

32 Practicing Resurrection
38 Ash Wednesday

22 'Recognizing
the Racism in
My Own Heart'

WHAT'S PRAYER?
IT'S SHOOTING SHAFTS INTO THE DARK.
WHAT MARK THEY STRIKE,
IF ANY, WHO'S TO SAY?
IT'S REACHING FOR A HAND YOU CANNOT TOUCH.
THE SILENCE
IS SO FATHOMLESS
THAT PRAYERS LIKE PLUMMETS VANISH IN THE SEA.
YOU BEG. YOU WHIMPER.
YOU LOAD GOD DOWN WITH EMPTY PRAISE.
YOU TELL HIM SINS
THAT HE ALREADY KNOWS FULL WELL.
YOU SEEK TO CHANGE HIS CHANGELESS
WILL.
YET GODRIC PRAYS THE WAY HE BREATHE,
FOR ELSE HIS HEART WOULD WITHER IN HIS BREAST.
PRAYER IS THE WIND
THAT FILLS HIS SAIL.
ELSE WAVES WOULD DASH HIM ON THE ROCKS,
OR HE WOULD DRIFT WITH WITLESS TIDES.
AND SOMETIMES,
BY GOD'S GRACE, A PRAYER IS HEARD.

—FREDERICK BUECHNER, *GODRIC*

18 Are You
There, God?



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Volume 151 | Number 02 | 2016

BANNER



FEATURES

18 **Are You There, God?** STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE
Sometimes our prayers are filled with anxious uncertainty.
by Caitlin Visser

◀ **32** **Practicing Resurrection**
People who are not ready to become a member of a church still have a place within a loving, patient community of disciples.
by Reginald Smith

DEPARTMENTS

Editorial: Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Christ? by Leonard J. VanderZee **6**
All too often God's people choose the power of the sword over the power of love.

Catch Your Breath: Holloways by Cathy Smith **7**
Holloways beckon like mysterious entrances to new worlds.

IMHO: What We Believe by John Van Donk **8**
We can bless each other by sharing our stories.

Letters to the Editor **8**

News: Redeemer Student Presents Manure Research at International Agricultural Conference **10**

Next: Rethinking the Death Penalty by Matt Maly **21**
I want to live in a culture that embraces life.

Just for Kids: Here's to Your Heart by Joanne De Jonge **30** ▶
Like people, many birds head to warmer places in the cold winter months.

Tuned In: The Inside Story By Phil Christman **34**
Writers can be found every where, including prisons.

Relating: Joining the Conversation: A Letter to My Son by Granger Lee **36**
If you're not ready to carry another's burden, you're not ready to join the conversation.

Reformed Matters: Ash Wednesday by Leonard J. Vander Zee **32** STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE
There are few times in life when we confront our feeble and fleeting human life so starkly.

Frequently Asked Questions **39**
Sometimes my anger feels like a curse.

Punch Lines **47**

TOGETHER DOING MORE

'Recognizing the Racism in My Own Heart by Chris Meehan **22**
Lasting forgiveness only comes over time.

The View from Here: In Praise of Going Slowly by Darren Roorda **26**



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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY FRANK GUTBROD

Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Christ?

AS LENT APPROACHES, I've spent some time carefully rereading the gospel accounts of the crucifixion. For many of us, the crucifixion comes down to the neat formula, "Jesus died for our sins." But the fact that the gospels spend so much time on the story invites us to pay more attention to the details.

One key incident struck me as particularly important. The first three gospels all tell us that the crowds, spurred on by their religious leaders (one commentator translates them "pastors") demand that Pilate release Barabbas and crucify Jesus in his place.

Matthew tells us that his full name was Jesus Barabbas, which means, "Jesus, son of the father." He was a violent rebel who fomented an insurrection against the Roman occupation—and who Matthew says was quite a popular figure. And why not? The Jews hated the occupation too.

So the choice is Jesus, son of the father, or Jesus, Son of the Father. How could the crowd choose the first one?

Think about it. Jesus Barabbas was a man of action. He didn't just take it; he fought back. Sword strapped to his side, he had the guts to lead an attack on a Roman military installation. Here was a man who acted on his convictions, who didn't just roll over. He was the image of violent resistance, the embodiment of Jewish nationalism.

Jesus Christ, on the other hand, must have seemed to many a wimp and a coward. He said, "If the soldier asks you to carry his load one mile, carry it two." He warned against insurrection, telling his fellow Jews that it would only lead to their being crushed, which is exactly what happened.

The most common Greek word to describe Jesus throughout his passion means "handed over"—not exactly heroic stuff. Jesus stood meekly in front of the crowd, bloody with beatings, the butt of savage mockery, a picture of silent surrender.

Jesus Barabbas, the freedom fighter, Jewish revolutionary, and folk hero, or Jesus Christ, committed to the power of self-sacrificing love over the power of the sword?

We tend to think that the seeming passivity of Jesus in his passion was only because God had ordained his death for our salvation. He had to die anyway, so what would have been the point of fighting it? But Jesus points us not only to his death for our sin, but to the *manner* of his death. He calls *us* to take up *our* cross and follow him. That is not so much about accepting our illnesses and disappointments, as it is often interpreted. Rather it is about self-sacrificing love, even for our enemies, and trusting in God rather than our fear-driven and sometimes violent instincts.

Don't forget: the way of the cross did win in the end. The followers of the crucified One eventually triumphed over the violence of Rome without ever resorting to the sword, while the followers of Barabbas met a violent end at Masada.

We are living in a time of fear and anxiety. There seem to be threats all around for us personally and for our society. In times like this it's easy to be attracted to people of action who are tough and unyielding, leaders who will fight fire with fire.

I don't claim to have all the answers to the thorny questions this raises about how to confront evil in this world. But I'm convinced that the striking choice between the two Jesuses at Pilate's palace is a parable for our time. For Christians, the cross of Christ is more than a means of our salvation, it's also a way of life. ■

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 choice is Jesus, son of the father, or Jesus, Son of the Father.

Leonard J. Vander Zee *Editor*

Judith Claire Hardy *Associate Editor*

Gayla R. Postma *News Editor*

Henry Hess *Editor,*
Together Doing More

Kristy Quist *Tuned In Editor*

Dean R. Heetderks *Art Director*

Pete Euwema *Graphic Design*

Frank Gutbrod *Graphic Design*

Contact Us

1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids,
Michigan 49508-1407

Address Changes and Subscriptions
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thebanner.org

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Editorial
616-224-0785 editorial@thebanner.org

News
613-330-3145 news@thebanner.org

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Holloways

I **JUST LEARNED** a delightful new word: *holloway*. From the Old English *hola weg*. Holloways, explains Robert Macfarlane in his book *Holloway*, are sunken corridors that have been created by foot traffic over long periods of time—ancient troughs gouged into sandy soil or chalky rock. In England they date back to the Iron Age, in the Middle East even further.

Not engineered by human hands, holloways exist because the route worked. It was the best way to get somewhere, the original narrow paths enlarged by flocks and herds and carts. Holloways beckon like mysterious entrances to new worlds, leafy branches hovering protectively overhead, light summoning at the end of the tunnel. They are evocatively or hauntingly named: Wrinkleberry Lane, Little Covert, Normandy's Death Valley Road, Antietam's Bloody Lane.

Holloways remind me of church. I love the historical depth of the church and the progression embodied within its evolving traditions. When I worship at my own church in Wyoming, Ont., I often let my

mind wander to older churches I've visited: the very first Christian Reformed Church—Graafschap in Holland, Mich.—boxy white-sided churches in Nova Scotia, awe-inspiring cathedrals in England and the Netherlands. I'm deeply comforted by an age-old lineage that meshes my footsteps with the tread of those who've gone before: my mother and father; my grandparents; C. S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien; Ralph Smith, my husband's Puritan ancestor who fled English persecution to land in Boston in 1633; Calvin, Luther, and Augustine; Lydia and Paul; Rahab and Abraham. It's a careworn *weg*, battle-scarred by our common frailty but softly luminous with the guiding truth of the Word, the sustenance of communion, and the promises of baptism.

Last night I attended a baby shower at my church, that oh-so-ordinary tradition of women gathering together to celebrate a mom and her first-born child. We had coffee and punch, played a couple of games, ate cake. The new mother opened her gifts and displayed the items to us, holding them up like badges of shared accomplishment. I took some photos,

capturing one of the older women holding baby Rory with gentle ease. Her husband had had a stroke recently, but there she was, smiling, offering her support to the next generation and the one after that.

Called “the Way” from its earliest days (Acts 9:2), I'm captivated by the image of the church as an incarnational holloway, carved into this numinous world by the passing on of countless gifts like those wrapped up in our baby shower: faith, hope, love. I lift my eyes to that glow in the distance. I pilgrim on, the wisdom of Henri-Frédéric Amiel as my walking stick. Amiel, a moral philosopher whose Huguenot forebears were driven to Switzerland by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, declared, “Life is short, and we do not have too much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us. So be quick to love, and make haste to be kind.” ■



Cathy Smith is a retired teacher and contributing editor of *Christian Courier*. She lives in Wyoming, Ont.



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Life is short, and we do not have too much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us. So be quick to love, and make haste to be kind.

—HENRI-FRÉDÉRIC AMIEL

What We Believe

IMHO

What if we believed that every person at our church has been sent to us by God for such a time as this?

AS A CONFESSIONAL CHURCH, we like to be clear about what we believe. We value adherence to shared confessions. We ask new members to agree that what our church teaches is correct. We ask leaders to indicate their agreement by signing the Form of Subscription, which points to three historic documents that together make up a kind of boundary within which we think and talk about God and all things spiritual.

On a congregational level, that same inclination to delineate what we believe shows itself on our websites, where we articulate how we are different from the church down the street. We do that in order to persuade website visitors to appreciate our uniqueness and perhaps to join our church.

Another purpose for being explicit about what we believe is to have that serve as the foundation for our values, policies, job descriptions, and performance reviews. A well-written “what we believe” statement gives elders something to go by when they look at what our ministry staff are doing.

However, in my humble opinion, calling this set of shared statements “what we believe” is a misnomer. Perhaps we could call it “what we aspire to believe,” or “what we want to believe,” or perhaps

“what our parents and grandparents would like us to believe.”

That is, unless, as a faith community, we regularly embark on an extended journey to hear each other’s stories of faith formation, to discover together all the different faith stories present in our midst.

What if we believed in our hearts that every person associated with our church has been sent to us by God for such a time as this—and that God had shaped that person with just the right upbringing, background, and experiences to bring a unique perspective on walking with God, a perspective we could all learn from in one way or another?

What if our leaders provided us with the coaching needed to help people rediscover their voices and encourage them to bring their spiritual journeys to the table? Imagine the great power in discovering and validating that in and through our respective journeys, God has been with us (see 1 Sam. 7:12)?

I believe that everyone has a story. For some, perhaps, that story even resembles the story of Joseph and his brothers: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen. 50:20). Imagine discovering a similar thread in your own personal story!

We could really bless each other by sharing our stories with each other, comparing notes, and finding common threads. And, then, perhaps only *after* that, we can try to put on paper “what we believe.”

What is *your* story? ■



John Van Donk is a former pastor who makes his living repairing pool and spa equipment.



Key Features of Reformed Worship

In the editorial “Key Features of Reformed Worship” (Dec. 2015), Vander Zee says that in the worship service God reminds us of his commandments—and we seek his forgiveness. That’s about as legalistic as the Roman Catholic beliefs I walked away from years ago when I joined the CRC. The gospel message of new covenant grace assures me that the moment I was born again, my entire life’s sins were pardoned, and God “remembers them no more.” That’s past, present, and future sins.

Christians are not subject to the Ten Commandments God gave the Israelites through Moses. God’s moral law is etched on the hearts of believers. Thanks to Christ’s finished, saving work through the cross, believers’ sins are no longer counted against them.

—Joe Serge
Oshawa, Ont.

Love Lost

It was painful to read a piece in *The Banner* in which the homosexual orientation seems to be repeatedly minimized as “mere sexual impulses” (“In My Humble Opinion: Real Love Lost,” Dec. 2015). We don’t reduce heterosexuality to such a bizarre notion. The various kinds of heterosexual promiscuity highlighted in the article should not be implicitly contrasted with

LETTERS

the longings for genuine intimacy and companionship that motivate most homosexuals—and most heterosexuals.

—Nick Overduin
Toronto, Ont.

Refugees

Re News stories about refugees (Dec. 2015):

Terrorists use fear tactics to accomplish their mission. Politicians in our country are using hysteria and fear in the desire to keep refugees from our country. Thirty governors say they will refuse to settle refugees in their states.

Our President and others have shown compassion in their willingness to welcome at least 10,000 refugees (as Jesus would have us do; see Matt. 25). The vetting of these refugees should begin without delays.

Lawmakers, however, are backing legislation that will keep refugees from coming to the U.S. I believe this is against God's will. We must ask the question, What would Jesus have us do?

—Herman Klap
Sahuarita, Ariz.

Doing Better

Toornstra writes, "What remains to be heard is a positive argument for the historic view of marriage" ("Marriage as Covenant," Nov. 1015). Absolutely. Every aspect needs to come under the microscope. Replace anemic premarital counseling with mentoring. Reexamine the ceremony: why are we able to affirm other covenantal vows (baptism, confirmation of faith, etc.) within a regular worship service, but a wedding demands its own day? Finally do we really mean it when we vow to uphold the promises we just witnessed? Or when the couple separates, do we sadly shrug, saying, "That's between them"?

We can do better. We are called to do better.

—Kyle Adams
Haslett, Mich.

Holy Catholic Church

We believe in one holy catholic church, so true ("Holy Catholic Church," Nov. 2015). When born-again believing strangers meet, it is amazing how quickly they recognize their oneness in Jesus. The church is built on one foundation, Jesus Christ our Lord, and not on sinking sand. The firmer the foundation, the straighter the walls and the better equipped its members are to build the church. Not all churches build with the same mortar, and its buildings show it.

Jesus loves his bride, and that was why he tells us to watch out, be careful . . . and keep your eyes on the prize. Too many build their churches to fit the culture, and Jesus becomes a pleading bystander.

—Arie Nugteren
Glencoe, Ont.

Please, each person who was responsible for letting the racist cartoon on page 30 stand in this issue ("Fall Is for Pumpkins," Oct. 2015): flip back a couple of pages and attend the "Blanket Exercise" as noted on page 26. Such cultural insensitivity has no place in *The Banner* and I was ashamed to see it there. We can do better, and we must, especially if our wish for reconciliation is to be anything more than empty words.

—Rebecca Warren
Edmonton, Alta.

Keep Len!

I would like to commend Len Vander Zee on the awesome job he is doing as interim editor of *The Banner*. I understand the difficulty of deciding what to publish in a church full of divergent views. I am

happy to find the content [of *The Banner*] uplifting and edifying and less divisive. At the same time, difficult issues are being addressed and not ignored.

He certainly has my vote for the permanent position if he wants it!

—Tim Andreas
Kingsburg, Calif.

Doctrine Still Matters

The Bible is enough ("Doctrine Still Matters," Oct. 2015). I agree that other historical literature can be helpful in explaining the times and culture, but all that is needed to unlock the truth (the treasures) of the Bible is the desire to know the truth and the Holy Spirit.

We do not need more literature trying to explain the Bible; we need literature that asks the right questions: What does this story tell you about God? What does this story tell you about people? Now that you know this, what are you going to do about it?

We need to stop teaching religion and start teaching relationship. We cannot teach the Bible to our children like a subject at school. Children need to see and hear from their parents or someone they respect what Christianity is supposed to be: a close relationship with God, and the benefits such a relationship offers. The "theological key" is a desire to know God and live a life pleasing to him.

—Alice Anderson
Calgary, Alta.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

NEWS

NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

For correspondents' email addresses, see www.thebanner.org.

Gayla R. Postma *News Editor*
Email: gpostma@crcna.org

Anita Beem
Classes Lake Erie, Kalamazoo
248-559-2806 • 248-645-1990

Anita Brinkman
Classes Chatham, Huron
519-354-9126

Gregory Chandler
Classes Georgetown, Grandville,
Grand Rapids North
616-392-8434

Shashi DeHaan
Classes Arizona, Red Mesa, Greater L.A.
623-418-6705

Callie Feyen
Classes Atlantic NE, Hackensack, Hudson,
Illiana, Southeast U.S.
240-422-1171

Janet A. Greidanus
Classes Alberta North, Alberta South/
Saskatchewan
In Memoriam articles
780-484-3370

Kyle Hoogendoorn
Classes Heartland, Iakota, Northcentral Iowa
712-476-5955

Jonathan J. Kim
Classes Hanmi, Ko-Am
626-616-0411

Ron Rupke
Classis Quinte
905-349-2336

Kristin Schmitt
Classes Grand Rapids East, Grand Rapids
South, Thornapple Valley
616-818-6673

Amy Toornstra
Classes Columbia, Lake Superior, Pacific
Northwest, Wisconsin
503-399-9165

Krista Dam-VandeKuyt
Classes Eastern Canada, Hamilton, Toronto
905-977-9855

Alissa Vernon
Classes Niagara, Northern Michigan
289-214-2025

If your region is not listed here,
please contact the news editor.

Redeemer student Kyla
DeHaan and supervisor
Edward Berkelaar with
tomato experiment.



KRISTA DAM-VANDEKUYT

Redeemer Student Presents Manure Research at International Agricultural Conference

It has a smell that can nauseate, but the putrid liquid has a purpose. The fermented weed tea is part of Redeemer University College student Kyla DeHaan's research on foliar organic fertilizers using plant and manure fermentation stews. DeHaan presented her research at the ECHO International Agricultural Conference in Florida in November. ECHO assists development workers around the world by gathering agricultural techniques that can help solve hunger problems.

DeHaan, a member of Charlottetown (PEI) Christian Reformed Church, is in her fourth year of a combined honors degree in international develop-

ment and environmental science at Redeemer. "When I chose a senior research project, I wanted it to be useful," she said. So she connected with Angela Boss, food security and agriculture technical advisor at World Renew.

"We brainstormed a few ideas, and of those, Kyla picked the foliar fertilizers," explained Boss. Access to synthetic fertilizers is limited and costly, so these fertilizers can address nutrient deficiencies in crops with inexpensive materials made with plants and manures found in resource-poor regions of the world, she said.

Researching best practices, DeHaan compiled tables that outline the nutrients found in various manures and plants and

identified a basic fermentation process using water and a pail. When fully fermented, the liquid can be sprayed directly to crop leaves for optimal absorption.

The conference provided great networking opportunities for DeHaan but also confirmed that there was significant interest in her research.

Boss said that the field guides that DeHaan is producing, complete with pictures to identify plants and instructions, will be of great use for agricultural programs in developing countries. In 2016, DeHaan will present her findings and best practices documentation to World Renew teams.

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

Pullman Youth Make Blankets for People Without Homes

The fourth and fifth graders of Pullman Christian Reformed Church in Chicago recently made blankets for people without homes after studying the parables of Jesus. Randy Moes, one of the group's leaders, explained that the children had been studying and reflecting on the parables of the lost son, sheep and goats, and the good Samaritan. "We have been reminded about the extravagant love of God and the kingdom calling on our lives," Moes said. That is how the group came up with the idea to make blankets.

The students made 15 blankets. The group cut fleece into two equal pieces, fringed the ends,



Fourth and fifth graders from Pullman CRC with blankets they made.

then tied them together to make a warm blanket. The blankets were rolled up and tied with a ribbon. Each included a handmade card. They were delivered to Roseland Christian Ministries, just a few miles away from Pullman CRC on South Michigan Avenue.

Moes says that the parable of the rich fool was particularly appli-

cable as the group worked on the project. "We spoke about needs and wants, and we discussed how our abundance could and should be available to others. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our neighbors."

—Callie Feyen

Knitting a Mountain of God's Love



A mountain of mittens, slippers, and hats was donated to the Good Shepherd Centre.

Sometimes a warm hat and mittens are all it takes to show someone the love of God.

Three years ago Janet Hagen, a member of Ancaster (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church, was volunteering at Good Shepherd Centre when the organization received a garbage bag full of yarn that volunteers were not sure what to do with.

Hagen took the bag home, divided the yarn among friends, and returned knitted items back to the center. That first bag sparked a ministry that has spread by word of mouth to many others. People from other churches, including Immanuel CRC and Faith CRC, are now involved too.

Ralph Veldstra of Ebenezer CRC became part of the ministry when he watched Coby Visser knitting hats for Good Shepherd using a corking ring, also known as spool knitting. "It's something to do in the winter. Ralph will make up to three hats per night," said Veldstra's wife, Ruth, who also helps with the knitting. "This a good way to support our community and fill definite needs."

"It's really grown from that first garbage bag against the wall," said Hagen. "It's neat to see how it has spread."

The wool from the Good Shepherd Centre has been used to make thousands of beautiful scarves, hats, mittens, and slippers for people who need them. This year, 1,100 items were brought to the center to be distributed during their Christmas Hamper Program.

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Harry Adrian VanderWindt

1936-2015

Harry VanderWindt, teacher and pastor, greatly enjoyed the ministry and the opportunities it gave him to serve others. He offered his last sermon the Sunday before he died unexpectedly on October 30 while working in the woods, one of his favorite places to be. He was 79.

After serving as principal for two Christian schools in Ontario, VanderWindt studied for the ministry, graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1978. He served four congregations in Ontario. Following retirement in 1999, he served numerous congregations as an interim pastor.

In his preaching, VanderWindt blended a strong biblical emphasis with real-life scenarios. He was particularly gifted in his home visits and providing encouragement. As a woodworker, he donated many items to various bazaars and he enjoyed spending time with grandchildren in his workshop.

VanderWindt was predeceased by two children who died shortly after birth. He will be dearly missed by Henny, his wife of 56 years, three children and their spouses, and by 12 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

—Janet A. Greidanus
Further information on recently deceased ministers is available on The Banner's website.

NEWS

Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en Cuba: The Christian Reformed Church in Cuba

I saw the old guitar on a shelf on the second floor of the tiny Christian Reformed Church in downtown Havana, so I picked it up and started strumming, then quietly began to sing one of my favorite songs—"Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord." Suddenly, I heard other voices in English and Spanish singing along. I looked up and the other people in the room—from Alberta and Toronto and Grand Rapids and Minnesota and Havana and Jaguey Grande, Cuba—we were all praising God and singing. And the eyes of my heart were opened. God's presence was real in that upper room, in that tiny storefront church not two blocks from the Cuban capital buildings."

These are the words of Dan VanKeeken, chair of Cuba Connection, a committee of Classis Alberta North (a regional group of churches). He was describing his

experience in Cuba earlier in 2015 with a number of people from the Christian Reformed Church in North America who have close ties with the Cuban CRC.

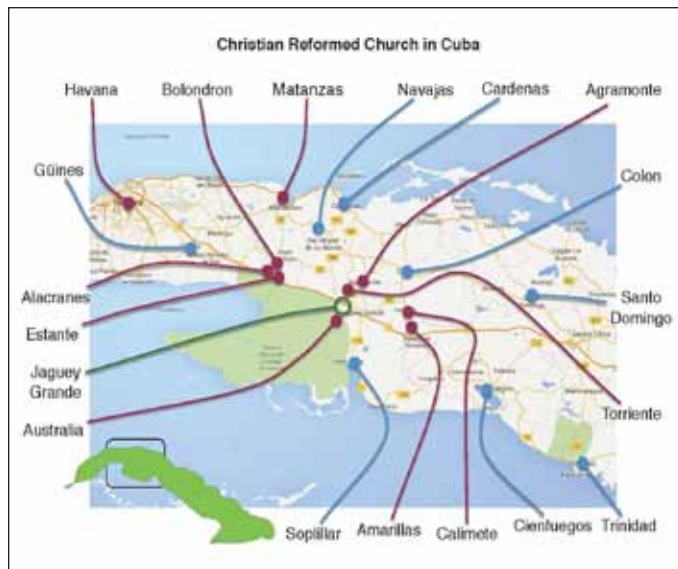
Having heard VanKeeken's stories, I welcomed the opportunity to travel to Cuba for 10 days in December to witness firsthand the work of the Cuban CRC and to meet many of its pastors and church members.

I was surprised, as many people are, that there are Christian Reformed churches in Cuba, having assumed that churches disappeared after Cuba's Revolution in 1959. In fact, today there are around 14 organized CRC congregations and numerous missions with a combined membership of 1,500 people.

Daniel Miller chronicled the beginnings of the Cuban CRC in 1941 (see *Banner*, Feb. 2010), with the arrival of a young Bessie



Felix Lazaro (left), pastor and president of the Cuban CRC, receiving a CRC logo from Rene Hebers of Edmonton, who made one for each church.



BRUCE MULLER

Vander Valk from Bethel CRC in Paterson, N.J., and her subsequent marriage to a preacher by the name of Angel Vicente Izquierdo. Together they established La Mision Evangelica al Interior. In 1951, a church building was constructed in Jaguey Grande. By 1958, there were 12 organized congregations and a pressing need for money.

That was when the people of LaGrave Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., were approached by Izquierdo and subsequently began to help the Cuban mission. In 1959, synod (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) adopted the Cuban church as a mission of the CRCNA. That original church in Jaguey Grande just celebrated its 64th anniversary, and LaGrave Avenue has continued to support the Cuban CRC in many ways. Many of the house churches we visited are properties purchased through LaGrave's Henry Beets Cuba Committee. The church has also been

Red dots show established Cuban CRCs, and blue dots show mission churches. Jaguey Grande is where the Cuban CRC national office and a small seminary are located.

involved in providing education and materials to churches.

The years following the 1959 Cuban Revolution were very difficult. Christian schools were closed and many church buildings were confiscated, leading to the establishment of discreet house churches—literally a room for worship inside a pastor's house. In 1962, the government even cancelled Christmas as a national holiday. "Many older Cuban Christians say their 'Babylonian captivity' began then," said Jim Dekker, a retired pastor with a long history of ministry in Cuba.

Things improved slightly in the 1980s. In the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of its subsidies to Cuba,

churches became important to the government as providers of social services and importers of medical supplies and other scarce goods from supporters abroad. As a consequence, the government relaxed its anti-religious policies somewhat. The number of Christians who worshiped openly on Sunday began to grow.

Today, the focus of the Cuban CRC is on planting churches in small cities rather than in rural areas. These churches are served by young pastors educated at the

support of its many sister churches across North America and Europe.

Plymouth Heights CRC in Grand Rapids fosters fellowship between its adults with disabilities and those in Cuban churches. Hillside Community CRC in Cutlerville, Mich., sends mission teams to teach English and train church musicians. Alberta's Cuba Connection Committee is involved in a \$30,000 parsonage project to replace the dangerous, dilapidated home of the pastor of the Torriente congregation. A con-

It is widely acknowledged that the December 2014 agreement to normalize diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba will take years to realize real benefits on the ground for most Cubans. As Miller wrote earlier this year, "Cuban Christians are probably somewhat ambivalent. . . . The conservative ones in particular may view it as a concession to the Cuban government without sufficient recognition of what the island's religious community has suffered and still suffers in terms of discrimination and persecution. On the other hand, Cuban Christians of all stripes are eager to deepen their connections to theologically congenial churches in North America and elsewhere, and so they will undoubtedly welcome the opportunity to travel

Cuba will be flooded with morally objectionable media in a culture whose isolation has limited access to such things in the past, Miller wrote. He concluded, "I think that Cuba's Christians can teach us North American Christians much more than we can teach them about what it means to be faithful followers of Christ."

Everyone in the group I traveled with would agree with Miller. The pastors and church members we met, like most Cubans, live in small houses that look more like concrete bunkers, uncluttered with material possessions. Most pastors get around and make pastoral visits on old donated bicycles or by horse and cart. The government provides food ration cards that usually run out mid-month. The average income is around \$20 a month. But from what little they have, Cuban Christians tithe and do much good work in the name of God—boldly preaching the gospel and worshipping, planting house churches, reaching out to youth through music, and feeding seniors.

"We want to see Jesus lifted high, a banner that flies across this land, that others might see the truth and know. . . ." Singing these words in a church in Havana was a poignant experience. We need to keep God's people in Cuba in our hearts and prayers as they continue to lift the name of Jesus in this beleaguered country governed by Raul Castro's Communist Party. They have persevered through much, and it means a lot to them to know they are not forgotten.

—Janet A. Greidanus



PHOTOS BY JANET GREIDANUS

The group from Classis Alberta North inside the "house church" of pastor Felix Lazaro, who is also the president of the Cuban CRC.

small CRC seminary that began in 2008 and is located in the CRC headquarters building in Jaguey Grande. Almost every Cuban CRC feeds dozens of seniors—twice a day, five days a week. The church in Amarillas runs a seniors' ministry out of a nearby house.

Finances are always an issue, however, as are other resources. One wonders how the Cuban CRC could manage without the faithful

tainer will soon leave Edmonton filled with donated medical supplies, bicycles, wheelchairs, sports equipment, clothing, and windows and doors for the Torriente parsonage.

Classis Minnkota regularly sends funds to Cuba. A team from Minnesota plans to travel to Cuba in 2016 to help construct the parsonage. These are just some examples of our denomination's outreach to Cuba. Money for property, as well as for food, also comes from the Netherlands.



Pastor Juan inside the Jaguey Grande CRC that recently celebrated its 64th anniversary.

to conferences and meet with other Christians for mutual encouragement and worship."

But with greater access to the Internet, there is concern that

NEWS

Pastoral Guidance for Churches Regarding Same-Sex Marriage

Now that same-sex marriages are legal in the U.S. and Canada, should the Christian Reformed Church allow couples in a same-sex marriage to be members of the denomination? Should CRC members participate in the wedding of two persons of the same sex? Should CRC clergy be permitted to officiate? Can the state force a church to let its facilities be used for such a wedding?

Those were just some of the questions that prompted Synod 2013 to appoint a committee to provide pastoral guidance to churches, back when same-sex marriage was already legal in Canada and in several jurisdictions in the U.S. The committee's recommendations will come to Synod 2016 by way of two reports. Two of the committee's members, while agreeing with much of the majority report, disagreed with some of the recommendations of the majority of the committee and are bringing forward a minority report on some of the recommendations. Synod will decide which recommendations to adopt.

What follows here is a brief summary of an extensive report that includes four appendices.

The committee's mandate stipulated that guidance provided by the committee be in line with the CRC's position on homosexuality, adopted in 1973 and affirmed in 2002, namely, that same-sex orientation is not sinful, but homosexual activity is. "Some have suggested that the committee cannot fulfill its mandate without opening up larger issues, including the

denomination's biblical and theological position on homosexuality," the authors wrote.

The committee said that broader questions about homosexuality and the church's ministry warrant further study and discussion, but that this committee focused its attention on civil same-sex marriage.

The committee framed its recommendations within a larger discussion of the differences between civil marriage and religious marriage, and the interest of both the church and the state in regulating marriage in a pluralist society. It affirmed that religious marriage, as understood by the CRC, is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman. While authors of both the majority and minority reports cited the CRC's 1980 statement on marriage, the minority report authors do so much more extensively.

The committee wrote that "the church in its ministry is moving in shifting cultural waters. . . . If there is a primary message from the committee's listening sessions and survey, it is that a wide variety of experiences and social settings exist within the CRC." It further cautions that any set of guidelines will leave "a great number of people unsatisfied in some way or another."

So what guidelines are recommended? Here are just a few of them.

Regarding same-sex weddings, the authors recommended that attending a same-sex wedding or providing a commercial service for a wedding be left up to the discre-

tion of an individual. For officebearers, the decision is more complex. "Attendance does not necessarily mean approval of every aspect of a relationship. It would be wise for a pastor to consult the church consistory regarding attendance at the ceremony."

Solemnizing a *religious* same-sex wedding is precluded by the CRC's understanding of marriage. Regarding a concern that pastors could be forced to officiate a same-sex wedding, the authors of the majority report wrote that "pastors would be wise to state clearly on their church's website the CRC understanding of marriage and adopt a policy statement regarding officiating at weddings." However, the authors of the minority report deemed the majority report to be insufficiently strong on this point. "To enjoy the protections of religious freedom, it is important for the pastor and church to make clear in the church's documentation and website their identity as belonging to the Christian Reformed Church."

The authors of the majority report noted that they were not of one mind regarding a CRC pastor officiating a *civil* same-sex marriage. Some felt that in very limited situations, some latitude should be given based on circumstances. The authors of the minority report disagreed. "Pastors cannot officiate a civil same-sex wedding ceremony. Were they to do so, the ceremony would, in some way, have the marks of a religious ceremony, because the pastor would be officiating on the basis of ecclesial office," they wrote. "Guidance that suggests there may be, under certain circumstances, latitude for a pastor to officiate at a civil same-sex

wedding is in conflict with the theology and polity of the CRC."

Regarding playing a role in a same-sex wedding, such as being an attendant or participating in the liturgy, the majority report authors wrote, "We judge any participation short of officiating to be a discretionary matter in which a person's own conscience before God should guide their decision." For ordained leaders, they continued, potential involvements are too complex to create blanket rules. "Suffice it to say that ordained and commissioned church leaders should exercise caution and discretion in their public roles."

The authors of the minority report disagreed with the majority report on the involvement of officebearers. "[Officebearers] must be held to a different standard. Since those in that office will be seen as operating out of their ordained roles, they should avoid accepting roles in same-sex wedding ceremonies because such acceptance and participation can easily be seen as supporting a sinful pattern of sexuality."

Apart from same-sex weddings, many communities face questions regarding day-to-day participation in the life of the church by same-sex spouses and their families. Should a spouse in a same-sex marriage serve as an usher or teach Sunday school? Should he or she be allowed to volunteer in the church office or be on the praise team? The committee concluded that "one size does not fit all and that it would be unwise to attempt to parse out advice for multiple potential situations in a report such as this. Decisions of this nature rightly belong to the discernment of the local church, where the persons involved are known and loved."

The authors of the minority report added, "Those in same-sex marriage relationships should be allowed, and encouraged, to participate. The level of participation should be no different from what has been made available to any other person desiring to explore life in the church community. It cannot be repeated enough that all people are to be welcomed into participation in the worship and other aspects of the life of the church. Soundness in life and doctrine is not a precondition for participation."

However, ministry leadership roles should be limited to members in good standing. What if a same-sex couple requests membership? The reports notes that following the logic of the Church Order and the 1973 report on homosexuality, "a person or a couple in a same-sex sexually active relationship should not be accepted as members in good standing in the church." However, they continued, if a person or couple agree to accept the CRC's teaching on same-sex sexual relationships and bring their lives into conformity, no obstacle prevents their acceptance as members. "The current position [of the church] does not require dissolution of a civil marriage; nor should the church be heard to require or encourage the dissolution of functioning families."

The committee wrote that "our pastoral guidance is bound by the mandate to our committee. A pastoral observation, however, to the church at large is that the complexities of ministry will keep membership issues a point of tension. A number of CRC churches are already navigating the challenges of integrating same-sex couples into the life of the church,

and for them the logic of being denied membership is experienced as damaging rather than life-giving."

Regarding baptism, the committee affirms Church Order Article 56, that at least one of the parents must be a member in good standing. The authors wrote that the question of participation in communion is complicated by the diversity of practice within the CRC. "Restricting access to the sacraments is a fearsome thing. . . . Only with the greatest reluctance and with the greatest procedural safeguards should the church take the step of forbidding access to the sacraments as means of grace. The Lord's Supper and its meaning may well provide an opportunity for conversation with those new to the church, including those in a same-sex marriage, to speak of the relationship between sin, grace, and a life of gratitude."

The report has much more to say about discipling and discipline, supporting Christian marriage, and other related issues, including how to present the conclusions of the 1973 and 2002 synodical reports in truthful and gracious ways.

It also noted that if the 1973 and 2002 reports are to remain useful to the church, they need to be revisited to deal with some of the language and terminology used, such as *homosexuality*, and suggestions that conversion/reparative therapy be the first strategy for dealing with same-sex attraction.

The full report will be published in the *Agenda for Synod 2016* and is also posted at crcna.org/sites/default/files/same-sex_marriage.pdf. Synod 2016, the CRC's annual leadership meeting, will discuss the report when delegates gather in June in Grand Rapids, Mich.

—Gayla R. Postma



Representatives from World Renew visit Randolph, Wisc.

Wisconsin Church Helps Feed the Hungry

First Christian Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisc., may be a small church, but it has a big heart for feeding people who are hungry. The congregation has raised thousands of dollars to combat world hunger.

The church is home to the Randolph Growing Project, in which local farmers designate the proceeds of some of their land and crops for the Foods Resource Bank.

FRB is a world hunger program that partners with World Renew, the relief and development agency of the Christian Reformed Church, as well as other partnering agencies.

The church hosted a breakfast to tell local farmers about the program. "I simply mentioned how in biblical times, farmers left some of the crops standing at the edge of the fields for gleaning by the poor

[and] widows," said church pastor Ken Prol. Prol anticipates the farmers will raise \$5,000 this year for world hunger.

In November, 200 church members and friends from the surrounding community also held a fundraising chili supper and raised \$2,090 for the program.

Prol said, "I believe this has given us a new sense of identity and a mission that involved a very large percentage of members."

The congregation plans to continue hosting farmers' breakfasts to raise money for the Foods Resource Bank through similar projects.

—Amy Toornstra



Foods Resource Bank
A Christian Response to World Hunger

First Randolph CRC supports the Foods Resource Bank.

Celebration Community CRC celebrates its new home in a car dealership.



Joanne "Jo" Ilbrink

Long-Time Calvinette Director Dies

Joanne "Jo" Ilbrink, who served for 20 years as executive director of the Calvinette program for girls, died on January 3, 2016. She was 82.

Ilbrink, who lived in Grandville, Mich., led Calvinettes (now called GEMS) from 1975 to 1995, and was also a Christian school teacher. Carol Smith, a former assistant program manager and leadership trainer with Calvinettes, remembered Ilbrink for her humility and ability to connect with people. "Every year (in Calvinettes) we'd adopt a different theme, and she'd give the theme speech. It always enlightened everyone in the biblical sense of how that year's theme would go," Smith said.

Ilbrink led many women's Bible study programs in the communities where she lived and volunteered at Crossroads Bible Institute. She is survived by her husband, Robert, and by three children and their spouses, nine grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren

—Greg Chandler

Former Car Dealership Repurposed for Worship

An old used car dealership nestled between a car wash and a bar has found new life as home to Celebration Community Christian Reformed Church in Muskegon, Mich.

The church had been meeting in part of the building for seven years—but only recently were they able to finish major renovations to make it their home.

Initially begun as a church plant, Celebration spent its first several years without a permanent place to call home, moving from a library to a church basement to an old school. When the church's realtor pitched the car dealership to them seven years ago, it had been the last place they had thought to look. The building had sat empty for several years. The owner happened to be a Christian Reformed man from nearby Grand Rapids who agreed to put together a land contract for Celebration. They finally had a place to call home.

However, their dreams of renovating the building hit more than one setback, including a lawsuit brought against them by the city disputing a particular bylaw. The suit was later dropped.

Pastor Matt Eenigenburg, who has been with Celebration for four years, said, "We had been meeting in the former showroom, which was simply too small, and we wanted to move our services into the service bay area. But that

wasn't going to happen unless we owned and outfitted the building and had the money to do so."

Several benefactors stepped up, and Celebration was finally able to move forward with the renovations with cash in hand.

"Most people will come to a church on a Sunday morning if a friend invites them, and we wanted to be a place where that could happen," said Eenigenburg. "We doubled the size of our worship area and created a narthex where people can gather before and after the service to just be together as a community. Those were the two things at the top of our list that we got done. There's still a third of the building left to complete—a multipurpose area and a kitchen."

Thelma Bergman, who Eenigenburg describes as the matriarch of the church, has been involved from the beginning. "It was an exciting, scary, fabulous, sad, happy, exhilarating, humbling event," she said. "I had no clue it would take this long. I was beginning to think it would not happen in my lifetime since I am now 86. But it's here. It was worth all the prayers, all the work."

Eenigenburg says the building reflects Celebration's philosophy of church, that God can repurpose anyone or anything, even an old used car dealership, to serve his purpose of bringing all people to him.

—Krista dela Rosa

Moms Share Ups and Downs of Special Needs Parenting

In 2011, Bev Rozeboom found her role as a mother to a teenage son with special needs could be lonely and just plain difficult. So she wrote a Bible study and invited other mothers of special needs kids to work through the study with her. Rozeboom is a member of the Christian Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa.

The women named themselves Moms of Special Treasures (MOST), and they continue to meet monthly in Pella. The group includes almost 20 members ranging from 30 to 60 years old.

"I think what draws the moms to MOST is that it's safe," said Rozeboom. "[It] is a safe place to open up about our fears for our children, discouragement over a child's lack of progress, weariness over yet another hospitalization. We can all relate to



MOST mom Carrie Andringa and daughter Emma.

the stresses and strains we face in our marriages, the challenges of meeting the needs of our other kids, and so forth."

Tricia Van Zee is the mom of Davis, age 7, who has a seizure disorder. She has found tremendous support in the group. "I have been encouraged many times by my fellow MOST moms—sometimes via prayer, sometimes a meal when my life

is overwhelming, and even with hospital deliveries when my special treasure was in the hospital."

"Mealtimes and just going out in public with our kids can be very emotional because we never know what someone will say to us about our child or how they will look at us," said Carrie Andringa, whose daughter Emma, 3, has Down syndrome. "It is also just different because of the amount of work [parenting] can take. It is so great to have a support group of moms encouraging each other. And we pray for each other and for our kids. It is incredibly valuable to have Christian communities and groups that can support and encourage each other through hard times."

—Roxanne Van Farowe

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Henry Morgan DeRooy
1929-2015

Henry (Hank) Morgan DeRooy was the eighth of 10 children, sometimes introducing himself as Henry VIII. A high-energy extrovert of quick wit who loved being around young people, DeRooy emphasized the gift of God's grace in his ministry and with his family. DeRooy died on November 9.

Following a brief stint in the printing trade, DeRooy felt a call to ministry, which he described as one of the clearest moments of his life. He subsequently attended Calvin College and Seminary. Following graduation, he served four congregations in South Dakota, Michigan, Washington, and Missouri. His ministry also included working in various roles for Christian Reformed Home Missions. DeRooy retired in 1994.

DeRooy was a voracious reader. A favorite quote from C.S. Lewis appeared in the bulletin for DeRooy's service of remembrance: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

DeRooy is survived by his wife of 62 years, Sylvia; by his three children and their spouses, 10 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

British Columbia Church Screens Documentary about Sexual Exploitation

Maple Ridge (British Columbia) Christian Reformed Church recently screened the documentary "Red Light Green Light" in an effort to educate church and community members about how people can be sexually exploited and what can be done to combat this exploitation in their city.

Tim Sheridan, pastor of the church, said that the event hit home in Maple Ridge. British Columbia's first human trafficking conviction, just a few weeks prior to the screening, included the case of a girl from Maple Ridge, and there had been reports of attempted luring at the local

high school. The event was attended by about 50 people from the church and community, including two city councillors.

The documentary follows two filmmakers across 10 countries as they attempt to discover how to prevent sexual exploitation. "We felt that this screening could be one step toward changing the tone [of the public discussion] and raising awareness about the exploitation of vulnerable women through trafficking into the sex industry and prostitution," Sheridan explained. He said some attendees were surprised but grateful that a church was facilitating this discussion.

After the screening, a discussion was led by Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma, executive director of education and development at

REED (Resist Exploitation Embrace Dignity), a Vancouver-based group working to end sex trafficking and to support the women affected by it. Bouma is the pastor of downtown friends, a Christian Reformed outreach ministry in Vancouver.

Sheridan said the discussion focused on whether the city is implementing Canada's new federal prostitution laws, and about how women are objectified and why their sexual exploitation has become "normalized" in our society. Participants recognized the need to educate young people about the realities of this problem.

"I hope to engage with all the churches in the CRC about how to address the male demand for sex and pornography, instead of solely serving the women who are exploited," Bouma explained. "It's not just a moral issue, but an issue of justice for women."

—Tracey Yan

Maple Ridge CRC movie screening provided time for education and discussion.



WHAT'S PRAYER?

IT'S SHOOTING SHAFTS INTO THE DARK.
WHAT MARK THEY STRIKE,
IF ANY, WHO'S TO SAY?
IT'S REACHING FOR A HAND YOU CANNOT TOUCH.

THE SILENCE

IS SO FATHOMLESS

THAT PRAYERS LIKE PLUMMETS VANISH IN THE SEA.

YOU BEG. YOU WHIMPER.

YOU LOAD GOD DOWN WITH EMPTY PRAISE.

YOU TELL HIM SINS

THAT HE ALREADY KNOWS FULL WELL.

YOU SEEK TO CHANGE HIS CHANGELESS

WILL. HE GODRIC PRAYS THE WAY HE BREATHEES,

FOR ELSE HIS HEART WOULD WITHER IN HIS BREST.

PRAYER IS THE WIND

THAT FILLS HIS SAIL.

ELSE WAVES WOULD DASH HIM ON THE ROCKS,

OR HE WOULD DRIFT WITH WITLESS TIDES.

AND SOMETIMES,

BY GOD'S GRACE, A PRAYER IS HEARD.

— FREDERICK BUECHNER, *GODRIC*

ARE YOU THERE, GOD?

■ I'M NO STRANGER TO PLEADING PRAYER.

The kind of prayer that fights to be heard over the shouts of fear and uncertainty, suffering and loss, chaos and disrepair. The kind of prayer that repeats itself over and over again—a desperate incantation of pleas and promises meant to provoke God to listen and to act. “Please God, if you’ll only step in, keep this from happening, show me you’re there, and I promise I’ll. . .”

Perhaps this kind of prayer sounds familiar to you. The anxiety over whether or not God’s ear is turned toward his people during prayer is not just mine. It is a concern that has troubled the hearts of people down the line of history and continues on in our own stories today.

The psalmist asks again and again if God is listening to his prayers. Or does God’s silence really mean he’s forgotten him? “How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? Look on me and answer, Lord my God.”

Even our own confessional material begs the question. Heidelberg Catechism question and answer 117 asks, “What is the kind of prayer that pleases God and that he listens to?” We each may come to this question for different reasons, but my hunch is that we all have prayed the anxious pleas of a heart that is uncertain whether it is being heard.

My own anxious prayers began as child. I grew up in a difficult and unpredictable home and I had an understanding of God that offered very little safety. I pictured our Father as some distant and ambivalent force—able to help, but arms crossed, waiting for me to convince him I actually needed what I was asking for. Or worse, waiting for me to convince him that I deserved an answer in the first place.

My view of God was shaped both by the hurts in my life and by a theology that made me responsible for the good things and bad things that occurred, even if these events were beyond my control. This kind of theology acknowledges a person’s hurt from a distance without doing any of the hard work to help heal it. It is a theology that, like Job’s friends, errs on the side of blame over compassion, of judgmental sympathy over engaged empathy. It is this theology that not only shaped me but continues to shape many people whose wounds and grief are often met with platitudes and admonitions: “Keep praying

and God will listen,” or “If you had true faith, you would not be in this position.”

If this is what we’re being taught about God and about suffering and our place in the middle of it all, it’s no wonder our prayers are filled with anxious uncertainty.

Praying Is Hard

A good friend once shared with me her reservations about praying. “Praying is hard to do even without the added responsibility of having to stir God into action,” she admitted. “I want to know that God hears me despite how I pray or despite how much I do or don’t deserve an answer. I want to trust God when I pray. I want to know that he cares about what I care about—that he cares about me.”

Isn’t this what we all want to know when we lift our voices to God—when we ask for forgiveness, when we pray for our loved ones’ safety, when we plead for healing, when we cry out to God after reading news reports of children and families dying as they flee war and destruction? Or when we simply ask for our daily bread? We want to know that our prayers will not fall on deaf ears. That in the act of praying we will meet a present God who assures, cares for, and comforts us. That every need we bring before God will be heard, regardless of how we stumble into asking.

The disciples needed that same assurance when they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. They’d all caught glimpses of him praying alone and had undoubtedly been present as he prayed with individuals or in big crowds. And they noticed that Jesus’ prayers got things done—these prayers healed the sick, cast out demons, and changed people’s lives. In the eyes of the disciples, Jesus’ prayers seemed to stir the very heart of God the Father into action.

“Tell us how to pray like *that!*” the disciples probably really meant to say. “Tell us how to pray so that we’ll be heard!” But Jesus’ response—the parable about the frantic host and his neighbor—wasn’t meant to comfort his disciples by simply teaching them how to pray. Rather, Jesus offered comfort by reminding them *Who* they were praying to.

In his parable, Jesus paints a less than ideal situation for the host to be in need. It is dark, and everyone is sleeping after their hard day’s work. However, the excitement and shock of »

BECAUSE OF CHRIST OUR LORD, GOD LISTENS TO US WHEN WE PRAY. NOT BECAUSE OF OUR OWN PERSISTENT ASKING OR OUR OWN DESERVING, BUT BECAUSE OF THE INCARNATE LOVE OF GOD.

a guest's arrival late at night overcomes the host's usual sense of good manners, and he asks for what he needs without thinking twice. Blurry-eyed and full of panic, the host realizes he has no bread to offer his guest, and so he stumbles out into the darkness toward his nearest neighbor. Regardless of the time of night, and with only his frantic need for bread pushing him forward, the host attempts to rouse his neighbor with his plea for help.

By beginning his parable with a rhetorical question, Jesus clearly emphasizes that no person would ever deny such a request—despite the time of night or the inconvenience it may cause. The neighbor may not answer his door out of friendship, but he will answer his door in reply to his neighbor's need, despite how rude or inconsiderate the circumstances may be.

And then Jesus makes the point his disciples have been needing to hear: "If a mere human is willing to meet his friend's need in the circumstances I have presented, how much more will the Father in heaven hear you and answer you?"

Ask, Seek, Knock

The care the neighbor shows the host in Jesus' parable is thoughtful, but the love of our Father in heaven is incomparable—it is great, mighty, deep, attentive, present, and faithful. And it is in this love that Jesus speaks to his disciples, as if to say, "Be encouraged, my dear ones. You will be heard, no matter what." This parable could easily stand outside the context of prayer and still emphasize the unconditional love and mercy of our Father. But Jesus follows his parable up with an invitation to the disciples to pray with confidence, believing in God's love for his people and his ability to provide what we need the most. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

Do not be anxious in prayer, Jesus is telling them, and he is telling us. You do not have to knock incessantly; you are not seeking a treasure that does not exist. You are not facing a locked door at midnight or a God who doesn't care. Pray because I promise to listen to you. "For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

This is the foundation that the Heidelberg Catechism uses to answer the question that the psalmist and Jesus' disciples wonder about. The question that marks our own worried asking, our own fearful, insecure attempts to approach and petition God. "What is the kind of prayer that pleases God and that he listens to?"

We look for formulas, for specific ways to pray in order to ensure that God will listen, regardless of what we want or deserve. But the parable, and the catechism, point us beyond the "how" and bring us into the

"what" of prayer, knowing that, until we know the nature of the One who hears us, we will carry that anxiety and fear. The catechism speaks to the base truth of who we speak to in prayer. When we pray, it says, "we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord. That is what God promised us in his Word" (Q&A 117).

Because of Christ our Lord, God listens to us when we pray. Not because of our own persistent asking or our own deserving, but because of the incarnate love of God, who came in flesh and blood to this earth. What the incarnation reveals to us is God in our own flesh, God coming to us to save us in a way that triumphs over platitudes, admonition, worry, and fear—in Christ, God meets us by becoming one of us. It is the ultimate act of compassionate, engaged empathy.

Christ, the King of glory, is born, dies, and rises again as a human being. He does not blame us for our needs, but rather chooses to experience need for himself. He knows what our pain is, and in his nature as God and man, he comes to us with the most intimate, humbling knowledge of that pain. Our God—who suffered and hurt, who was a refugee fleeing from his own land, who on the cross cried out to the Father in fear that he wasn't being heard, who redeemed his people, who spoke with the power and the promise of resurrection—because of this God, we know that our own pleading prayers are heard, understood, and held in his good and perfect love.

And no matter how we stumble into asking for our needs, God hears and answers our prayers by inhabiting the very darkness that surrounds us. Whether that means filling the darkness with his light, or simply finding our hand as we crouch in the corner and continue to call out his name, God does hear us.

The door, Jesus says, is open. Ask, knock, trust, and believe. For the Father in heaven hears you. The Spirit of God groans for you. And the Son, with arms wide open, invites your asking. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Caitlin Visser is an ordained pastor and hospice chaplain in the CRC. She also serves as a live-in mentor with her husband for Calvin College's Project Neighborhood.

Rethinking the Death Penalty

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

IN MAY 2015, Nebraska's unicameral legislature voted to abolish the death penalty. That's right—Nebraska! Not exactly known as a hotbed of liberalism—in fact, 36 of its 49 officially nonpartisan legislators are Republicans. The passage of this bill is evidence of a growing group of conservatives and evangelicals, both in Nebraska and across North America, who are starting to rethink the death penalty. I'm one of them.

In a study report from Synod 1981, the Christian Reformed Church took the following stance: "It is not desirable that capital punishment be routinely inflicted upon persons guilty of murder in the first degree. Only under exceptional circumstances should the state resort to capital punishment." As I see it, this is a system that's broken beyond repair, and our denomination should consider outright calling for its abolition.

First and foremost, I'm pro-life. This doesn't just mean I'm against abortion. It means I want to live in a society that embraces a culture of life; one that treasures the dignity of all people—including the unborn—and that doesn't take death lightly. Since 1973, there have been 156 people wrongly convicted and eventually released from death rows in the United States. (Canada repealed its death penalty in 1976.) There's little more horrifying than the thought of executing the wrong person. Here in Nebraska, officials once executed a man named William Jackson Marion, only to later find that the man he had allegedly killed was actually still alive. In 1987, the Governor posthumously pardoned Marion 100 years after his hanging—100 years too late.

Even in cases where we're absolutely certain of the offender's guilt (or as close to certain as we can be), is the death penalty

really an appropriate punishment? When someone is executed, the cause of death on the death certificate is listed as homicide. Is that something we really want our state involved in? It's certainly not necessary for public safety—with modern advancements in the corrections industry, developed nations are fully capable of keeping criminals locked away for life.

The death penalty is also harmful to the families of murder victims. Effective justice is "swift and sure"—the death penalty is neither. It often takes decades for executions to be carried out, and many never take place. Victims' families have to relive the gory details of their loved ones' murders as the case comes up in the newspapers again and again.

Another issue is the arbitrariness of how the death penalty is applied. It's said that this penalty is reserved for "the worst of the worst." But in reality, those who are wealthy enough to afford a good attorney can often avoid the death penalty, regardless of the crime. The death penalty disproportionately affects people who are poor, people who are members of ethnic minorities, and people who suffer from mental illness or disability.

What happened in Nebraska demonstrates a growing skepticism about capital punishment in conservative and evangelical circles across North America. Many people are recognizing that the death penalty is part of a broken system that isn't compatible with our Christian worldview. A fundamental part of the gospel is grace: no one is ever beyond the possibility of redemption; no one can be defined by the worst thing they've ever done. Christ tells us, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). Do we really believe that God's grace is sufficient even for the absolute worst in our society? If we do, let's join the fight to end the death penalty. ■

Matt Maly is the Coordinator for Nebraska Conservatives Concerned about the Death Penalty. He attends Prairie Lane Christian Reformed Church in Omaha.



No one is ever
beyond the
possibility of
redemption.



‘Recognizing the Racism in My Own Heart’

by Chris Meehan

Mike Hogeterp was riding in the back of his softball coach’s pickup truck when he joined in yelling racial slurs at a group of Indigenous men standing outside a bar in a rough part of Saskatoon, Sask.

Only years later, while attending university, did he realize how wrong he’d been.

“That’s when, as a student, a passion for social justice was stirred in me,” said Hogeterp, chair of the Doctrine of Discovery task force and director of the CRC’s Centre for Public Dialogue. (See [cncna.org/sites/default/files/doctrine_of_discovery.pdf](http://crcna.org/sites/default/files/doctrine_of_discovery.pdf) to view the task force’s report.)

“This included some learning about the history of the oppression of Indige-

nous people and recognizing the racism in my own heart and experience.”

In June 2012, Hogeterp attended a national event of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, held across the street from Bethel CRC, Saskatoon, where his parents had served during the late 1970s and early ’80s.

“In that town hall event, with the relationships and convictions I developed over the years, I felt prompted to publicly confess my sins of racism as a preteen and teen in the streets of Saskatoon,” he said.

“After I sat down, a First Nations Elder offered me forgiveness . . . a pretty moving experience.”

Hogeterp said he has come to realize that lasting forgiveness only comes over

Mike Hogeterp (center) was among those marching in Ottawa to highlight reconciliation with Aboriginal people in Canada.

time, as the process of reconciliation unfolds among people.

First, people must confront and understand the past, which he said is one of the goals of the task force report.

“We hope the church recognizes that the Doctrine of Discovery—and its legacy—is something in our history that requires continuous discernment and response,” he said. ■



Chris Meehan is a staff writer with CRC Ministry Support Services.

You add.
God multiplies.

Report Asks Synod to Repudiate Doctrine of Discovery

The 71-page Doctrine of Discovery Task Force report that is coming to Synod 2016 chronicles the history of a colonialist doctrine dating back hundreds of years.

According to the report, the so-called Doctrine of Discovery began with a series of papal pronouncements in the 15th century “that granted dominion over non-Christian peoples and lands.

“It evolved as a legal construct alongside colonial history, was encoded in the judiciary of settler nations, and continues to influence legal and policy decisions today.”

The report asks synod to repudiate the doctrine.

Among other issues, the report describes the formation of church-run Indian boarding schools in Canada, where many instances of abuse happened, and where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission worked to heal deep wounds.

Although the CRC did not operate boarding schools in Canada, it did operate a boarding school in Rehoboth, N.M. The report is critical of the Rehoboth boarding school. It says that Native children were punished for speaking their language and were forced to cut their hair and to wear non-Native clothing.

Rev. Al Mulder, a former pastor at Bethany CRC in Gallup, N.M., said the report serves the CRC well by digging into North America’s historical underpinnings.

But, he suggested, it would have been better to have withheld the judgment that “the CRC was wrong to establish and run a boarding school named Rehoboth.”

“The CRC sent its first missionaries to Arizona and New Mexico when a lot of people still thought that ‘the only good Indian is a dead Indian,’” Mulder said.

“While we may cringe today at some of the language and methodology of these early missionaries, clearly their motives were to serve the Navajo and Zuni people in the name of Christ.”

Carol Bremer-Bennett, a Navajo who serves as director of World Renew-U.S., said she appreciates that the report helps to focus attention on the injustices committed when Europeans took the homelands of Native peoples.

But it is important to understand the Doctrine of Discovery in the context of history, she added, noting that Native Americans also were guilty of wrongdoing, both before and after Europeans arrived.

“We need to realize that all of us are both victims and oppressors,” Bremer-Bennett said. “I need to be humble and admit I have done wrong, and need to forgive and be forgiven.”

She said the report relies too much on the European version of history and fails to fully express how God’s grace can work in the lives of all people.

“Anyone who has been to Rehoboth Christian School knows that God is strongly present there,” said Bremer-Bennett, who served as superintendent of the school before joining World Renew.

“We are called to confess our sin, but not to stay there,” Bremer-Bennett said. “God overcomes our failings, even using them to work his eternal good. I celebrate the reconciliation and healing that is possible through our Savior.”

Note: At Rehoboth Christian School today, students are encouraged to explore their Native heritage and no longer live on campus.

—Chris Meehan

‘History Has Implications for How I Live’

Calvin College student Tonisha Begay says she often feels torn as a Navajo woman in a mostly white world.

Begay grew up in the Christian Reformed Church in Gallup, N.M., and attended Rehoboth Christian School.

“It was a huge culture shock when I came to Calvin,” said Begay, a senior majoring in sociology. “Having been at Rehoboth, I thought it would be easier.”

She said many of her teachers at Rehoboth were from West Michigan. They were mentors and helped to develop her faith.

And while she has learned a great deal and grown as a Christian at Calvin College, she has done this among people who generally know very little about what it means to be Navajo.

“I have had to ask questions about my own identity as a Navajo woman in a school where only three other students were Native,” she said.

She also found it hard when she returned home, where people wondered if she had adapted to the white world, leaving her Native heritage behind.

She said the Doctrine of Discovery task force report has helped her sort through how to live in both worlds. By learning the history of relations between the white and Native American worlds, she has been able to gain a better perspective.

“The report talks about a lot of the trauma and separation that happened to my people over the years,” said Begay. “We see that the church had a hand in that history. I’m trying to understand how that history has implications for how I live today.” ■

—C. M.



Tonisha Begay grew up in Gallup, N.M., and is studying at Calvin College.

Stories Can Bring Healing

Harold Roscher said that listening to Indigenous people describe how they were abused as children in church-run boarding schools in Canada was profoundly disturbing. “There are times where you are boiling mad over what happened.”

As chaplain and director of the Native Healing Centre in Edmonton, Alta., one of three Aboriginal ministry centres the Christian Reformed Church supports in Canada, Roscher attended many of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s hearings at which Native people shared their stories.

He also helped to prepare the Doctrine of Discovery report that will be going to synod this year.

“Thinking about the commission and the Doctrine of Discovery becomes hard,”



Edmonton Native Healing Centre director and chaplain Harold Roscher presents a painting to police officer Dan Jones as part of a healing ceremony.

said Roscher, a Cree who was adopted and grew up in the home of a white CRC family.

But he said that the power of people telling their stories can help to bring healing—both for the storyteller and for those who hear the story.

He said he hopes that people in the CRC will read and discuss the task force

report and allow it to reshape their view of history, even if it means stirring up intense emotions.

“It is okay to be in turmoil over this,” he said. “As we live into this report, we remember that Jesus is the only answer, and the work Christ did on the cross is the crucial tie that binds us together.” ■

—Chris Meehan

Blanket Exercise ‘a Mind-Opening Experience’



Caleb Dickson was sergeant-at-arms for Synod 2015. Here he hurries delegates back to a meeting.

Caleb Dickson, a Nez Perce Indian and pastor who serves Naschitti Christian Reformed Church in Naschitti, N.M., says that participating in the Blanket Exercise at Navajo Ministries, a nondenominational center in Farmington, N.M., was “a mind-opening experience.”

“I wasn’t totally surprised by the things that they talked about during the exercise, but the depth and extent of what happened (to the Indians) did startle me,” said Dickson.

“Clearly, we weren’t viewed as people. We were seen as heathens, as less than human to the extent that we were people without rights,” he said.

In the exercise, blankets are spread on the floor. As people walk on the blankets, someone reads a narrative of the wars, broken treaties, epidemics, and other ways in which Native Americans were removed from their ancestral lands.

Slowly, people are asked to step off the blankets, illustrating people dying or being forced to move. At the same time, blankets are taken away until only a small square of cloth and a few participants remain.

Different versions of the Blanket Exercise are used in the U.S. and Canada.

Dickson said he hopes CRC churches and members will consider taking part in a Blanket Exercise.

“This could help get a dialogue going, just like the Doctrine of Discovery report, I hope, can do,” he said. ■

—C. M.

*You add.
C... 15/15/15.*

Renewal Lab Helps Revitalize Local Churches

In its first three years of pilot programming aimed at revitalizing local churches, Calvin Theological Seminary's burgeoning Church Renewal Lab has impacted about 40 congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Now the Church Renewal Lab and participating churches are benefiting from a new pilot partnership with Calvin College's Jubilee Fellows program, an initiative that encourages high-potential students to explore the call to ministry.

A half-dozen Jubilee Fellows are serving year-long internships in congregations from California to New Jersey in a "gap year" between graduation from Calvin College and the decision to enter seminary or some other career pursuit.

Among the current group of six interns, two have been assigned to historic congregations in northern New Jersey: Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson and Unity CRC in Prospect Park, both of which are among the Renewal Lab congregations.

"This has been a great experience," said Jon Bosma, a 22-year-old Jubilee Fellow assigned to Unity in Prospect Park. "It's given me a year off from school, and it's helping me develop a greater passion for doing mission work while helping me discern my calling."

Bosma, who grew up in Zeeland, Mich., expects to enroll at Calvin Seminary in the fall of 2016, with pastoral ministry his intended goal. He noted that his daily encounters with the cultural diversity of the urban sprawl of greater New York City has changed many of his preconceptions about the nature of building a church community.

"Unity's neighborhood has changed from predominantly Dutch American to



Pastors and interns at a retreat center on the Jersey shore for Renewal Lab training.

Latino and Muslim," he said. "The church is much smaller than it used to be, but people are really dedicated to being a church that makes a difference in the community, and to changing the focus so that it's more about Christ and less about us."

Claire Dornbush, another Jubilee Fellow who also hails from Zeeland, called her assignment at Paterson's Madison Avenue church a "big learning curve and a very interesting and extremely good transition from college to the real world."

"Paterson is nothing like Zeeland," she said. "I've taken myself out of my old context and put myself in a dramatically different one."

"It's given me more of a real-life look at what a lot of churches are going through and the roadblocks they often face. It's helped me see that being in a multicultural setting is a top priority to me, no matter what kind of ministry I might be called to do."

One of the northern New Jersey pastors who lobbied hard for the Church Renewal Lab process to come to his area, Rev. K.C. VandeStreek of Faith Community Christian Reformed Church in Wyckoff, N.J., praised the efforts of Calvin Seminary to come alongside churches in decline or distress.

"I've noticed that the seminary increasingly sees its role as not merely training people to serve churches but to actually partner with churches in ministry," said VandeStreek.

"It shows me the seminary wants to be on the front lines, not just training and sending, but being more involved in doing the

work of God in our communities—whether through Church Renewal Lab engagements or distance learning opportunities."

The Church Renewal Lab, launched through the auspices of Calvin Seminary's Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal, is directed by Rev. Keith Doornbos and a team of pastors, church planters, and professors. Doornbos modeled the renewal journey for many years at his congregation, Providence CRC in Holland, Mich.

"Our purpose is to develop intentional missional congregations that make more and better disciples who transform lives and communities for Christ," Doornbos explained.

"When churches are willing to embrace God's vision and mission, [to] come together and put differences aside and embrace a larger calling, those churches are changed. Then we can begin to imagine a more interesting and Christ-centered future." ■

—Bruce Buursma is a freelance writer in Grand Haven, Mich.

In Praise of Going Slowly

I recently read an article written by Susan Delacourt that spoke well to how I see the healthiest parts of our current leadership working in the church locally and denominationally. It was an opinion piece evaluating the style of Canada's newly-elected Prime Minister.

You may or may not like Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party platform or his stance on particular issues, but there is something in the posture of his leadership that bears a resemblance to the leadership in the Christian Reformed Church and the Ministry Plan that is being developed for the CRC.

Delacourt writes, "Trudeau needs help from people and institutions outside his government to make good on his campaign pledges—help from premiers, from other countries and, perhaps most importantly, from Canadian citizens themselves."

The article goes on to say, "The responsibility for making things work in government belongs to citizens as well as politicians. In this version of government, citizens aren't merely passive 'taxpayers'—they're participants." She concludes with comments about how this approach is "daring" and "could go slower," and she admits that "much could go wrong." But she remains convinced that this new approach is the right way to go. It is reminiscent of John F. Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you . . ." style of leadership.

In a way, this reminds me of what I see in the CRC. Our leadership is taking the time to listen, to learn, and to invite the voices of the local church to speak loudly so that we might walk a journey together and accomplish great things with and for God. It's a risky and slower approach. It might be easier to have a half-dozen denominational people "command" the next ministry thing into existence—but that doesn't work, ultimately.

I know that many people throughout the CRC expect things to move faster, but that's not biblical leadership. The command approach might work corporately on occasion. But it does not fit with the oft-forgotten Reformed tenet of the "priesthood of all believers" and it certainly does not fit Jesus' style either.

Imagine if Jesus had come to earth and done all he needed to do in three months instead of 33 years! Jesus himself slowed things down and invited others into the journey.

So, fellow priests, let me propose a few things for your consideration. First, think about finding time and occasions to develop an understanding of how we might grow together in the areas of justice available to us locally and nationally. For example, participating in the Blanket Exercise will allow you and your church to set the tone for reconciliation in your community.

Second, get proactive in your local church. Whether by connection to your council, participating in a ministry, or actively praying for your community and its leaders . . . get involved! As a priest—as well as prophet and king—you are meant to be at the center of the action.

Third, let me encourage you to attend the National Gathering in Canada, to be held in May 2016, where we will unite our voices as CRC people and determine the ministry priorities in a uniquely Canadian context. (Our American members will have an opportunity to participate in three regional gatherings with similar goals.)

All in all, this is a time when we are praying, planning, and participating together. We need your help. This process is daring and goes a tad slower, but it seems right, doesn't it? ■



Gathering 2016

May 6-8, 2016

Wilfrid Laurier University

Waterloo, Ont.

The purpose of the gathering is to bring the church together and stimulate conversations about God's plan for the local church, the CRC in Canada, and the CRCNA as a whole. We'll share stories, identify priorities, and look to the future. Each church is asked to nominate someone to attend. To find out more, go to crcna.org/Gatherings.

“We must tell our story by words and deeds.”



Rev. Darren Roorda is the Canadian Ministries director for the Christian Reformed Church in North America.



Young at Heart Seniors Mentor Youth

Shirley Raterink, 75, joined members of Fairway Christian Reformed Church's seniors' group, Young at Heart (YAH), last summer for a workshop on mentoring youth in faith.

The workshop at the church in Jenison, Mich., was led by Rev. Steven and Deb Koster of Back to God Ministries' *Family Fire* outreach.

"How do we make sure the faith of our generation actually makes it to the next generation?" Deb Koster asked the group. "Research shows that it takes five

adults with consequential faith to be involved in a young person's life in order for their faith to become real to them."

The Kosters challenged YAH members to get to know the young people who sit around them in church.

"Engage in their world, and pray specifically for them by name," Deb Koster encouraged. "We underestimate how much of an impact we make on others," she said.

Fairway youth director Brian Davis is enthusiastic about the YAH group's desire to be intentional as they influence youth.

"Students long for the kinds of conversations the seniors offer, to learn from what they've been through [and] their daily walk with God."

Fairway young people and YAH members signed up to be prayer partners for each other.

"It's good for us to see what they are dealing with," said Raterink. "Their lives are a whole lot different than when we were that age." ■

—by Nancy VanderMeer,
Back to God Ministries International

Home, Sweet College

Katherin "Kat" Stahl works in Heide, Germany, near her childhood home, teaching German in an immigrant and refugee center.

"Teaching German is one thing. But accepting and loving [people] is the main objective. These families are welcome," said Stahl, a 2009 Calvin College alumnus.

Her path to Calvin College—and to Christ—is inspiring.

Calvin German professor (now emerita) Barbara Carvill was bringing a group of students to Husum, Stahl's hometown on the North Sea, for an interim term off-campus experience. One host family

fell through, and Stahl's parents agreed to house a Calvin student.

That initial interaction with Calvin was positive, and Stahl's parents were ready to sign up for another year of hosting.

Then Carvill surprised the family with a phone call. Would Stahl be willing to be a language assistant in the German department for a year?

After the initial shock, Stahl came to Calvin to assist and to take a few courses during her year on campus.

By the end of the year, Stahl wanted to enroll as a student. Finances presented a big hurdle, but after a year she was able to return.

Stahl majored in psychology with a media design minor, spent a semester in

New Mexico, and grew in her faith.

And she started and developed a ballroom dance club still popular at the college.

Shortly after graduation, Stahl returned to Germany and earned a master's degree in teaching German as a foreign language.

"I marvel at how much beauty I have seen God create in people and in the world he made," she said. "Now I think I may be that person to light the spark in someone else." ■

—by Mike Vandenend,
Calvin College



Katherin "Kat" Stahl teaches German in an immigrant and refugee center in Germany.

Mentoring and Transforming in Cambodia

A few Sundays each year, members of New Life Fellowship Church in Cambodia head to the nearby pool. One by one, up to 30 young believers enter the pool and are baptized while onlookers sing and cheer.

Although Buddhism and traditional beliefs permeate Cambodian culture, celebrations like this demonstrate the gospel transformation taking place among Cambodian youth.

“From the world’s perspective, the Cambodian church might be counted as small and Cambodian believers as insignificant,” said Gil Suh, who



Gil Suh (left) meets with Tep Samnang (right) as a one-on-one coach and in small groups of Cambodian leaders.

serves with Christian Reformed World Missions in Cambodia. “But there is a saying in Khmer, *toj tai klum*, which translates to ‘small but sufficient.’”

Since Suh began serving in Cambodia at the end of 2008, he has focused on developing younger leaders in the city of Phnom Penh. Tep Samnang is one such leader.

Among the many people who were displaced and orphaned during Cambodia’s bloody oppression under the Khmer Rouge, Samnang became a Christian while living in a refugee camp in Thailand. When he returned to Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge lost power, he joined other first-generation Christians at the Phnom Penh Bible School.

Samnang later became the Bible school’s principal. But he recognized the need for a mentor.

Seeing the impact that Suh had in mentoring others, Samnang asked Suh to mentor him. Suh began coaching him and helping him with common leadership challenges.

“Mentoring usually means telling what to do,” says Samnang, “but Gil’s methods really help me to grow by myself.”

As a sign that Samnang’s leadership skills have been growing, he recently became the youngest executive director of the largest Christian organization in Cambodia. ■

—by Brian Clark,
Christian Reformed
World Missions

Making God Known

Areopagus, the campus ministry at Iowa State University, takes its name from the hill on which the apostle Paul reasoned with Greek philosophers and leaders.

Partially funded by Christian Reformed Home Missions, this ministry is headed by Tyler Helpers, whose goal in ministry is to “reflect the ongoing relevance of the Christian faith, and the gospel in particular, to all parts of life for the students and the faculty.”

Helpers focuses the ministry on teaching, service, and fellowship. Areopagus hosts Tuesday-night Bible studies, volunteers with a food pantry, and has regular fellowship and a partnership with the local Trinity Christian Reformed Church, where the group worships on Sunday mornings.

Areopagus is invested in spreading the Word on a larger scale, as well as making God known on the Iowa campus.

Last spring break, a group of four students traveled to West Jackson, Miss.,



Members of Areopagus on their trip to restore homes in Mississippi.

with Helpers to restore homes in the area. The students experienced transformation in the neighborhood as well as themselves. The relationships they built with the community opened their eyes to what God is doing in the world.

One student came back and donated \$100 worth of backstocked seeds from the garden store where she worked to the community in Mississippi.

Helpers was happy to hear her say, “I’m just excited because [those seeds are something] they can use in the neighborhood, and when we go back down there we can see how they’ve been used to help further the community.” ■

—by Annemarie Byl,
Christian Reformed Home Missions

You add.
God multiplies.

Elsa Bakes Her Way to a Successful Livelihood

Elsa's corn *rosquillas*—donut-shaped, hard-baked, savory cookies enjoyed with coffee—are well known in her Honduran community.

When Elsa (not her real name) bakes a batch, they sell out quickly. In fact, they are so popular people buy them to send to family members in the United States as a little taste of home.

Despite Elsa's hard work and reputation, she has struggled to make a living. For years, all of her profit was used to keep her 10 children clothed, fed, and in school. There was nothing left to invest in the business or to save. Balancing the needs of her family with the costs of running a business was difficult.

One day, Elsa was visited by a member of a local savings and loan group started by World Renew's partner *Diaconía Nacional*.

This woman explained to Elsa that several business owners worked together to save and pool their money. Through this group, they could take out small loans to invest in their businesses. Elsa decided to join.

Since then, Elsa has used a small loan to grow her baking business and is able to produce enough to meet orders.

Not only has she repaid her loan, but she is actively saving money for the future.

She also has learned to read and write through a *Diaconía Nacional* literacy class, which



Elsa shows off her corn *rosquillas*.

has allowed her to access training in business management. Her income has increased, and her self-esteem has grown.

"Now I am able to provide better for my family," she said. "I am a happier person." ■

—by Adele Konyndyk,
World Renew

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

SHORT TAKES



CRC Gatherings Seek to Bring Churches Together

The Christian Reformed Church in North America will hold three Gatherings in 2016—one in Canada and two in the United States—for the purpose of bringing churches together to stimulate conversations about the mission and purpose God has for local congregations and for the CRCNA at large.

The Gathering in Canada, which will be a national event, is set for May 6-8 at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont.

The initial Gathering in the U.S., the first of three regional events, will occur June 8-10 just before Synod 2016, which meets June 10-17 on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids.

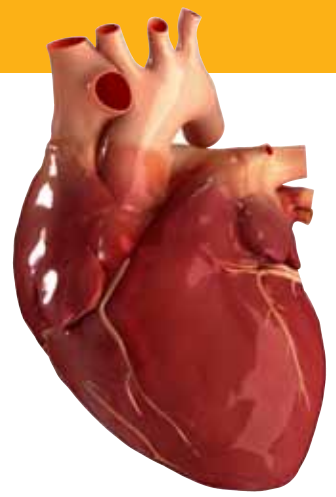
Another U.S. regional Gathering will be held later in 2016, while the third will occur early in 2017. Likely, one will be held on the East Coast and the other on the West Coast of the U.S. The locations and dates for those events are to be determined. ■

—Chris Meehan

Here's to Your Heart

It's February. This month you'll see hearts everywhere—valentine cards, paper hearts, candy hearts, cookie hearts, maybe even heart-shaped cakes.

But these pages are not about paper hearts or candy hearts or even valentines. They're all about your amazing heart.



What Does Your Heart Look Like?

Hint: it's not shaped like a valentine. Since you can't actually see your own heart, you'll have to imagine what it looks like. You can find an image of a beating heart at tinyurl.com/BeatingHeart1.



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



Directions, Please!

Your body has approximately 3,000,000,000,000 (three trillion) live cells. Each of those cells needs oxygen to live and work. Your blood brings that oxygen to your cells. It also takes away carbon dioxide, the gas left over from the cells' work. It's a bit like bringing in the meal and taking out the trash.

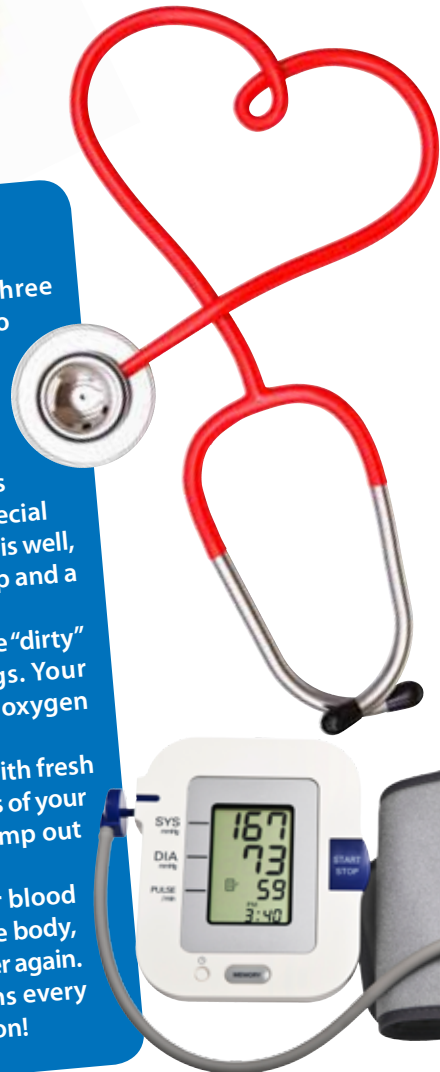
Your heart has to pump your blood to all the cells in your body. But your blood also has to make a special trip to your lungs to pick up oxygen. In order to do this well, your heart was created with two pumps: a left pump and a right pump.

The right side of your heart takes in all the "dirty" blood from your body and sends it to your lungs. Your lungs take out the carbon dioxide and put fresh oxygen into your blood.

The left side of your heart takes blood with fresh oxygen from your lungs and sends it to all the parts of your body. Your body cells pick up the oxygen and dump out the carbon dioxide.

After that, the cycle starts all over again: your blood goes to the heart, to the lungs, to the heart, to the body, to the heart, to the lungs—on and on, over and over again.

Even more amazing: this whole cycle happens every time your heart beats! How often is that? Read on!



Healthy Heart Rates

Here's a list of common healthy heart rates (in beats per minute) from the Texas Heart Institute.

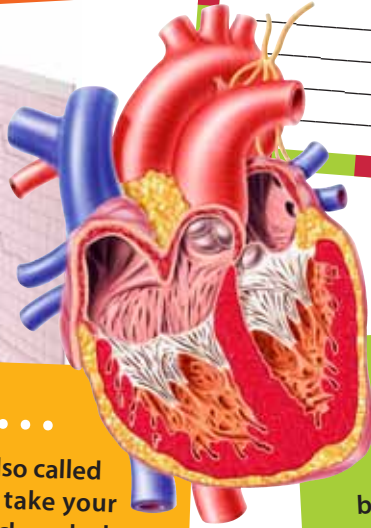
1. Newborn babies: 70-190
2. Infants to 1 year old: 80-160
3. Children 1-2 years old: 80-130
4. Children 3-4 years old: 80-120
5. Children 5-6 years old: 75-115
6. Children 7-9 years old: 70-110
7. Children 10 and older and adults: 60-100

Straight from the Heart

The Bible speaks often about loving with your whole heart. Check out Matthew 22:37-39. These verses start with "Love the Lord your God..." Try to say the rest before you read the verses.

One of the most important verses in the Bible is about how God loves the world. It is John 3:16. Write it on the lines below. The first few words are given to get you started.

For God so loved _____



The Beat Goes On . . .

You can feel your own heartbeat—also called your "pulse." Try these two ways to take your pulse. But first, get a pencil and a watch or clock with a second hand. Are you ready?

To find your pulse at your wrist:

Hold a hand out in front of you with your fingers and thumb pointing up. Slide the fingertips of your other hand gently and slowly along the inside of your upraised wrist. You should feel your pulse just below the fattest part of your thumb pad.



To find your pulse at your neck:

Put three fingertips gently atop your Adam's apple. (That's the bump in your throat that goes up and down when you swallow.) Next, slide your fingers up to the top of your neck. Then move them to the left, off your throat, about halfway to the bottom of your ear. You should feel your pulse in the soft tissue there.

After you've found your pulse, count it. Using a watch or clock with a second hand, count the number of beats for one full minute.

That's your heart rate.

Write your pulse rate here: _____ beats per minute.

Now do some jumping jacks or run in place for a full minute. Then take your pulse again.

Write the new rate here: _____ beats per minute.

Look at the chart above to see how you compare with other people's heart rates.



Six Healthy Heart Tips

1. **Laugh a lot.** Health experts say that a good laugh relaxes your blood vessels and sends more blood throughout your body. Your blood brings everything each body cell needs, so your cells are "happier" when you laugh.
2. **Look at the bright side.** Got chores? Don't groan about it. Think of what a help you are. Studies show that a good attitude is good heart medicine.
3. **Walk a lot.** Walk or ride your bike whenever you can to exercise your heart. Run when you can for the same reason. Dance to keep your heart dancing.
4. **Brush and floss your teeth.** There is a direct link between a healthy mouth and a healthy heart.
5. **Get your ZZZZs.** For kids ages 7 to 12, most doctors recommend at least 11 to 12 hours of sleep each night. Getting enough sleep cuts your chances of developing heart problems later in life.
6. **Spend time with friends.** Laugh, cry, be silly, complain, explore, and just talk with other kids. People who connect with other people generally have happy hearts.



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

Practicing Resurrection



FLORENCE* always had a prayer request during the Sunday morning service. One of the microphones would make its way to her pew. She cleared her throat to make her confession to the congregation. “I want ya’ll to pray for my live-in boyfriend, Jose. He has not been treating me right. I need help with my kids, and I have several people I am not speaking with. Thank you.” She calmly handed the mike back. People were shocked by her vulnerable honesty during a church service.

Florence had been coming to the church I pastored since 1994. She knew her imperfections and sins very well. She found a women’s Bible study at church that became her lifeline. She connected with other women who were struggling with real-life issues. Leaders and other church members showered Florence with love and support. She found the spiritual home she needed. This was her church.

A few years later, Florence came to my office. She had a smile on her face and a lightness in her step. She’d been thinking about become a member of the church, she said. We sat down at the table in my study to talk about it. She said her children

felt at home at the church too. She loved sitting in the balcony or her pew as she worshiped God.

She declared she wanted to become a member.

But there was one problem. She was not going to kick her man out of her home. In Florence’s mind, a piece of a man was better than no man at all. She didn’t think I would ask her to make a tough decision that might leave her lonely. However, I brought up the issue of her boyfriend living in her home. The smile ran away from her face. She dropped her head as I explained the moral obligations of church membership. Florence stopped listening to me. I told her about the new members’ class coming up and invited her to come. She mumbled that she might come. She brought her six children to the meeting. She never brought up membership ever again.

Florence isn’t a rare person. Many churches and leaders who are seriously reaching out with the love of Jesus and welcoming those who are seeking to become his disciples are finding that their membership requirements are daunting. Some potential members can’t accept theological values. James and Shirley couldn’t wrap their heads around the doctrine of the Trinity. They said they would not become members if they had to sign

a membership agreement to accept it. Others, like Florence, face a difficult choice between a person they love and the church they love.

A Few Good Disciples

Jesus asked twelve guys to join his discipleship group. He never used the word “membership.” Maybe we need to take that word out of commission for a while. For most people, it has certain baggage that distorts the real issue, which is being a disciple of Master Jesus. The Savior was looking for a few good disciples.

All kinds of people followed Jesus during his three-year ministry on earth. Yet he chose only twelve disciples, each representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel, chosen as “a light to the nations.” Was there more to it? Did Jesus have discipleship standards? You bet he did! He chose those who were ready to drop everything to follow him (Matt. 4:18-22). He chose them because they were ready to learn from him (Matt. 10). His disciples had to unlearn a lot of bad things and learn Jesus’ way of doing things (Matt. 12:46-50). Jesus invited crowds to follow him, but he had different standards for his disciples.

Discipleship is the process of learning Master Jesus’ truth and doing things the Master’s way. We give up our agenda and our plans because we submit to Jesus’ lordship. The Jesus way, which in most churches is emphasized by way of membership standards, isn’t easy. It requires helping people who have no clue about discipleship to be pruned and redirected from self-centeredness and self-absorption to become God-centered, Jesus-driven, and Spirit-led followers.

The invitation to become a disciple of Jesus, via joining a church, is a significant step along the journey of discipleship. But Jesus doesn’t allow us to choose the road of least resistance. Discipleship begins in a church that is practicing the resurrection of Jesus in all members. “The practice of resurrection,” wrote Eugene Peterson in his book *Practice Resurrection*, “is the intentional, deliberate decision to believe and participate in the resurrection life, life out of death, life that trumps death, life that is the last word, Jesus life.” Discipleship isn’t a one-act play but the lifelong drama of dying and rising in Christ.

The Gospel Is a Process

Florence didn’t stop coming to church. She didn’t quit going to her Bible study. She knew she was not ready to make the decision to become a member, but nobody stopped loving her and her children. She still had a place in the family of God at our church. She was still our sister on the way.

Our Lord has not given up on Florence, nor has he given up on any of us. We are not finished products or self-help projects. Instead, we are all being shaped in the Potter’s hands. Florence needed God’s slow patience and a loving community

Florence needed God’s slow patience and a loving community that believed the Spirit is still at work in her life.

that believed the Spirit is still at work in her life. God’s Spirit was redeeming Florence, allowing her to experience the gospel in new, yet hard ways.

Invited and Included

In the early 2000s, Patty began attending church. She grew up in the church, but life had taken her down some rough roads. She was burned out on religion. She started coming to my church with a family member. She enjoyed the energetic worship, open prayer request time, and the preaching of the Word. She came to my study to share her story. She was living with a man, but she wanted a clean start. We began to meet and I tried to answer her questions.

Soon Patty began attending the same Bible study as Florence. A change was happening in her heart. She talked about joining the church. We discussed the discipleship standards. She was willing to submit to Jesus as her Lord. She knew there was a community in her corner and a Savior who was patient with her. Gradually, the Spirit revealed what she needed to do. She told her boyfriend he had to go because she wanted to be a disciple of Jesus and a member of the church. I saw a woman growing in confidence in her identity in Christ. In 2004, Patty was welcomed into the joys and pains of membership in Christ’s church. In 2015, I had the honor of marrying her to a wonderful man who cherishes God’s workmanship in her.

Did this happen overnight? Of course not. Patty needed the assurance of God’s support through his people, through worship, and through the power of Jesus. When she stood before God’s people and reaffirmed her faith in Jesus, she received the warm embrace of many people who had witnessed the work of God in her. Florence was there too, invited and included. Membership isn’t a destination, but the patient work of God in all of us until we submit to his amazing grace and become obedient disciples. ■

**All of the names of people in this article have been changed.*



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

The Inside Story



ISTOCK PHOTO

C.S. LEWIS ONCE WROTE: “Aim at heaven and you will get the earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.”

He was talking about the Christian’s journey toward sanctification, but I have found this to be true in every part of life. I exercise harder when I tell myself, thus far falsely, that this year I’m finally going to run that triathlon, than when I show up at the gym thinking about “health.” I’m a better teacher when I think about the flourishing people I want my students to be than when I think about some bureaucrat’s list of decontextualized “skills.”

When I began editing the *Michigan Review of Prisoner Creative Writing*—a journal made up of exactly what the title says—it was important to me to downplay the rehabilitative or therapeutic aspects of prison arts programs. I assumed that there were people in Michigan prisons who loved writing, as I do, for its own

I assumed that there were people in Michigan prisons who loved writing.

sake, and I wanted them to have a place to publish. Loving an activity for its own sake is rehabilitative, is therapeutic. And it’s no accident that America’s enormous prison population is drawn mostly from the ranks of people whose schools and cities never offered them a chance to discover what it is they love to do.

I am now three years deep into editing the *Review*, and one thing is clear: I was right about there being serious writers in prison. (Interested readers are hereby directed to prisonarts.org, where you can purchase current and back issues of the *Review*. Pieces by Cozine Welch, Chris Dankovich, Nicole Deschermeier, Dylan Pruden, Steven Montez, Tarajee Maynor, and the late, much-missed Tom Engel all make good starting points.)

But my thinking has also shifted. I still view the journal as an outlet for serious writers. I now realize that it is also, in its way, a charitable work. The charity is enacted by our writers, who gift a society that utterly scorns them with work that, at its best, enriches that society with its sensitivity and imagination. It is the readers’ responsibility—and privilege—to receive those gifts. ■



Phil Christman teaches English at the University of Michigan and attends St. Clare’s Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor, Mich.

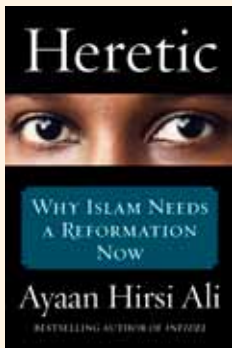


The Wonderlands

by **Jon Foreman**
reviewed by **Adele Gallogly**

Foreman, lead singer of the popular band Switchfoot, has created a four-part EP (extended play) series on the theme of darkness and light. Entitled *Sunlight*, *Shadows*, *Darkness*, and *Dawn*, each disc offers quiet acoustic tracks balanced with louder, livelier tracks. The energetic “You Don’t Know How Beautiful You Are” builds from verses about our tendency to hide our true selves to a soaring, soul-stirring chorus celebrating individual beauty and self-acceptance. It’s a fine example of how Foreman’s music is informed by his deep faith in a loving God in whose image all of us are made, even when he is not addressing God or using the language of worship songs. Foreman is a solo artist worth watching. (Word)





Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation Now

by **Ayaan Hirsi Ali**
reviewed by **Jim Romahn**

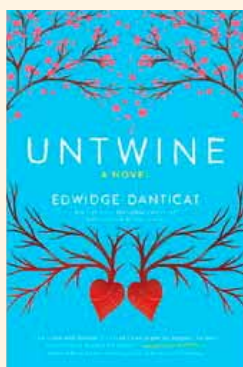
For 13 years, former radical Islamist Ali has been arguing that the violent acts of extremist Islamic groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS cannot be divorced from the religious ideals that inspire them. They will not be defeated on the battlefield. What's required is an Islamic reformation that brings Muslims into the mainstream of modern society, including respect for women, free speech, and peaceful coexistence with people of other faiths. According to Ali, that reformation must come from within the Muslim community. This is another brave and thought-provoking book from Ali. (Harper)



The Martian

reviewed by **John Williamson**

When an accident forces his crewmates to return to Earth without him, botanist Mark Watney (Matt Damon) must survive on Mars until he can be rescued by NASA's next mission to the planet—four years later. His survival, and the film's success, depend on the character's good humor, and Damon's ability to oscillate between grief and hope is essential. In fact, despite the bleak premise and reliance on hard science, Watney's optimism make the film remarkably fun. While the plot is fictional, its restriction to the possible, or at least plausible, hooks the audience into the stirring, extraordinary story. PG-13 primarily for language; on disc now. (20th Century Fox)



Untwine

by **Edwidge Danticat**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

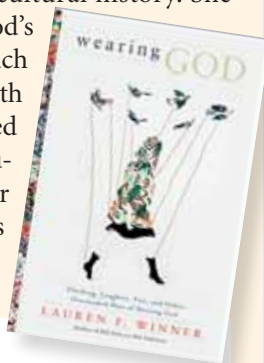
Sixteen-year-old identical twins Giselle and Isabelle Boyer were born holding hands so tightly that the doctor had to untwine their tiny fingers. The Haitian American sisters feel each other's pain and have the same nighttime dreams.

Tragedy leads to an irrevocable separation in which Giselle must struggle to come to terms with her relationship to Isabelle, her parents and extended family, and her friends. This young adult novel deals deftly with a somber theme within the context of the healing and transforming power of love offered in families and friendships. (Scholastic)

Wearing God: Clothing, Laughter, Fire, and Other Overlooked Ways of Meeting God

by **Lauren F. Winner**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

After a period of indifference, Episcopal priest Lauren Winner became newly fascinated with Scripture. She began to consider the images and metaphors that the Bible uses for God. She augments her exploration of those metaphors, such as clothing, bread, and vine, with their social and cultural history. She concludes with a humble confession: "God's utter difference from the world is too much to describe, and God's nearest intimacy with the world is too near to name." Reformed readers might not agree with every conclusion. However, her willingness to share her struggles and to ask hard questions is admirable. (HarperOne)



THE LOWDOWN

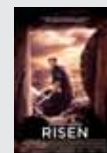


Going Deep: Worship leader and singer/songwriter Meredith Andrews releases her new album, *Deeper*, this month. (Word)



Spy Swap: Tom Hanks stars as a lawyer negotiating a Cold War exchange of

prisoners in *Bridge of Spies*; see our review at *thebanner.org*. On disc this month. (Disney)



True Story? *Risen*, due in theaters this month, is sure to raise some questions and maybe

some hackles. Joseph Fiennes stars as a non-believing centurion who investigates the disappearance of Jesus' body from the tomb. (Sony)



Shine On: Christian singer Natalie Grant debuts the first two titles for *Glimmer Girls*, a

new children's book series for the Faithgirlz line, in which three young sisters have mystery-solving adventures. (Zonderkidz)

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

Joining the Conversation: A Letter to My Son

DEAR SON: Turn on the TV, open your computer, or visit your local establishment. Pretty much anywhere there are people, it won't take you long to find conversations unfolding about controversial topics. "What do you think about immigration?" Or "What's your view on homosexuality?"

These conversations in particular (among others) are in the spotlight almost daily—and everyone seems to have an opinion. But before you jump into the dialog, I want to suggest nine requirements that must be true before you speak—or rather, nine red flags: sure signs that you are not ready to join the conversation.

1. If you're joining a discussion out of a motivation to "win," then you're not ready to be part of the conversation.
2. If all your thoughts can be summarized in 140 characters or fewer, then you're probably not ready to be part of the conversation.
3. If you're comfortable only listening to one side of the argument, then you're not ready to be part of the conversation.
4. If you think you have an easy or simple solution to a complex issue, then you're not ready to be part of the conversation.
5. If you are quick to speak but slow to listen, then you're not ready to be part of the conversation (check out James 1).
6. If you haven't yet considered whether your opinion could possibly be wrong, then you're not ready to be part of the conversation.
7. If your heart is not burdened to the point of sacrificial action on behalf of those to whom the "issue" relates, then you're not ready to be part of the conversation.
8. If you haven't yet empathized with multiple perspectives on a given issue or put yourself in the opposing side's shoes, then you're not ready to be part of the conversation.
9. If you don't yet have love for your enemies or you haven't yet taken the time to pray for those of an opposing viewpoint—and not just for them to change their minds—then you're not ready to be part of the conversation (Matt. 5).

And then if, after satisfying all nine requirements, you still hold the same perspective, great. Wonderful. To be clear, my intention in inviting you to consider these warnings isn't to

change your beliefs or opinions. Rather, it's to ensure that any conviction you might have is rooted in compassion (John 8:1-11). It is important to remember that you can have a "correct opinion" or a "right stance," but without the humble posture of a servant you will be wrong every time. Christ emptied himself and came to his enemies as a servant (Phil. 2; Rom. 5); do not think you are above doing the same.

Do I have thoughts on immigration policy or on the topic of homosexuality? Yes, I do. Are my beliefs simple enough to boil down to a mere "for" or "against," or a slogan on a bumper sticker? I'm afraid not.

Hurting human beings are involved on every side of every issue, which means there is no room for cruelty, thoughtlessness, carelessness, or pride in the conversation.

I've discovered that the debate on homosexuality suddenly becomes just a little more complex when you're sitting across from a mother whose son took his own life after begging God for years to change the way he feels. I don't think I'll ever forget the words of a woman I once met: "One night it was raining, and I couldn't find him [her son] anywhere. Finally I found him lying in the soccer field behind our house, sobbing uncontrollably because he felt stuck and didn't know what to do."

And immigration becomes more than an "issue" when you consider what kind of conditions could make a mother so desperate that she would send her child a thousand miles on top of a truck or across a dangerous desert just to find a new place to live.



And while many have pointed out that the emotional appeal of an issue doesn't dictate whether something is right or wrong, the human element can, and must, influence our posture as we seek and teach truth, knowing that human beings are involved. It might not always change what we believe, but it has to change how we think about and treat *people*. If these conversations truly are attempts to get closer to the truth, then we would do well to remember that Truth is a person, a being. When Jesus said, "I am the Truth," he made it relational; he made it personal.

We live in a broken world, and everyone hurts. Things have gotten messy on political levels, social levels, and personal levels—and we're sitting in the middle of it. We are *all* called to repent. We are *all* in need of grace. No one is completely right except Christ, and his company cannot be joined without great humility and grace.

Hurting human beings are involved on every side of every issue, which means there is no room for cruelty, thoughtlessness, carelessness, or pride in the conversation. On the contrary, these discussions need to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and so must be founded in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Gal. 5).

All opinions, judgments, or decisions from the church relating to homosexuality must come from Christ's own Body lying

in the grass next to the young man sobbing in the rain. Every opinion, judgment, or decision from any other place will most certainly be the wrong one. And all opinions, judgments, or decisions regarding immigration must come from Christ's own Body—the ultimate refugee—who knows what it is to be mocked, protested against, rejected, spat upon, and exiled to a cross. Every opinion, judgment, or decision from any other place will most certainly be the wrong one. Yes, we will talk, and we will debate, and we will go to the Bible, but our stance must become and remain prostrate.

And after we prayerfully discern what is permissible and what isn't, what is persuadable and what isn't, what is acceptable and what isn't, we must never forget that it is the duty of the church to shoulder the load, whatever it may be, alongside those who are called to walk with Christ (Matt. 23). So if you're not ready to carry another's burden, you're most certainly not ready to join the conversation.

Love,
Dad ■

Granger Lee lives in West Michigan where he teaches high school and is a part of a close-knit CRC community.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the first step on a yearly journey that leads to the glad trumpets of Easter.

WHY ON EARTH are we writing about Ash Wednesday in a column called “Reformed Matters?” This would have been unthinkable just 20 years ago.

Though I have no hard statistics on this, it’s apparent that an increasing number of Christian Reformed congregations—and Protestant churches in general—are instituting Ash Wednesday services in their observance of Lent. Why?

First, a little history about about the observance itself. Ash Wednesday began to appear in the Western church around the 10th century to mark the beginning of Lent. Lent has its roots much farther back in the practices of fasting and repentance in preparation for Good Friday and Easter. This time of fasting and prayer imitates Jesus’ own 40-day fast in the wilderness. If you count forty days back from Easter—not including Sundays, which are never fasting days—you come back to Ash Wednesday.

The association of ashes with the fasting and repentance of Lent comes from the Bible itself. Wearing sackcloth and pouring ashes on oneself was a sign of repentance in the Old Testament. Remember Job’s words after he finally humbles himself before the Lord: “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

So for centuries Christians have gathered on Ash Wednesday to begin Lent by receiving

the imposition of ashes on their foreheads in the shape of a cross.

The practice has never been regarded as a sacrament in any church. It has no scriptural institution, and God does not promise to confer grace through it. Roman Catholics and Anglicans call it a “sacramental” in that, like a sacrament, it uses common material to convey spiritual truth.

The typical Ash Wednesday service has some common elements: praying Psalm 52, David’s great psalm of repentance; a call to observe the season of Lent; and a brief guide to its observance. And, of course, the imposition of the ashes.

The ashes are imposed on people’s foreheads with these words: “Dust you are, and to dust you shall return”—words spoken by God to Adam after he had sinned in the garden of Eden.

In the last church I served, we began to observe Ash Wednesday as a kind of experiment, but it continues to this day. Typically, about half the congregation attended this midweek service. Most surprising of all was that it was particularly popular with children and youth.

In our church we began with a simple soup supper before moving to the sanctuary. The service, brief but solemn, was marked by prayers and hymns of repentance, a sermon, and the declaration of the beginning of the

season of Lent. It culminated in the imposition of ashes.

For me, giving and receiving the ashes is a deeply moving moment. After all, there are few times when we confront our helplessness, our feeble and fleeting human life, so starkly. But on Ash Wednesday someone speaks a stunning truth about ourselves and makes it stick with a black smear of ashes placed prominently on our foreheads.

Often, when a young child or even an infant came before me, I choked on the words “Dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” Yet this essential truth is undeniable. We are, all of us, weak and mortal, poor and needy, sinful and rebellious.

But even in that moment, hope emerges. Ash Wednesday is the first step on a yearly journey that leads to the glad trumpets of Easter. The ashes are smeared on in the shape of a cross. It is the sign of the One who bore our weak and sinful humanity, who faced our mortality, and triumphed over it in his cross and resurrection. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



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

FAQs

Church

Q A person desiring to join our church was baptized soon after his birth in an intensive care unit by a Roman Catholic nurse who feared he was about to die. Is this baptism considered to be valid in our denomination?

A Yes. Article 58 clearly takes that position: “The baptism of one who comes from another Christian denomination shall be held valid if it has been administered in the name of the triune God, by someone authorized by that denomination.” The fact is that the Roman Catholic Church authorizes nurses and other medical professionals to do this if they are truly acting in good faith. They are not ordained, it is true, but they do have formal authorization.

On this issue, the position of the Christian Reformed Church is remarkably broad-minded. We fully honor the catholicity of the church, just as St. Augustine did in his approach to the Donatists of the fourth and fifth centuries. These Donatists, on the other hand, refused to acknowledge any baptism performed in the Roman Catholic Church and ordered recipients of it to be re-baptized.

There was a time when our churches would “conditionally baptize” such individuals. They would administer the baptism with the statement: “If, in fact, you have not been baptized, or your previous baptism is not valid, I baptize you into the name of the Father. . . .” In reflecting on that practice, I have come to the conclusion that I could not permit myself to do that. In this case, I would rather hold the baptism to be valid and rejoice with the person involved and the congregation that God keeps his promises to us.

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

Your anger is telling you something is wrong.

Relationships

Q Is anger sin? I feel angry a lot. I try to get rid of it, but can’t seem to. It feels like a curse. Help!

A Anger, just like the other four primary emotions—fear, sadness, guilt, joy—is a good gift from God. In the same way the primary colors (red, yellow, and blue) form the basis for the many variations of color we enjoy, so too, the primary emotions underlie the many ways we are able to express what we feel. They color our lives.

Rather than sin, appropriate anger is a normal response to a situation that is unjust or unfair. Your anger is telling you something is wrong. And it is providing the energy needed for the hard work of resolving the problem(s) that gave rise to angry feelings.

However, if what makes you angry (a real or perceived injustice) is not able to be resolved, anger is likely to build within you until it has to be discharged. In that case something small can trigger an explosion of anger, which is generally not a good thing and can feel like a curse.

Anger that cannot be discharged appropriately needs to be given up voluntarily. We pray, “Forgive us our debt as we forgive our debtors.” Think of the anger that you have a right to as a debt owed to you—for example, someone treated you or others unjustly. It’s not fair!

When you forgive the debt owed, you are also set free from your accumulated anger. In the same way Christ bore the injustice of our mocking voices, so we too sacrifice our right to justice for ourselves and loved ones. In that sacrifice we are set free.

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

Ethics

Q What should I do? I love my local church but I have a problem with some of its practices. As a woman, I am struggling with the assumed gender roles that I find sexist. I can leave for another church to save myself grief, but I worry about the young girls growing up in this church.

A Even as I commend you on loving the church enough to seek change, let me emphasize that the end goal is always to help each other grow into spiritual maturity in Christ. Therefore, prayer is a must.

If your issue is with women in office, the CRC regards both options as biblical. Otherwise, sexist behaviors have no place among Christians. Even without office-bearing, there should be affirmations of women’s spiritual gifts and service in the church.

With those in mind, I suggest you talk to others you trust. Are there others who feel the same way? If not, it might mean this community isn’t ready for change.

However, if there are others who feel the same, then I suggest you and like-minded folks mentor the young girls and boys in the church. Provide them with good resources, good role models, and good conversations on what it means to be women and men in Christ.

Eventually, as a group, approach the church leadership discreetly and gently to voice your concerns and hopefully have a fruitful conversation. Remember that they probably mean no harm, even in disagreement. Propose specific, incremental changes rather than radical changes. A possible proposal could be a season of mutual learning and dialogue on the subject. What results from such a meeting should give you signs of possible next steps.

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

ADS

Deadlines: March issue is 2/1/16; April issue is 3/7/16. 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

Agenda for Synod 2016

Synod has established the following deadlines for materials to be received by the office of the executive director of the CRCNA for the synodical agenda:

- Overtures, communications, and appeals to synod are due no later than March 15 and must first be processed through the local council and the classis.
- Names and addresses of delegates to synod on the Credentials for Synod, as well as the completed information sheet on each synodical delegate, are to be submitted by stated clerks of classes as soon as possible but no later than March 15.

Materials will be included in the printed Agenda if received before the synodically established deadlines.

Steven R. Timmermans, Executive Director

Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that **TONY (HYEON) BANG** 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

Annual Day of Prayer

Synod has designated Wednesday, March 9, 2016, as the Annual Day of Prayer. All CRC congregations are requested to assemble to ask for God's blessing upon the world, our nations, crops and industry, and the church worldwide.

Councils are reminded that if it is judged that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningfully observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U. S.), they have the right to change the date of service accordingly (Acts of Synod 1996, p. 578). The National Day of Prayer (U. S.) is Thursday, May 5, 2016.

Steven R. Timmermans, Executive Director

Calls Accepted

REV. MARK TIMMER, of Faith CRC, Tinley Park, IL, to Third CRC, Zeeland, Michigan

REV. STEVE BUSSIS, of Coopersville CRC, MI, to Bethel CRC, Manhattan, Montana

Rev. Ron Meyer, Stated Clerk, Classis Zeeland

Financial Aid

CLASSIS KALAMAZOO The student aid fund committee of classis Kalamazoo, Michigan invites students from their classis who are planning to pursue full-time ministry in the crc (undergraduate or

graduate level) and are in need of financial aid for the academic year 2016-2017 to apply no later than March 31, 2016 by contacting Jeff Mejeur, 8244 W. OP Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49009, phone 269-372-7384, or e-mail mejeurelectric@gmail.com. Undergraduate students must be at least in their junior year during 2016-2017. Students presently receiving aid must reapply."

CLASSIS ZEELAND STUDENT AID Classis Zeeland invites students from our classis who are preparing for ordained/non-ordained ministry in the CRC to apply for financial aid for the 2016-2017 school year. If you are interested please contact Dan Kinnaas at (616) 772-2390, or by email at daniel.kinnaas@bethelzeeland.org. All applications need to be received by April 1, 2016.

Congregational

Church's 100th Anniversary

BROOTEN COMMUNITY CRC in Brooten, MN will celebrate its 100th Anniversary on July 2-3, 2016. A dinner will be served on July 3. To make reservations please email brootenc2016@gmail.com or call 320-346-2477. Check schedule of events on cra56316.weebly.com. All friends and former members are welcome.

HOPE CRC in Grandville, MI is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2016. Join us on April 24, 2016 as we "Rejoice in Hope!" Services at 9:30 am and 5:30 pm. If you have questions or stories to share, contact us at secretary@hopecrgandville.com.

Church's 50th Anniversary

NORTH HILLS CRC in Troy, MI will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2016. All friends, former members and others interested are invited to celebrate with us at a banquet on April 16, 2016 and a celebratory worship service on April 17, 2016. Please send us your contact information so that we can give you further information. Contact Rev. Randy Engle at randyengle@aol.com or his administrative assistant, Susan Ballard, at admin@northhillscrc.org. Telephone: (248) 645-1990.

General

CORRECTION The full name of TLTI is the Timothy Leadership Training Institute, which is located at 3300 Burton St. SE Suite 105, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49546, www.tliti.org. They can be reached at 616-647-5554.

LK ALFRED MINISTRY - 140 Mallard Rd 33850 near Winter Haven & Orlando Rt 17/92. www.lakealfredministry.org, phone 863-422-6442. Preachers: March 6- April 10 Rev. Ron Noorman.

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

Dr. Eric Forseth, Provost

Dordt College
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Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697
provost@dordt.edu

www.dordt.edu/prospective_employees/faculty/

Dordt College does not discriminate as to age, sex, national origin, marital status or against those who are disabled.

Birthdays

100th Birthday



REV. GYSBERT ROZENBOOM oldest minister in the CRC, will celebrate his 100th birthday on Feb. 17. An Open House will be held at the Raybrook Friendship Room on Sunday, Feb. 21 from 2 - 4 pm. Cards can be sent to him at 2121 Raybrook S. E.

90th Birthday



TREESA BOEREMA will celebrate her 90th birthday February 11, 2016. Her family thanks God for her example of Christian service. Cards may be sent to 15243 Catalina Dr. 1A, Orland Park, IL 60462

FRED JACOBS of Holland, Michigan will celebrate his 90th birthday with an open house on February 13, 2016 at Third CRC, Zeeland from 1-3pm. All friends and family are invited. His family is very thankful for his good health, work and faith.

Church Position Announcements

PASTOR: 2nd CRC of Fremont, MI is in need of a Pastor to share the good news of Jesus Christ to our congregation and community. For more information and our church profile, please contact Jason DeKuiper at jdekuiper@comcast.net.

LEAD PASTOR: Cadillac CRC, a vibrant church in scenic Northern Michigan, is seeking a Lead Pastor. Please see our church profile at crcna.org, visit our website at cadcrc.org, or contact our search committee chair (Glen Van Antwerp) at vanantg@gmail.com or 231-829-3470 for more information about our congregation.

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. Confidential inquiries can be made to Hessel Kielstra at pastorsearch@emmanuelcrc.org. Church profile available from the Ministerial Information Service at CRC's Pastor Church Relations.

PASTOR Rudyard CRC in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (God's Country) is currently searching for a full time pastor. We are a solid, Loving and Faithful Church. We are kind of traditional with great youth and children programs. For information and church profile please contact Woody Bandstra at wbandstra@yahoo.com or call 906-248-5388

YOUTH MINISTRY POSITION We, Woody Nook CRC, a large vibrant church located near Lacombe, Alberta are seeking a full time director of youth ministries. We would love a person who has a heart for engaging youth, encouraging faith, developing relationships, and most of all having fun. A degree in youth ministry is preferable. For the job description and full church profile please visit the website www.wncc.ca. If this position interests you, please send your resume to ericjondoe@yahoo.com.

YOUTH PASTOR: New Westminster CRC in Burnaby, British Columbia, is looking for a youth pastor. This position requires coordinating responsibilities and visionary leadership including: discipling youth, mentoring leaders, overseeing weekly youth gatherings and other

ROSE KLOOSTER ZIGTERMAN wife of Clarence (deceased 2001), of 16300 Louis Avenue, South Holland, IL 60473, will celebrate her 90th birthday on February 28. Her children, Karen Admiraal (Case, deceased), Kent and Kathie, Paul and Bonnie, 15 grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren (one deceased), are thankful for God's goodness and faithfulness to her through the years. His blessings continue to overflow.

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

BOUMA Rev Gerard and Margaret Bouma will celebrate 65 years of marriage and ministry of the Word on Feb 1. With their 4 children and spouses, 10 grandchildren and 12 great grands we remember Gods faithfulness, beginning in The Netherlands, becoming the first Dutch ministerial couple called to Canada in 1952 and moving to the USA in 1972. An open house is planned for Sat. Jan 30 from 2-4 at Holland Home Breton Terrace; cards may be sent to 2500 Breton Woods Dr, #3068, Grand Rapids, MI. Mom and Dad we love you, we praise God and give Him all the glory.

BYLSMA Pastor John and Henriette (Wynstra) 18175 Redvere Dr. Brookfield, WI, 53045 celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on December 21. They and their family thank God for His goodness - to Him be the glory!

events, and working successfully in a team ministry context. Thinking of studying at Regent College? this 20 hr/week position, fairly compensated, requires an individual who: demonstrates a deep love for Christ and His people, is Gospel-centered, missional, and will work well in the Reformed tradition; is a servant-leader with strong relational skills; and possesses a college or university degree and has/is working towards theological training. If you wish to apply for this position, please contact office@nwcc.ca. Application deadline is Jan. 31, 2016.

YOUTH DIRECTOR First CRC Red Deer, Alberta is seeking a highly relational youth director who will help our youth grow spiritually, as well as grow their sense of belonging in the church. This person will be self-motivated and self-directed; yet will be able to work well in a team ministry. Education and/or relevant experience will be considered. Visit our website at www.firstcrrredeer.org for job description. To apply, please send your resume and 3 current references to firstcrrcrt@gmail.com

WORSHIP LEADER - Harderwyk Ministries is a multi-site, Gospel-Centered ministry in Holland, MI. We are currently searching for a worship leader of the Celebration service. Celebration is a liturgical service with a rich music ministry and robust congregational worship. In collaboration with the teaching pastor, the worship leader will be responsible for planning, organizing, conducting, and leading the various aspects of our worship ministry. We are seeking a team player with a deep love of the Gospel, a Reformed world and life view, and a desire to see people love God more through music and liturgy. The successful candidate will have a music degree or relevant experience, the ability to lead choirs, and experience creating weekly liturgy. This is a part time, 15-18 hour a week position. A complete job description is available upon request. If you are interested, please send a statement of inquiry and resume to CWL@harderwyk.com.

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES Faith CRC, Elmhurst IL, is seeking a qualified person to direct its youth ministry. This position is full-time with primary focus on middle and high school and some responsibilities for children's and young adult ministries. To apply, send letter of introduction with resume to dymsearch@faithelmhurst.org or contact Ray Middel at 630-862-1861

YOUTH PASTOR New Westminster CRC in Burnaby, British Columbia, is looking for a youth pastor. This position requires coordinating responsibilities and visionary leadership including: discipling youth, mentoring leaders, overseeing weekly youth gatherings and other events, and working successfully in a team ministry context. Thinking

Obituaries

BERGSMAS Ken, age 95, went to be with his Lord on November 19, 2015. Ken will be missed by Jeanne, his loving wife for 72 years; daughters: Vicki L. Bergsma Knott (fiancé Cliff Halmrast); Carol J. Bergsma (Roger Briand); Judith K. Bergsma (Richard Safar); Audrey L. Bergsma (Mark Scantlebury) and two "adopted": Tran Ky & Donna Groot; 16 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren.

BIERLINK Fredrick, of Lynden, WA entered his glorious heavenly home on November 25, 2015. Surviving are his wife, Shirley, nee Mellem. Children, Henry (Evonne), Rod (Lana), Beverly (Terry, deceased) Bowen, Brenda (Tom) Iverson, Becky (Chris) Teeuwesen, Bruce (Rebecca) and 19 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren.

DE JONG Eleanor J. (Alsum) age 84, of Bellflower, CA. went to be with her Lord on August 4, 2015. She was preceded in death by her husband Arthur De Jong. She is survived by her children, Goldene (Tom) Byma, Gerald, Arthur II (Erika), five grandchildren, eight great grandchildren and sister Joann.

ILBRINK Joanne "Jo" Dorothy (Kortenhoven), age 82, of Grandville, MI went to be with her heavenly father on January 3, 2016. She was executive director of Calvinettes (G. E. M. S.) for twenty years. She will be lovingly remembered by her husband of 60 years, Robert "Bob" Ilbrink; children, Faye and Richard Dykema, Ronald and Jane Ilbrink, Richard and Kari Ilbrink; 9 grandchildren; 3 great granddaughters.

of studying at Regent College? this 20 hr/week position, fairly compensated, requires an individual who: demonstrates a deep love for Christ and His people, is Gospel-centered, missional, and will work well in the Reformed tradition; is a servant-leader with strong relational skills; and possesses a college or university degree and has/is working towards theological training. If you wish to apply for this position, please contact office@nwcc.ca. Application deadline is Feb. 29, 2016.

IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE MINISTRY Do you have a passion for the immigrant and refugee population? Are you excited to lead others to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ? New Roots Ministry in Sioux Falls, SD is looking for such a person to be their new Director. People from all over the world make Sioux Falls their home. New Roots Ministry builds relationships among the immigrant community and serves as a bridge to the local culture and resources. This position also serves half time as a chaplain at a local company that employs over 3,000 people from 50 different nations. If you are ready to see the world in one community and help them come together in Christ, please contact us at sfnewroots@gmail.com for more information.

SENIOR PASTOR Third CRC in Lynden, WA is eagerly looking for a Senior Pastor, someone who enjoys preaching, values relationships, and has the gift of leadership. Lynden is a growing community in the Northwest, with excellent schools. Email iirdcpcpastorsearch@gmail.com for more information

PASTOR The First Christian Reformed Church of South Holland, Illinois is seeking a new pastor who prizes the preaching of the word and is willing to lead our congregation in meeting the challenge to be a witness in our community. Our congregation is wholeheartedly committed to a Reformed approach to worship and life. A church profile as available at the CRCNA website and further information can be obtained by contacting Don Vander Zee at 708-805-3934 or d.zee@sbcglobal.net.

PASTOR Tracy CRC in Tracy, IA is seeking a part-time pastor. We are a small rural church in need of a pastor to shepherd our flock. For more information contact us at tracycsrcsearch@gmail.com.

FULL-TIME PASTOR John Calvin Christian Reformed Church located in beautiful Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada is seeking a full-time pastor to lead our multi-generational congregation. To receive a copy of our church profile please contact our Search Committee secretary, Kelsey Withrow at kelseywithrow@hotmail.com

LANDHUIS Clarence (Clix), age 87 went to his heavenly home on December 26, 2015. He is lovingly remembered by his children Laura (Russell) Swayne, Nadine (Bill) Iwema, and Ross (Pam) Landhuis, seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Special thanks to True Blue Caregivers for their years of loving care.

POST Clarence, 86, of Sheboygan, WI, formerly of Cicero, IL passed away peacefully on November 8, 2015. He is survived by his children: John (Dorrie) Aurora, IL, Tom (Sandi) DeMotte, IN, Clarissa (Jake Van Belle) Oshawa, Ontario, Carol (Kurt Le Mahieu) Sheboygan, WI; thirteen grandchildren, Paul (Kristy), Laura (Bart Visser), Joel (Tami), Ben (Susan), Julianna, Lori and Jennita Van Belle, Sarah and David Le Mahieu; five great-grandchildren, Wyatt and Alli Post, Tara and Faith Visser and Chloe Post; siblings, Margaret (Andrew Buikema), Richard (Rose), Alice, Harold (Joan) and sisters-in-law, Joanne Engel, Florence Davids, Annette Davids and Diane Davids. He was preceded in death by his loving wife, Elizabeth (Davids); dear friend, Vera Rath and relatives, Fred (Effie), Peter (Jeanette), Lena (Fred Van Dahm), John Davids, Martha (Ben Heslinga), Richard Davids, Ernest Engel and Ralph Davids. Clarence was a member of the Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Sheboygan. He worked for over 40 years as a truck driver in the Chicago area.

RIITSEMA Arlynn Mae, age 82, of Grand Rapids, went to her heavenly home after a long struggle with Alzheimer's. She is survived by her loving husband of 63 years, Henry Ritsema; her children, Randall and Mary Ellen Ritsema, Gwendolyn Heys, Michael and Jane Ritsema, Curtis and Darlene Ritsema, Edward and Kristin Ritsema, Cherylyn and Tom Van De Griend; grandchildren, Megan, Kelley (Isaac Grotenhuis), Emily, Molly, Joelle, Brett Ritsema, Kyle (Rebecca), Kevin Heys, Aaron, Rachel (Brian Dokter), Marcus (Jenna), Jordan (Jodi) Ritsema, Kalee, Jenna (Zack Hampel) Ritsema, Matthew, Ashley Ritsema, Peyton, Camilla, Jesse, Colton Van De Griend; great grandchildren, Logan, Carson, Ella, Avery, Winslet, Jubilee; sister, Carol Broene.

SIEBERSMA Nelvy Hubers, 86, went to be with her Lord on Dec. 5 2015. She was preceded in death by her husband Stan and son Bob. "A life of faith, well lived."



TERMAAT THERESA, nee DeVries, age 91, beloved wife of 69 years to John TerMaat. Loving mother of Joanne TerMaat, Evelyn (Dr. Richard) Loerop, and the late John C. (Jacquelyn) TerMaat. Cherished grandmother of Janine Skala, Julie O'Connell, Jacquelyn Loerop, Christine (Jacob) VanKempen, Erica (Cody) McCary and Kim Loerop. Dearest great-grandmother of Tori, Ally, Lacy, Tessa, Gracie, Hailey and Noah. Fond sister of Tena Vander Muil, and the late Louis DeVries, Jenny Lenters, Winifred DeVries, Gertrude Tibstra, Geraldine Wodrich, Clara Spoelma, and Johanna Leo. Dear aunt and great-aunt of many nieces and nephews. Condolences, 2648 Falcon Pointe Dr., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49534.

VAN KOOTEN Marjorie of Lynden, WA. (formerly of Cooper Landing, Alaska) went home to her Lord and Savior on December 4, 2015 at age 86. Daughter of Bastian and Henrietta Van Kooten (deceased). Survived by sisters Alta Louws, Irene (Maurice) Beld, Frances Ten Kley, Carolyn (Sherwin) Van Mersbergen, Lois (Arvin) Apol, Helen Terpsma; many nieces and nephews and special friends Jacqueline Greenman and Anna Belle Engbers. Marge was well known for her nursing career in Alaska.

Volunteers

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CEO Salem Christian Homes in Chino, California is seeking a highly engaged, experienced, and dynamic leader to fill its CEO position. The organization has a fifty four year history of providing Christian care for individuals who have developmental disabilities. At present 112 adults are being cared for in nineteen community homes in Chino, Ontario, Upland and Lakewood, California. Applicants are invited to send a letter of interest with a brief biography to: Robert DeJong, Salem Christian Homes, 6921 Edison Avenue, Chino, CA 91710. Attention: Search Committee or to rjdjong@yahoo.com. A complete application packet will be sent to all interested applicants.



DIACONAL MINISTRIES CANADA Seeking applicants for the position of NATIONAL DIRECTOR - The National Director will

be responsible for ensuring that Diaconal Ministries Canada fulfills its mandate of partnering with diaconates, churches and parachurch organizations across Canada to demonstrate God's love in the community. For more information please visit our website at www.diaconalministries.com/careers

PRESIDENT/CEO The current President and CEO of Christian Living Ventures (CLV) headquartered in Denver, CO, has recently announced his plan to retire effective Fall of 2016. Therefore, CLV now invites applications for the position of President (CEO). Please see the Web site: christianlivingventures.org.

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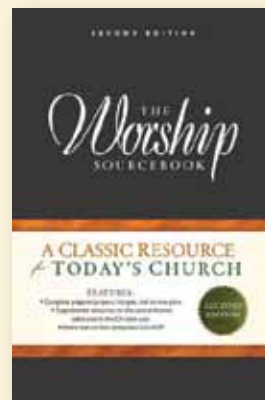
Visit FaithAliveResources.org/Worship to view these and other resources to help you lead and plan worship.



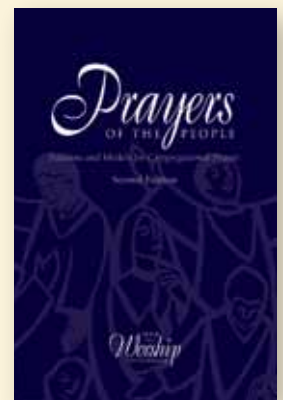
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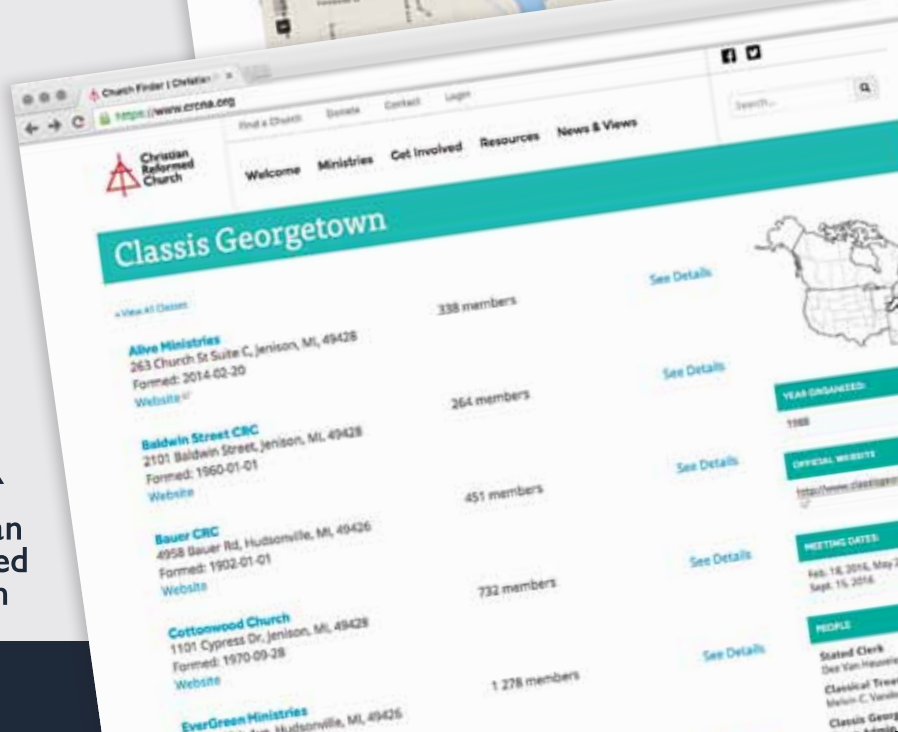
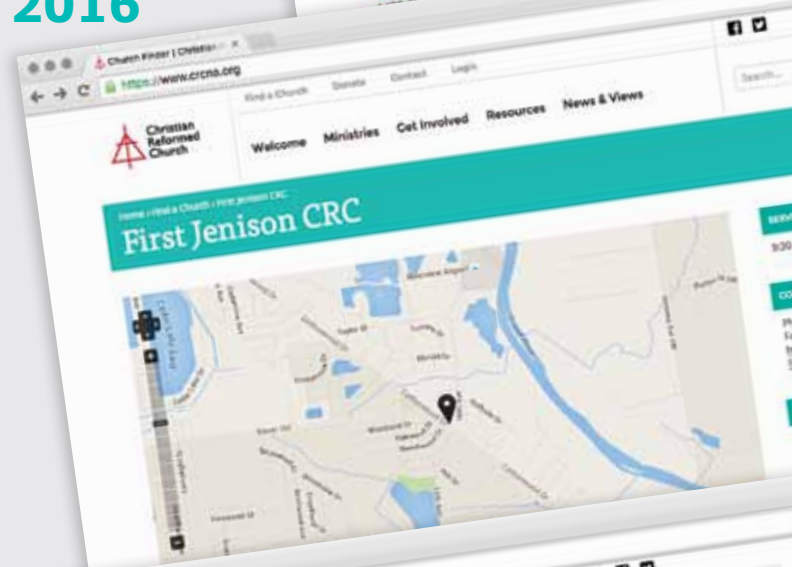
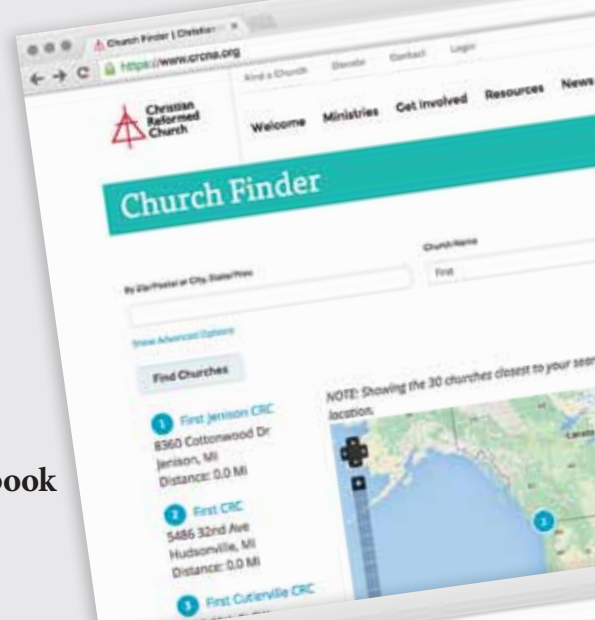
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February 2016**



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!

While I was visiting her school, my granddaughter Chloe introduced me to a new boy in her class.

"Hi," I said to the boy. "Where did you move from?"

"Up South," he replied.

—*Connie VanderKlok*

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending, and to have the two as close together as possible.

—*Cyndi Boss*

My cousin is a pastor in a rural church in Michigan. During one of her sermons, she was waxing poetic about the harvest season. Thinking she had used the word "harvest" one too many times, she said, "It is so thrilling to see the large concubines working in the fields."

A silent pause ensued, and then a roar of laughter erupted in the church.

She looked at the choir director seated to her left for an explanation.

"Wrong word," he said, laughing. "It's supposed to be *combines*."

It didn't end there.

At coffee hour after the service, a 93-year-old parishioner said to her, "I sure would like to see those large concubines!"

—*R.E. Monsma*

No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

—*H. De Boer*

I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island. But it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.

—*Dave Smit*

While visiting an elderly woman in his congregation, the pastor advised her that she should be thinking more and more about the hereafter.

"Oh, but I already do," she replied. "I walk into a room and I say to myself, 'What am I here after?'"

—*Aletta Whipple*

Sign on a fence:

"Salespeople welcome. Dog food is expensive."

—*Sue Lauritzen*

Standing in line for fast food, my son asked his 7-year-old daughter what she wanted to drink. "I'll have a hic, please." Not understanding, he asked again. She still wanted a hic. The person at the counter said, "I can help with that. It happens all the time. She wants a Hi-C."

—*Rich Kornnoelje*

Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other, "You stay here. I'll go on a head."

—*L. Knoops*





DORDT COLLEGE

Concert Choir Spring Tour

The Concert Choir, under the direction of Dr. Benjamin Kornelis, is bringing the music of Dordt College to a location near you!

MARCH 4, 7:30 PM, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Rapid City, SD

MARCH 5, 7 PM, Manhattan Christian Reformed Church, Manhattan, MT

MARCH 6, 8 PM, Sunnyside Christian Reformed Church, Sunnyside, WA

MARCH 7, 7:30 PM, Bellevue Christian Reformed Church, Bellevue, WA

MARCH 8, 7:30 PM, Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

MARCH 9, 7 PM, Living Hope Christian Reformed Church, Abbotsford, BC

MARCH 11, 7:30 PM, Cloverdale United Reformed Church, Boise, ID

MARCH 13, 6 PM, Third Christian Reformed Church, Denver, CO

Admission to the concert is free, with a freewill donation received to help defray tour expenses. For more details, go to www.dordt.edu/arts/music/tour

