

BANNER

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Be One Who Gets It »



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Holy Catholic Church

IN THE CHURCH I ATTEND WE RECITE THE APOSTLES' CREED EVERY SUNDAY. These days I find myself drawn to the statement "I believe in the holy catholic church." That's a good place to start thinking together about our identity as the Christian Reformed Church.

We should say this phrase with a taste of ashes on our tongues. The rise of denominations, like the CRC, stands as a monument to our failure to obey Jesus Christ and honor his prayer to the Father "that they may be one as we are one."

How can we understand our identity as a denomination and still be faithful to Christ and to the apostolic faith expressed in the creed?

One way is to keep in mind that our denominational identity and mission are always provisional and temporary. As with our own personal lives, what we are as a denomination is not what we ought to be. If we as a church really believe what we say in the creed, one of the most important activities of the CRC lies in the Ecumenical Relations Committee.

On a practical level, each of us needs to learn to think of the divisions within the holy catholic church in a new way. It's as though the light of Christ, that blazing, holy light of truth and love, has been refracted through the lens of denominations. As regretful as that is, we can at least recognize that the many colors reflected in the various denominations are each beautiful in themselves.

So in viewing other denominations, our first impulse should be to recognize the beauty of the one light of Christ refracted in each one: the evangelistic energy of the Baptists; the staggering beauty of Eastern Orthodox worship; the worldwide scope and influence of the Roman Catholics; the spiritual fervor of the Pentecostals. In all of them—not in any *one* of them—the full light of Christ can be seen. We can then value our own distinctive mission and doctrines, but only as a beautiful color in the rainbow of the whole church of Christ.

It's important to notice that we don't just believe in the catholic church but in the *holy* catholic church. That doesn't mean we believe in the church only when it is pure and united and faithful. The church is not holy by the measure of its own efforts. Let's face it, most of the time the church is a mess; the bride of Christ stands with a torn dress and dirty feet, dripping mascara from her tears.

The holiness of the church comes not from herself, but from her Lord, the bridegroom. The church is holy because Christ has identified with her, redeemed her, and stands in her midst. He is the magnificent and holy One who walks among the candlesticks in Revelation 1.

Each week in our worship it's as though we come in with ragged clothes and dirty bare feet, and Christ invites us to try on the wedding dress and look in the mirror. Can it be true? *We* are the bride of Christ, the holy catholic church?

That's our deepest identity, before any denominational label, before any particular doctrines, true as they may be. We are members of the one holy catholic church, the body and bride of Christ.

A practical place to deepen that awareness might be in our congregational prayers. What if we prayed not just for the persecuted and suffering churches, but for the megachurch to which some of your members moved, the liberal mainline church downtown, and the Roman Catholic parish down the street? Doing so says that for all our problems, we are really the one holy catholic church. ■

FOR MORE, SEE
AS I WAS SAYING
at thebanner.org



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

The church is
holy because
Christ stands
in her midst.

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Let It Go

I**N APRIL 2015**, a strange guy came looking for me. My church administrator told him I was not in.

He was back the next day. The man's name was Michael. He wore a crumpled yellow L.L. Bean jacket and black boots. He was short and pudgy, with sunken brown eyes and a receding hairline. He drove a brown Honda Accord. He asked if I was Rev. Smith. I wanted to lie and tell him I was in a government witness protection program. Instead, I confessed my true identity. We sat down on a bench in the narthex. He told me that the Lord had given him a message for me.

Can you hear the warning bells going off in my head? Over the years, I have had all kinds of urban prophets and crackpot messengers come to tell me I would win the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes or that I should pray against the demon ivy that crept along the church walls. OK Michael, I thought, make my day!

The sardonic man was given three messages, he said, but he was forbidden

to tell me two of them. Fine by me. The message he told me was that African Americans had suffered greatly in America and the church needed to repent from it. He asked for my forgiveness for his race's part in the suffering of black people in America. He stuck his hand out.

My body froze. What was he doing? Why was he doing this? Did God really send him to me? Why should I accept his confession for a whole race of people who had done wrong? I didn't know what to make of it. Little did I know that Michael had offered me a chance to release my load.

My church was struggling to survive. I felt like a failure in my ministry. I was angry at God. Michael's extended hand to me was an invitation to let go. Let go of "my" church that really belonged to Jesus. Let go of my self-righteousness and prideful ideas that performance was better than faithfulness.

I let go with a handshake. A slight smile rose on Michael's face. Now, he did tell me some crazy things, but he also said my encouragement was Psalm 37:1-8. He got up and left quietly. I didn't read the

text for three days, because I was scared. Then I read, "Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture" (v. 3). And I felt God's grace wash over me like healing balm applied by a loving Father.

My first response—and maybe yours—was that this guy was crazy. But most prophets in the Bible were called crazy for delivering messages to a skeptical people named Israel. My second response was to question Michael's mental state. But most prophets were accused of being out of their minds.

I needed Michael to shock me back into receiving grace by letting go and letting God be God. Thanks be to God for an obedient prophet of grace. ■



Rev. Reginald Smith has served churches in Michigan and New Jersey and is still an avid fan of the Chicago Cubs.



*There is no path to God
that is not first
God's path to us.*

— JOHN MOGABGAB

Lessons of Liberation

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THE BANNER



Young Dutch women climbed onto the tanks to hug the Canadians.

COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

THE END OF WORLD WAR II, experienced by many people who later immigrated to the United States and Canada, was unforgettable.

Seventy years ago, on May 5, the Canadians liberated our city of Oudewater in the Netherlands. We saw the tanks rolling through the streets with smiling Canadian soldiers waving to the crowds. The crowds were ecstatic, waving the Dutch red, white, and blue flag again, along with the orange, the royal color of the Netherlands, forbidden for five long years. Young Dutch women climbed onto the tanks to hug the Canadians. Thinking of that celebration still brings tears to my eyes. As a kid I stood in the middle of the crowds in total awe.

My father had been deeply involved in the underground resistance movement. He was foreman in a warehouse and 20 greenhouses that had become a supply- and nerve-center. In the boiler cellars was forbidden radio contact with London, England.

As an 8-year-old, my job was to stand watch for the Gestapo. I remember three SS soldiers emptying all our closets as my mom stood by with tears in her eyes. We kids joined in the crying, so glad that they found nothing. We knew where a lot of stuff was hidden—way underneath the anemones, freesias, and cauliflower in the greenhouses.

How can we ever thank America and Canada enough for the freedom they helped bring? How can we thank Almighty God enough? He, after all, brings even more—freedom from tyranny plus freedom from the tyranny of sin and evil that causes wars. He provides the Prince of Peace for anyone who surrenders to receive the gift of everlasting peace.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch remember all the fallen who perished on land, at sea, in the air, and in concentration camps, for our freedom on the anniversary of liberation.

Have we learned anything?

What about America trading five terrorists for one U.S. deserter? What about Benghazi, where four American officials died? What about Iraq and ISIS? Against the advice of U.S. generals, America pulled out of Iraq without leaving sufficient power and protection and left a vacuum that the terrorists filled. Now it is costing more and more lives. Minorities and Christians are being slaughtered. The enemy is emboldened by the U.S.'s portrayal of weakness and failure to act when it is so desperately needed.

A strong America means a much safer world.

As we look back to remember and give thanks for freedom during this 70th anniversary year, may we all be in prayer and repentance to turn back to the Author and Provider of liberty. “If my people, which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). ■



John Van Hemert is chaplain of the Port of Palm Beach, Fla. He has served churches in Canada and the U.S. for 37 years.



Don't Walk Away

I applaud De Moor's wise counsel in his editorial “Don't Walk Away” (Jul/Aug 2015). We would do well to read this article before every council room “hockey game.” This fits so well with the wisdom of Solomon: “It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes” (Eccl. 7:18).

—Peter Stellingwerff
Abbotsford, B.C.

Our retiring editor's last word “Don't walk away” continues with pastoral advice to be a “daring Daniel” and not to sweep homosexuality, creation science, and other issues under the ecclesiastical carpet, [citing] synod's decision to cede each council to deal with some of these contentious issues.

To suggest “local options” may not erode our biblical world and life view; however, it will definitely lead to congregationalism.

—George and Ann Lieuwen
Langley, B.C.

Re the discussion about homosexual practice (“Don't Walk Away”):

To those who consider homosexual practice a sin, it might help to keep in mind that many young homosexuals kill themselves when they realize they are gay because for many that also means being

TTERS

rejected by their families and finding themselves alone in the world.

I'm not saying it's not sinful; I'm just saying don't be too quick to throw a stone at them. After all, Christ didn't condemn the woman caught in adultery. And when we say, "Hate the sin, love the sinner," many homosexuals hear, "Hate the sinner." Maybe because our behavior doesn't seem very loving to them.

—*Michèle Gyselinck*
Montreal, Quebec

Re the editorial "Don't Walk Away":

Telltale signs that the denomination may be about to cave to gay pressures:

- A pastor delegate at synod stating, "You can't stop this conversation" despite the fact that the denomination already has a time-honored stance on homosexuality.
- An elder delegate at synod gives credence to prominent authors who have betrayed the clear teaching of the Bible by compromising to changing cultural and legal pressures.
- The general tone of synod, concluding we can't avoid our disagreements on whether homosexual practice is always sinful.

The basic question is not so much about same sex marriage but about the authority of the Bible and its grand narrative.

—*Ivan Mulder*
Pella, Iowa

It's refreshing to learn that synod once again decided to face the issue of same sex relationships ("Don't Walk Away")—long overdue, in my opinion. People in the gay community who wish to remain with the church are ostracized, ridiculed, and, in general, made to feel *persona non grata* in most Christian Reformed congregations. [Are same sex relationships] sinful? Yes. But we all are not without sin.

The CRC needs to show compassion and love, thereby taking steps to eliminate discrimination and judgment against the gay community. Let those who are without sin cast the first stone.

—*Tienco Posthumus*
Oshawa, Ont.

In Bob De Moor's "Don't Walk Away" editorial he suggested a local option so that opposing sides in the same sex marriage (SSM) debate could remain in the CRC.

He went on to state that the Bible was very clear that leaving the church was not an option. We are to stay in the church family and keep the dialogue going. I disagree.

Particularly in this stressful time when the CRC is "evolving" in its position on SSM, it is important to be very understanding toward people who leave the church. They are often not the knee-jerk reactionaries that they are sometimes portrayed as.

Perhaps we can learn from the CRC's change of heart on divorce and remarriage a few decades ago. Maybe we can begin to also show some of that empathy and support to people leaving their churches as well. When people have legitimate concerns they can leave with our blessing. We can wish them well and encourage them in their difficult time of transition.

—*Dean Mc Rae*
Oshawa, Ont.

Re the editorial "Don't Walk Away":

As parents, we have put a lot of energy into searching out God's will for our family since our adult son came out several years ago. In our searching we came to embrace a "third way."

Rather than debating the issue and its implications, the third way challenges us to accept the gray area and love each other

in it. Don't all of us live in a gray area between right and wrong? Homosexuality is one of many things gone awry since creation. Are any of our sins unreachable by God's love? Certainly they add pain and tension to our days, but the Bible teaches that love can overcome a multitude of sins.

There are lonely and hurting children and adults in our midst struggling with their homosexuality, whether they are practicing or not. If there needs to be discipline, let that be God's decision on Judgement Day. Today let our energies be spent on loving God and loving our neighbor.

Our family lives in "the tension between truth and grace." It is a place where we strive to love unconditionally as God loves us.

—*Isaac and Sylvia Van Geest*
Grimsby, Ont.

Correction

Membership totals for Classis Hanmi were reported incorrectly in the 2015 Yearbook, which led to an error in reporting the total number of CRC members for 2015. As a result, a recent column by Steven Timmermans, executive director of the CRCNA, was incorrect in stating that CRC membership has grown. It is more accurate to say that membership remained stable from 2014 to 2015. Dr. Timmermans regrets the error.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

NEWS

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Every sheriff's department vehicle is equipped with four activity packs with age-appropriate items for children and youth in crisis.

Sheriff's Department Blessed with Backpacks for Kids in Crisis

Officers with the Missaukee County Sheriff's Department are equipped with practical tools to comfort, distract, and make a positive connection with children thanks to Back Packs for Kids, a partnership of local churches and businesses initiated by Lake City (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church in July.

"Our hope is to create a personal, positive experience with law enforcement for children and youth in situations that would typically be negative and traumatic," said Jennifer Pugh, director of this ministry as well as Kids Hope at Lake City CRC. Pugh said this extension of the church's previous outreach to children via mentoring and food relief grew out of a community leadership meeting in which the needs of local children were raised as a top concern.

She met with sheriff Jim Bosscher with the idea of providing

activity packs for children with whom the sheriff's department comes in contact, perhaps because a family member is injured or has died, or when an arrest is being made. Bosscher and his officers agreed. Pugh said an abundance of games, puzzles, books, snacks, and hygiene items were donated by people from all over the county within 48 hours of getting to work on the project. Today the department puts backpacks for each of four age levels into every officer's vehicle, the ambulances, and the sheriff's department boats.

"The packs become tools through which children and youth feel the love of Christ at an unexpected and critical moment," Pugh said.

From the officers' perspective, the sheriff's department said having the packs available has helped to calm children in a difficult moment or aid the officer to complete tasks on the scene.



Backpacks include games, puzzles, books, snacks, and hygiene items donated by people from all over the county.

Currently, nine area churches of several denominations and several businesses provide funds or goods that go into the packs. "Without the partnership, Back Packs for Kids wouldn't exist because the need is too large for one average-sized church to handle on its own," Pugh said.

—Alissa Vernon

Michigan Church Supports Business Owners

In Holland, Mich., Providence Christian Reformed Church has heard and responded to its congregation's desire for a focused group for business owners.

Larry Koning, the current driving force behind the group, is a business owner in Holland. He is president of LS Mold, Inc., and has been pouring his passion for entrepreneurship into the ministry.

Providence CRC developed the entrepreneurial support group in 2008; the Business Owners' Group has been a unique prayer and support ministry for business owners of the congregation for eight years.

The ministry came at a critical time for the congregation's large group of business owners. "There was definitely a need. The economy was in a real crash-type scenario, so it was a very stressful time for business owners," Koning said.

Attendance ranges from two to 30 members at any given time. Comprised of mostly men and a few women, the team welcomes anyone who owns a business. From eye doctors to electricians, from builders to egg farmers, the group provides wisdom from those of every business avenue.

Though the group represents diverse businesses, Koning sees mutual needs across the board. "We consider ourselves a sort of confidential chamber of business owners. [The group] exists to provide mutual support and answers to questions everyone has from time to time. Maybe someone has a question about health insurance, how to [give bonuses to] employees, general



employee issues, or even just discussion of how we see the economy moving forward," he explained.

Within the divide that tends to exist between the faith and business worlds, Koning sees a great need not only for Christians in the business world, but also for congregational dialogue and prayer for the challenges of daily life.



Larry Koning

Providence CRC consistently supports business owners within their ministry through seasons of plenty and little. For Junior Post, cofounder of Post Hardwoods Sawmill, the group was both a main drawing factor for joining the church, as well as a timely support after a fire that consumed his mill.

"The Business Owners' Group was a real aid after the mill fire. The group was there immediately asking what I needed, and to just bounce ideas off of."

He finds a particular beauty in the group's ability to offer business advice from a Christ-like perspective—a factor unique to a group of business-experienced Christians. "It's easy to go on the Internet and get advice for your business issues but quite another experience to go to someone who shares your faith, who has your best interest at heart and is not trying to gain anything from it," said Post.

"The best part of our ministry is praying over the other owners," Koning said. "[There are] weeks when we sorrow together when business is slow, and we don't know how to get through the following weeks. Though the economy will often drive how many will come out to the group, every time is fruitful when we can be of general support to each other, bringing our needs to one another in both confidentiality and in prayer."

—Laura Heming

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. John Engbers

1927-2015

John Engbers, accomplished carpenter, avid fisherman, and pastor, had an unforgettable sense of humor. He died of cancer on August 18 in Rock Valley, Iowa, at the age of 88.

Following service in the U.S. Navy during World War II, Engbers established a successful construction company in Iowa. During that time Engbers felt called to ministry.

He entered the ministry at age 39, serving churches in Iowa, Michigan, and Minnesota. He retired in 1994 and continued to preach until a few months before his death.

Engbers was a man of many hobbies. He and his wife spent summers at a lake in Minnesota, a place Engbers described as "the closest place to heaven on earth." Family and friends will remember him hunched over his favorite saw or with the day's crossword puzzle tucked under his arm.

To the very end of his life, Engbers maintained his quick wit and sense of humor.

Engbers is survived by his wife of 67 years, Violet, and by three children and their spouses, 10 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, and two great-great-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.

Canadian Government Matches Funds Donated for Syrian Crisis Aid

On September 12, 2015, the Canadian government announced that donations made by Canadians to help people in Syria and neighboring transit countries will be matched to provide up to \$100 million in additional assistance. Donations made between September 12 and December 31 to World Renew, the relief and development agency of the Christian Reformed Church, are eligible. The government will place matched monies into the Syria Emergency Relief Fund. Canadian registered charities like World Renew can

apply to receive money from this fund to supplement existing programs.

The announcement came shortly after the UN's World Food Programme reduced its assistance because of low funding. This caused public outcry after haunting images of a little boy, one of many refugees who drowned while fleeing Syria, were shared on social media.

World Renew's Middle East crisis response began in 2012 with food provisions in Syria. It has evolved over the past three years to include non-food items such as blankets, heating fuel, and other emergency supplies.

World Renew has an active partnership with the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development (LSESD) and the Fellowship of Middle East Evan-

Refugees in Jordan line up to receive a food package.

gelical Churches (FMEEC) to distribute these provisions through a network of churches. In Syria, over 2,000 households receive a package containing food each month. In Lebanon and Jordan, food packages and vouchers are also given to displaced families in these regions.

When visiting the distribution centers this past summer, Ken Little, senior project manager for World Renew, was impressed with the outstanding monitoring done by the LSESD and church volunteers. "It's amazing to see how churches are reaching out to help their neighbors," said Little.

World Renew suggests that churches in North America can further help by increasing awareness of the situation and its victims, by taking the time to consider refugee sponsorship, or by donating money to assist with World Renew's efforts to save lives. Most important, Christians can help through prayers for peace and safety for all those in this war-torn region.

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt



News from the Board of Trustees

The restructuring of the Christian Reformed Church's governance structure was high on the agenda when the Board of Trustees met on September 24-25. The board conducts the business of synod (the annual leadership meeting of the church) when synod is not in session.

Following Synod 2015's approval of the transition from a 30-member board to a 60-member council of delegates, to be implemented over the next few years, transition committees have been appointed. Board members also took part in a training session on policy governance.

The board approved a \$75,000 study to explore possibilities for renovation and expansion of the Burlington, Ont., offices of the CRC.

On matters related to *The Banner*, the board adopted an addition to the conflict resolution policy as directed by Synod 2015, namely, that the *Banner* editor retains the right to appeal to synod should he or she disagree with a Board of Trustees decision regarding *The Banner*.

The board adopted a recommendation by the *Banner* Advisory Council (BAC) that the July/August issues continue to be combined. The board also took note of a BAC recommendation that the board apply the open meeting policy to the executive committee of the Council of Delegates. The open meeting policy means a representative of *The Banner* may be present for the meetings except when the board moves into executive session.

The board suggested to the planning committee of Synod 2016 that it consult with the task force studying the Doctrine of Christian Discovery to use the Christian liturgies and practices of indigenous North American peoples, including the sharing circle format, whenever practical, and to include indigenous representatives in leading such exercises.

—Gayla R. Postma

Fifteen Years of Lay Leadership Training in British Columbia

After more than 15 years in existence, British Columbia's Leadership Development Network (LDN) continues to build up lay leaders for ministry in the province's Christian Reformed churches.

LDN graduate Perry Daciuk of Immanuel CRC in Langley refers to LDN as one of the CRC's best-kept secrets. "Too many still don't know what LDN is or what a phenomenal blessing it is for leadership development and theological training within the CRC," he said.

The British Columbia LDN began in the late 1990s in response to a need for more church planters in the region. Gradually it shifted to a program for all church leaders. It provides Reformed theological training in several ways: a three-year training program, one-day classis-wide topical events, tailored training for local churches, and website resources.

Wilma van der Leek serves as commissioned pastor of education for Classes B.C. North-West and B.C. South-East, the two regional groups of churches that run the LDN program. She has taught over 40 LDN graduates who serve the CRC in a variety of ways—as commissioned pastors, elders, deacons, youth and children's pastors, worship leaders, and in other ministry roles. One graduate is starting a Master of Divinity degree.



KEVIN VAN DER LEEK

Wilma van der Leek, facilitator for the British Columbia LDN.



The logo represents the twelve disciples in a circle with the text of Scripture.

"We have a pretty beautiful thing going here," van der Leek said, "trying to offer a holistic, spiritually formative, and experiential way for lay leaders in the CRC to meet God in Scripture and then become people who can lead others there as well."

Program graduate Carolyn Gerber of Hope Community CRC in Surrey serves her church in the areas of worship planning and small groups. Gerber, a busy mom, felt able to commit to the monthly meeting and homework of the LDN program. "I joined LDN because it was a local opportunity to develop leadership and ministry skills to equip me in my personal spiritual journey as well as enhance the work I was doing for our local congregation," she said.

Melissa Van Dyk of First CRC of Vancouver works full time for Union Gospel Mission in Vancouver's downtown east-side. She explained that the skills learned in LDN become a unique part of its graduates. "The fingerprints of the training are all over everything I do."

—Tracey Yan



Group members pray together at Heart Matters meetings.

Heart Matters: Support for Parents of Children with Mental Health Issues

Raising children is demanding. For parents whose kids have mental illnesses such as borderline personality disorder or schizophrenia, child rearing presents its own set of challenges. The desire for a safe place to share and receive mutual encouragement led Paul and Janette Stalemo of Eastern Hills Community (Christian Reformed) Church in Aurora, Colo., to start Heart Matters, a biweekly support group for parents whose children have mental health issues.

Approximately 12 people attend group meetings. "It is truly a support group. We share resources and experience," said Paul Stalemo. "We don't try to fix each other. We love each other and we try to be encouraging."

While the group occasionally brings in speakers, the purpose of meeting is providing every person the chance to share their daily parenting issues. Parents in the group deal with behavioral issues that may seem shocking to those who have never walked in their shoes. Marc, a member of the group, said, "This group has allowed us to meet other hurting families as we try to understand and empathize with the hurts and struggles that we all face both emotionally and financially. This church and this group full of grace allows us to show up and just be our broken selves. I thank God for our church family."

Even though the everyday struggles for these parents can be exhausting, they assure one another they are not alone. Lana, who also attends Heart Matters, said, "I would have been lost had the Lord not provided me with such a wonderful group of people to help me on this difficult journey."

—Amy Toornstra

Michigan Crib Ministry about More Than Just Cribs

For Brookside Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., a crib ministry is not just an opportunity to provide cribs to families in need but also a way to open church doors to seekers.

In 1987, several members of the church had a heart and a vision for a crib ministry. They began partnering with local social service agencies to identify and refer families most in need of cribs. Volunteers also occasionally provide additional cribs to families through special requests.

"Cribs and mattresses are purchased as needed from several merchants online and are deliv-

ered directly to the church," said Karen Price, current director of the ministry.

The ministry receives funds from Brookside CRC, church offerings, and some assistance from the United Way.

Despite its name, the crib ministry is not limited to cribs. Church members also donate toys, crib sheets, and knitted hats. Price said, "Cribs convert to toddler beds as well. We also provide a small New Testament specially designed for new mothers (in English or Spanish); a toddler Bible storybook; and information on our church worship times, our mobile food



Karen Price (right) and Sue Boerman participate in Brookside's crib ministry.

pantry, and our Coffee Break ministry, as appropriate."

Brookside can reuse the cribs after the children outgrow them. The ministry asks the families for a \$20 deposit if they can afford one; if or when the families return the cribs, the ministry returns their money.

The ministry is a doorway to relationships with members of the community. "We meet with the family, get to know them a bit, and offer them Christian love,

encouragement, and prayer support," said Price.

She added, "Many are interested in learning more about what our church is all about. We invite them to church. Several have attended Coffee Break. The families are very appreciative."

In the last 28 years, Brookside has distributed approximately 1,450 cribs. Currently, they are distributing cribs at a rate of about 30 per year.

—Rachel Baarda

World Renew Wraps Up in High River

Nearly two years after flooding devastated the town of High River, Alta., World Renew, the relief and development ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, wrapped up its work there.

As the work finished in September, World Renew project manager Henry Visscher said, "It is all about relationships being built while working together daily in a client's home, giving them renewed hope."

On June 19, 2013, flood waters caused the whole town of 13,000 to be evacuated for over a week. The river rose so quickly that people had to flee their homes with only the clothes on their backs.

Shortly after the flood, Rev. Paul Droogers, pastor of High

River CRC at the time, and World Renew case manager Al Brander met with representatives from Mennonite Central Committee, Habitat for Humanity, and Samaritan's Purse to assess the needs.

"The initial meeting was very helpful to establishing the needs of the community," Visscher said.

Volunteers donated 32,500 hours to help the people of High River, Alta.



"The Town of High River allowed case workers hired by World Renew to conduct interviews door to door to identify what the needs were."

A total of 29 teams came from all over Canada and the U.S. for two to three weeks at a time. Ron Willett, director of World Renew's disaster response in North America, said that 430 volunteers, all wearing the distinctive disaster response green shirts, donated 32,500 hours of work.

"Forty-one homes had reconstruction of basements, drywall, [and] repairs to kitchens and interiors. Two homes were completely rebuilt," he said. "In addition, 315 families were helped with mold clean up, roofing, [and] concrete issues, while others were also helped through the systems to receive help from insurances and government agencies." Recovery work was supported by donations from churches and individuals across North America and by grants from the Canadian Red Cross and the Town of High River.

Visscher said the highlights were the joy of volunteers excited to help repair homes and the connection between the volunteers and the clients. He described it as a ministry of presence.

—Patricia Vanderploeg

Fast Cars with a Mission

Andy Geelhoed has worked and played with cars nearly his entire adult life. For the past 12 years he has used his passion for driving fast to spread the love of Christ at drag racing strips and car shows across Michigan as a chaplain with Racers for Christ.

Geelhoed, a member of Ideal Park Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Mich., has managed the organization's 12 chaplains across Michigan for the past three years.

Geelhoed's interest in cars and driving fast crystallized soon after he graduated from high school in the 1970s. He recalls spending a lot of weekends watching drag races with his friends. His interest morphed from watching drag races to running in drag races after completing automotive classes at Grand Rapids Community College.

"I had a lot of success," Geelhoed said. "I won a championship race in my rookie year, and my career kind of took off after that."

Geelhoed took a full-time job as a tool and die maker with an automotive manufacturer in Grand Rapids, Mich., while continuing his racing career on the side. He gave up racing in

1980, and the auto plant where he worked closed soon after that.

But Geelhoed stayed active in the racing scene by starting his own automotive garage nearly 35 years ago, primarily working on custom cars and race cars.

About 12 years ago, Geelhoed felt drawn to get involved with the drag

racing scene again. A friend who was the Racers for Christ Michigan director at the time helped Geelhoed apply for and launch a part-time chaplain ministry at drag strips and car shows primarily around West Michigan. "I thought it would be a good thing to do and give back a little," said Geelhoed.

At racetracks, Geelhoed is a fixture around the staging lanes where racers warm up their machines and strap in before hurtling down the track at speeds topping 100 mph.

"As drivers strap into their cars, we'll go over and see if they want to pray," Geelhoed said. He also takes calls for pastoral care from racers and their families. "I'm open to what people are looking for," Geelhoed said. "Sometimes I get a call to visit a racer in the hospital. Sometimes I get a call because a racer's child is in the hospital. You never know what the next call could be."

As a chaplain, Geelhoed uses his experience as a racer to demonstrate that pursuit of speed—especially spending many weekends away from home—doesn't have to come at the expense of pursuing Christ.

"I didn't spend a lot of time in church" as a racer, he said. "I want people to see that even though I wasn't looking out for the Lord, the Lord was looking out for me."

—Ryan Jeltema



Andy Geelhoed



Campmeeting Singers

New Mexico Churches Continue Camp Meeting Tradition

In August, Maranatha Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Farmington, N.M., continued a tradition of more than 100 years by hosting its annual downtown camp meeting.

Members of the community and people from other churches in Classis Red Mesa (a regional group of Christian Reformed congregations) participated. As many as 75 people attended each of the two days.

Ruth Benally, a member of Maranatha CRC, said the classis history of camp meetings started in the early 1900s. "Christian Reformed missionaries introduced camp meetings as a practical necessity," she said. "Hogans, the traditional Navajo dwellings, are small and cannot hold more than maybe a dozen people, so open air gatherings were the only way to preach the gospel."

Benally has a personal connection with camp meetings. "I have a letter in which my grandfather, Rev. L. P. Brink, describes driving from his home in Farmington with a bedroll and a large pot of chili beans in the trunk of his car to meet up with other missionaries traveling from Rehoboth at a spot in the Chuska Mountains called Cottonwood Pass," she said.

While the prevalence of revivals has lessened throughout North America, Benally and Pastor Susan LaClear of Maranatha CRC said camp meetings have persisted in Classis Red Mesa communities.

Graduates of the local Leadership Development Network, along

with people from Christ Church, an Anglican church that meets in Maranatha CRC's building, led prayers and worship services.

"We invited Rev. Stanley Jim and a few members of his gospel band to lead the worship time on Saturday. They led us in rousing country gospel versions of Navajo and English hymns," said LaClear.

Jim, pastor of Fort Wingate Christian Reformed Church, said, "The culture is very social, and camp meetings help people connect. People bring a superb spread of food, and we eat together and [enjoy] fellowship. We sing the old Navajo hymns, and they give us a sense of belonging. We reconnect with people. Today a lady gave me a big hug and said, 'Welcome home.'"

LaClear said, "Since we are a city church, we hold ours right in the middle of our downtown parking lot and call it our 'downtown camp meeting.' It's probably an unusual sight to passersby who aren't familiar with camp meetings, but that tent tends to draw a crowd."

It's also an outreach event. "To Navajo people who grew up in Christian homes but have lived their lives away from the church, the camp meeting has a sentimental draw. They come because it reminds them of their Christian heritage, and the gospel message that is preached gives them an opportunity to reconnect and recommit."

—Shashi DeHaan

NEWS

CHURCH WORLDWIDE

CHURCH WORLDWIDE: Keep Faith-Based Hiring Discrimination, Religious Leaders Tell Obama

Seventy supporters of religion-based hiring discrimination urged President Obama in September to continue to permit government-funded faith groups to employ people with like beliefs.

Their request comes less than a month after a coalition of religious and secular organizations sent Obama a letter saying the current policy will tarnish his legacy of fair and equal treatment for all Americans.

The latest signatories said the administration's policy allows equal opportunities for religious groups to work with government in helping the needy.

"Making it more difficult for faith-based organizations to join those partnerships would undermine, rather than burnish, your commitment to effective and flourishing 'all hands' partnerships," reads the letter, released by the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance.

Signatories included National Association of Evangelicals President Leith Anderson, evangelist Franklin Graham, and Archbishop William Lori, who leads the U.S. Catholic bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty.

The issue has dogged the president since before he took office, and a White House official said the administration "will respond in due course."

The writers of the new letter told Obama that opponents are not making legal or constitutional arguments.

"Religious staffing by religious organizations is protected in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and is not illegal discrimination," they said. "This right is not somehow waived or otherwise lost simply by the receipt of government funds."

When he was a presidential candidate, Obama campaigned against the policy, which dates to the George W. Bush administration, and vowed to change it once he was in the White House.

—*Religion News Service*

Michigan Church Celebrates 100th Anniversary



On October 28, 1915, 24 men in Grand Rapids, Mich., met to talk and pray about the need for a new church. These family heads were members of the Sherman Street and Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Churches.

Both Sherman Street and Oakdale Park originally conducted worship services in Dutch. Neland Avenue CRC was one of the first churches in Grand Rapids to conduct services only in English. Although membership dwindled at times, the church has grown to include over 655 members.

Centennial celebration organizers Karen Weaver and Harry Boonstra commented on the changes Neland has undergone since its beginnings, noting that worship has continued to accommodate the changing times.

"Neland follows a blended form of worship," they wrote in an email, "using traditional hymns, a great variety of instruments, and international music traditions. [Members of] all ages participate in worship—from liturgies, ensembles, dance, dramatic interpretations, prayer gathering, and testimony."

During the centennial celebration, the church also implemented a story share program into their services. All members of Neland are invited to record a story or memory experienced in the church. These memories are shared during the offering in the worship service and during an after-church adult education class.

Dance is part of worship at Neland Avenue CRC.

The church's celebration included a church picnic and block party. Celebrations will continue into December, ending with a centennial banquet.

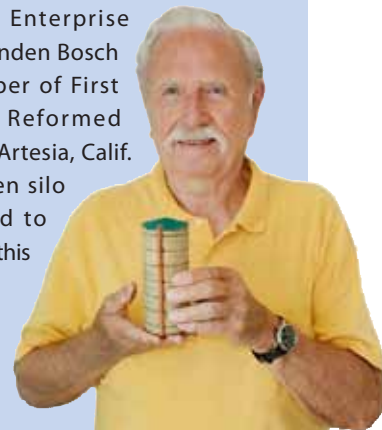
—*K. Schmitt*

Noteworthy

Mark Vandenberg's musical parody *Hunger Games: The Musical* recently finished a run at the Vancouver Fringe Festival, a local showcase for independent theatre, where it played to sold-out audiences. Vandenberg teaches drama at Surrey (B.C.) Christian School and is a member of Hope Community Christian Reformed Church.

Ron Vanden Bosch's small replica of a wooden silo is now part of the Smithsonian Institute's 1920's Nebraska farm diorama. It is part of the American Enterprise exhibit. Vanden Bosch is a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Artesia, Calif. His wooden silo was added to the display this summer.

Ron
Vanden
Bosch



FAQs

Faith Formation

Q What is “faith formation”? I keep hearing about a new Christian Reformed Church initiative called “Faith Formation Ministries.” What do I need to know about it?

A In our denomination we are in a season in which many congregations are realizing that cultivating more intentional discipleship and faith formation practices is central to their calling. We are called to be in churches that “smell like Jesus” (2 Cor. 2:15), in which a community is growing together to be more Christ-like to one another and to their surrounding community.

As the perceived need for this growth becomes stronger, we may realize that the tools we have for this growth are insufficient. For example, most folks enthusiastically and sincerely make vows at every baptism to encourage the child’s faith. But often they lack the tools to carry out specific acts that back up this vow. Similarly, many folks are eager to have a stronger presence in the surrounding community but are not sure how to do that.

We at Faith Formation Ministries aim to be encouragers and equippers who walk alongside those longings and suggest specific tools to shift those longings into action. For example, literally hundreds of Christian Reformed congregations have reexamined (or are reexamining) their practices concerning inviting children to the Lord’s table. So this summer we released an online resource called *Welcoming Children to the Lord’s Supper* toolkit, which provides many resources for this discernment process. It does not advocate for any particular practice but provides tools to support the congregation in its own decision-making process. (For more on faith formation, visit crna.org/faithformation.)

—Syd Hielema is a team leader for Faith Formation Ministries. He is a member of Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ont.

Most folks enthusiastically and sincerely make vows at every baptism to encourage the child’s faith.

Justice

Q My brother gets away with doing things for which I get punished. Is this fair?

A Treating every child the same is often the most just way. But when children have different needs, treating them the same way can be unjust. A good bike rider, for example, may be allowed to bike on the street, but not a learner. A street-smart child may be allowed to go to the park alone, but another child of the same age may be disciplined for doing that. It is important to understand the reason for the different treatment. Have you asked your parents to explain?

All children are created and called by God to develop their gifts and use them to help others. Helping children do that is the biblical test for justice, not same treatment or obeying specific rules.

For adults this question reflects two important points. First, from an early age children are attuned to the norm of justice. Research shows that we often underestimate the ability of even young children to discern what is just, beyond following rules. It also shows that children who learn about their own rights and respect the rights of others show more respect for authority and more concern about others. I have seen children lead a whole community to greater justice.

Second, home and school are important places to learn when treating children the same way is just and when differences need to lead to different treatment. Helping children develop their built-in justice radar will equip them to deal with this concept, which lies at the core of major social issues and building a more just society.

—Kathy Vandergrift is a public policy analyst living in Ottawa, Ont.

Outreach

Q How do we live out St. Francis’s axiom “Preach Christ! If you must, use words”?

A It is a sad commentary on the church when Christians attempt to evangelize unbelievers with their words and yet fail to authenticate the gospel with their deeds. On the other hand, there are also Christians who engage in acts of kindness, justice, and mercy but choose to remain silent with respect to what is motivating their good deeds. They love others with the grace and truth of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe disciples of Jesus Christ must engage in the joy of evangelism with both word and deed.

The apostle Peter encourages us along those lines with these words: “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Pet. 2:12). Paul further compels us: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? . . . Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ” (Rom. 10:14, 17).

You see, both Peter and Paul “talked the talk and walked the walk!”

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

DOES PREACHING HAVE A FUTURE?

THE DAY OF PENTECOST was a day of considerable wonders. When the Spirit came in power as had been long prophesied—and more recently predicted by Jesus himself before ascending to the Father—the result was a sight and sound spectacle that left most onlookers gobsmacked. But for all the rushing winds and tongues of flame spectacle of it, the fact is that the very first thing that happened once

the Spirit got unleashed on the apostles was—drumroll please—a sermon. Peter stood up, cleared his throat, overcame his feet-of-clay recent past, and preached a sermon.

In one sense his text was the whole Bible. But he narrowed it down to a few specific passages, and so became history's first exemplar of preaching Christ from the Old Testament, as well as of using the whole Bible to bring people face to face with the good news that is the gospel of

Jesus Christ. It was a pretty effective sermon too, as the Spirit worked through the message to convert about 3,000 folks. After only one sermon, Peter formed history's first megachurch. Not bad.

As I often tell students and fellow preachers, one of the hazards of being really familiar with the Bible is that everything in it feels inevitable.

So also with Acts 2: the Spirit came in power, and Peter preached a sermon. The sermon was inevitable. But I wonder . . .

might we have expected something different? Suppose you had been there that day. And suppose that about an hour or two before the Spirit arrived, someone had come up to you and said, “God’s Holy Spirit—the Spirit of power, the Spirit that helped create this entire cosmos—that very Spirit is going to roar into this place very soon. What do you suppose will happen next once the Spirit gets here?” What might you have predicted? Miracles of healing perhaps. Jubilant choruses of singing maybe. Going to the local graveyard and raising the dead perhaps.

It seems unlikely that the average person would have said, “Well, I think the people will all fall quiet and listen to someone talk about the Bible for a while. I’d predict a good old-fashioned sermon!” Nope. When you think about it, not only was Peter’s sermon *not* inevitable, it actually counts as extremely surprising.

Yet that’s what the Spirit inspired as his first act in the newborn church. Make no mistake: the Spirit also eventually helped the apostles to perform wonders, raise the dead, heal the blind, and establish worshipping communities where jubilant singing and the celebration of the sacraments took place. That all would come in time.

But it all began with a sermon.

Today, though, people sometimes wonder if preaching still has a future. In a multimedia age of dazzling communication technologies when just about everybody who attends church is exposed to skilled speakers and professional oratory all week long, do people still have—now and in the near future—the patience to sit down and listen to someone speak for 15, 20, or 25 minutes, or more? Isn’t that just dull and boring? Aren’t there better ways to convey the gospel in the 21st century than the outmoded method of preaching a sermon?

No one can predict the future, and so no one knows if the 21st century will see the demise of the preached Word. But I doubt that preaching is dead or that it will die anytime soon. The Holy Spirit who inspired that first sermon at Pentecost seems to be doing the same thing yet

today. And it seems likely that the Holy Spirit will continue this two-millennia-long pattern into the foreseeable future.

To support this claim, let me lay out a few ideas. Some of these have historical backing—including from recent history—some of these ideas are deeply theological in nature. A couple are anecdotal, so readers can take them for what they are worth.

History

Throughout church history, preaching has been a mainstay. Starting on Pentecost with Peter, the preached Word continued on through preachers like Augustine and Chrysostom (the latter was named “Golden Mouth” because of his renowned

THE SPIRIT LIKES TO WORK THROUGH THE WORD PREACHED. ALWAYS HAS, AND, SO FAR AS WE KNOW, ALWAYS WILL.

preaching), St. Francis and Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin and Martin Luther (who used to preach daily), Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield (of whom it was said he could make women faint and grown men weep just by how he pronounced the word “Mesopotamia”), Billy Sunday and Billy Graham.

But of course, the lion’s share of preachers throughout history have been people whose names no one remembers anymore. Pastors, priests, and parsons all over the world labor in quiet obscurity. Even The Beatles knew about such things: their song “Eleanor Rigby” includes lyrics about a backwoods priest named Father MacKenzie, week after week “writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear” because “no one comes near.”

But if it’s true that most of history’s sermons have been preached by people whose names are now known only to God, it is also the case that some of history’s sermons have been, well, probably not very good. There has been boring and

badly structured preaching in the past, and this pattern continues to this day. In fact, so much preaching has probably run the gamut from the ho-hum to the terrible that you might have expected the Church either to have died out long ago—died of boredom, that is—or to have re-tooled the whole worship enterprise to center on something—anything!—other than a sermon.

About the only thing that could account for the fact that neither of those alternatives have happened is the Holy Spirit’s ongoing role in undergirding preaching—the eloquent and the fumbling, the powerful and the humdrum. The Spirit still nurtures faith, still keeps

people close to God’s Word, still builds the Church through preaching. The Spirit, as William Willimon once said, is really skilled at taking the sermon from the preacher’s hand every week and saying to the preacher, “Well, (sigh), let me see what I can do with this thing.” And then the Spirit does some powerful things through even some of the weaker sermons preached in churches on any given Sunday. The Spirit likes to work through the Word preached. Always has, and, so far as we know, always will.

Still Hungry

This might also explain why even in the last 20 or 30 years—precisely during a time when first television and then computers have filled our lives with alternate forms of communication—preaching has continued to flourish. In fact, not long after people in the 1980s were predicting that drama teams and film clips would replace the boring old spectacle of one person standing on a stage talking to folks, sermons in some places—including in the »



largest churches that formed in the 1990s and early 2000s—actually got longer.

People left churches that featured 20-minute sermons for congregations where “hip” preachers like Rob Bell or Andy Stanley preached for around 50 minutes. Whatever you may think of Rob Bell’s theology and career trajectory, he founded the Mars Hill Bible Church by preaching for almost an hour every Sunday. Not only that, but his first sermon series centered on no less than the book of Leviticus. I have also been struck by recent conversations with some Roman Catholic colleagues who tell me that especially younger people in the Roman Catholic Church—some inspired by the excellent preaching of Pope Francis—are asking their priests to move away from the 8-minute short homilies that have long been standard practice toward preaching fuller, longer sermons.

People, it seems, are still hungry to be fed by the heavenly manna that is God’s Word. As Isaiah asked in his chapter 55, why spend your money on food that doesn’t satisfy? It is listening to God’s Word that allows spiritually starving human beings to feast on what Isaiah called “the richest of fare.” You have to have faith, naturally enough, to believe the Bible is a living Word from God. But once you have that conviction of the Spirit, you do become keenly hungry and thirsty for what only that Word can provide. Preaching has been the Church’s weekly way of dishing out that Word, and God’s people have not stopped lining up for the homiletical buffet.

The Personal Word

Theologically, though, there may be a deeper reason why the proclaiming of God’s Word from someone’s physical larynx will continue: Christianity is the religion of the incarnation. The Word of God was made flesh. The good news of the kingdom came to this planet not when God wrote the gospel into the stars or sent startlingly bright angels to sing and dance in front of folks. No, the good news passed through Jesus’ very human lips as

the incarnate Savior interacted personally with the crowds that gathered to hear him as well as with individuals and smaller groups who sought him out. That is, quite simply, how God brought the good news to the world.

Before Jesus left this earth, he also made it clear that this human-to-human pattern of proclaiming the kingdom was to continue. “*You will be my witnesses,*” Jesus told the disciples. Their first job was not to write information down—although the Holy Spirit eventually made sure to inspire the written witness to Jesus in what we now call the New Testament—but to sally forth into the world and preach what they knew to be true: that Jesus Christ, crucified and raised from the dead, is the Messiah and the world’s only true Savior.

This is, theologically speaking, why I have a hard time with churches that have satellite campuses where the preacher appears only on a screen, beamed in live from the main church campus or by way of an edited, pre-recorded video. Something about the non-physical presence of God’s messenger as he or she proclaims the gospel just feels wrong. I am thankful God the Father did not just send us a DVD of his beloved Son in the first place—we needed Bethlehem’s stall, replete with the bloody, painful mess that is the birth of a real child. And even now, 2,000 years since Jesus physically departed the earth, I am glad the Spirit has chosen again and again to bring people the gospel in person rather than send us virtual images of Jesus from God’s right hand.

The Vital Word

Any given congregation is, and should be, more than the sum of a preacher’s sermons week after week. And most congregations have a long history that included many preachers of varying gifts and preaching styles. But through that long history, the fellowship of God’s people continued on. Ministry and mission took place. God-glorifying worship services were held every week. The church is more than the preacher, which is why

people who leave a congregation on account of the preacher frequently express guilt over that decision. “I know that church is about more than hearing a solid sermon every Sunday,” people have said to me when explaining their transfer to a new church, “but I need to be fed. I need the strength the Spirit gives in good preaching, and I can’t make it very well in life if I don’t get that.”

Whether any such decision is rightly or wrongly motivated, the desire to feast on God’s Word through the weekly sermon makes eminent sense when you look at how the church has been operating for centuries. “How can people believe if they do not hear?” Paul asked in the agonizing chapter 10 of the book of Romans. “And how can they hear unless someone preaches?”

Today we might be tempted to respond by saying, “Well, they could hear about the gospel on Facebook or on Twitter or on YouTube videos. Or in lots of exciting multimedia ways that are way more interesting than just listening to somebody.” And if the apostle Paul could hear such an answer to his question, he might ponder it a bit. But I suspect he’d reply, “OK, some of those things might help. But I still say, how can they hear the gospel unless the Spirit uses somebody to preach it?”

The fact that we generally do not encounter “The First Church of YouTube Videos” or “Facebook Community Church” probably tells us that, as usual, the apostle was right. Somebody’s just got to preach! And when that somebody does, the Spirit goes to work—just like in Jerusalem one surprising day 2,000 years ago. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Scott Hoezee is director of the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Leadership, Heidelberg-Style

ORGANIC FOODS are all the rage these days. And organic is the latest fad in church leadership as well.

Springing from the emerging church movement, organic leadership is an inductive style that tends to be free-flowing, flexible, and intentionally unpredictable, on the verge of a Holy-Spirited chaos. In the organic model of leadership, leaders are recognized naturally as their giftedness bears fruit. Leadership is considered freshest when homegrown. Programs are not imposed upon the congregation by some authoritative structure directing traffic “from above.”

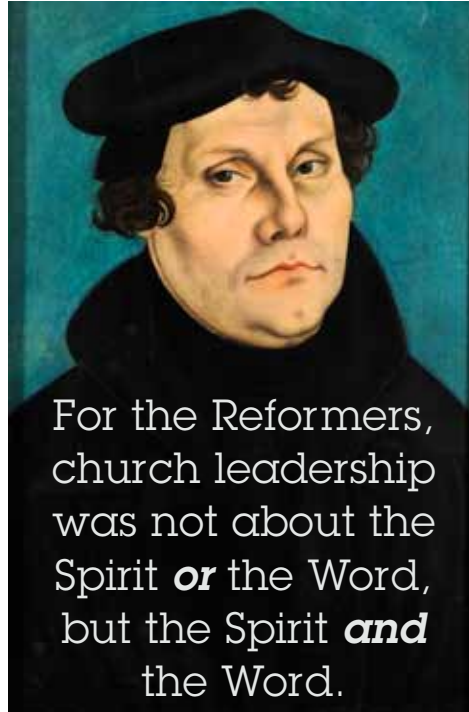
This style of leadership sprouted in reaction to perceived weaknesses in “corporate” leadership. While organic leadership is a postmodern phenomenon, corporate leadership is fueled by the Enlightenment. Reason rules. Leaders begin with the great idea of an organization. They then deduce what programs to develop and what sort of people are needed to fill the slots. It is a top-down leadership style with preconceived notions carefully reasoned and thoughtfully implemented.

Corporate leadership styles tend toward bureaucracy, are change-resistant, are intentionally predictable, and maintain good order. The laity takes its cue from ministry professionals.

Déjà Vu

The Heidelberg Catechism provides insight into leadership styles in its teaching that Christ leads his church by his Spirit and Word (Lord’s Day 21). The Reformers faced a similar debate about whether to pursue organic or corporate leadership, though the debate was shaped by the times in which they lived.

The medieval church had developed a strong, corporate, top-down model, starting with God’s Word through the pope, and then passed down to a complex bureaucracy that dispatched programs.



COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG

The laity watched the professional office-bearers do their work.

In reaction, sects on the fringes of Christianity developed what we would recognize as a more organic model—bottom-up, free-flowing, Spirit-led. Everyone was a priest with a word from God, so formal education was unnecessary, even undesirable.

The Reformers saw truth in both extremes. For them, church leadership was not about the Spirit *or* the Word but the Spirit *and* the Word.

Spirit and Word

The church is alive when it is inductive *and* deductive, organic *and* corporate, Spirit *and* Word. Keeping both poles in tension and informing each other, the catechism says, produces “living members” rather than a church that is chaotic or rigid.

The order of the Heidelberg’s Spirit and Word appears at first to contradict the Canons of Dort and the Belhar Con-

fession, which use the phrase “Word and Spirit.” In fact, the catechism is geared toward the practical outworking of doctrine. So the Canons of Dort and the Belhar are following a *logical* order, while Heidelberg follows a *practical* order.

What was this practical concern that caused the authors of Heidelberg to list the Spirit first?

Was it challenging the “Spirit through the Word” formula that some churches in Germany had adopted? Did they fear that the churches might minimize the Spirit’s everyday work in the church without a special emphasis?

Heidelberg author Ursinus maintains in his commentary a distinction between the Spirit (the “immediate executor”) and the Word (the “instrumental cause”) in salvation as found in the church. That church is led by Christ, who has entrusted the keys to leaders, so broader implications for leadership become readily evident. Though the Spirit and Word usually work together, it’s vital that one doesn’t swallow the other for maintaining a healthy church.

Throughout history, the church has had the tendency to drift toward one end of the spectrum or the other. The corporate style can get so rigid that committee meetings are mistaken for ministry accomplished. The organic model can become chaotic to the point of people getting hurt when so many claim to have a direct line to God.

The time-tested Heidelberg style of leadership—keeping a healthy balance between Spirit and Word—can take advantage of the strengths of new leadership models while avoiding the weaknesses that inevitably become apparent. ■



H. David Schuringa is a Christian Reformed minister who served as president of Crossroad Bible Institute.

For 50 years, BTGMI's Spanish-language ministry has been inspiring people like Lilibeth Contreras.



Celebrando 50 Años: Fifty Years of Spanish Media Ministry

by Kristen Van Stee and Nancy Vander Meer

Lilibeth Contreras de Castro has been described as a pillar of faith in the Latin American community where she lives. She gives all the glory to God.

“Since I met Jesus 30 years ago, I have seen his hand guiding my life and leading me all the way,” she testified.

Contreras, an award-winning journalist, lives in El Salvador. When she first became a Christian, she was looking for strong biblical teaching to nurture her faith.

She started listening to *La Hora de la Reforma* (“The Hour of Reformation”), a radio program hosted by Rev. Juan Boonstra. Boonstra launched the first Spanish-language radio program for Back

to God Ministries International (BTGMI) 50 years ago.

“I still listen to *La Hora* today,” says Contreras. “The topics are still very relevant. What I learn inspires the work I am doing today.”

Contreras has worked in radio for the past 20 years, and is passionate about addressing the issue of violence against women. Her ministry intertwines with BTGMI and Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM); she said God used these agencies to equip her to lead her own ministry.

La Hora de la Reforma, now hosted by BTGMI Spanish leader Rev. Guillermo Serrano, still has relevance for people all over Latin America, noted Contreras.

“The program is truly reforming others in their faith.”

Contreras met Serrano at a 2008 BTGMI communications conference in Panama.

“Our Spanish team offers media training for professionals and church leaders throughout Latin America. These workshops prove to be an effective way of building bridges for media ministry,” Serrano explained.

By attending the conference and meeting Serrano, Contreras gained a new opportunity for speaking to victims of domestic violence. Upon learning of her ministry to women, Serrano invited Contreras to write two devotional booklets for BTGMI’s Spanish ministry: *Women and Community* and *Women and Violence*.

You add.
God multiplies.

“ Now there are new opportunities to share the Word with the Cuban people. ”

Through their ministries, both Serrano and Contreras have addressed the issue of violence against women—an ongoing problem in Latin America. Contreras, a long-time reader of the BTGMI Spanish-language devotional *Cada Dia*, was grateful for the opportunity to share stories of faith and hope for victimized women.

Contreras, who also facilitates evangelistic small groups in homes, says, “Women have approached me to tell me of their difficulties at home, at work, and in their family.”

While taking advanced studies through the Centre for Interdisciplinary Theological Studies (CETI, a program of theological formation directed by James DeBorst), Contreras and colleague Carmen Castro created the Association of Integral Support for Women (ASIMUJER).

“We have sponsored health campaigns and partner with professionals who provide advice for women who are victims of domestic violence,” she said.

Ruth Padilla DeBorst, who serves with her husband, James, as CRWM staff in Latin America, says Contreras is “a model of the integration of her faith and her profession as a journalist.

“[Contreras] is a leader in Christian radio programming and the church at large. Her studies with CETI were instrumental in helping her enter more fully into her vocation as a Christian journalist.”

Through her radio program, Contreras addresses women’s issues as well as topics related to life, health, the environment, human rights, children, and more. “My work is a wonderful experience in

that I am able to communicate messages of hope and address topics of everyday life with listeners,” she said.

She receives information and inspiration from BTGMI Spanish radio and TV programs, which address these issues from a biblical perspective. “Back to God Ministries has been an influence in my life from the late 1980s,” she said.

“After I became a Christian, these programs helped me develop my faith and my understanding of Scripture in the midst of society and caused me to reflect on the various areas of my life.”

Who Could Have Imagined?

Contreras’s story is one of many that illustrate the ripple effect BTGMI’s Spanish-language ministry has had over the 50 years since Boonstra’s first broadcast.

“Who would have thought the voice of a country lad from the pampas of Argentina would one day be recognized



throughout the Spanish-speaking world?” asked Boonstra’s widow, Natalie Boonstra Bosscher.

In 1937 Boonstra met South American CRC missionary Rev. Jerry Pott. With Pott’s backing, Boonstra enrolled in Calvin College, arriving in Grand Rapids, Mich., in 1948 with little more than the clothes on his back and slight knowledge of English. He graduated from Calvin Seminary in 1954 and returned home as a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church of Argentina.

The young pastor took with him a wire recorder, provided by seminary friends and Seymour CRC in Grand Rapids. Boonstra’s broadcasts reached an audience of sheep ranchers spread over hundreds of miles and any other neighbors who tuned in to the only radio station available.

He found that the best time to record his programs was in the middle of the night, when the town’s supply of electrical power was stable enough to produce a steady recording on the machine.

Boonstra’s ministry caught the attention of Dr. Joel Nederhood, then director of *The Back to God Hour*. Nederhood »



Rev. Jaun Boonstra brings God’s Word to thousands at a mass rally in Honduras.

Boonstra started the BTGMI Spanish-language ministry in 1965.

» contacted Boonstra about beginning a Spanish-language ministry. Boonstra accepted the call, and in 1965 BTGMI added a second “foreign language” ministry (Arabic outreach had begun in 1958).

“Juan quickly realized the power of radio to reach so many more souls, and in a few years the response reached a thousand letters a month,” his widow recalled.

“His largest audience was the little guy, the average man in the street. Delivering [Boonstra’s] dry cleaning one day in a city in Colombia, the clerk looked up with shining eyes and blurted out, ‘You are that guy that preaches about Jesus. I never miss your program. I too am a believer now.’”

Soon BTGMI Spanish-language radio broadcasting expanded throughout Latin America; 15 years later Boonstra piloted a television program in Spanish.

In 1979, he partnered with CRWM to develop a “media blitz” that touched tens of thousands of people. Through the broadcast and print media, Boonstra invited people to a series of mass rallies in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.



Luis discovered the TV program *La Vida Ahora* on the Life Channel in El Paso, Tex. He said, “I saw for the first time your program on TV. I liked it and wish to receive further studies for my spiritual growth! May our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ continue to do the work through technology worldwide!”



When Diolinda, a 24-year-old from Cuba, was searching for truth, she received the *Cada Dia* devotional. God used Christian media in her faith journey. Diolinda testified, “I was raised an atheist, but when God called me, none of that mattered. God is great no matter what culture and teaching you were raised with.”

“The campaign put the Christian Reformed Church on the map,” one missionary noted after the event, which filled 10,000 stadium seats three nights in a row. The story was reported a few weeks later in *The Banner*.

In the isolated mountains of the Dominican Republic, Boonstra’s broadcasts had a more subtle impact. When CRC missionaries first visited the area, they were surprised to discover Christian Reformed churches already established. How? The congregations had decided to gather and affiliate with the denomination associated with *La Hora de la Reforma!*

Spanish Media Ministry Today

Following Boonstra’s retirement, Serrano was appointed in 1991 to lead the Back to God Spanish-language media ministry, known today as *Ministerio Reforma* (Reformed Ministries). *Ministerio Reforma* now airs three radio programs,

including the flagship *La Hora de la Reforma*, on nearly 600 stations.

It also produces two television programs, *La Vida Ahora* (*Life Today*) and *En Perspectiva*, which is broadcast on more than 200 TV stations, and a children’s video series called *El Club del Arca* (*The Ark Clubhouse*), one of the only authentic Spanish programs produced for children in Latin America.

Cada Dia (*Today*), for which Contreras was invited to write, provides daily devotions in print for an estimated 5,000 homes and is available on social media and mobile apps. Noteworthy is the distribution of the devotional into Cuba. Even during the years of the U.S. embargo, BTGMI was able to ship *Cada Dia* devo-



Every night, Nelson, a Costa Rican husband and father, brings together his wife and children to read the *Cada Dia*. “Now my family does not go to bed before reading *Cada Dia* and praying. We did not always practice this, but now we see the hand of God moving in an extraordinary way in our lives.”

tionals to partner churches in Cuba from its ministry center in Brazil.

Pastor Tony Gonzalez expressed gratitude for the shipments of *Cada Dia* devotionals to Cuba. “On behalf of all Christians in our church, we wish to thank all donors and personnel who put this beautiful gift in our hands,” he said. “People have found salvation in Jesus Christ, families have been reunited, and Christians who lost their faith have

You add.
God multiplies.



BTGMI media conferences establish relationships that are a significant factor in opening doors to stations that are willing to air its Spanish-language programs. Nearly 600 stations air the programs for free as a result of these relationships, saving the ministry an estimated \$500,000 to \$750,000 annually.

returned to God because someone gave them a *Cada Dia*.”

Now that the doors to Cuba have reopened, there are new opportunities to share the Word with the Cuban people, including a media training conference in October—the first opportunity the Spanish ministry team has had to visit Cuba.

In 2014, BTGMI launched a new, culturally authentic, Spanish-language radio drama and web program for children, *Las Aventuras de Elisardo*. The program was inspired by the popular English-language radio show *Kids Corner*, produced by BTGMI’s English-language ministry, ReFrame Media.

“No one else is producing this kind of programming in Latin America,” noted Nancy Ayala, Spanish ministry producer.



BTGMI children’s Spanish-language radio drama is the only one of its kind.

“People think that radio is on the way out, but it’s not. When kids come home from school the radio is on. And if you have a kids’ program on, they stop and listen to it.”

She added, “Children’s programming is needed all over the world. More than 100 stations have picked up our programming. We are in Colombia, Argentina, and Peru and are beginning to promote the program in North America and Brazil.”

“*Ministerio Reforma* uses every kind of media, enabling us to reach millions of people in Latin America, Spain, North America, and other parts of the world,” said Serrano.

“Our audience trusts us because we establish a relationship with them through voice and through email. Over the years



Rev. Serrano hosts a TV program aired on more than 200 stations in Latin America.

our audience can be calculated in the millions.

“We are grateful to God because he has given us opportunities to proclaim the powerful message of the gospel and to see people come to faith in Christ.”

He added, “We cannot fully anticipate how media will change in the future, but we continue trusting that God will lead us to use all the resources available to proclaim the Good News to Spanish speakers throughout the world.”

Prayer Requests

- Praise God for faithfully leading the BTGMI Spanish-language ministry team for 50 years.
- Pray that the Spanish ministry will help listeners such as Requejo to grow in faith.
- Pray for the ongoing production and broadcast of the children’s audio and web-based program, *Las Aventuras de Elisardo*, developed in partnership with the English-language *Kids Corner* ministry.
- Pray for BTGMI’s partnership with Spanish Radio Moody in producing a live radio program. This joint broadcast has the potential of increasing the North American audience of our other programs.
- For monthly prayer updates, visit BackToGod.net/pray.

A listener, Requejo, wrote: “When my father was alive, he listened to the program called *La Hora de la Reforma*. After more than 30 years, I now have the desire to personally know Christ. Now I listen to Christian radio stations and Internet.”

“Thank you for faithful support through the years to BTGMI Spanish outreach, through ministry shares, individual gifts, and church offerings,” said Rev. Serrano. “Without your support it would be impossible to do this ministry. Your prayers and support help Mrs. Contreras and so many others grow in faith and share God’s Word with others.” ■



Kristen Fergus Van Stee and Nancy Vander Meer are members of the BTGMI communications team.



‘We Need Your Partnership’

Last month I focused on the emerging Ministry Plan for the Christian Reformed Church, ending with “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.”

Soon after writing those words, I was able to step into one of the places where God is at work—and we’re privileged to be a part of that work. I attended the Christian Reformed World Missions Theological Education in Africa (TEA) conference in Kampala, Uganda.

Like many of you, I grew up with an image of missionary work as a mix of challenging hardship and adventurous faithfulness, resulting, in my mind, in near sainthood for those who serve in faraway places.

If the old approach to missionary work in Africa was to parachute North Americans into cities or villages, a new approach is needed, for much has changed in Africa and in the entire global South.

The *World Christian Encyclopedia* predicts that in 10 years there will be 633 million Christians in Africa, compared to nine million in 1900. Most significantly, the explosive growth of Christianity on the African continent is the result of evangelism to Africans by Africans.

It is clear that we need to learn from our African neighbors. Their churches are growing; the Spirit is at work. Yet as I listened to church leaders from the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, I heard a repeated refrain that is profoundly reshaping our approach to missions: “We need your partnership with us.”

In most denominations in Africa, pastors have little theological training, and there is an extreme shortage of pastors. While some churches may wish to send a few leaders to places such as Calvin Theological Seminary so that they can return as professors in their seminaries, the overwhelming desire is for pastors and aspiring leaders to receive training where they are—while they remain involved in their flourishing ministries.

For World Missions and World Renew, the Timothy Leadership Training Institute is a key vehicle of partnership for training pastors and lay leaders. Timothy Leadership Training is

also an important resource for the French-language ministries of Back to God Ministries International. At one point in the TEA conference, those in the audience who were or had been involved in Timothy training were asked to stand. More than 100 pastors and leaders stood.

The Timothy approach, used in more than 50 countries around the world, focuses on preaching, pastoral care, stewardship, worship, educating others, and family issues. The training always includes assignments that put learning into action.

The ways in which the gospel is being spread around the world are changing, and those changes are being reflected in our own denomination.

One strategic focus in the emerging Ministry Plan states: “Congregations and ministries participate in leadership development efforts with partners throughout the world.”

That is already happening, but we are hoping for even more involvement across North America as congregations form relationships with leaders and partners overseas in ways that benefit and provide learning for both sides.

Another strategy flowing out of the Ministry Plan is to better understand how to relate to our Reformed brothers and sisters in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and other places whose denominations also bear the name “Christian Reformed.”

Seeing our name reflected in these places signals a significant opportunity. Looking for new partners in mission? We must ask these brothers and sisters what partnership could mean—not just for them, but for all of us. Drawing closer could radically reshape our collective ideas about kinship in Christ, about the unity of the Reformed family, about how to share faith with others.

These are just two of the strategies flowing from the emerging Ministry Plan. The plan has been shared at some classis meetings this fall and will be shared at more in the months ahead. Consider it an invitation to open our hearts to the leading of the Spirit, engaging us in life-changing ministry at home and around the world. ■



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

“We need to learn from our African neighbors.”

You add.
God multiplies.

OUT AND ABOUT

A Smaller Footprint

Taylor Vos is a 2008 Calvin College graduate who works in urban real estate development. He says he is particularly intrigued by the “tiny house” movement. Tiny houses are sub-400-square-foot homes that provide incredible efficiency gains and allow almost total freedom from an energy grid.

“There is a financial and environmental appeal to tiny houses,” said Vos. “You can build a house for less than the down payment on a typical residence and then consume far less energy.”



Taylor and Annie Vos sit outside a friend's home.

Vos worked in communications in Grand Rapids, Mich., after college graduation. Then he and his wife, Annie, decided to see the country by traveling—and living—in a conversion van.

“We’re both interested in urban planning, so we thought the best way to see what was going on in cities across the country was to draw up a map and see for ourselves,” he said.

On the road, the young couple asked many questions, took notes—and lived in a very small space.

Settling in Phoenix, Ariz., they decided to investigate building a tiny house.

“Our research showed we could build a home for \$15,000,” he said.

Tiny houses, however, are currently subject to the same zoning and building codes as traditional homes. All houses not on wheels are required to have a foundation, and the numerous other permits and fees began to change the financial equation for Taylor and Annie.

Taylor assisted a friend who was ahead of them in the tiny house building process and was trying to overcome the same barriers.

“We wound up buying a 790-square-foot place in a historic neighborhood,” said Vos, “and our friend will eventually put her tiny house on our property as an accessory dwelling unit.”

The Voses haven’t given up on their interest in a tiny house and continue to be engaged in local dialogue on the subject. They know there have to be changes in city codes and restrictions for the movement to flourish.

“We’ll be involved in any conversation that is about how we can challenge ourselves to live better,” Taylor said. ■

—by Mike VanDenend,
Calvin College

First Female Tenured Professor at Calvin Seminary Gives Convocation Address

According to her mother, Mary Vanden Berg could never sit still during church services—and that was a problem. A restless child in the pews was often a distraction to the preacher, who just happened to be her father.

But at the opening convocation service of Calvin Theological Seminary in September, roles were reversed.

Mary Vanden Berg, a professor of systematic theology, gave the convocation address to the students, faculty, and staff assembled in the seminary chapel.

Her parents, retired CRC pastor Rev. Wilbur and Marilyn De Jong, sat in a pew, not restless but warmly attentive and quietly beaming.

It was a proud moment as they saw before them a woman who had been called and equipped by God to become a “pastor to the church” as a seminary professor.

In introducing Vanden Berg, seminary president Jul Medenblik publicly marked the moment in the seminary’s 140-year history by announcing that she is the first female faculty member to receive tenure at Calvin Seminary and to give the convocation address.

“Make them like trees” was both the teaching and prayer undercurrent of Vanden Berg’s address.

Using the horticultural images of Psalm 1, she challenged and encouraged students to experience a season of fruitful formation while “planted in the soil” of the seminary and watered by the streams of God’s Word and Spirit. ■

—by Jinny De Jong, Calvin Theological Seminary



Rev. Wilbur and Marilyn De Jong and their daughter, professor Mary Vanden Berg.

Education Beyond the Classroom

Rev. Mike Wagenman came to Western University in London, Ont., as a campus pastor in 2005.

He found that even though many Christian student clubs had already been established, first-year students who became involved often left after a year or so.

When students started asking harder questions, student

clubs weren't equipped to answer.

So Wagenman began the Kuyper Centre, a campus ministry dedicated to student and faculty development modeled on a study center. In addition to helping students through their tough questions, the Kuyper Centre focuses on providing leadership positions to students.



A group of young people connected to the Kuyper Centre.

"We want to provide opportunities to the Christian leaders of tomorrow," said Wagenman.

The ministry is led by students and for students and supports a whole group of student leaders. »

It's No Joke

A police officer, a former gang member, and a missionary walk into a church.

No, it's not the opening line of a joke. It's the beginning of a new brand of leadership training—and a step toward transforming Guatemala City.

Beginning in early 2015, an unlikely group began meeting in the outskirts of Guatemala City for training in pastoral care—the police officers to improve their skills in a chaplaincy program they lead for other police officers, and the former gang members to continue their work of mentoring and pastoring those who want to get out of gang life.

"The first encounter was not easy," recalled facilitator Rev. Luis Pellecer, Christian Reformed World Missions regional leader of Latin America.

"Although these police officers didn't wear their uniforms when they came for training, they were quickly identified by the ex-gang members."

Likewise, the tattoos of the former gang members led the police officers to recognize who they were.

Still, the group agreed to read Scripture with one another and share ideas to improve each other's ministries.



Some of these men are former gang members; some are police officers. Today they have a common mission.

"At first there was some apprehension, but as time passed, everyone lowered their guard," said Pellecer.

When the first training session drew to a close, the group reflected on their time together.

"We used to hate you. We used to fight against you," said one of the former gang members. "We killed some of you, and you killed some of us. But now, by the grace of God, we are brothers in Christ."

The police officers echoed this message, and the group began praying for one another.

"No eye was left dry in that place," said Pellecer. "We felt like we had just been bathed in love."

This group continues to meet every four months, building friendship and trust and praying that God will eventually use the restored relationship between rivals to transform some of Guatemala's most broken systems.

—Brian Clark, *Christian Reformed World Missions*

You add.
God multiplies.

Young Mother Becomes Community Health Leader

» In addition to Wagenman, the Kuyper Centre has an intern who looks after the undergrad programs. Funded by Christian Reformed Home Missions, Classis Chatham, and others, the resources help Wagenman spend more time on the graduate student and faculty programs as well as one-on-one mentoring.

Another focus is an emphasis on the relevance of the gospel in all areas of life, showing students that academia and religion are not separate.

During the past year, the Kuyper Centre partnered with other groups to host an event focused on the harm of pornography and attended by more than 600 students and faculty.

Afterward, a professor expressed her appreciation to Wagenman for addressing pornography from a perspective of hope as opposed to despair; the world may be broken, but there's hope in the midst of the brokenness.

Wagenman said this is what campus ministry is all about, citing John 13:35: "They'll know we are Christians by our love." ■

—Annemarie Byl,
Christian Reformed
Home Missions

Modina Begum, 28, lives in a remote village in Bangladesh. She never thought of herself as a leader. Through God's grace and community health training, that has changed.

Begum's village is home to 180 families, most of whom make their living as small-scale farmers. The villagers have little access to medical clinics, pharmacies, or doctor's offices, which has a negative impact on their health.

Begum knows about the risks of inadequate health care. Soon after she married at the age of 17, she gave birth to her first child and has since had two more. Having children at such a young age can create immense challenges.

Begum's husband is a farmer who works hard but does not earn enough to adequately provide for his family. Sometimes they can't eat as well as they would like.

In 2009, Begum learned about a new health project in her community. Led by World Renew's local partner, PARI, the program focused on women. It addressed the risks of having children at a young age; the benefits of good nutrition during pregnancy; and the importance of proper prenatal care, improved labor and delivery practices, and nutrition for infants and young children.

Begum signed up and learned so much that she agreed to volunteer as a community health worker.

In 2014, World Renew returned to begin a project with funding from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank aimed at improving health for children by focusing on nutrition from conception through their second birthday.

Begum was a natural choice for this project as well.

"Modina is a good learner and very quickly learned a lot about infant and young child

feeding," said Prafulla Chandra Hajong, the project manager.

While Begum doesn't consider herself a leader, she has become one by serving as a community health worker.

"I never thought that I could ever be of any help to my community," Begum said. "Now I



Modina Begum weighs a child.

have knowledge about the importance of feeding nutritious food to pregnant women and young children." ■

—by Kristen Vanderberg,
World Renew

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

Food for Thought

It's that time of year again: harvest and thanksgiving. Farmers are harvesting or have already harvested their crops. Gardeners have picked their produce. Let's all celebrate!

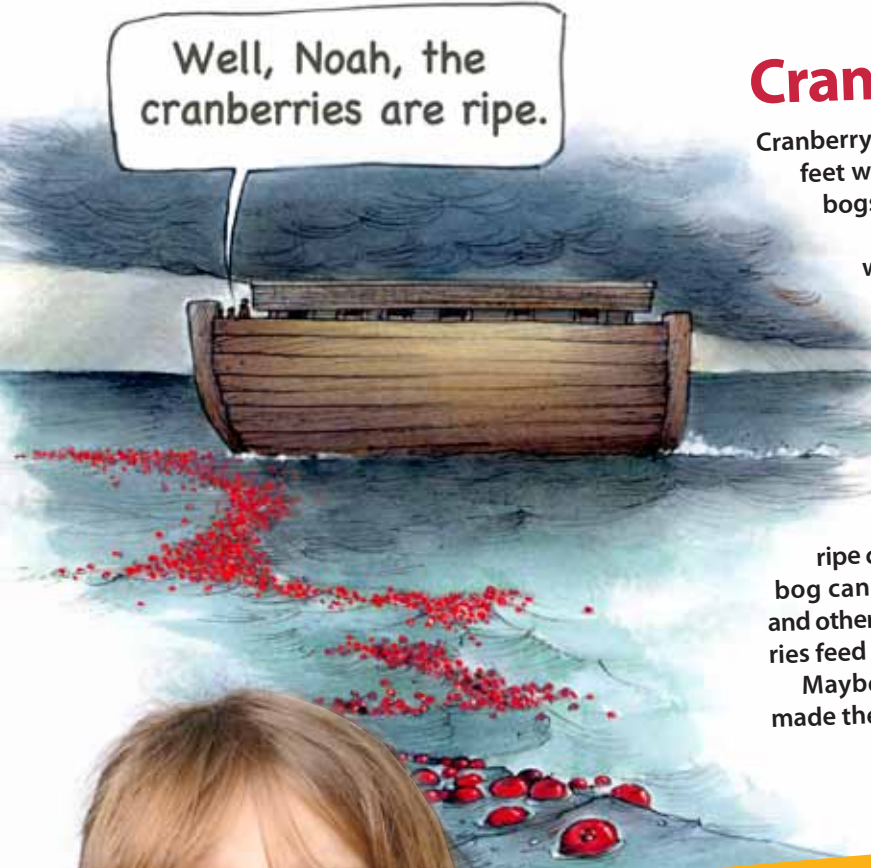
People have held food festivals as long as crops have been grown. They know that they'll have enough to eat

through the long winter, so they celebrate. Some people call it Harvest Festival. We call it Thanksgiving because we thank God for making the food grow.

Many of us sit down to a big feast with family and friends. We thank the cook and enjoy turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, and pumpkin pie.

But we don't always think about the wonderful miracle of growth that God makes happen. So this year, let's take a closer look at some of the plants our food comes from and hold our own real thanksgiving.

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



Well, Noah, the cranberries are ripe.

Cranberries Have Wet Feet

Cranberry bushes are low, scrubby plants that like to get their feet wet. Their roots need plenty of water, so they grow in bogs and swampy areas.

You'd think that finding and picking ripe cranberries would be a soggy, wet, dirty job. But that's not the case.

As a cranberry ripens, it develops an air pocket inside. So when it's ripe, it floats. If a ripe cranberry falls from the bush, you can see a red berry floating on top of the water.

That makes finding ripe cranberries fairly easy. Cranberry farmers make it easier yet: they flood cranberry bogs at harvest time.

Even without the flooding, red ripe cranberries floating in a bog can be spotted by people and other creatures. Wild cranberries feed wild animals.

Maybe that's why God made them red!



The Kernel of Life

Next time you eat corn that's been cut off the cob, take a closer look at one kernel. Down at the bottom of the kernel, you'll see a light yellow part. Around it the kernel is darker yellow. That darker yellow is the foodstuff of the corn. That gives it most of the flavor and the nutrition.

That lighter yellow kernel part is the life of the corn. It's the part that sprouts into a corn plant. That's the mysterious stuff of life that we can't make.

Only God can make life. Only God can make food for life. Thank farmers for harvest. And thank God for life.



Queen Anne's . . . Carrots?

You know what Queen Anne's Lace looks like, don't you? It blooms in late summer. After the plant dies, it simply dries. It still looks like lace.

Look around for that big lacy flower—you may be able to find some Queen Anne's Lace nearby. Keep your eyes open in fields or along roadsides. If you find one, pull it gently from the earth. Pull from the bottom of the plant. You need to pull the root out of the earth.

Once you have the root in your hand, smell it. What vegetable can you smell, maybe only slightly? Smell it again. Yes, it's a carrot! Queen Anne's Lace is the original source of the vegetable we call carrot today.

Over the years, scientists have developed carrot plants with a bigger, more tender root. But God gave us the first carrot: Queen Anne's Lace!



Flavors, Spices, and More

What's your favorite milkshake flavor—strawberry, vanilla, or chocolate? Whatever it is, that flavor came from a plant. Strawberry flavor comes from strawberry plants, of course.

Chocolate flavor comes from the cacao tree. These trees grow in Central and South America. The seed pods of cacao trees taste like chocolate. The chocolate syrup you love comes from mashed or ground or processed tree seeds.

Vanilla comes from vanilla orchids. Your vanilla ice cream is flavored with processed vanilla seeds.

Cinnamon comes from the bark of a tree that grows naturally in Southeast Asia.

Pepper also comes from Southeast Asia. One black peppercorn is one seed of a woody vine that grows best in hot, humid places. Originally it was found in rainforests near the equator.

Medicines also came originally from plants. Next time you need to take an aspirin to bring down a fever or chase away a headache, give thanks for the bark of a certain willow tree that gave us our original aspirin.

This Thanksgiving Day, look at your table and thank God for all the things that help us live well.



Plant a Potato

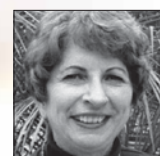
If you've ever had to peel potatoes for supper, you know what potato eyes are. If you don't know what eyes are, go to your kitchen and find an unpeeled potato. Look closely at it. See those little dents and hard spots? Those are potato eyes.

The eyes are where the sprouts come out. The sprouts look like little white roots growing from the potatoes. That's exactly what they are . . . roots!

Gardeners plant a potato patch by cutting up potatoes with eyes. They leave an eye (or a sprouted eye) in each part. Then they plant the parts into loose soil. Each potato section sprouts into a new potato plant.

You can grow your own potatoes. In many parts of North America, it's too cold outside to do that now. But you can plant a potato inside and watch it grow. Here's how.

1. Find a tall clear 2-liter plastic bottle. Clean it well.
2. Cut off the upper third of the bottle. You should have a tall, straight clear bottle.
3. Using a nail, poke a few small holes into the bottom of the bottle.
4. Fill the bottle about $\frac{3}{4}$ full with loose soil.
5. Find a small potato with eyes in it. If you can find a small potato with sprouts, that's better yet. This is your seed potato.
6. Push the seed potato gently into the soil inside the bottle.
7. Cover it with a little more soil, keep the soil damp, and watch it grow.



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

MARRIAGE AS COVENANT



“ I don't see why we need to get married if we're committed to each other. Marriage is just a piece of paper. ”

“ Marriage is a right that shouldn't be denied to any couple, whether homosexual or heterosexual. ”

YOU'VE ALMOST CERTAINLY HEARD these sentiments today. Whether in Canada (where same sex marriage has been legal nationwide for nearly 10 years) or in the United States (where the Supreme Court legalized same sex marriage earlier this year), marriage is increasingly viewed as a civil right that should be extended to all couples, regardless of sexual orientation. At the same time, the number of couples living together without seeking the traditional marriage commitment continues to rise on both sides of the border. The church seems caught in the middle.

So should the church adapt her positions and her interpretation of Scripture in order to be more accepting? Dig in her heels and fight the cultural trends that threaten the church's historical position? There is no shortage of voices on either side of this issue.

Sadly, our conversations can sound more like we are playground bullies than followers of Jesus. Those on both sides of the issue spend more energy stating what they oppose rather than what they are for. What remains to be heard is a positive argument for the historic view of marriage. Here are two reasons why the traditional biblical view of marriage portrays something of great value—not only to married people but to society at large.

Marriage Is a Covenant That Reflects God's Character

Marriage was not created merely as a romantic relationship, nor even as an institution aimed at self-fulfillment. Marriage is God's way of modeling his covenant-keeping nature. In Ephesians 5:32, Paul concludes his instructions on marriage by stating, "This is a great mystery—but I am talking about

Christ and the church.” Paul has been giving instruction on marriage, when suddenly he is describing Christ’s relationship with his church. Is Paul talking about marriage or the church? The answer is yes; marriage is patterned after God’s relationship to his church. Thus, in marriage (our own or others’) we begin to know God more intimately.

How? In a godly marriage we begin to discover what it means to be deeply known and steadfastly loved. From beginning to end, God’s preferred way of relating to his people is by covenant. By making a covenant, God joins himself to his people, pledging to remain steadfastly committed and loving his imperfect people even at the cost of death. In other words, by making a covenant, God makes an unwavering promise that he will continue to love and care for his people—even though they may fail God, even though they may be unfaithful to him, and even though they may grow cold in their love for him. In the fullness of time, God kept this promise with his people, even though it meant laying down his life for them in death. As a covenant, marriage is, ideally, meant to model this steadfast, promise-made/promise-kept relationship. In a marriage, two people publicly bind themselves together, committing themselves to one another, promising to be faithful, exclusive, and sacrificially loving, until death.

Keeping this commitment is no small effort. Feelings and affections can cool for a season. Circumstances like illness, job loss, or family conflict can create strain that tears at the fabric of a marriage. And of course, we stare at our own personal sins and failures—pride, a critical spirit, and selfishness, to name a few—in the mirror of relationship. The covenant of marriage is meant to hold husband and wife together through these purifying fires, leading us to growth and maturity.

Seasoned spouses will often acknowledge times in marriage when it was the covenant vows alone that kept them together. But when the vows are kept and the covenant upheld, those around begin to glimpse (though admittedly through a dark glass) what God’s commitment to us actually looks like: a promise made to us, and a promise kept, even at infinite cost to himself. Faithfulness to his bride, through sickness and health, good times and bad. Marriage, then, becomes a beautiful portrayal of the gospel itself.

So why withhold this covenant from same sex couples? This is a fair question that requires a careful and pastoral response. In part, the answer lies in how marriage reflects not only God’s relationship to the church, but also his nature. Genesis 1:27 emphasizes that when God created human beings, he “created them in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Masculinity and femininity are not artificial social constructs, nor are they traits to be either idolized or ignored. They are a piece of what it means to reflect God’s image. In a marriage between man and woman, the image of God is reflected in a way that is unique. This does not diminish single people, who also beautifully reflect the image of God. Rather, it suggests that when

“ Churches ought to do all they can to promote healthy marriages. ”

two people become one flesh, God’s intent is to illustrate something of his image that cannot be communicated in homosexual relationships. The joining together of male and female as one gives us a more complete picture of God’s character.

So how ought the church live in the midst of these changing times? First of all, churches ought to do all they can to promote healthy marriages that reflect God’s covenantal relationship. This means preaching and teaching about marriage, it means promoting premarital ministry, as well as ministry to married couples. Some churches have invited couples who have been married for a decade or longer to serve as mentors to newlywed couples. Church leaders would be unwise to take an indifferent approach to couples living together. Each situation is unique, of course, so there are no one-size-fits-all answers. But churches should take care to disciple couples to pursue the covenant commitment of marriage, even though that may be culturally unpopular. Such care for those living together should always be offered with the truth and grace that Jesus himself so marvelously demonstrated.

The Church Must Call People to Holy Living

That brings us to the second reason why the church must become known for upholding the traditional biblical view of marriage, particularly as it relates to those experiencing same-sex attraction. As a church, we must learn to love deeply those with whom we disagree. Jesus showed on many occasions the transformative ability to love a person while simultaneously calling them out of sin and into holiness. Too often we are known for one or the other: we call people to holiness, but we do it without love. Or we love people unconditionally, but we dismiss the destructive presence of sin. Neither fits the fullness of the biblical approach. The church must be a place that embraces those struggling with sexual sin—loving them, encouraging them, and joining them in pursuing the gift of holiness.

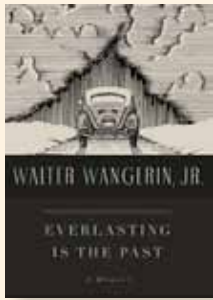
A couple I once counseled listened intently as I shared this biblical pattern for sex and marriage. In their past, all they had learned from the church were the cold and unfeeling rules about sex and marriage. Those who kept the rules were accepted; those who did not were judged. Hearing this message on marriage, they said this was a message they had wanted to hear their whole lives.

As a church, we have a glorious message to bring to the world! Let us be faithful to speak it and live it well, before the eyes of a watching world. ■



Rob Toornstra is pastor of Sunnyslope Christian Reformed Church, in Salem, Oregon. He is the author of *Naked and Unshamed: How the Good News of Jesus Transforms Intimacy* (Doulos Resources).

Christmas Treats and Treasures for Everyone on Your List



Everlasting Is the Past

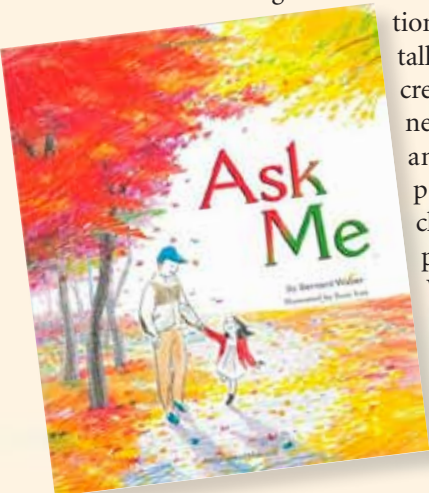
by **Walter Wangerin, Jr.**
reviewed by **Kathryn Hoffman**

In this memoir, Wangerin chronicles three significant stages in his life: the experience of losing and then regaining his faith, the discovery of his vocation, and the tender journey he embarks on with an inner-city church. Wangerin expertly tells his stories: some are lovingly detailed and others are simple yet profound snapshots of a life where doubt and belief twist tightly together to form a cord called faith. (Rabbit Room)

Ask Me

by **Bernard Waber**
reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

“Ask me!” says the little girl to her father as they go for a walk around the neighborhood. She wants her papa to ask her questions. “What else do you like?” They talk about seashells and starfish, ice-cream cones and stories, waiting and next Thursday. The text is as honest and tender as any conversation a parent has had with their young child. Published posthumously, this picture book honors Bernard Waber’s storytelling tradition. The accompanying illustrations evoke the gentleness and intimacy of the text. A great gift book. Ages 4 and up. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)



The Truth According to Us

by **Annie Barrows**
reviewed by **Judy Hardy**

It’s 1938, and the town of Macedonia, W.Va., is celebrating its sesquicentennial. Twelve-year-old Willa, who prides herself as “a natural-born sneak,” is the fearless narrator who peels back the complicated layers of the Romeyn family in the wake of the Great Depression. Laced with warmth and humor, this novel for adults doesn’t shy away from the hard realities of life in a mill town among people who aren’t always what they seem to be—even in Willa’s own family. (Dial Press)



Sound of a Living Heart

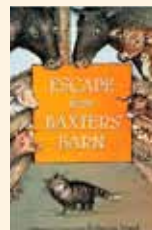
by **JJ Heller**
reviewed by **Paul Delger**

JJ Heller, a popular independent artist with a strong Internet following, invites listeners on a journey toward wholehearted life with her eighth studio album, *Sound of a Living Heart*. Heller’s voice is simply sweet and inviting; the lyrics are honest and vulnerable. The music features pop with a dash of folk. With standout songs like the title track and “Father-Daughter Dance,” this album will both soothe and challenge listeners. (Stonetable Records)



Escape from Baxters' Barn

by **Rebecca Bond**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**



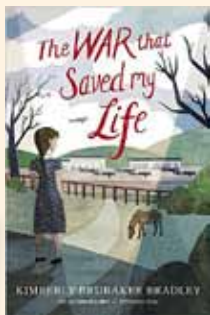
Burdock the barn cat is a loner who has experienced repeated rejection. When he learns that all the farm animals are in grave danger, Burdock realizes that he “could go it alone.” When the animals plan their escape, he faces a moral quandary: “Saving yourself seemed right. Obviously abandoning your companions seemed wrong. But what if saving yourself meant abandoning them?” This winsome juvenile novel, illustrated with charming pen and ink drawings, will delight fans of *Charlotte’s Web* and other lovely animal stories. Ages 7 and up. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

Waiting Songs

by **Rain for Roots**
reviewed by **Robert J. Keeley**

If there is one thing kids know, it’s that waiting is hard. *Waiting Songs* explores that idea. This is not your typical Christmas album. It’s actually an Advent album about waiting. The album opens and closes with traditional Advent songs; in between are eight original songs ranging from serious to silly. The songs are catchy and easy to learn. Rain for Roots once again shows that simple does not have to mean simplistic, and child-like is not childish. (Rain for Roots)

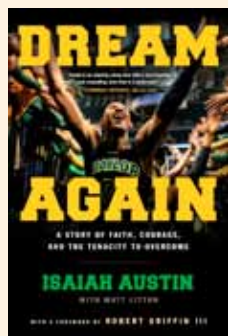




The War That Saved My Life

by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
reviewed by Sandy Swartzentruber

Ten-year-old Ada's abusive mother has never let her out of their squalid London apartment because she's ashamed of Ada's disability. When World War II threatens their city, Ada and her brother escape to the countryside. But no one wants to take them in, and they're forced into the care of a woman who is fighting her own interior battle. This inspiring middle-grade novel has its eyes wide open to the hardships of war—both physical and emotional—but its heart is open equally wide. Ages 9 and up. (Dial Books)



Dream Again: A Story of Faith, Courage, and the Tenacity to Overcome

by Isaiah Austin and Matt Litton
reviewed by Paul Delger

For years, Isaiah Austin envisioned walking across the stage on NBA Draft Night. But just days before the 2014 draft, Austin was diagnosed with a serious condition called Marfan syndrome, and his competitive playing days were over. Austin's book talks about his faith, basketball, and his many health challenges. It's a story of encouragement and motivation in which God redirects the life of a skilled basketball player into a servant mode. (Howard Books)



Anne of Green Gables, My Daughter, & Me

by Lorilee Craker
reviewed by Kristy Quist

When Lorilee Craker was a young teen, she found a kindred spirit in Anne Shirley, the orphan in the *Anne of Green Gables* series by L. M. Montgomery. Craker herself had been adopted, and she and her husband eventually adopted a daughter of their own. In this memoir, she intertwines the stories of these adoptions, while framing their stories in the greater picture of our adoption into the family of God. Craker is at her best when relating the emotional complexity of her own experiences. The perfect gift for the adult *Anne* fan in your life! (Tyndale)



Mad Miss Mimic

by Sarah Henstra
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In 1872 London, the opium trade and a mysterious gang cause havoc. Meanwhile, 17-year-old Leonora Somerville struggles with a speech disorder—she stutters and impeccably imitates other people's voices. Leo lives with her sister and brother-in-law, Dr. Dewhurst. Leo becomes uneasy as she realizes that lower-class patients are dying in Dr. Dewhurst's care as he experiments on them with an injectable form of opium. Fast-paced and exciting, this young adult novel introduces readers to an intriguing character who learns how "a person grows brave." Ages 13 and up, available from booksellers in Canada. (Razorbill)

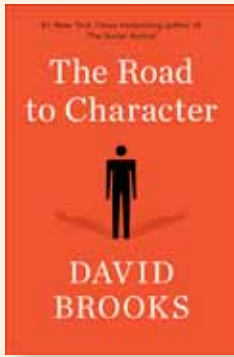
Counternarratives

by John Keene
reviewed by Phil Christman Jr

This story collection, one of the best I've read in years, presents moments from North and South American literary and cultural history, reimagined from somewhere on the far side of power (think Jim rather than Huck Finn). Keene's sense of form is breathtaking—the stories turn inside out; snap shut on the reader; take sudden, dazzling twists that on reflection were inevitable—and his sentences reflect an almost crazed love of language. It's also a good deal more fun to read than I'm making it sound. (New Directions)



MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE



The Road to Character

by **David Brooks**
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

David Brooks, op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*, leads readers on a personal journey while applying inspiring lessons of history. Through 10 major biographical sketches, ranging from St. Augustine to George Eliot, Brooks's characters confront some core sin and discover a way to beat it. In so doing they serve as models for us, showing how strength comes from their weakest places. (Random House)

Orbiting Jupiter

by **Gary D. Schmidt**
reviewed by **Kathryn Hoffman**

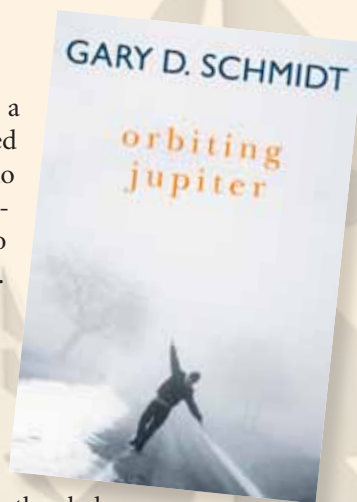
Jack's family takes in Joseph, a 14-year-old who is being released from a detention facility and who is already a father. By all appearances, Joseph is on his way to becoming a hardened criminal. His life becomes even more complicated with the unexpected arrival of his abusive father. Jack and his parents see Joseph for who he really is—a hurting young man with a large capacity for love and family. Can they help him see that in himself? Schmidt tells Joseph's difficult story with warmth, humor, and an unflinching capacity for telling the truth. Ages 12 and up. (Clarion)



Rachmaninoff: All-Night Vigil

by **Phoenix Chorale and Kansas City Chorale; Charles Bruffy**, director
reviewed by **Otto Selles**

At 100 years old, this music sounds timeless, especially under Charles Bruffy's impeccable direction of the combined Phoenix and Kansas City Chorales. The liner notes provide an excellent introduction to the composition of the *Vigil* and also offer a complete translation of the Russian text. But even without knowing Russian, listeners cannot help but soar along with the choirs' singing of "Glory to God in the Highest" and "O Praise the Name of the Lord."



Waiting

by **Kevin Henkes**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Five creatures—an owl, a pig, a bear, a puppy, and a rabbit—wait on a windowsill. Each waits for a particular thing: the moon, rain, wind, snow, or for whatever will happen next outside the window. One day a cat arrives. They wonder what she is waiting for. In a humorous surprise ending they learn that the answer differs radically from what they have been waiting for. In this gentle, leisurely children's picture book, young readers are introduced to the nature and wonder of waiting—something that most children find difficult to do. Ages 4 and up. (Greenwillow Books)



Inside Out

reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

In this outstanding Pixar film, 11-year-old Riley's life changes abruptly when her parents decide to move. Riley experiences some of the typical losses of a big move—friendships, familiarity, favorite activities, and even her sense of self. The film's focus is the range of Riley's emotions, depicted by the characters Joy and Sadness, among others. This inventive and beautifully animated movie creatively explores things like memory, imagination, and personality, subtly teaching the wonders of the brain while keeping the movie-watching experience fun and meaningful for everyone. (Disney)

The Night Stages

by **Jane Urquhart**
reviewed by **Jim Romahn**



Jane Urquhart's new novel alternates between Gander International Airport in Newfoundland and County Kerry, Ireland, in the 1940s and 50s. Tamara flies warplanes from Canada to Europe. She meets and marries a dashing young man who, it turns out, is not a good choice. This novel unfolds slowly, beautifully, as it paints landscapes, but it develops surprising tempo and drama in the final chapters. (McClelland & Stewart)

Essentials of Etiquette

MY MOM, Annie Tuininga (nee Schoonekamp) passed away a few months short of her 100th birthday. We let her know that she could receive signed certificates from the Queen of England, the Prime Minister of Canada, and the Premier of Alberta if she lived long enough to become a centenarian. But that wasn't one of her goals in life. She stubbornly resisted anything that smelled of arrogance.

Further evidence of Mom's character was a little booklet we found in her belongings called *Essentials of Etiquette*. It was compiled by a teacher, Helen Van Laar, in 1935, when Mom was a single woman in her 20s. It offers instructions for behaving well in various settings: Manners at the Table (drink coffee "without making noise") and Manners at a Party ("Have an attitude of kindly interest in each one of [the] guests and be determined that everyone shall have a good time.")

But I was particularly drawn to Manners at Church: "Be on time. Late-comers disturb worship. If you are late, however, wait at the entrance until the congregation has finished singing, praying, or Bible reading. . . . If a man and a lady are ushered in, the lady always goes first, the man following her. If there are no ushers, the man goes first, stands aside, and lets the lady enter the pew first. Never should he shove in before his companion.

"Whispering, talking, sleeping, slumping are more out of place in church than in the presence of our President or that of the King of England. . . . Sit straight, and don't extend your arm in either direction encircling your neighbor. Of course, affectionate cuddling of adults is beyond all propriety."

As for street manners, "Couples should not walk [arm in arm] on city streets.



*Such manners
were Mom's way
of considering
others better
than herself.*

They walk side by side without holding either arms or hands." However, couples "are permitted to walk [arm in arm] on country lanes or in gardens."

In Manners Expected of Ladies: "If you've dropped a handkerchief or any article, don't stoop to pick it up if you're in the company of a gentleman. He'll pick it up for you if he's at all cultivated. And it would embarrass him to have you dive for it in his presence." When being taken out by a gentleman, "Do not desire the most expensive foods or costliest entertainments. A 'gold-digger' is too despicable for words." And when a young man comes to pick you up, "don't rush out at the bidding of a honk. He's supposed to get you personally from the house."

The pamphlet concludes with a warning not to be satisfied "with only outward elegance. Satisfaction with such surface conduct is like being content with the cold glittering beauty of snow on a wintry landscape. Underneath the ground is hard, dead, and unfruitful. Our manners should be like the verdant trees and lovely

flowers that spring forth from the warmed sunlit soil. So our hearts should be warmed and all the powerful yet beautifully tender emotions of the Holy Spirit should be nurtured. . . . You will then . . . radiate the very atmosphere of heaven and thus remind others that we belong not only to the dust of the earth but also to the realms above."

Mom has been taken to the "realms above," having practiced as best she could the ways of heaven on earth. These "Essentials of Etiquette" may crack a few smiles today, yet such manners were Mom's way of considering others better than herself. This is how she worked out her salvation with fear and trembling, making her shine like "a star in the sky" to all who knew her (Phil. 2:3, 15). ■



Bill Tuininga is interim pastor at Centrepointe Community Church in Edmonton, Alta.

The Good News about Election

Election portrays the ever-widening embrace of God's love.

SCOTT CRESSWELL/FUCKR

FOR MANY OF US, the doctrine of election means that God has chosen a certain number of people to be saved—and, depending on how you interpret the Canons of Dort, a certain number of people to be damned.

In thinking about election, we tend to dwell on those passages that seem to portray election as God choosing individuals for salvation. Some, maybe even a few, are chosen, while others are not. And no one can complain because we all deserve damnation anyway. Is that all there is to the doctrine of election?

Some time ago I became familiar with the writings of the great British missionary and theologian Lesslie Newbigin. In his book *The Open Secret* on the theology of mission, he names election as the foundation of the mission of the church. How can that be? The doctrine of election seems to be a problem for the mission of the church rather than its foundation.

The trouble is that we tend to think about election mainly from the perspective of Romans 9-11. Many interpreters, from Augustine to Calvin, understood these chapters to be about the election of individuals and the church to salvation. But, as more recent interpreters point out, Paul's doctrine of election here has a wider reach with roots deep in the Old Testament.

It begins in Genesis 12 with God's call of Abraham and Sarah. Inexplicably, sovereignly, God chooses this barren couple. God's purpose is clear:

I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you . . .
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you (vv. 2-3).

Abraham was elect—that is, chosen by God to bear God's blessing to the whole wide world.

God then widens his purpose with the election of the people of Israel, Abraham's descendants. Out of all the people in the world, God chooses them to be his own royal priesthood and holy nation (Ex. 19:5, 6). But their election has the same goal as that of their father Abraham: to be a "light to the Gentiles" (Isa. 49:6).

Jesus Christ finally appears as the "new Israel," embodying the elect and holy people Israel failed to be. His purpose as the true Israel is to show God's love for the whole world. Jesus then chooses (elects) disciples and finally sends them out to "all the world" to make disciples of the nations (Matt. 28:19).

Every step of the way, God works by electing some with the purpose of reaching more. Election is the means of God's mission, which means that our own election is never meant to stop with us so we may be an exclusive group of elect people to enjoy God's favor. It's not about setting limits and building fences.

Election portrays the ever-widening embrace of God's love. Its purpose is always inclusive rather than exclusive. It's the way the sovereign God gets things done. God chooses

some so that they may bear the blessing of his love and salvation to the many.

It's a great encouragement not only to know we are elect, but to realize that God continues his electing love through us. When Paul speaks to Lydia about Christ, Scripture says, "the Lord opened her heart" (Acts 16:14). Through his electing love and by the witness of Paul, God called Lydia and eventually gathered his church in Philippi through her. God is way ahead of us in his gracious electing love.

By sovereign election, God is accomplishing his loving purpose to spread the blessing of his love to every corner of the world, to every tribe and tongue and nation. Or, as Paul concludes in his discussion of election in a doxology:

For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

For from him and through him and for him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

(Rom. 11: 32-33, 36) ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



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

ADS

Deadlines: December issue is 11/2/15; January 2016 issue is 11/30/15. Details online.

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

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

Denominational and Classical

Calls Accepted

REV. DON BYKER has accepted a call to serve the Newman CRC of Hesperia, MI.

REV. JIM KUIPER has accepted a call to serve Bethany CRC of Bellflower, CA.

Eligible for Call

WE ARE PLEASED to announce that **David Van Eck** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

WE ARE PLEASED to announce that **Jeffrey Chang** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

Congregational

MARANATHA COMMUNITY CHURCH CRC The Maranatha Community Church CRC will meet at Farnsworth Hall, 6159 University Drive, Mesa AZ from Dec thru 2nd Sunday in April at 10:00 AM Visitors are welcome. Please confirm and send billing to harlanram@gmail.com

General

PHOENIX/SUN CITY, AZ West Valley Christian Fellowship (Reformed Faith) welcomes you to visit this winter. Our services are at 10 AM and 6 PM on Sundays. 12649 N. 105th Ave Sun City, Az. Call 623-810-5201 for more information.

THANK YOU! Grace Nyenhuis was overwhelmed and blessed by the many well wishes on her 90th birthday. Thank you all so very much.

Birthdays

100th Birthday



THELMA DURIAN will celebrate her 100th birthday on November 27. In her lifetime Thelma has been blessed with 4 children and 65 grandchildren. Cards can be sent to 200 North Locust, Wayland, MI 49348.

ALICE (BOS) SCHILPEROORT celebrated 100 years on October 10 with her large extended family in Sunnyside WA. A second party was celebrated October 21 where she resides at 2895 SE Powell Valley Rd, #104, Gresham OR 97080. She has been blessed with 6 children, 8 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren who in turn are blessed to have her beautifully intact physically, mentally and spiritually.

95th Birthday

FRED HOLTROP will celebrate his 95th birthday Nov.11. He resides at 141 Port Sheldon, 14 East, Grandville, MI 49418. His family thanks God for his love and long life!

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

DIEPEVEEN, Dick and Nel (Spaans) of Surrey, British Columbia, celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on October 11. We praise God for his faithfulness and blessings throughout the years. Much love from their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

60th Anniversary

DE BOER Marvin and Merrie Lou (Boss) 2708 Olivia NW Grand Rapids, MI 49504 will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary Nov. 25, 2015. They with their children; Barbara & John Buteyn, Carol & Bill Buikema and David & Jane De Boer, 10 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren praise God for the many blessings experienced during these years.

EYZENGA Chris & Sophia (Zandbergen), 612 6th st.#1705 New Westmr BC. V3M 1X5 announce with thankfulness to God who has blessed us with 60 years of marriage. 4 married children, 15 grandchildren (one with the Lord) and three great grandchildren

LOEROP Richard and Rosalind (Kiaassens) of Elmhurst II celebrated 60 years of marriage on Sept. 24. They and their children Richard and Jan, Walter and Sandra, Robert and Linda, Timothy and Nanette, 12 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren thank God for his blessings and faithfulness

VANDER KLIPP Lawrn and Donna (Francis) celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on October 28, 2015. Together with their loving family and many friends they thank God for his continued faithfulness in their lives!

VAN WEELDEN - Ernest and Mary Ann (nee Nordman) are celebrating their 60th Wedding Anniversary. Ernie and Mary Ann married at the Woden CRC on November 11, 1955 where they are still members today. With loving gratitude from your family Sherri & Steve Sechrist (Burleson, TX) Lauren & Douglas; Mark Van Weelden (Omaha, NB) Zachary & Matthew. Gone to be with the Lord are son David Jon & grandson Christopher Sechrist. Praise God for a life well-lived! 2803 240 Ave. Wesley, IA 50483.

H. Henry Meeter Center

Scholarships for High School Seniors

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies is pleased to offer the Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards for High School Seniors. Awards are given annually for research papers on a topic pertaining to John Calvin and Calvinism. Awards are payable to student tuition accounts at the following colleges: Calvin, Dordt, King's (Canada), Redeemer (Canada), Kuiper, and Trinity Christian. The topic for 2016 is "John Calvin and Pastoral Care." The first prize is \$3,500 and there are three second prizes of \$2,000. Papers must have a **January 15, 2016**, postmark.

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

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CALVIN
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50th Anniversary



VAN STAALDUINEN Bill & Grace: 50 years blessed! Together, we thank God for His blessings on Bill & Grace van Staalduinen (nee Vriend). From your kids Kirsten, Dennis, Brent, and Sharon - with all 4 spouses and 10 grandchildren! "Many waters cannot quench love, nor can rivers overtake it." Song of Sol 8:7

Obituaries

DOUMA Conrad M. 95, entered heaven on August 23, 2015. He was preceded in death by his wife Betty in 2008. The Doumas served as missionaries in Guam for several years during the '70s. Con is survived by children Becky (Tom deceased) Bandstra, Bob & Bo Bryant, Con & Deb Douma, Tim (Carolyn deceased) Douma, Phil & Helen Douma, Scott & Naomi Douma, Lee (Bettijane deceased) Petroelje. 21 grandchildren, 19 great grandchildren, 3 great, great grandchildren.

FLIKKEMA, Lloyd, 92, of Manhattan, Mt. our father, grandfather, great grandfather, husband and friend went to his heavenly home July 29, 2015. He is survived by his wife, Wilma, children, Clary, Liz, Gary, Stan, Ted, Shelley, Terry, Tami & Bonnie, 20 grandchildren and 31 grandchildren.



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LARSEN, Cathy Yonker, Surrounded by family, at rest July 20, 2015. Dear wife of David Larsen, deeply loved mother of Joshua (Deborah) Larsen, Anne (David) Vander Weele and Catherine (Chris) Jamison and the late Mathew, Mark and Thomas. Fond and fun-loving grandmother to Adeline and Beatrix Larsen; Samuel, Margot and Benjamin Vander Weele; and Ingrid Jamison. Devoted daughter of Wendell and Dorothy Yonker, sister to Wendy Sue (Eric) Van Vugt and Thomas (Judy) Yonker, and sister-in-law to Karen (Bruce) Merchant. An aunt treasured by many nephews and nieces. A registered nurse, Cathy devoted nearly 30 years of her career to Elim Christian Services, and served many leadership roles in her community, church and faith-based institutions. She knew the meaning of servant leadership, and lived in the grace of God, now fully.

THOMAS MICHAEL P. O'HARA, age 79, has joyously received the anticipated Gift of Salvation and began his new life with his Lord on Sunday, August 30, 2015. He will be remembered by his wife Marie

(Timmerman) O'Hara; children and grandchildren, Daniel and Denise O'Hara (Sara, Priscilla), Tom and Dorothy Cantrell (Allison, Jack, and Luke), Christopher and Janie O'Hara (Robert); sister, Dolly and Robert Weathers; and sisters-in-law, Connie O'Hara and Wilma (Tom) Lotterman.

VAN WYHE Wm., On October 1, 2015, Wm. Van Wyhe left his suffering behind to live with Jesus in Heaven. He taught high school mathematics in IL for 9 years, and for 33 years he served as a Professor of Mathematics at the Palm Beach State College in FL. He lived 80 years, and was married to Janice (Praeger) Van Wyhe, of Lake Worth, FL. for 56 of them. Their children are Mike and Sharilyn Van Wyhe (IL), Mark Van Wyhe (FL), Dr. Sherry and Dwight Schubert (CO), and Suzanne Wiegiers of NJ, who preceded him in death. They also have nine precious grandchildren and one great grandchild. His family and friends will miss him. On October 24, his funeral will be held in North Carolina, where he spent the last eight years of his life. For information, please call 561-214-3425



Vos, & four sisters.... Christ in us, the hope of glory!

VOS Otto, 97, met Jesus Feb.3, 2015. Survived by wife, Judy, children Jeremy O. (Jodi), Mary (Ed Rozenboom), Melvin (Phyllis), Judy (John Burn), Stanley (Pearl), 17 grandchildren and numerous great grandchildren, brother Clarence (Jeanne). Preceded in death by wife Ruth (1970) parents John & Bertha

Employment

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Church Position Announcements

PASTOR NEEDED IN CALGARY, AB Just east of the beautiful Rocky Mountains, in the diverse city of Calgary, Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church is seeking a Pastor of Preaching and Administration. We are an active, large church family with a full range of ministries including contemporary Reformed worship and an active community development ministry. We are looking for an inspiring, motivating leader able to apply Scriptures to our contemporary lives and to work collaboratively with our ministry leadership and staff. In a city that offers everything from sports to arts and prairies to mountains, we invite you to consider helping us build a body that is alive in Christ. If the Lord is leading you to hear more about our current pastoral vacancy we invite to confidentially contact a member of the pastoral search team at pastorsearch@emmanuelcrc.org. Church profile available from the Ministerial Information Service at CRC's Pastor Church Relations.

PASTOR Hillcrest Christian Church (CRC) of Denver, CO is seeking a pastor. Our current preference is for a pastor to serve on a part time basis (25-30 hours/week), which could develop into full-time. Our church is multinational, primarily American and Chinese, with a strong college student ministry. We need a pastor who is gifted in preaching and leading worship, effective in administration, involved in pastoral care, and fluent in English. We seek a pastor who relates well to each age group and ethnicity in the church, and is able to work cooperatively with church leaders and staff. For more information, contact Henk DeYoung at hencorde@aol.com.

LEAD PASTOR: Charlottetown CRC, Prince Edward Island, Canada is seeking full-time Lead Pastor to provide biblical preaching and pastoral care to our congregation. Should be able to work effectively and meaningfully with our ministry staff and congregation through the church's vision and programs. A Church Profile is available at the Pastor-Church Relations Office or contact search committee at peircsearch@gmail.com.

PASTOR First Christian Reformed Church in Kingston, Ontario is seeking a full-time pastor to lead our multigenerational congregation. For more details about our church please visit www.firstcrck-kingston.ca. To receive a copy of our church profile please contact Lawrence Vandermeer at lawrencev@bell.net.

PASTOR Second CRC in Kalamazoo MI, Classis Minnkota, is seeking a full time Senior Pastor. Contact search committee (Barry Klaassen) at crows51@sbcglobal.net or 269-344-7128.

PASTOR Fairlawn Christian Reformed Church, located in the heart of the beautiful Blackstone Valley, is seeking a pastor to shepherd our congregation in Whitinsville, MA. We are praying for a man of God who will share our love for the gospel, as expressed in the historic Reformed confessions, and will be an effective communicator of that gospel to our multi-generational congregation, as well as to our larger community. The successful candidate will have a thorough grounding in, and commitment to, the Reformed faith, as well as relevant training and experience in preaching, teaching, leading

worship, fostering spiritual formation, providing pastoral care, administrative oversight, and outreach to the community. M. Div. is a requirement. Please send a resume, references, and inquiries to: Search Committee, Fairlawn CRC, 305 Goldthwaite Rd., Whitinsville, MA 01588, or searchcommittee@fairlawnrcrc.org.

SENIOR PASTOR -Shalom CRC of Sioux Falls, SD is seeking a senior pastor to lead our congregation in a growing union with Jesus Christ and expression of God's grace in our church, community and world. Shalom is an active and engaged church in a rapidly growing city with many opportunities to make an impact for our Lord. You can view our church profile at www.crcna.com or our website - www.shalomcrc.com. Interested candidates can submit their profiles to office@shalomcrc.org or contact Dan Harmelink, search committee chair, at dan.harmelink@woodsfuller.com

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES Faith Christian Reformed Church, Elmhurst IL, is seeking a Director of Youth Ministries (DYM) to direct and coordinate ministry for the youth of our church. The DYM is a full-time position with primary focus on middle and high school ministries, as well as some responsibilities for children's and young adult ministries. For further information about the DYM profile and qualifications, please send a letter of introduction with resume to dymsearch@faithelmhurst.org or contact Ray Middel at 630-862-1861.

YOUTH MINISTRY LEADER: Innerkip Presbyterian Church, in beautiful Oxford County, near Woodstock Ontario, is accepting resumes for a full time position as Youth Ministry Leader. Competitive wages include a generous benefit package. For position description go to thriveatipc.com. To submit a resume or ask any questions please email Stan Cox, Assistant Minister, at stan.cox@sympatico.ca

CREATIVE ARTS AND WORSHIP LEADER: Innerkip Presbyterian Church, in beautiful Oxford County, near Woodstock Ontario, is accepting resumes for a full time position as Creative Arts and Worship Leader. Competitive wages include a generous benefit package. For position description go to thriveatipc.com. To submit a resume or ask any questions please email Stan Cox, Assistant Minister, at stan.cox@sympatico.ca

YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP PASTOR Harderwyk Ministries (MI) seeks an innovative team player to lead its multi-faceted youth ministry and equip its three worshipping communities in discipling young people. This includes overseeing our ministry to middle school and high school young people, building bridges into the community, ensuring young people are invested in Harderwyk's ministry and spiritually nurtured, and envisioning new ministry opportunities. The job description can be viewed at: <http://harderwyk.com/about/job-descriptions>. Candidates interested in applying for this position should review the Harderwyk Ministries web site (harderwyk.com) prior to submitting a resume, a two-page philosophy of youth ministry and the names and contact information of three references to the Youth Discipleship Search Team at CYD@harderwyk.com



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 they relate 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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mdebic@crcna.org

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December 31, 2015



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Dr. Eric Forseth, Provost
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provost@dordt.edu

www.dordt.edu/prospective_employees/faculty/

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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

1. Publication Title: The Banner; 2. Publication No. 0041-300; 3. Filing Date: Oct. 1, 2015; 4. Issue Frequency: Monthly except August; 5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 11; 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$24.00; 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; Editor: Rev. Leonard Vander Zee, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; Managing Editor: Judith Claire Hardy, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407. 10. Owner: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None; 12. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.

13. Publication Name: The Banner; 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2015.

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total No. Copies (Net Press Run)	87,611	86,060
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	59,528	58,801
(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions	0	0
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	26,630	26,492
(4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	23	8
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	86,181	85,301
d. Free Distribution by Mail		
(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	35	35
(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541	0	0
(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	0	0
(4) Free Distribution Outside the Mail	5	5
e. Total Free Distribution	40	40
f. Total Distribution	86,221	85,341
g. Copies Not Distributed	1,389	719
h. Total	87,610	86,060
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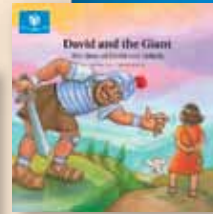
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Punch Lines

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

I always carry a pocketful of Tootsie Rolls that I give to kids at church. Our minister's not-yet 2-year-old son was being held by his grandpa. When I gave the youngster the Tootsie Roll, his grandpa said, "What do you say?"

The boy held it out and said, "Open it."

—Tom Cavanaugh

After reciting the Lord's Prayer with my children one evening, I asked them who gave us that prayer. My son quickly replied, "It was Ms. Zweep!" I'm sure he's not the first child to think his first-grade teacher walks on water!

—Heidi de Vries

Husband: "Why do you weep and sniffle at the movies over the imaginary woes of people you've never met?"

Wife: "For the same reason that you scream and yell when a man you don't know slides into second base."

—Dick Bylsma

A woman invited some people for dinner. At the table, she turned to the 6-year-old daughter

and said, "Would you like to say the blessing?"

"I don't know what to say," the girl replied.

"Just say what you hear Mommy say," said her mother.

The daughter bowed her head and said, "Dear Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people for dinner?"

—Bruce D. Quinn

A friend of mine mentioned that she had an appointment coming up with her son's Spanish immersion kindergarten teacher. I knew that regular parent teacher meetings were not due for a while yet, so I asked if there was a problem. She related a conversation she'd had with her son. "Mom, I can speak three languages now," he said excitedly.

"Three?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied proudly.

"English, Spanish, and inappropriate."

—Jan Veltkamp

Did you hear the one about the short fortune teller who escaped from prison? He was a small medium at large.

—L. Hardy

I was visiting my granddaughter last night when I asked if I could borrow a newspaper.

"This is the 21st century," she said. "I don't waste money on newspapers. Here, use my iPad."

I can tell you this much: That fly never knew what hit him!

—Sue Lauritzen

On Sunday after church, a mother asked her very young daughter what the lesson was about.

The daughter answered, "Don't be scared, you'll get your quilt."

Needless to say, the mother was perplexed.

Later in the day, the pastor stopped by for a visit. She asked what the previous week's Sunday school lesson had been about.

He replied, "Be not afraid; thy Comforter is coming."

—Peter Haagan



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