heard and prayed the laments of the psalmist in a new way. “For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace” (Ps. 102:3).

# A Luminous Mystery

Where is God in all of this? Was this part of God’s plan? As a Reformed pastor and professor, my instinct was to turn both to Scripture and the Reformed confessions for guidance. When I announced my diagnosis to my congregation and my colleagues at the seminary, I first quoted the beginning of the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 1: “What is your only comfort in life and in death? That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.” The scriptural truth in these words is enough to put everything in perspective, to be with me through my dying breath. We are not our own. We act like we are, but we are not. In life and death, we have one promise to trust: that we belong to the God who has united us to himself in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, and we find our life in him.

## Asking the Questions

But what was I to think about the sentence further along in that same question and answer? “He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.” I heard this in a new way in this season: within a week of diagnosis I began chemotherapy in order to prepare for a stem cell transplant. As part of the transplant, I would receive an intensive chemotherapy derived from mustard gas. My hair would drop out—left on the pillow like shag from an old carpet. I wanted to ask the Heidelberg: what about *these* hairs—is it God’s will for *these* hairs to fall from my head? Is it God’s will for me to have cancer, leaving my young children without a father and my wife without a husband? How could it be? My wife and I had prayed for years for children before

they came as wonderful gifts. Why would God answer those prayers, just to take away their dad?

In the psalms I found that I was not alone in asking these agonizing questions. In fact, I discovered that the most widespread type of psalm is that of lament. Psalms of lament bring the psalmists’ anger, confusion, and complaint before God. Indeed, they dare to question God, wondering whether God is to blame for the calamity:

“I, O Lord, cry out to you;  
in the morning my prayer comes before you.  
O Lord, why do you cast me off?  
Why do you hide your face from me?  
Wretched and close to death from my youth up,  
I suffer your terrors; I am desperate” (Ps. 13:13-15).

In the midst of these laments, the psalmists testify that God is King. “You, O Lord, are enthroned forever; your name endures to all generations.” But it’s precisely because the psalmists trust

in God as King that they wrestle with God and his covenant promises. When disaster hits, it does not feel or look like God the King is ordaining what is right. Thus the psalmists protest: “Why do you cast me off?”

Where is God in the mess of a debilitating, lethal disease? At times, I just wanted an answer. Maybe I did something wrong to deserve the cancer—the punishment of some sin in my life. Maybe it was out of God’s control. Maybe God was only capable of “suffering along with me.”

Yet as I prayed and lived with the psalms, it was clear these “answers” were not ways forward. Most of those who wrote psalms of lament did not see the calamity as a direct result of their sin. And the laments of the psalmists would have been nonsensical if they did not believe that God was almighty. If God were not capable of doing anything about the crisis, then why cry out to God, “Why do you cast me off?” Why blame the Lord as one who is sovereign, one who “has broken my strength in midcourse,” who has “shortened my days”?

On the other hand, others insisted that all of this was somehow part of “God’s perfect plan.” Building upon a misinterpretation of documents like the Heidelberg, with its strong doctrine of God’s sovereignty, this misappropriation of Reformed doctrine is a symptom of never learning how to lament. “It was ordained by God,” some said with a stoic face. “There’s nothing that could have been done.” Or, as we sometimes hear at funerals, “It was her time.” Really? Doesn’t God hate evil?

Joining the psalmist in lament provides a way beyond these two dead-end possibilities. With the psalmists we declare that God is King, God is sovereign. But that does not lead to a stoic »

fatalism. No. Because of this trust in God's kingship, we wrestle with the Almighty when his covenant promises do not appear to be coming to pass.

Yes, God is King, but the psalmists wait in lament until God's kingship is uncontested. And they rejoice when anticipating

God's judgment, God's setting things right: "Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness" (Ps. 96:13).

As those who belong to Jesus Christ, the King of kings, we are still waiting. His kingdom has already come, but it is still not yet—it is not yet uncontested in "this dark world" (Eph. 6:12). That's why Jesus commands us to declare, "Thy kingdom come."

That's why the creation itself

"groans," and the Spirit cries out in "wordless groans" until the kingdom has come (Rom. 8:22, 26). That's why we cry out to our ascended, kingly Lord: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

### A Way Forward

How does this fit with a Reformed confession about providence and the declaration that "not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven?" My way forward came through meditating again on Scripture and receiving the affirmation in the Heidelberg Catechism in light of the more detailed exposition in the Belgic Confession. Three months after my diagnosis, in a CarePages posting I reflected upon this passage from Question and Answer 1 of the Heidelberg and its source text in Matthew 10:29-31: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." Here's what I wrote in that post:

*The powerful passage about Providence in verses 29-31 above is not in the context of assuring Christians that they will have an easy life, or that they are entitled to bypass pain or suffering. Rather, Christ assures us that we need not fear opposition to our witness to him, because Christ will finally win out. Moreover, on a more intimate level, neither a sparrow nor a hair "will fall to the ground apart from your Father." . . . The passages from Matthew and the Heidelberg Catechism point to a providential care that is both reassuring and mysterious. Was it the Father's "will" that I undergo intensive chemo treatment? Did the Father just "consent" to this, given our fallen world in which people get cancer? Or did the Father just "know" that this would take place?*

*Personally, I find a distinction from another confession, the Belgic, to be illuminating here: it speaks about the distinction between God's active will from the beginning of creation and God's permissive will, given the mess of sin that we are in (Belgic Confession, article 13). The distinction doesn't explain*

*away the mystery, but it gives a way to speak about cancer and the stem cell transplant: that it is not God's "will" from the foundations of the earth—yet, given our fallen situation, it is still within God's hands, still within God's "permission" in some sense, for God can and does use even evils like cancer toward his own good ends.*

In the distinction that I noted, the Belgic Confession states that calamity does not just happen to slip through the fingers of God (chance) and God is not the author of evil or sin. For "nothing can happen to us by chance but only by the arrangement of our gracious heavenly Father, who watches over us with fatherly care, sustaining all creatures under his lordship, so that not one of the hairs on our heads (for they are all numbered) nor even a little bird can fall to the ground without the will of our Father."

The Belgic Confession openly admits that this leaves us with a mystery. But it is a luminous mystery giving assurance of God's care from his Word, even when we don't know the reason he has allowed this crisis. For "we do not wish to inquire with undue curiosity into what God does that surpasses human understanding and is beyond our ability to comprehend. But in all humility and reverence we adore the just judgments of God, which are hidden from us, being content to be Christ's disciples." The Belgic Confession notes that God discloses his will for Christ's disciples in his Word: in God's law and promise, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, we've been given a new identity, we know whom to trust.

We should not speculate about why God has allowed a disaster in nature to occur at a particular moment, or why God has allowed me to have cancer at this particular time. We don't know. But we can put our trust in God's own Word—a trust that manifests itself in lament and thanksgiving, petition and praise.

When disaster hits, the sovereign God is present and active, even when things seem out of control. Yet this is a truth that we cannot embody in abstractions or easy clichés: we embody it by joining with the suffering in praying with the psalmists—joining the Spirit and Jesus Christ in hopeful lament.

This is God's world, but it's also not the way things are supposed to be. In hope, we look forward to when God's loving and perfect rule in Christ will come in its fullness. But until then, we both hope and lament. When we come to the suffering, we should not act like Job's friends who falsely presume to know God's reasons—"It's just the way that God wanted it to be," or "God's just suffering along with you—he can't do anything about it." No. God is almighty and loving, and yet terrible things happen. We don't know why. But we do know where to direct our trust: toward God's own promises, for we are not our own, but by God's promise and action—in life and in death, we belong to our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



**J. Todd Billings** is the Gordon H. Girod Research Professor of Reformed Theology at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Mich., and an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America. His most recent book is *Rejoicing in Lament: Wrestling with Incurable Cancer and Life in Christ* (Brazos 2015).

## Four Walls and a Roof

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

**AS A UNIVERSITY STUDENT** I've spent my fair share of time in a dorm room. The one that I lived in for two years was built like an apartment, with naked halls lined with doorways. Each room was designed for one occupant and had limited square footage. A real estate agent would have called it "cozy."

Most students took it upon themselves to make their rooms as homey as possible. Whenever I took a stroll down the hallway there were open doors everywhere. Every room took on the character of the person who lived in it. Just by walking past someone's door, you learned a lot about them.

The one thing I always noticed were the posters. People's walls were dedicated to their favorite movie stars or superheroes. Actors' faces were plastered over beds, reaching out to the corners of the room.

My walls were just boring squares of beige. Partly it was because I was lazy. I was only going to be in the room for eight months at a time, I figured, so there wasn't much point. But my room at home doesn't have posters or pictures either.

I had never really thought about those blank walls until I lived in a dorm. I wondered, how could a person love Chris Hemsworth so much that they needed to have him staring at them? Every. Single. Day? Yep, still loving the hair. I like Chris Pine just fine, but bro, quit staring at me.

Then the answer started staring me in the face. Actually, Channing Tatum was staring me in the face, but he and his actor buddies gave me the answer.

At first all of this seemingly unexplainable level of dedication to a bunch of actors weirded me out. Then it started to make me feel a little guilty. These people were so loyal

and passionate about celebrities that they kept them at eye level for eight months straight. I had foolishly worried about being singled out at my campus for worshipping God. Meanwhile, everyone around me had turned their walls into shrines. Why didn't I have any posters of the one person every Christian aspires to be like? Not that I'd find a cheesy picture of Jesus to hang on the wall—but I could have surrounded myself with some sort of imagery to remind me of what's important.

One of my friends is passionate about comic book superheroes. Every once in a while she'd say of a female superhero, "She's everything I aspire to be." In that moment the superhero posters on her wall made all the sense in the world. Every time she looked at those posters they motivated her to be like her hero. That's an attitude I can respect.

I started to "get" all those walls plastered with posters. These people had the gift of passion. They might be funneling it in the wrong direction, but they had a fire burning inside.

God made us with a desire to worship. So it's exciting to see people who have a big desire to do just that. People who don't have God to worship use up all that energy and passion on other things instead. If they were pushing it in the right direction it would be glorious. Now when I see people with their posters, I'm inspired to be more passionate about my own hero. And I hope that one day their passion will find the right target.

These days I live in a house. I've decided to dedicate my walls to God, to use them to worship him. In the same way that I strive to praise God with my words, I'm going to try to give him praise with my possessions as well.

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

Literally. ■

**Emily Monster** is a media studies student at Guelph-Humber University and is an active member of the church group on campus called Embassy. She attends Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, Ont.

NEXT



I had foolishly worried about being singled out at my campus for worshipping God. Meanwhile, everyone around me had turned their walls into shrines.

## Fishing for Change

by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg



“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” This proverb has long been used to help people understand the best way to do charitable acts.

The point is that handouts alone cannot overcome chronic hunger. For that, you need to equip people with the skills they require to feed themselves.

World Renew has been the Christian Reformed Church’s arm for responding to disaster, hunger, and poverty for more than 50 years. During this time, World Renew staff have learned that there is a

time for giving people fish, a time for teaching them to fish—and even a time for helping people gain better access to the pond and to improved prices for the fish they catch.

While these projects can include everything from improved farming techniques, treadle pump irrigation, and composting latrines to urban savings groups, adult literacy classes, and HIV testing, some of the best examples actually do involve fish.

### Giving People a Fish

As a rice farmer in the Philippines, Jose Wendell Jadlov struggled to provide for his family of five. In 2000, he decided to

**Jose Jadlov stands in front of the makeshift shelter he built after Typhoon Haiyan destroyed his house and livelihood. Through World Renew he received a new fishing boat and fishing gear and is now rebuilding his life.**

move to the coastal community of Barangay 89 to begin a new venture as a fisherman. Little did he know that this move would put him right in the path of Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013.

“I could catch fish and sell it at the market and make money every day, unlike when I was a rice farmer and only reaped the reward after three months,” he said. “I was happy because I had a better job.”

You add.  
God multiplies.

## “ I now have hope for a better life for our future.”

Then Typhoon Haiyan struck. In the hours before the storm, the Philippines government issued an evacuation warning to people living in coastal villages. Jadlov took his family and ran to an evacuation center.

“Corrugated iron sheets were flying through the air,” he recalled. “My children were afraid because the rain and wind were very strong. They were shouting and crying.”

When the storm died down, the family returned home, only to discover that they had lost everything—their house, boat, appliances, clothes, and keepsakes.

Through World Renew, Jose and his family received a cooking pot, dishes, a wash basin, and other materials to help them get by. They also participated in a cash-for-work program which gave them a short-term source of income to buy food and materials for a makeshift shelter. Without fishing gear, however, Jadlov had no long-term plan for supporting his family.

Then World Renew chose Jadlov and several other fishermen in the community for a livelihood program. These families were given new boats and fishing gear to help them restart their lost businesses.

“I can now support my family’s needs,” Jadlov said, looking at his new gear. “I now have hope for a better life for our future.”

### Teaching People to Fish

While Jadlov needed immediate aid, other people need assistance that is more complex. Abdul Mannan in Bangladesh, for example, was struggling with chronic poverty as a way of life that was not the result of a natural disaster.

Like most of his neighbors, Mannan grew rice on a small plot of land but found it difficult to support his wife, three children, and elderly parents.

“I live in a small village, and I have very little land to live on or to farm,” he explained. “In the past, I could grow enough rice for perhaps eight months,

but the other months I had to borrow from moneylenders at a very high interest. I could not afford to send my children to school, and we often went hungry for days.”

Through World Renew and its local Christian partner, PARI, Mannan has changed his life—not with handouts but with improved skills and hard work. PARI suggested that he build dykes around »

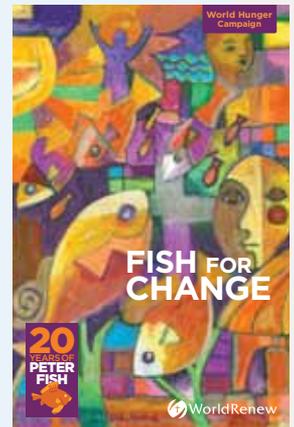
### World Hunger Campaign

The 36th Annual World Hunger Campaign materials are now available. This year marks the 20th anniversary of using orange Peter Fish banks as part of the campaign. In honor of his birthday, Peter Fish has taken a global tour this year. Check out photos of his travels on Twitter at #PeterFishTravels or visit World Renew’s Facebook page.

You can also participate in this year’s “Fish for Change” World Hunger campaign. The campaign is rooted in Luke 9:16-17: “Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied.”

By participating in the campaign, you and your congregation will be reminded that when we give of what we have—our time, our prayers, our talents, and our finances—God is able to multiply these resources. The resulting miracle is one where not just the poor but all people in the whole world are able to eat and be satisfied. To learn more, visit [worldrenew.net/worldhunger](http://worldrenew.net/worldhunger).

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg



Abdul Mannan and his neighbors release fish fingerlings into a flooded rice paddy.



» his field, flood the land to grow rice, and use this flooded rice paddy to farm fish at the same time as he grew rice, a technique known as inter-fishing.

“I learned how to choose rice varieties that thrive in water and how to protect the fish in my fields. Soon I was able to grow more rice and fish and earn money from selling them,” Mannan said, explaining that he earned 22,000 taka (\$283 U.S.) from his fish and 15,000 taka (\$193 U.S.) from rice this past year. PARI also showed him how to farm vegetables on the high dykes, which enabled him to earn another 3,000 taka (\$38 U.S.).

This training has greatly improved Mannan’s life. He now has vegetables for nutrition, fish for protein, and an

**Farmers catch the grown fish. By raising fish and rice together, Mannan has maximized the use of his land and increases his profits.**

increased source of income. His children are in school and have a better chance of escaping poverty. He has even saved enough money to build a latrine.

“I hope to lease another piece of land to start inter-fishing there,” he said. “I am sharing new learning with my neighbors and group members who are also eager to try new things. Now the future looks much brighter.”

**Improving Access to the Pond**

But what happens when people have the skills and the materials they need to

improve their lives yet are prevented from achieving their goals by unfair systems, violence, and unjust laws? In these situations, Christian organizations like World Renew also have the opportunity to change lives for the better.

The Etulo people in Nigeria are primarily Christian. Most make their living as farmers or fishermen. Over many decades, groups of Etulo people have migrated from their ancestral homes in central Nigeria to places in the north in search of more fishing opportunities.

In 2013, however, their peaceful fishing way of life came under attack by way of persistent insurgency by militants in northern Nigeria. As Christians, these families were targeted with violence, kidnappings, bombings, and even murder. Many of the fishermen were killed; their wives and children soon fled en masse back to their ancestral homes.

One of the communities to which they fled is a small village called Adi. Their arrival put a lot of strain on the people already living there. There was more competition for food, jobs, and materials

»

**This woman was widowed by horrific violence in Northern Nigeria. She has used a small loan to start a business selling dried fish.**



**Pray for World Renew**

- Pray for World Renew’s response to the earthquake in Nepal, tornadoes in Texas, and the many other places where disaster survivors are in need of assistance.
- Thank God for the more than 3,000 people who volunteer with World Renew each year and pray for their safety.
- Thank God for World Renew’s 65 Christian partner denominations and/or organizations around the world and pray for their ministry in communities in need.

You add.  
God multiplies.

and more demand to provide shelter and food for relatives who were arriving.

World Renew used a grant from the Africa Widows and Orphans Support to assist 19 women in Adi who were affected by this violence. First, they provided the women with a biblically-based trauma healing course that helped them deal with their grief, understand the symptoms of post-traumatic stress, learn forgiveness, and develop conflict prevention skills.

Next, World Renew encouraged women to form savings groups and provided these groups with small business

training and about \$35 of start-up capital per person. As the women met together, they provided each other with encouragement and support to start small business ventures.

One woman decided to use her capital to start a dried fish business. Today, she sells a variety of dried fish at the local market and has peace as she thinks about her future.

#### **Fish for Change**

Your support of World Renew is used across the spectrum to provide emergency

aid, long-term rehabilitation, skills development, trauma healing, and justice programs.

As a result, about one million people each year are able to join Jose Wendell Jadlov in saying, "I am content and satisfied and am able to stand on my own two feet. Thank you, World Renew, for all of the help. God bless you!" ■



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

## **Fighting AIDS in Fishing Communities**

In one Ugandan fishing community, the fight against AIDS has taken a great leap forward, thanks to a boat race and some creative work by World Renew.

According to the United States National Library of Medicine, people living in fishing communities in developing countries are among the highest-risk groups for HIV infection.

This is due in part to the fact that fishermen often live far from their families for large parts of the year. Fishing ports are also notorious for risky behaviors such as alcohol abuse, gambling, and commercial sex.

Unfortunately, because fishing and fish trading are mobile occupations, people in these populations are frequently overlooked for health services. People are often absent from home or out on their boats when HIV counseling, testing, and education are offered.

In Uganda, World Renew and the Pentecostal Assemblies



**A boat race at the Akampala landing in Uganda provided an opportunity to share HIV-prevention messages with at-risk people.**

of God (PAG) gathered groups of fishermen together over the course of a year and walked them through the "Stepping Stones" curriculum. This award-winning curriculum encourages behavior change by discussing HIV, AIDS, gender issues, communication, and relationship skills.

After a year of training, World Renew and PAG organized a boat race at one of the most popular boat land-

ings in the area. During the event, as people from the surrounding community filled the boat landing to watch the race, they were also able to get tested for HIV.

In addition, fishermen who had attended "Stepping Stones" training with World Renew during the past year talked with the other fishermen about values, faithfulness, and the risks associated with HIV.

"It was amazing to see fishermen mobilized at the Akampala landing site to help fellow fishermen adopt faithfulness as a lifestyle," said Nema Aluku, World Renew's HIV and AIDS program manager.

In less than 12 months since the program began, people's lives have been changed. Alcohol consumption at the boat landing has been greatly reduced, communication within families has improved, and many fishermen have started to adopt faithfulness and safe sex practices.

"This is the first time that World Renew has implemented an HIV intervention among fishermen in East Africa. The results are promising," said Aluku. "We plan to scale up this intervention to reach more fishermen at additional boat landing sites." ■

—Taylor Smith is a writer with World Renew.

## Stepping into God's Mission

Last month's column ended with these words: "As we look forward, may we also look to the Lord, submitting our plans to his."

I made this suggestion in the context of the planning we do, not only within each of our congregations but also for the work we do together by way of our shared Ministry Plan.

Synod 2015 reviewed the emerging Ministry Plan and endorsed its contours, finding agreement not only about the future we believe God desires for us but also the strategic focuses that will align with and help to shape the ministries of more than 1,000 individual churches.

Let me say a few words about what this Ministry Plan is—and isn't. First, as I mentioned in last month's column, it is a collaborative effort, born from a series of meetings with Christian Reformed church leaders in a variety of locations across North America.

That process identified challenges many of our churches are facing, ranging from how to engage young people in a way that keeps them connected, to how to identify, develop, and empower leaders, to how to remain relevant and responsive in the face of social changes that are turning our once-comfortable world upside down.

The CRC's Board of Trustees—which carries out the work of synod throughout the year—picked five of the challenges as strategic priorities. These became the foundation for the Ministry Plan. Others will be added as the plan continues to develop.

So do not expect a fully-fledged Ministry Plan to show up in your mailbox anytime soon. And do not expect denominational staff in Burlington, Ont., or Grand Rapids, Mich., or

Palos Heights, Ill., to tell you what you need or what you should be doing. (You wouldn't want that anyway!) Rather, all of us together are preparing for a journey, much as members of a sports team prepare for a big game well before they climb aboard the team bus.

But this metaphor is only partially helpful. Boarding the bus for an away game suggests a destination. But in our case, the destination isn't ours to choose—it's the destination God has picked for us. Our job is to focus on the qualities we need for the future God desires for his church, and then step into the places where God is already at work as he reveals them to us.

At classis meetings this fall we have begun sharing the contours of the Ministry Plan, asking delegates to identify the places where the plan aligns with the needs and desires God has placed in the hearts and minds of their congregations.

I hope that after your elder or deacon or pastor returns from a classis meeting at some point in the coming year, he or she will ask you to help identify those points of common focus, grouped into areas such as Church

and Community, Faith Formation, Leadership, Identity, or Collaboration.

The next step will involve the channeling of denominational resources to congregations in ways that further the work of the Spirit in the ministries of your church.

Nothing glitzy; nothing handed down from above. But together we will be working on a plan to assist each other in our local ministries as well as those carried out by denominational agencies and ministries. Stepping forward in faith into the places where God would have us. ■

### The Blanket Exercise

Synod 2015 encouraged churches to use the Blanket Exercise to deepen our understanding about issues we often ignore.

What is the Blanket Exercise? It's a simulation that combines history and geography in an experiential way to promote learning. While your grade 11 history book may have told about the patterns of exploration, settlement, and displacement, those are just words on a page.

The Blanket Exercise allows us to live into the experience in a way that helps to place human history, with all its warts and shortcomings, into God's story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

If you would like to know more or are interested in arranging to hold a Blanket Exercise at your church, please visit [crcna.org/BlanketExercise](http://crcna.org/BlanketExercise).

“Our job is to step into the places where God is already at work as he reveals them to us.”



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

*You add.  
God multiplies.*

## Doing What God Prepared Him to Do

**J**ei Wilson has been a member of Roseland Christian Ministries in Chicago, Ill., for nearly 30 years. It all started when his mother, Irene Wilson, ordered the *Today* devotional after learning about it from the *Back to God Hour* radio program.

“When I was younger we were always a believing family. My mom faithfully studied her Bible, but we didn’t feel the need to belong to a church,” Wilson remembered.

“Once she found the *Today*, she wanted to find a church associated with it. She liked the way it was true to what the Bible said.”

Back to God Ministries staff directed the family to Roseland Christian Ministries (RCM), a CRC congregation in their neighborhood. Wilson, who was 18 at the time, admits his mother had to cajole him into going to church.



**Jeji Wilson uses *Today* to encourage Debbie Zigler and others at Roseland Christian Ministries.**

Wilson was glad she did. Rev. Tony Van Zanten, the pastor at that time, soon discovered Wilson’s love for music and pointed him to a set of drums “that was just collecting dust,” Wilson said.

“I played along with Mrs. Van, who liked traditional music, and Miss Williams, whose style had a more bluesy feel.”

Wilson has been committed to the church’s ministry since then, serving as a deacon and an elder. Now, at age 46, he has been appointed director of ministries and development for RCM, leaving behind a successful information technology career. His responsibilities include overseeing the housing ministry, women’s shelter, thrift store, and food pantry.

Wilson said he is thankful his mother received that first *Today* devotional. He clearly sees God’s hand in his life: “I’m where I’m supposed to be, doing what God prepared me to do.”

Wilson, along with the staff and volunteers who work with him at the neighborhood food pantry, distributes *Today* devotionals to those who come for assistance and encouragement. ■

—by Nancy Vander Meer,  
*Back to God Ministries International*

## Exporting Goodness

**J**eremy Konyndyk can gauge his daily priorities by the ever-changing maps on his office wall.

His team at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Washington, D.C., manages a never-ending series of crises around the world—of which the urgent ones get the most prominent real estate on the walls.

The 1999 Calvin College graduate was appointed director of USAID’s Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in September 2013.

He’s the second Calvin alumnus to play a leading role in the office. Bill Garvelink, who graduated in 1971, worked there from 1988 to 1999, first as an assistant director for response and then as deputy director.

OFDA, the lead federal office responsible for coordinating the U.S. government’s humanitarian response to disasters overseas, works with other U.S. government entities—such as the U.S. military and the Centers for Disease Control.

The office responds, on average, to 70 global crises in more than 50 countries annually.

Some are natural disasters, such as the Nepal earthquake. Other crises, such as armed conflict or drought, develop more slowly.

When disaster strikes, Konyndyk is in charge of determining how OFDA will respond.

Konyndyk was a European history and classics double major at Calvin. He thinks the skills he developed as a history major are invaluable to his work.

“In history you have to critically analyze subject matter and think ‘big picture’ about how history affects culture,” he said.

Of OFDA’s recent work, Konyndyk is most impressed with the effort to combat the Ebola virus.

“There was no playbook for this crisis, no precedent to follow,” he said. “There’s a much clearer template now. The African people ultimately defeated the disease, but the awfulness avoided by the U.S. aid effort there cannot be understated.” ■

—by Michael Van Denend,  
*Calvin College*



**Jeremy Konyndyk at work in Africa.**

### Restoring Dignity through Photography

**W**hile living on the streets of Tshwane, South Africa, David was mistreated, misjudged and ignored by others.

“So often we withhold dignity from people enduring homelessness,” said Megan Ribbens, who serves with Christian Reformed World Missions.

Now Ribbens is working alongside David and others to restore that dignity.

Ribbens teamed up with Blake Woodhams, a professional photographer, to offer photography classes to David and 11 others. These lessons allowed participants to tell their own stories rather than having their stories told for them.

After a few lessons, Ribbens and Woodhams found themselves engag- »



David shares his story with television crews at the homelessness summit.

### Knocking at the Door in Nanaimo

**C**ertified Fishing Guide and Registered Chaplain.”

This is the text featured on Andrew Turkstra’s business card. Turkstra is the owner of Reel Time Fishing Charters in Nanaimo, B.C., as well as a pastor who recently began Breakthrough Ministries.

Breakthrough is a bi-vocational evangelistic and discipleship ministry currently funded by Christian Reformed Home Missions.

As part of his ministry, Turkstra knocks on the doors of local businesses throughout Nanaimo. The idea is to establish relationships and share the gospel through deed but also through word when the opportunity presents itself.

On the first visit, Turkstra introduces himself and finds out as much as he can about

the business owners, managers, and employees.

On subsequent visits, he works to deepen relationships. His ultimate goal is to launch gospel communities within these places of work.

In less than a year, Turkstra has visited nearly 400 different businesses with an over-

whelmingly positive response. About half have been open to the idea of a visiting chaplain—someone with whom to discuss personal and vocational concerns, as well as explore spiritual issues or questions.

A few months ago, Turkstra was en route to one of his

visits when he drove past an outdoor recreation shop. He felt a tug to go in, even though it was not on his list for the day.

“I had been there before but had never had spiritual conversations with anyone yet. But that all changed this time. I spoke with an employee who could not believe that I came on that day because he needed someone to talk to about his marriage and finances.

“We continued to chat for over an hour about these issues. We prayed together, and it was such a blessing.” ■

—by Rachel Ponstein,  
Christian Reformed Home Missions

The boat that Andrew Turkstra uses in his business.



You add.  
God multiplies.

» ing in participants' lives and sharing fellowship that showed signs of built trust.

During one of the lessons, David shared why he lives on the streets.

It turned out David had a chance to live with his mother, but he knew that she was receiving government grants, and he did not want to take advantage of that money.

These were the kinds of stories that David could share through photography.

Ribbens challenged David to use his new skills to capture snapshots of his life and invited him to display his photos at a homelessness summit.

"[The viewers] mulled over the creative perspectives, deep meanings, and raw images," said Ribbens.

Adding voices like David's to the conversation in Tshwane is an important step to transforming the city, said Mike Ribbens, Megan's husband.

"It's all about trying to transcend boundaries," he said. "We can talk about spiritual renewal, social renewal, but if we don't actually talk together, we're never going to make a long-lasting impact. That's the beautiful thing that's happening here." ■

—by Brian Clark,  
*Christian Reformed  
World Missions*

Longer versions of  
these and other  
stories are online at  
[thebanner.org/  
together](http://thebanner.org/together).



Joy-Elizabeth  
Lawrence discusses  
lively Scripture  
reading.

## Vivid Words

Every seat in the room was taken when Joy-Elizabeth Lawrence opened her workshop at the Day of Learning put on by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

Her topic was "Vivid Words: Scripture Reading That Captures the Imagination." But the teaser—"Don't let Scripture reading become an opportunity for your congregation to update their grocery lists"—was aimed at what happens when pastors and worship leaders read Scripture a certain way.

Lawrence, a student at Calvin Seminary, has a passion for Scripture to be read well, allowing it to form people's imaginations and bring the Word of God to life. Her calling springs from Paul's instruction to Timothy: "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture."

She has devoted herself to using her background in both theology and theater to help churches capture and communicate the life-changing power of God's Word. In her workshop, she involved participants as volunteer actors and spoken-choir members and directed them in the ways Scripture can be presented in the context of worship services.

Her sample script repertoire included familiar stories taken verbatim from the biblical text—Jonah fleeing from Nineveh juxtaposed with the disciples caught in a violent Sea of Galilee storm.

Through simple but effective means such as positions on a stage, repetition of phrases, voice volume, cadence, and choral voices, she demonstrated how familiar stories become new.

But this not easy to do. Lawrence reminded the participants that readers need to be committed to training and to rehearsals—just like musicians and sacred dancers and excellent preachers. Giving our best requires practice, she said. ■

—by Jinny De Jong, *Calvin Theological Seminary*

# Fall is for Pumpkins

What is your favorite thing about fall?

The weather gets cooler, and in northern climates maple trees turn into a beautiful sea of golden orange, red,

and yellow. What a wonderful gift! One of the most colorful sights of autumn is a field of those bright orange squashes we call pumpkins. You'll also find them decorating porches

and doorsteps. In fact, October is the perfect time to take a trip to a pumpkin patch and choose some for cooking and decorating. Read on for some cool facts about pumpkins.



This-um Great German Pumpkin!

## Fruit or Vegetable?

Is a pumpkin a fruit or a vegetable? Most people think pumpkins are vegetables because, like many kinds of veggies, they are often cooked, roasted, or boiled. But since a pumpkin has seeds, it is really a fruit! Pumpkins are part of the squash plant family called *Cucurbita pepo*. Other squash family members include fruits such as melons and cucumbers. Pumpkins first came from Central and North America—but now you can find pumpkins all over the world!



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

## Pumpkins Need Honeybees!

Pumpkins need help from honeybees in order to grow. Honeybees buzz around the pumpkin flowers, collecting pollen on their bodies. As the bees travel from flower to flower, grains of pollen drop from the male pumpkin flower to the inside of the female pumpkin flower. (Yes, pumpkin vines have girl flowers and boy flowers!) This is called pollination. The female flowers must be pollinated in order for pumpkins to grow from the vine. Over time the female flower dies and the fruit of the pumpkin begins to grow. These pumpkins are first green and then turn orange as they grow bigger. After about three to four months of growing on the vine, pumpkins are ready to be picked.

## Delicious Pumpkin Dip

### What you need:

- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 1 package cream cheese (8 oz)
- 1 cup canned pumpkin puree (also called "solid pack" pumpkin)
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg

### What to do:

- Combine powdered sugar, cream cheese, pumpkin puree, and spices in a bowl.
- Mix ingredients with a mixer or a wooden spoon until well blended.
- Enjoy this delicious dip with gingersnaps, vanilla wafers, or graham crackers!



# FUN Facts

Pumpkins are usually **orange** but are sometimes yellow, green, red, or white.

The **world's heaviest** pumpkin was grown in Mainz, Germany. It weighed 2,096.6 pounds (951 kg)!

Most pumpkins contain **hundreds of seeds**.

**Native Americans** introduced pumpkins to the Pilgrims who came to North America from England.

The word **pumpkin** comes from the Greek word "pepon", which means "**large melon.**"

Pumpkin flowers are **edible!**

## How Pumpkins Grow

If you've ever felt the inside of a pumpkin, you know it feels slippery and kind of slimy. The insides of the pumpkin are called fibrous strands. Some people like to call them pumpkin brains! Inside all that goo are the pumpkin seeds. Like any other plant, pumpkins grow from seeds. Once the seed is planted in good soil, it sprouts into a vine. Small yellow flowers begin to grow from the vine. These flowers are the beginning of a new pumpkin!



## Power Pumpkins

Pumpkins are packed with things that are good for you. Pumpkins have lots of beta carotene, which gives pumpkins their bright orange color. In your body, beta carotene turns into vitamin A. And vitamin A helps your eyesight stay sharp and clear. It also helps you see better in dim light.

Pumpkin seeds have lots of protein and fiber. Eating a handful of roasted pumpkin seeds will help you feel full longer than other foods. Fiber also helps keep your heart healthy. Even better, pumpkin seeds taste good. So they make a great snack!

## Make Your Own Pumpkin

### What you need:

- School glue
- 1 roll of toilet paper
- 1 sheet of orange tissue paper
- Green construction paper
- Green pipe cleaners
- Brown construction paper

### What to do:

- Cover the roll of toilet paper with the orange tissue paper. First, lay the sheet flat and put the roll in the middle. Lift the tissue paper up around the toilet paper roll and tuck the extra tissue paper down into the roll's hole.
- Take one piece of brown construction paper and roll it the long way to make the pumpkin's stem. Then fold it in half and stick the stem inside the roll's hole.
- Cut leaves out of green paper and tape them inside the roll's hole. Create vines and tendrils using curled pipe cleaners (tendrils are the cool curly parts of the vine).
- If you like, cut black construction paper into shapes for eyes, a nose, and a mouth to make a face. Glue them into place. Put your pumpkin in your bathroom or another place in your house for fall decorations!



## Word Fun

How many words can you make from the word *pumpkin*?

Have a contest with your family and write down as many words as you can in the spaces below.

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**Christin Baker** is a full-time stay-at-home mom. She is a member of Resurrection Fellowship church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



**G**ONE ARE THE DAYS when the majority of church members attended worship 50 out of 52 Sundays, committing themselves to the ministry and membership of their local church. We're witnessing a cultural phenomenon in which there are many followers of Jesus who call on the name of their Savior, enjoy the ministry and fellowship of the local church—and are even involved in it—but who simply attend and commit less. There are many reasons for this.

### Increasing Affluence

A demographic trend in North America indicates that more and more people in the middle class have more disposable income. One might even argue that the middle class is shrinking, in part because more of the middle class is shifting to the upper class. Personal disposable income is at an all-time high, both in the United States and in Canada. This increase in income also gives people more options for how they choose to spend their time.

Practically speaking, this means that church members, along with the rest of the population, are able to do things they might not have been able to do a decade ago. How many people do you know in your church who have bought a boat or a motorcycle, or who own a cottage on a lake or a cabin outside of town, or who simply like to travel?

With demanding careers and busy lifestyles during the week, people are increasingly choosing to travel or engage in activities they enjoy on the weekend—activities that may compete with a committed engagement to the local church.

### Kids' Activities

Another cultural phenomenon is the growing number of children who play sports or engage in other group activities. Many of these sporting events or extracurricular activities take place on weekends—and more and more parents are choosing their children's sports and hobbies over church activities.

Studies show that parents get involved in their children's sporting and hobby activities earlier—by age 5—and extend their involvement longer—until they graduate from high school. Many parents are committed to taking their sons and daughters to

# INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP, WE SHOULD CONSIDER ENGAGING PEOPLE IN THE JOY AND LIFE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH.

hockey, soccer, basketball, or dance practices throughout the week and tournaments on weekends. One church that did a survey of its own members found out that it was not uncommon for a family to spend up to 15 to 20 hours weekly on these activities.

## Weekend Work

More of us are working on weekends. An increasing number of North Americans are taking their work home on weekends, trying to meet deadlines or catch up on projects. Some are simply trying to fulfill the heavy requirements of their job description. And depending on where people live and what kind of work they do, it's not unusual for them to travel out of town for work. Some commute weekly or daily; others are required to work night and weekend shifts.

All of these situations make it difficult, if not impossible, for people to commit consistently to the local church.

## Blended and Single-Parent Families

These days, more and more blended families and single-parent families are represented in church membership. So what's this got to do with church attendance or commitment to a local congregation? Church leaders and members alike need to realize that when parents share custody of their children, they may see them only 26 Sundays a year.

Transportation is also a factor in this equation. This is true especially in my own context. Most of the single parents in my congregation do not own a vehicle and struggle financially. Adding to this reality, the challenge of taking babies or young children on public transit during long winters is a formidable obstacle. One blogger noted a strange twist: "People who have a car are often not in church because they have a car and choose to do other things. People who want to be in church are not because they don't have a car." Some people who want to get to church simply can't.

## Virtual Church

It is now unusual for a church not to have a website. In fact, countless churches have created a social media presence that includes sermon podcasts and videos. Online materials are readily available. In addition, effective and influential churches are launching online campuses that bring the entire Sunday worship service to your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

Many people agree that there are advantages and disadvantages to these technological tools. But the reality is that churches with a strong online presence have seen it impact their physical attendance. As access to online ministry continues to grow, more and more Protestant Christians in North America are meeting their spiritual needs online. Whether or not we agree that a virtual church experience can or should replace membership in a local congregation, we need to understand that it is here to stay.

Closely intertwined with this cultural shift is what some call "self-directed spirituality." People in general, both inside and outside of church, are turning less to churches and clergy to help them grow spiritually. In an age when information and knowledge are ubiquitous, we can search online for just about everything, from shopping and news to health-related items. When my son developed a rash on his skin, the first thing I did was consult an online doctor from the Mayo Clinic. Similarly characteristic of the postmodern mind is a decline in our trust of and reliance on institutionalized religion. Many people attempt to meet their spiritual needs all on their own, apart from the body of Christ. They may fail to see a direct benefit or the value of regularly attending and committing to a local church.

These trends are the reality churches are facing. How, then, shall we respond?

## Defense or Offense?

It seems to me that churches can either play "defense" or "offense." The former refers to correcting, rebuking, teaching, and training, pointing out to people the benefits of membership in the church and encouraging them to change. The latter tactic acknowledges the cultural trends and finds new and creative ways to make disciples, given the changes in our milieu and our church attendance. Perhaps the Holy Spirit can bring something good in either approach.

In addition, we might consider the issue of involvement. As pastor and podcaster Carey Nieuwhof has suggested: "People always make time for the things they value most. If they're not making time for church, that tells you something. Even among people who say they love the church and who say they love your church, if declining attendance is an issue, chances are it's because they don't see a direct benefit. They don't see the value in being there. That could be because there isn't much value or there is value that they simply don't see."

Similarly, author Will Mancini has suggested that instead of focusing on attendance and commitment to membership, we should consider engaging our people in the joy and life of the local church. Isn't it true that the most engaged people in your church are those who serve, give, invite, and commit themselves in a small or community group, and who are frequent attenders?

One thing is certain: our culture is shifting seismically. And that shift is shaping the life of the local church in how we reach out to help people grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and to follow him in a changing world. ■



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

## These Books Aren't for the Birds



**HAVE YOU SEEN ONE?** It might look like a birdhouse, but closer inspection will reveal a tiny library of books.

Visitors are invited to swap books, putting one of theirs in for every one they take out. No fines. No due dates. Simply swap your book for one you like.

The idea for these mini-libraries began in Hudson, Wis., in 2009 when Todd Bol made a wooden box to look like a one-room school, put it on a pole in his front yard, and filled it with books. He invited passersby to take and read them.

Bol's neighbor, Rick Brooks, teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Continuing Studies. He works with community development and saw an opportunity to further literacy.

Bol and Brooks worked together on several more mini-libraries, and then the idea took off, eventually becoming the Little Free Library movement. Since then more than 30,000 of these impromptu lending libraries have popped up all around the world, from the United States and Canada to Sri Lanka and Ghana.

It has, in a word, gone viral.

Darrell Bauman, the construction manager for a large Habitat for Humanity project in my hometown of Kitchener, Ont., just happens to be married to a librarian. He worked with a few volunteers on a slow day to cut enough pieces to build about a dozen boxes. One of those libraries ended up in front of the office of the Habitat project.

Look for—or build—a Little Free Library near you. ([LittleFreeLibrary.org](http://LittleFreeLibrary.org)) ■

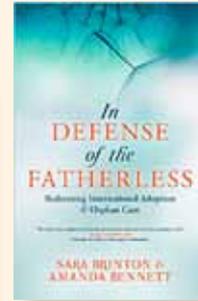


**Jim Romahn** is a freelance journalist in Kitchener, Ont., where he belongs to Community Christian Reformed Church.

No fines.  
No due dates.

## In Defense of the Fatherless: Redeeming International Adoption and Orphan Care

by Sara Brinton and Amanda Bennett  
reviewed by Jenny deGroot



Writer Brinton and lawyer Bennett were each committed to adopting a child through an international agency. Their experiences, however, took them down unexpected and painful paths, compelling them to explore how we might be hurting children

and their extended families through the very thing that we believe is helping. This book reflects their own journeys and their desire to give parents, churches, and other institutions the courage to be critical, self-reflective, and thoughtful about what we are called to through the biblical directive to look after orphans. (Christian Focus)



## When Marnie Was There

reviewed by Kristy Quist

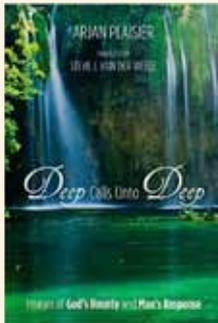
Twelve-year-old Anna is unhappy. She has loving foster parents, but she doesn't believe she is

worthy of love or happiness. The stress triggers her asthma, and her mother sends her to relatives at the seaside to recover. In a nearby abandoned mansion, Anna discovers Marnie, an unusual girl of her own age who seems to live there. *When Marnie Was There* combines the modern-day themes of isolation and being an outsider with a vibe that is part fairy tale, part ghost story. This quiet, emotional Japanese film features the lush, hand-painted animation we expect from Studio Ghibli movies.

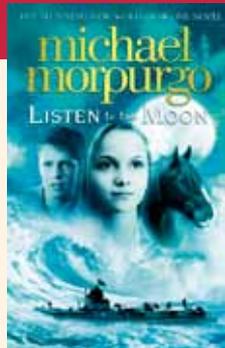
## Deep Calls Unto Deep: Images of God's Bounty and Man's Response

by Arjan Plaisier, translated by Steve J. Van Der Weele

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



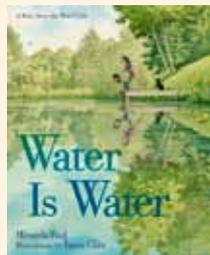
Plaisier's motive for writing "derives from a deep love, and a passion. It is a declaration of affection for the unbounded generosity of God and, as such, a plea for belief as an appropriate response." To frame his exploration, Plaisier views, as if through a kaleidoscope, images of God's revelation, humanity's faith, the church, and the realities of truth, goodness, and beauty. Though Plaisier, the Secretary General of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, meant for his book to be devotional in nature, it might be a bit too academic for some readers. Nevertheless, he contributes many worthy insights into God's magnificent love story and the necessity of a response from each person. (Wipf and Stock)



## Listen to the Moon

by Michael Morpurgo  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

During World War I, an 11-year-old girl, who is silent except for a few words, is discovered on an uninhabited island off the coast of England. Given the name "Lucy," the girl is taken in by a family that loves and cares for her. When the locals turn hostile because they suspect Lucy is German, the islands' physician confronts their bigotry. Morpurgo's stunning juvenile novel explores the remarkable history of the relationship between Germany and the Isles of Scilly, the destructive nature of war, and the powerful repercussions of sacrificial, loving acts, no matter one's citizenship. Ages 10 and up. (Feiwel and Friends)



## Water Is Water

by Miranda Paul  
reviewed by Gwen Marra

Poetry and information: the perfect combination! *Water Is Water* uses the rhyme and rhythm of poetry to take readers on a scientific journey through the water cycle. Accompanied by beautiful watercolor paintings, water changes to steam, fog, clouds, and snow using a familiar poetic pattern that sings in the reader's ear. This book would be a great read-aloud at home or in school. "Water is water unless . . . it heats up. Whirl. Swirl. Watch it curl by." Ages 6 and up. (Roaring Book Press)

## Something More Than Free

by Jason Isbell  
reviewed by Otto Selles

Jason Isbell blends raspy tenderness and a melodic twang to sing of fallen dreams, hard luck, and working-class resilience. His musical style fits mostly into the roots and alt-country genres, yet his band will blend pop country hooks with startling electric guitar solos. Isbell is best when he describes the slow road to personal recovery: "I fight the urge to live inside my telephone. I keep my spirits high. Find happiness by and by. If it takes a lifetime." The songs often express a longing for wholeness, as does the title track. Isbell is a first-rate artist

who challenges the listener through his varied musical style and thought-provoking lyrics. (Southeastern Records)

## THE LOWDOWN



**Long History:** The book *Faithful Witness* by Robert P. Swierenga recounts 150 years of worship and service at Central Avenue CRC in Holland, Mich. (Van Raalte Press)



**Rest Assured:** The new *Blessed Assurance: The New Hymns of Fanny Crosby* offers an album of never-before-published songs from the beloved hymn-writer. (Integrity)



**By the Numbers:** Worried by reports that the church is losing its young people? Jonathan P.

Hill's very quick but potent read, *Emerging Adulthood and Faith*, will give you a hopeful new perspective on the research. (Calvin College Press)



**On Fire:** Christian singer/songwriter Andrew Peterson's new album *The*

*Burning Edge of Dawn* comes out this month. (Centricity)

## Calling all readers! (and watchers and listeners too)

If you like to spread the news about the latest great book you've read, album you've heard, or movie you've watched, here's a chance to share it with all of us. Submit a review at [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org). We post reader-submitted reviews on our site, and we'd be happy to hear from you!

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

# What Are We Doing Right?

**I** RECENTLY HAD COFFEE with a young couple to make arrangements for premarital counseling. I've known John (not his real name) since he was in 10th grade as an active student and volunteer in our youth ministry. I've watched him grow up, move off to college, and transition from teen to young adult.

Despite the growing wave of young adults fleeing in the opposite direction, John is still connected with Christ and the local church. He and his fiancée are examples of young people who are the exception to the mass exodus of young adults from our churches. Both have a vibrant faith and are using their gifts to put that faith into practice. They are actively seeking to stay strongly connected with a church family.

Over the past 25 years I've participated in hundreds of conversations about the future of the church. The focus has always been on what's wrong: what happened that would cause so many youth group "kids" to bail? But my question flips those conversations around. What went "right" with John? What happened that has enabled him to stay solidly connected while so many of his peers flee?

Here are several factors that could powerfully influence how churches focus their energy and resources in the future.

## Family

The family a person grows up in—with all its celebrations and laments—is still the most powerful factor in where young people will land once they begin to make choices for themselves. Neither John nor his fiancée come from perfect homes, but having a stable family environment where loving God and loving others is part of the family equation is a huge advantage if we want "kids" to grow up and still be in relationship with Christ and his church.

There are significant reasons why many families struggle so hard these days. But in the case of this young couple, having stable and intact families plays a significant role in their ongoing relationship to Christ and his church.

## Connections

John and a group of his peers in our congregation were blessed to have had a married couple who stayed connected with them consistently throughout the middle and high school years. This couple committed to walk alongside this group of students every week—all the way up through high school graduation.

Young people  
value  
authenticity  
above almost  
everything.

This was an incredible commitment, made without any guarantees that relationships would always be warm and fuzzy. It was a commitment the couple faithfully carried out all the way to the finish line and beyond. In addition, this group of teens grew up during a time in our church's history with consistency in staff and pastoral leadership. Our church wasn't rotating through a new youth pastor every year or two.

Where we have seen adults make such selfless commitments to faithfully walk alongside individuals and groups of teens, we have also seen great fruit. Equipping and encouraging faithful adults to invest their lives into middle and high school

students should be at the top of the list for encouraging young adults to remain firmly attached to the body of Christ. John and his group of peers *belonged* at our church during their teen years. They mattered to adults in our church enough that they were willing to commit to staying with them for the long haul. And they continue to matter today, long after they've graduated from what we call "youth ministry."

## Authenticity

Inevitably, time invested in today's young people will lead to significant conversations about faith and life and all manner of complicated subjects. Life isn't always as simple as we might wish it were. Sunday school answers and Christian clichés don't often work for adults in an ever-changing culture, and they certainly don't work for our young people, who value authenticity above almost everything. They can smell the opposite almost instantly, and once they make up their minds that a person is not being "real," it's all over. This generation can be incredibly tolerant about all kinds of things . . . but they are incredibly intolerant of people pretending to be something they aren't.

So we need a generation of adult role models who will fearlessly dive into the tough stuff, who will share their life—including its struggles—with youth in appropriate ways, and who will not pass judgment when good and real conversations reveal personal struggles. Loving teens unconditionally as they occasionally reveal what is behind their masks is crucial for helping them see that faith in Christ and connection to his body is essential. Conditional love will have the opposite effect.

## Service

Another significant factor in John's church experience was the emphasis placed on servant leadership, discovering



gifts, and serving the needs of others in practical ways. John and his peers participated in mission trips and camps. They went “away” to serve the Lord, and came back with amazing stories about their experiences. Once they were back we found ways for them to continue serving in the midst of ordinary everyday life. Inviting younger people into the mission of the church—the rubber-meets-the-road, “love your neighbor as yourself” parts of ministry and service—is crucial to creating a community they want to be part of later on.

John served as a camp counselor for the youngest kids coming into our ministry and as a small group leader at our weekly middle school youth group. He loved computers and technology, so we invited him to help us figure out better ways to use those tools in our ministry. Meanwhile, he consistently had a solid team of caring adults nearby—people who affirmed and gently nudged John and his peers toward areas where they could thrive and grow in their ability to help other people.

Rather than systematically creating some grand, bullet-proof scheme for leadership development, we stumbled forward step by step in that direction by highly valuing our students and their gifts and by imperfectly plugging them into areas where they could actually make a difference. It wasn’t until John and his peers had moved off to college and began to come back and continue to help that we realized just how powerful serving had been in helping them stay connected to Christ and the church.

### **Grace**

Within the best of families and the best of ministries to people young and old, we must acknowledge with gratitude that we serve a God who holds tight even when we sometimes tend to wander. Even with all the right pieces in place, life and faith are challenging. Jesus spoke often about how difficult it is to live faithfully for him. Fortunately God is incredibly gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love. Any time we celebrate stories like John’s, we must also acknowledge that it is first and

foremost because God’s grace is at work among us. He often works despite our brilliant and trendy plans, rather than because of them. God remains firmly on his throne.

For now, I hope to encourage those who have been called by God to champion younger generations. There are a lot of simple things that we’ve probably been doing right in addition to the things we’ve probably been doing wrong. If we concentrate on engaging what is right, perhaps we’ll begin to see results that look more right as well.

There’s no magic bullet that will instantly solve the problems the church faces with the next generation. What is required is the slow, hard journey of faith and faithfulness, of intentionally engaging and empowering young people into lives that matter—to God and to the world around us. ■



Christopher Gibson is a member of Christ Memorial Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. For 25 years he has been involved in youth ministry.

# The Miracle of Forgiveness

FORGIVENESS BY ANN WILLEY © EYKONES.COM

How else do you express “the communion of saints” if not by forgiveness?

**THE DISCIPLE PETER** thinks he’s being generous when he offers to forgive the brother who sins against him seven times (Matt. 18:21-22). The Lord Jesus takes it past generosity when he answers “seventy times seven” (or 77 times; it’s immaterial which). He means that forgiveness is not about the sin, or even about the brother—it’s about yourself, your attitude toward the world.

Because, really, don’t you often have to forgive your brother 77 times for the very same sin? Maybe you forgave him once, but then you wake up again each morning with the lousy consequences of his sin against you, which endure despite your having forgiven him. And you have to forgive him all over again for that same sin.

You don’t have to be a believer to understand the liberating power of forgiveness. When you forgive, you let go of the sinner’s drag on you; it’s pure human wisdom. But in the parable that follows Peter’s question, our Lord moves forgiveness into a “God thing.” You can read the parable for yourself, but what I’m saying is that in order to forgive your brother who sins against you countless times, you have to enter the forgiveness of God, which is outside of time, outside of results, outside of cause and effect. That’s because it’s not based on any improvement in the sinner. Rather, as the catechism says, “because of Christ’s atonement,

God will never hold against me any of my sins nor my sinful nature which I need to struggle against all my life” (Lord’s Day 21).

If you think about it, you’re already forgiven for the sins you’ll do in the future. You need to confess them—but not to be forgiven, because forgiveness is a result of the atonement. You need to confess them in order to enter into the mind of Christ and the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, which in themselves are equal to eternal life.

Yes, think about it. And think about the Apostles’ Creed, which you repeat every week. “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.” The forgiveness of sins is a work of the Holy Spirit, and it is just as much a miracle of God as the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Indeed, it is a step of the Spirit on the way to that resurrection and that life.

When you forgive the sin of your brother (or sister, or mother, or father, or boss, or child), you enter the miracle of God’s forgiveness out of time, by which I mean the eternal forgiveness of God in the atonement, which the Holy Spirit works among us here in time and space.

How else do you generate “the resurrection of the body” when it’s these old, sinful, scarred, and guilty bodies that are to be resurrected?

Do you see how the forgiveness of sins is the work of the Spirit before the resurrection of the body? How else do you express “the communion of saints” if not by forgiveness, because one of those saints is your insufferable uncle who makes the same comment every time you see him, and you have to forgive him again and again in order to take communion beside him.

Oh, it’s a joyful thing, the forgiveness of sins. God forgives you seventy-seventy-seventy times for that same stupid sin you keep on doing—not because you deserve it, but because of this strange atoning commerce between the Father and the Son, which the Spirit applies to you. As far as you can see, that looks like love. That’s what you do when you love somebody. You know it. And the Lord says Yes. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



**Daniel Meeter** is pastor of the “Old First” Reformed Dutch Church of Brooklyn, N.Y., founded in 1654.

# ADS

**Deadlines:** November issue is 10/5/15; December issue is 11/2/15. Details online.

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

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

## Denominational and Classical

### Retirement

**DAVID J. SIEPLINGA** Bethany CRC, Muskegon, MI, announces the retirement of their beloved pastor, David J. Sieplinga. He has served congregations at Prairie Lane (Omaha, NE), Madison Square (Grand Rapids, MI), Garfield (Chicago, IL), Immanuel (Kalamazoo, MI) and Maple Avenue Ministries (Holland, MI). In 2004 Dave returned to pastor Bethany, his home church until ordination in 1975. An Open House Celebration was held at Bethany on Saturday, September 26, 2015 from 1-5 PM. Dave and Terri (Thomas) Sieplinga reside at 286 Monroe, Muskegon, MI 49441.

**REV. WAYNE DEYOUNG** With gratitude to God for 38 years of service, Second Kalamazoo is honored to announce the retirement of a son of our congregation, Rev Wayne DeYoung and his faithful wife Sandy. They have served with CRWM in Honduras, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico, and also with Home Missions in Marquette (MI). Celebration service and luncheon on Oct 11 at 6pm. Call the church for details.

## Congregational

**GRAND OPENING!** November 1 2015 - Sunlight Community Church of Lake Worth FL will celebrate its Grand Opening! This is a relaunch of Lake Worth Christian Reformed Church that has been ministering in the city for 60 years. All are welcome to join us! 561-585-2011



### PROVOST

Starting date no later than July 1, 2016

### VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVANCEMENT

Starting date no later than July 1, 2016

To nominate persons for either of these positions, please email [president@trnty.edu](mailto:president@trnty.edu).

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[www.trnty.edu](http://www.trnty.edu)

Trinity is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes applications from diverse candidates.

**TRANSITION** The council and congregation of Avery Street Church in South Windsor, CT express gratitude to God for the way He has used the ministry of Rev. Jerald and Donna Lion. In ministering to four congregations over the past 35 years, many people have been blessed by the use of their gifts. We wish them God's continued presence as they anticipate their retirement from active ministry as of June 30, 2016. As our congregation prepares for this transition, we invite inquiries from any Pastor who may be interested in sharing in an established ministry in beautiful New England. Send inquiries to: Search Committee, Avery Street Christian Reformed Church, 661 Avery St, South Windsor, CT 06074 or email at [AveryCRC@aol.com](mailto:AveryCRC@aol.com)

### Church's 100th Anniversary

**NELAND AVE. CRC** its 100th anniversary this fall. Events include worship services led by former pastors: Duane Kelderman on Sep. 27, Rich Hamstra on Oct. 4, Ruth Boven on Oct 18, Len Kuyvenhoven on Nov. 8, and Carl Kammeraad on Nov. 22. A Celebration Program will be held the afternoon of Sunday, Nov. 22 and banquet on Saturday evening, Dec. 5. The centennial worship service will be December 6. Friends and former members are cordially invited to these events. Visit [Neland.org](http://Neland.org) for more details.



Dordt College is seeking applications for the following areas beginning August 2016:

### Faculty Positions

Agriculture

Art

Communication

Engineering

Finance

Application reviews will begin immediately. Qualified persons committed to a Reformed, Biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to follow the faculty application procedure at the link below.

Dr. Eric Forseth, Provost  
Dordt College  
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## General

### School's 50th anniversary

**HALTON HILLS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL** celebrates its 50th Anniversary Celebration Gala: Saturday, November 7th 2015, 7:00 pm-10:00pm Call 905.877.4221 for more details.



Seeking applicants for the bi-national position of

### Editor in Chief for *The Banner*

Beginning August, 2016

*The Banner* is the monthly periodical of the Christian Reformed Church used to inform members about what is happening in the church, to strengthen their Christian life, and stimulate critical thinking about faith issues as it relates to our culture.

The Editor in Chief will be responsible for the content of *The Banner* to ensure it fulfills its stated purpose, including writing content and overseeing other staff who provide content.

The successful candidate will have a Master's of Divinity or Theology degree, or equivalent and at least eight years of broad ministry experience; extensive knowledge of the church of Jesus Christ, especially the Christian Reformed Church, and a commitment to the Reformed Faith; and proven leadership and administrative skills.

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- Thurs. Nov. 12 **Des Moines, IA**
- Wed. Nov. 18 **Zeeland, MI**

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## Birthdays

### 95th Birthday



**STEVE VAN DER WEELE** will celebrate his 95th birthday on October 13. His children, son Philip and spouse Joan (Snyder) and daughter, Deborah Kula, along with his two granddaughters, Katie and Jennie, thank God for his life and work. His address is 2018 Mallard Drive, SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49546.

### 90th Birthday

**ANGIE VANDEN HEUVEL** will be 90 years old on Oct. 9. Celebrating God's grace and goodness in her life are husband, Dennis, children Rev. Jack Vanden Heuvel, Doug and Dawn Terpstra, Rev. Doug and Nancy Einfeld, 18 grandchildren and 19 great grandchildren. The entire family celebrated Dennis's (March 3) and Angie's 90th birthdays with a family reunion weekend in July. Great is thy faithfulness!

## Anniversaries

### 65th Anniversary

**KASS** Theodore (Ted) and Ellen (Kaashoek) are celebrating 65 years of marriage on October 13. Ted and Ellen, as well as their children, Roland and Celeste Kass, Suellen and Rick Hekman, Karen and Curt Dubai, Steven and Sue Kass, Glenn and Camille Kass, Marcelynn and Tim Bakelaar, 14 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren are thank-

ful for the many years and many blessings God has given to them through his faithfulness.



**BOB** Cornelis and Tina (Bakker) of Fontill, ON, with love celebrate 65 years of marriage on October 8. They and their children and spouses, 8 grandchildren and spouses & 5 great grandchildren thank God for His many blessings and faithfulness. Mom and Dad, your love and faith are an inspiration to us all. We love you.

### 60th Anniversary

**KORTHUIS** Herb & Bernace (Strengholt), 507 Wildrose Circle, Lynden WA 98264, thank God for His faithfulness during the last 60 years! Married on November 2, 1955 their family now includes three married sons, eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. To celebrate this milestone and Herb's 80th birthday, the family will host an open house dessert social from 12-2pm on Sunday November 1 at Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Lynden.

**WILTJER** Rich and Marilyn (Greenfield) of 7424 W. 108th Pl., Worth, IL, 60482, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on October 21, 2015. They with their children John & Brenda VanTholen, Dan & Barb Vree, Rick & Deb Wiltjer, Doug & Beth Blink, 11 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren are thankful for God's faithfulness and blessings through the years. An Open House celebration will be held on October 17, 1-4 pm at Trinity Christian College, Grand Lobby, 6601 W. College Drive, Palos Heights, IL.

## Church Position Announcements

**SENIOR PASTOR** The Crossroads Fellowship Church, a regional fellowship of Reformed Christians serving the Des Moines (IA) metropolitan area, has begun a search for a new Senior Pastor. For more information contact Sam Hamstra here: [info@chapter-next.com](mailto:info@chapter-next.com).

**PASTORS** Hope Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Courtice—near Oshawa—Ontario, is looking for two pastors who will serve in a team ministry that will take our church into its next chapter. The pastors will succeed our current pastor when he retires. We are a growing, diverse congregation committed to vibrant, contemporary worship. We are excited about pursuing ways to implement our mission to believe, belong, bless, and we're eagerly anticipating what God has planned for the next phase of our development. If you can see yourself as part of a team ministry in an ethnically diverse church in which nearly half the members are under the age of 25, we'd love to chat with you. Contact our Succession Planning Committee at [hfsuccession@gmail.com](mailto:hfsuccession@gmail.com) or call the Committee's chairperson, Stan Baker at 905-440-6583.

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

**YOUTH PASTOR/DIRECTOR** Drayton CRC, located in beautiful southwestern Ontario, is seeking an outgoing, highly relational youth pastor/director who will engage the youth of DCRC in spiritual growth by developing, coordinating and administering an effective and comprehensive youth ministry. As a member of the pastoral team you will also provide discipleship and pastoral care for the youth and young adults as well as lead the congregation through preaching. Church profile upon request. Please contact Teresa Rumph at [rumph@hsfx.ca](mailto:rumph@hsfx.ca).

**PASTOR:** Living Hope Community Church (Fox Lake, WI), a young, multi-generational congregation, with a missional-church mindset, awaits the arrival of a new pastor. For more information on this pastoral opportunity, contact [info@chapter-next.com](mailto:info@chapter-next.com).

**CARETAKER OF FACILITIES:** Gateway Community CRC, in beautiful Abbotsford, BC, is accepting resumes for a full time position as Caretaker of Facilities. The qualified application must have a deep love for Christ and His church and view this position as a vital ministry within the church. For position description go to [gatewaycrg.org](http://gatewaycrg.org). To submit a resume or ask any questions please email Marcel deRegt, Executive Pastor, at [marcel@gatewaycrg.org](mailto:marcel@gatewaycrg.org)

**PASTOR OF YOUTH** and Congregation at Clinton CRC, located in Southwestern Ontario, surrounded by natural beauty. We are looking for a person to work with new and mature Christians to use their God given gifts for service within our congregation and community. This person must be enthusiastic about God, organized, self-motivated, and willing to work in a team environment. Some preaching throughout the year will also be expected Our church profile is available at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org), visit our website [www.clintonchristianreformedchurch.ca](http://www.clintonchristianreformedchurch.ca) or contact search committee at (Phil Dykstra) [dykstrafarms2010@gmail.com](mailto:dykstrafarms2010@gmail.com) 1-519-441-8226

**FULLTIME ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY** at Clinton CRC to fulfill this position one must have strong computer skills, be punctual with deadlines, organized and receptive in a Christ-like manner. Our church profile is available at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org), visit our website [www.clintonchristianreformedchurch.ca](http://www.clintonchristianreformedchurch.ca) or contact search committee at (Phil Dykstra) [dykstrafarms2010@gmail.com](mailto:dykstrafarms2010@gmail.com) 1-519441-8226

**SENIOR PASTOR** Christ Community Church of Plainfield is seeking to identify the individual that God has selected to become our next Senior Pastor. For more details about the church, to review the job description, and to initiate the application process, please visit [http://aplacetoconnect.com/news/view/Senior\\_Pastor\\_Opening](http://aplacetoconnect.com/news/view/Senior_Pastor_Opening).

**DIRECTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP** LaGrave Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan seeks a half-time Director/Minister of Discipleship to lead a ministry of spiritual formation and small groups with the ultimate goal of creating a connected, caring fellowship of believers and spiritually healthy, growing disciples of Christ. The ideal candidate will have a thorough grounding in, and commitment to, the Reformed faith, relevant training and experience in spiritual formation and a demonstrated ability to work collegially in a team-based leadership model. Minimum of a bachelor's degree required. Please send a resume with cover letter to [grace.shearer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:grace.shearer@sbcglobal.net) Full job description available at [lagrave.org/AboutUs/JobOpenings](http://lagrave.org/AboutUs/JobOpenings)

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# FAITH FORMATION MATTERS

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## Obituaries

**BENNIK** Wilma (Weening) Bennik of Rimbey, AB, passed into Glory to be with her Lord and Savior on Sunday, August 16, 2015 at the age of 78. Wilma will be lovingly remembered and missed by her loving husband Joe of 59 years, her children Sy (Grace) Bennik, Audrey (Pete) deKlerk, Joanne (Cor) Bouwsema and Carolyn (James) Vanderhoek, 18 grandchildren and 25 great grandchildren, one sister Shirley (Henry) Valstar and four brothers, Walter (Gerda) Phil (Janet) Clarence (Jean) Ed (Hinke) Weening. Wilma was pre-deceased by her infant grandson Benjamin Vanderhoek.

**GROTEHUIS** Eleanor (Veldman), age 84, of Jenison, Michigan joined her husband Dale and son Jack in glory on August 5, 2015 from pancreatic cancer. She is survived by sons Bob, Phil (Joy), Tom; four grandchildren, one great-grandson.

**REINSMAS** Mins, age 92, went to be with his Lord on August 14, 2015. He will be lovingly remembered by Tryni (Romkes), his wife of 68 years, and by their four children and ten grandchildren: Luke and Barbara (Feikens) Reinsma, Nathaniel, and Marika; Barbara (Reinsma) and John Ottenhoff, Samuel, and Chloe; Clarence and Lisa (Pitstick) Reinsma, Micah, Hanna, Grace, Emma, Peter, and Rachel; and Teresa Reinsma. Memorial service to be held at the First CRC of Seattle on Saturday, September 12, 3 p.m. Memorials to Shoreline Christian School, 2400 NE 147th Street, Shoreline, WA 98155 are appreciated.

## Employment

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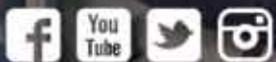
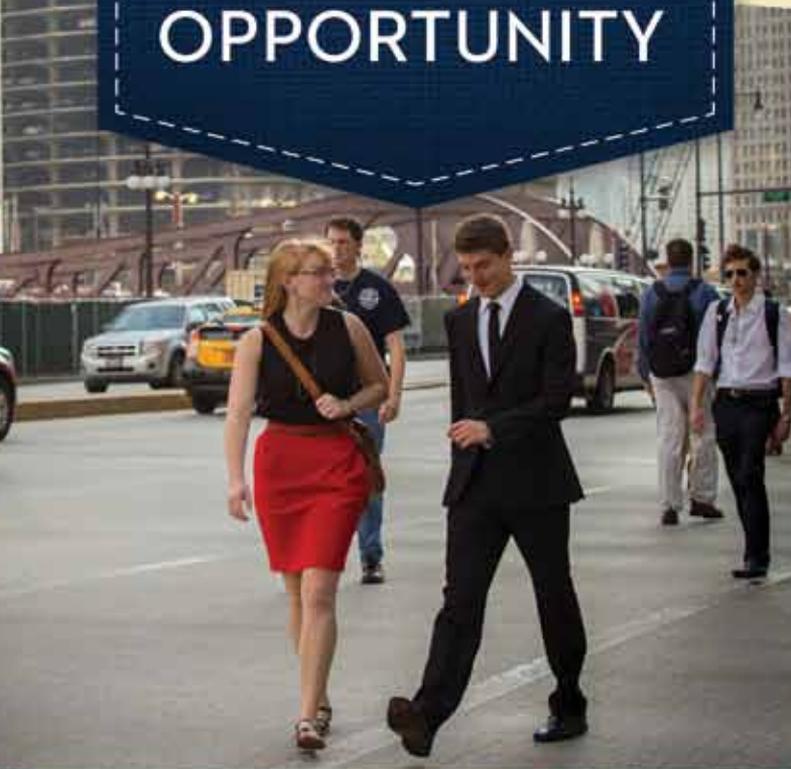
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# Punch Lines

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

**A**s a pastor I recently had the unusual experience of performing a wedding ceremony for a couple in our local hospital. I excitedly shared this news with my wife and 7-year-old granddaughter.

Me: "I married someone at the hospital today!"

Granddaughter: "Oh, but can I still keep my same Nanna? I love my Nanna!"

—Rudy Ouwehand

**S**hortly after his retirement, a pastor and his wife decided to join a certain congregation.

Not too long after that, another retired ministerial couple joined the same church. The Sunday this was noted in the church bulletin, a long-time member was heard to comment innocently, "Hey, it looks like we are becoming the suppository for retired preachers."

—Hank Kuntz

**D**uring communion one Sunday, my then 4-year-old grandson wanted some of the bread and grape juice. His mother explained that when he made profession of faith someday, he could. He looked up at the ceiling

and said, "Really, God? Why can't I have some?"

—Margaret DeJager

**T**asked with presenting the children's message on Pentecost Sunday, I decided to use some props to explain how Pentecost is like the birthday of the New Testament church. I held up a birthday cake with a solitary candle for the children to see, and then lit the candle, asking kids to identify what was on my cake.

"It's fire!" said a small boy.

Thinking we were on track for a great lesson, I quickly said, "Yes! And what was on the apostles' heads at Pentecost?"

"Birthday cake!" replied an enthusiastic little girl.

—Heidi de Vries

**A**Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her 5- and 6-year-olds. After explaining the commandment "honor thy father and mother," he asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat, one little boy answered, "Thou shalt not kill."

—Clarence Wildeboer

**S**potted on a church sign in Cobden, Ontario:

Garden for God  
Lettuce Be Kind  
Squash Gossip

—Jacob Rook

**I**took my 3-year-old granddaughter to John Ball Zoo in Grand Rapids, Mich. The zoo features a life-size statue of founder John Ball just outside the entrance. Children always climb onto the statue's lap. When my granddaughter was sitting on John Ball's lap, I asked her if she knew who that man was. She replied, "Jesus?"

—Nancy Zeilstra

**T**wo guys were fishing on a Sunday morning and feeling pretty guilty. Said one to the other, "I suppose we should have stayed home and gone to church."

To which the second angler replied: "I couldn't have gone to church anyway. My wife is sick in bed."

—Dick Bylsma



"Good grief! They're automating!"



# Mission Matters

**Your personal relationship with Jesus can transform a life.** Joining God's mission matters because we are called by God to be his hands and feet in this broken world. "As the Father sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). We are sent to heal, to restore, to bring transformation, and to be Christ's ambassadors. **Will you prayerfully consider a gift to Home Missions this fall?**

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