



May 2016 | thebanner.org

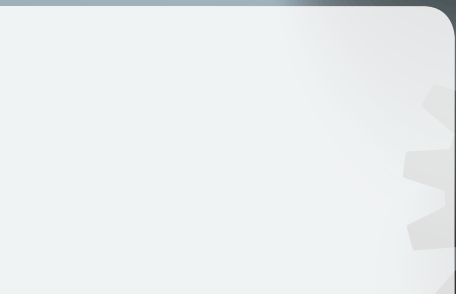
**32 The Fabric of Creation:
Understanding Genesis**
**38 Millennials and the Great
Commission**

**22 Shining a Light
in the Darkness**

**19 Millennials:
Where Do
They Fit?**

150 YEARS

THE BANNER





A Bible for Those Who Can't Read



The Solar Talking Bible

- Easy to use
- Powerful speaker
- Solar powered



Evangelist Worku is using Talking Bibles for ministry and people are listening!

Ethiopia: No one would listen to Worku when he preached. Because few of the 4,000 people in his rural community can read, they did not trust his word for what the Bible says. His ministry was suffering, while people stopped coming to church.

Then Worku received a Talking Bible and everything changed! When he played his Talking Bible in villages, people would stop to hear. Now when he goes out to meet with the people, everyone wants to listen. They are fascinated to hear God's Word speaking to them in their language. Worku's church is growing with many people becoming new believers.

God is blessing more and more people in Worku's community through the Talking Bibles ministry. He is reaching believers and nonbelievers alike. You too can minister to communities like Worku's. Let a Talking Bible take God's Word around the world for you today! Please donate at www.talkingbibles.org



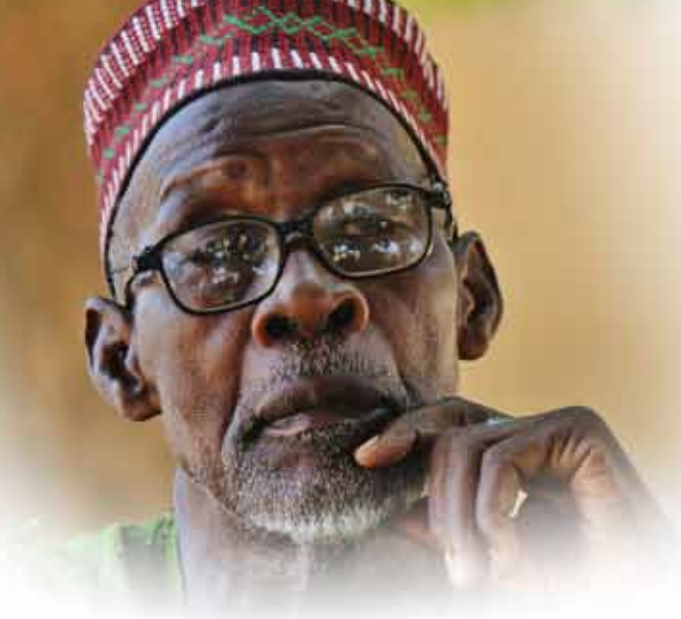
Enhancing Trust



"Accredited for special offerings"

www.TalkingBibles.org

Talking Bibles International • 419 East Grand Avenue, Escondido, CA 92025
Telephone: 855-55-BIBLE (855-552-4253) or 760-745-8105



LUKE⁺

society

Christian International Medical Ministry
www.lukesociety.org

Health is no game.

*It's a **LIFE** decision.*



 **TRINITY**

CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Palos Heights, Illinois 60463

866.TRIN.4.ME | trnty.edu

Trinity Christian College: **YOUR TOP TIER CHOICE**

**100%
NCLEX-RN
Pass Rate**

– National Council of
State Boards
of Nursing, 2015

**A Top College
for the Money**

– Time Inc.'s
Money Magazine, 2016

**Top Tier
College of 2016**

– *U.S. News & World Report
Regional Colleges-Midwest*, 2016

**Ranked Among the
Top 15 Best Values
in Illinois**

– *The Economist*, 2015

**#1 in Illinois 2015
CPA Exam Pass Rate
& Average Exam
Score***

*35 or more parts taken
– *Illinois Board of Examiners*

**One of 2016
Best Colleges
of Illinois**

– *Niche*

Come see what everyone is talking about and schedule a visit.

WE CAN'T WAIT TO WELCOME YOU TO CAMPUS!

www.trnty.edu/visit



Volume 151 | Number 05 | 2016

BANNER



FEATURES

- 19** **Where Do They Fit? What Millennials Need from the Church** STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE
Contrary to popular opinion, young people still care about religion and spirituality.
by Todd V. Cioffi
- 32** **The Fabric of Creation: Understanding Genesis**
A Calvin Seminary professor explains what she teaches about the creation account in Genesis.
by Mary Vanden Berg

DEPARTMENTS

- Editorial: Something Is Missing** by Leonard J. Vander Zee **6**
The weekly celebration of Holy Communion is part of our Reformed roots.
- Catch Your Breath: Family Stories** by Jennifer L. Holberg **7**
In many ways, what we do in church is pass on our family stories.
- IMHO: Reconciliation** by David Snapper **8**
When we disagree with others, it's up to us to follow Jesus' lessons of reconciliation.

Letters to the Editor **8**

News: A New Look at Old Testament Wisdom **10**

- On the Journey: Why I Want You to Invite Me Out for Coffee** by Hannah Biggs **17**
I need you to teach me what love looks like in the church.

Just for Kids: Goin' on a Bug Hunt **30** ▶

Critters, creepy-crawlers, and Daddy-long-legs all have jobs to do.

Tuned In: Of God and Gladiator **34**

Real-world ministry in the virtual world of online gaming.

Reformed Matters: Millennials and the Great Commission **36** STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE

There's a shift happening throughout North American Christianity.

Frequently Asked Questions **38**

How do I approach the topic of churchgoing with my young adult children without sounding judgmental?

Punch Lines **47**

TOGETHER DOING MORE

Shining a Light in the Darkness **22**

The light of Christ is overcoming darkness in places around the world.

The View from Here: Practicing Civility in an Uncivil World **26**



Be One Who Gets It >>



Visit **The Banner** website at thebanner.org:

- read the latest news, features, and exclusive content
- sign up for a weekly email of new content

Follow **The Banner** on social media:

- [Facebook.com/crcbanner](https://www.facebook.com/crcbanner)
- [#crcbanner](https://twitter.com/crcbanner)

Something Is Missing

IT'S A PRACTICE THAT BEGAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH (Acts 20:7) and continued throughout the early church right up until the Reformation. And then, for lots of Protestants, it stopped. What is it? The weekly celebration of Holy Communion. How could something so embedded in the church's worship for 1,500 years have been so quickly jettisoned?

The major Reformers were clear. Luther insisted on weekly communion; Calvin advocated it too. So how did it happen? Up until that time, the natural world was experienced as being alive with God's presence. This God-created, God-infused world could not help but reveal its Creator. The spiritual and material were so deeply intertwined that material things not only pointed to their Creator, but God was experienced and known in physical things.

That sacramental view of the world was as biblical as rainbow promises in the sky, trees clapping their hands to God's glory, and the Spirit blowing like the wind. As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins famously put it, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God."

But that worldview changed because of a philosophical and theological revolution in the late Middle Ages that seeped into the Reformation largely through the influence of Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli. Strongly opposed by both Luther and Calvin, Zwingli taught that material things such as the bread and wine of communion could not reveal or convey spiritual reality. They were merely symbolic, serving only as reminders of Christ's saving work—a kind of spiritual visual aid. And if communion is merely a symbolic memorial, no wonder it loses its significance as an essential and regular means of grace.

Zwingli's views gradually suffused even the Reformed churches, despite the fact that the Reformed confessions take a quite different view. For example, Belgic Confession Article 35 declares: "We do not go wrong when we say that what is eaten is Christ's own natural body and what is drunk is his own blood—but the manner in which we eat it is not by the mouth, but by the Spirit through faith." Reformed doctrine insists that in Holy Communion we do not just remember a long-ago event—we receive Christ and all the blessings of his redemption in and through the bread and wine.

Still, in my experience, many CRC folks tend to think of communion merely as a symbolic memorial of Christ's saving work. No wonder we only celebrate it so infrequently.

For the last seven years I have attended a church where communion is celebrated every week. Now I cannot think of worship without it. I go to church hungry and thirsty not only for the Word of God but also for the physical confirmation of Christ's gracious presence in the bread and wine.

It may take a while to fully realize how much we need it. Many report that for the first few months weekly communion may seem tedious or repetitive. It's only after six months or so that you begin to realize how important it has become in your spiritual life, and soon it's an indispensable part of weekly worship. (See "How Weekly Communion Is Shaping Our Church," April 2016, and reformedworship.org/blog/weekly-communion-too-catholic.)

It's time we Reformed Christians returned to our roots and restored the church's ancient and continuous practice of Word and sacrament as the two regular and necessary means of grace for our spiritual well-being. As one Dutch Reformed theologian put it, a worship service without communion is like ending a sentence with a colon instead of a period. It's not over yet. ■

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.

It may take a
while to realize
how much we
need weekly
communion.

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
800-777-7270 or visit our website at
thebanner.org

Classified Advertising
616-224-0725 classifieds@thebanner.org

Display Advertising
616-224-5882 ads@crcna.org

Editorial
616-224-0785 editorial@thebanner.org

News
613-330-3145 news@thebanner.org

Published monthly (except August). Periodicals postage paid at Grand Rapids, Mich. Postmaster, send address changes to: The Banner, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407. Canadian publications mail agreement #40063614. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: The Banner, 3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8.

Copyright 2016, Christian Reformed Church in North America. Printed in U.S.A. The Banner (ISSN0005-5557). Vol. 151, No. 05, 2016.

Member of Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.

Family Stories



NE of my grandmothers had a childhood straight out of *Little House on the Prairie*: she and her family homesteaded in

both the western U.S. and in western Canada. She'd tell of living in a sod house out in the Sandhills of Nebraska. Of riding her horse to a Sunday school convention—an epic ride, replete with an ornery horse and a very high stream—where she (spur of the moment) decided to elope with my grandfather. My other grandmother, who was a city gal, had her own stories. Of working in advertising in the 1920s, for instance. And, better yet, of winning the property for her house in a dancing contest!

Family stories are important, particularly in shaping and normalizing the possibilities we imagine for ourselves. If everyone in your life goes to college, for example, you are far more likely to believe that that's your path too. The flip side is that stories (or lack thereof) can also limit possibility—if no one you know has done something, it's harder to imag-

ine yourself doing so. Even though my grandmothers were born at the turn of the 20th century (in 1903 and 1904), their narratives always made me think I could do just about anything.

In many ways, what we do in church is pass on our family stories. The Bible, of course, is a kind of family album to which we've added 2,000 years of supplementary material from the lives of the great cloud of witnesses.

The way I have always envisioned Psalm 145:4 is as lovely, wise elders teaching me about God. As I've moved into middle age, I've even begun to see myself (particularly in my role as a professor) joining that group. But I wonder if it means something even more robust: that the church should be a place that, in a stance of humility and teachability, learns from every generation, including younger generations. And not just after a mission trip or on "youth Sunday." There are endless stories, for instance, of why millennials don't want to come to church. Could it be because we do not listen to them or value their stories as a deliberate practice of the church?

It's fashionable these days to dismiss younger folks as entitled, narcissistic, and whiny. But as Christians, I'm pretty sure they want what all of us want—to be known and loved and challenged to live out their faith fully. And the fundamental fact is, whatever anyone thinks of this generation (or any other), God is at work in their lives. Right now. So they have amazing stories to edify and encourage. Let's stop trying to figure out what would "appeal" to a particular demographic—as if church were about satisfying a consumer itch—and, instead, find ways to hear the "mighty acts of God" from every voice. ■



Jennifer L. Holberg has taught English at Calvin College since 1998.



One generation shall
praise your works to
another and shall
declare your mighty acts.

—PSALM 145:4

Reconciliation

IMHO Jesus came to us while we were yet sinners to bring peace and reconciliation, to restore us to worship.



JESUS WAS CLEAR. If a person claims we have hurt him or her, it is our responsibility to do four things (Matt. 5:23-24):

1. Stop and pray, asking how we may have hurt others.
2. Take initiative. Even if you believe you are innocent, go to that person. Be the one to act first.
3. Humbly listen to the claim against you. Take it seriously. Express your heartfelt sorrow that you were involved in causing hurt. Do your best to restore the relationship.
4. Resume your worship. After you have finished, offer your gift to God and you will be blessed.

Jesus indicates that resolving conflict has a higher priority than even worship. And although reconciliation is difficult, we must give it our best effort.

In following Jesus' words, we follow his actions. He came to us while we were yet sinners to bring peace and reconciliation, to restore us to worship.

We may have hundreds of excuses that keep us from attempting reconciliation. But the only valid reason for not doing so, in my opinion, is in cases where we believe the person intends to cause us physical harm.

The same principles apply in congregational and denominational settings. In

congregations where there is unresolved hurt, no one seems willing to take the initiative to create peace and reconciliation. But the truth is that no one can be right in the eyes of Jesus when worship continues without reconciliation.

On a larger scale, the Christian Reformed Church has unresolved issues with the United Reformed Church, many of whose members withdrew from the CRC following the conflict over women in office. Twenty years after that split between brothers and sisters, I have read nothing to indicate that our leaders have attempted a reconciliation.

At the upcoming synod, our leaders will be dealing with complex problems, including members and worshipers with same-sex attractions. This could lead to another serious crisis.

So let's consider what Jesus teaches us about reconciliation. Whether you are a delegate or just watching the events of synod unfold, heed his words:

Stop to pray. Is there anyone who may have a complaint about the way they were treated in your church, or by you personally?

Take initiative. Talk it out with grace and humility.

Humbly reconcile. Even if you have polar opposite opinions and will never agree, you can still be reconciled. Be respectful in your disagreement, just as Jesus was.

Resume worship. When you humbly attempt reconciliation, you will return to worship having experienced the heart of God. ■



David Snapper has written a DVD resource on forgiveness called *(Un)hurt: The Healing Power of Forgiveness*. A retired

CRC pastor, he lives in Silverdale, Wash.



Community of Love

Thank you for the encouraging article "The Holy Trinity: The Community of Love at the Heart of Reality" (Reformed Matters, March 2016). I feel my Father's pleasure and love when I am reminded of what Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are like. It is such good news that we are one with them, sharing in the face-to-face relationship of love, joy, goodness, and life. Yes, let's join in the dance!

—John Kranenburg
Lacknow, Ont.

Where Have All the Shepherds Gone?

I agree with Gertrude Pool's article (IMHO: "Where Have All the Shepherds Gone?" March 2016). In most churches, volunteers are visiting people who are sick, shut in, or disabled. But many who are unable to go to church or get on the Internet never get to see the Shepherd. I have been a member of an awesome Christian Reformed church for many years. Yet when my son took his life in July 2015, in my extreme pain I had to reach out to my church family and pastor for comfort and the strength to go on. I am a widow and most of my family has already left this earth. I felt very alone in my grief. How about tending the flock?

—Leona Stukkie
Grand Rapids, Mich.

LETTERS

I left the church for a time after a divorce because of the lack of pastoral care (“Where Have All the Shepherds Gone?”). Not a single phone call or visit from my pastor. And when the pastor does not seem to care, the rest of the flock seems to follow his lead.

—Thomas Martinie
Hudsonville, Mich.

Holloways

Cathy Smith’s polished gem of a piece (“Holloways,” Feb. 2016) ends with “I lift up my eyes to that glow in the distance,” suggesting the opening of Psalm 121. The closing quoted wisdom of Henri-Frederik Amiel as a walking stick and the accompanying picture of a holloway have sent me searching for more information and possibly travel to find some of these hollowed and hallowed places. But I really do not need to go through the expense and effort to travel; this numinous essay has taken her readers to places there and beyond.

—Judy Parr
Holland, Mich.

What We Believe

I was concerned by the suggestion in “What We Believe” (IMHO, Feb. 2016). Of course we should listen to each others’ stories, and of course these stories can bring encouragement, commonality, and new perspectives. But we are not called by Scripture to create a creed based on our experiences; we are called to submit ourselves to the Word of God. This is the path of discipleship, as was so beautifully taught in Reginald Smith’s article “Practicing Resurrection” in the same issue.

—Elizabeth Knighton
Seattle, Wash.

Pastoral Guidance

Re the News story “Pastoral Guidance for Churches Regarding Same-Sex Marriage” (Feb. 2016):

It is clear that synod cannot make a decision without rewording our biblical and theological stance on same-sex marriage. Marriage is not a sacrament but a civil requirement by the state. No specific reference can be found in the Bible with the exception of Joseph and Mary going to register with a secular institution (see Luke 2). Solemnizing the religious same-sex marriage is precluded by the CRC. Ultimately a response belongs to the local church.

—George Lieuwen
Langley, B.C.

We are writing to our CRC family in response to “Pastoral Guidance for Churches Regarding Same-Sex Marriage.”

We are Christians. We are followers of Jesus. We are siblings and children. We were baptized and raised in the CRC. We attended Cadets and GEMS. We professed our faith. We taught Sunday school. And at some point we discovered something about ourselves that would change our place in the church: we are lesbian. We are gay. We are bisexual. We are transgender.

In 1973 the CRC declared that we could not be full members of the church that had cradled us—unless we lived in loneliness, not partaking of the blessing that is family. The church determined that we were called to be celibate or else marginal members.

What is coming before Synod 2016 is only a portion of what needs to be taken up regarding the CRC’s LGBT siblings and children. We are asking you to follow Jesus’ example of radical inclusion, of valuing mercy.

—Douglas Houck, *Classis Pacific Northwest*; Anna Redsand, *Classis Red Mesa (currently PCUSA)*; Haley Reyenga,

Classis Lake Superior; Cara Oosterhouse, *Classis Grand Rapids East*; Ryan, *Classis Alberta South Saskatchewan*; Robert, *Classis Chatham, Ontario*; BE, *Classis Ontario*; Tyler Reckman, *Classis Chatham*; Sharon Dam, *Classis Chatham and Huron*; Marnie Kersten, *Classis Toronto*

Editor’s note: A complete version of this letter is available online.

Saying Goodbye

I am deeply moved by Rev. Koornneef’s honest story (“I Never Had a Chance to Say Goodbye,” Jan. 2016). It is a difficult story to tell. Grief is often a subject we do not know how to deal with. I appreciate his testimony of how he was always aware of God’s presence and promises and the caring of family and friends. Often grieving is a lonely journey.

I too travel this journey. It is good to know I am not alone. My prayers are with Rev. Koornneef. Thank you for sharing.

—Alice De Kleer
Georgetown, Ont.

Worship Music

You could hardly have said it better (“The Business of Worship Music,” Jan. 2016): “. . . it’s a terrible mistake to leave behind the riches of the past.” Where are we when it comes to music and praise in many of our churches?

There is bountiful, excellent music and worship in many of our churches. But at times the songs are shallow, repetitive, and human-centered. What adds to this problem is churches that have gone to one service: everything has to happen in a one-hour service.

In the words of Psalm 84:10: “Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere.”

—John Van Hemert
Lantana, Fla.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

Chicago Teen Gunned Down

Andre Taylor, a lifelong member of Roseland Christian Reformed Church in Chicago, was shot and killed in his front yard on the evening of Sunday, March 13, just hours after worshipping at Rose-land. He was 16.

"He was a good kid," said Rose-land pastor Joe Huizenga. "Three or four days a week he would be here [at the church], taking part in various music and youth activities." He said Andre was a talented singer who wrote poetry and rap. He was a good student at Percy L. Julian High School and

a member of the school's swim team.

Huizenga said Andre was returning home after walking his girlfriend to the bus stop when a car pulled up and shots were fired. "I don't know why," said Huizenga. At the time of publication, no arrests have been made.

Andre lived with his grandmother, Betty Johnson, and his two brothers Donell, 18, and Damon, 14. Their mother died in a car accident eight years ago, and Betty, a 30-year member of Roseland CRC, has raised them since then.

Huizenga knows the family well, having boarded with them during his time as an intern from Trinity Christian College. He has been at Roseland for 16 years.



Huizenga spoke of the gun violence that plagues his city. "I've done eight funerals in the past seven years for young men who died of gun violence," he said. "It feels like we are living in a land where potential never reaches what it is supposed to. It's a feeling of utter powerlessness." One of his deacons told of the monthly poetry night at the church. She said that every one of the kids' poems is about death.

Huizenga said that the church members have been part of a lot

of protests against gun violence, lobbying and advocating for common-sense gun laws, while at the same time trying to provide as many programs for youth as possible to give them opportunities.

In the meantime, he said, they gather at the church to cry together, to hold each other, and to hold on to the promises of God that down the road there will be more shalom and not more death.

—Gayla R. Postma

For more news

about the churches and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, visit thebanner.org.



Follow The Banner

Magazine on Facebook and *crcbanner* on Twitter.



Got a news tip?

Visit thebanner.org/news and use the "Got a Tip" button.

GOT A NEWS TIP?

Or contact the news editor

at news@thebanner.org or 613-330-3145.

Chess Nuts Chess Club Brings in New York Neighbors

For years, Craig Fisher taught chess and organized clubs and tournaments. When Fisher was challenged by his pastor to serve the community, he chose his favorite hobby and started the Chess Nuts club at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Wappingers Falls, N.Y.

One afternoon a week, as many as 13 kids show up for a chess lesson led by Fisher. He demonstrates a few skills, and students discover the solutions as they play. "Craig is great with the kids," said Pastor Bill Hanchett. "He and his other adult helpers resist the impulse to solve problems for the kids; rather, they guide them to find their own solutions. These are great life skills for all of us!"



Kids gather every Thursday afternoon at Immanuel Church to play chess.

"The chess club provides one of many entry points into the Immanuel Church community where people see the love of Christ being lived out," Hanchett said.

Fisher explained that the chess club is a great way to build relationships within the community. In one case, a little girl adopted from China knew very little English. Chess was something she could do and use to communicate with other children.

Hanchett said the club has also provided a chance to pray for some of the members. "We've prayed with a mom who was going

through a difficult time. I also prayed for a dad who is an Iraq War veteran suffering from PTSD. How God will use our prayers we do not know. But these parents are learning that we at Immanuel Church are a community that believes in the power of prayer as well as being a safe, nurturing environment for their kids."

"To provide a service to the community, it is helpful if that service incorporates one's gifts," Fisher said. For seven years, he has been doing just that.

—Callie Feyen

A New Look at Old Testament Wisdom

Piece by piece, a stunning collage of the Old Testament builds at the front of the sanctuary. Each artwork depicts a different passage of the Old Testament, but together they form a whole, displaying God's love for his people and pointing to Christ.

For seven months, Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ont., has been studying the Old Testament based on the *Old Testament Challenge* preaching curriculum published by Zondervan.

Each week a member of the congregation submits an artwork relating to that week's Scripture passage, which is then displayed at the front on an easel, used for the bulletin cover, and projected on the screen during the service. The artists also write an explanation of the way the passage spoke to them in the creation of the piece. Afterward, the piece is

The art pieces are accented by the gold theme color for this section of the series.



The collection of art pieces forming a tapestry at the front of Meadowlands Fellowship. Prevalent themes include light, the journey, and God's grace.

added to the growing tapestry at the front of the sanctuary, which is woven together by thin chains suspended above.

"This art project tells the story of how people respond to Scripture in different ways," explained project coordinator Alice Wolters. "It is inspiring to see this multi-generational involvement in the services."

The art pieces consist of a range of media, from cross stitch



"Passing on the Faith to the Next Generation" by photographer John Bijl depicts the movement of the Holy Spirit passing from one person to the next.

to collage, pastels to photography. The artist profiles are also diverse, from children to seniors, amateurs to professionals.

"[The project] has had such an enthusiastic response. The artwork

creates conversation, excitement, and engagement," said pastor Everett Vander Horst.

After the series' completion this May, the art pieces will be hung on the walls throughout the church. The entire collection can also be viewed on the church's website.

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

Men's Coffee Break Ministry Debuts in Michigan

As a stay-at-home father of two small children, Jon Helder was looking for an outlet—not only for spiritual growth but also for social interaction with other men during the day.

Coffee Break ministry—weekly Bible study that offers child care along with opportunities for evangelism, spiritual growth, and social interaction—is geared toward women. So Helder thought, "Why not a Coffee Break-style ministry for men? As a stay-at-home dad, I was looking for the same thing, and it didn't exist."

Helder met with Sam Huizenga, codirector of the Christian Reformed Church's Coffee Break ministry. She connected him with Mayfair Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. With the encouragement of congregational leaders at Mayfair, Helder began a men's Coffee Break that meets at the same time as the women's Coffee Break program. Child care is available for both.

Four men are currently in the men's Coffee Break program at Mayfair, including a family physician, a part-time nurse who works at night, and a retiree. They are studying Eugene Peterson's *Leap Over a Wall*, a book that explores the life and faith of King David. Helder created a Facebook page to get the word out on the ministry; it is linked to the main Coffee Break Facebook page.

Huizenga is thrilled by the startup of the men's Coffee Break group and is hopeful that similar programs will develop as word gets out.

"God is doing this. We're not thinking this up. This is happening locally," Huizenga said. "We're just trying to share these stories, to inspire others to think about how we can follow where God is at work in Coffee Break."

Helder, meanwhile, is hopeful that future fellowship opportunities will open up through the men's program. "I'm hoping it'll become more than a weekly Bible study during the school year," he said.

—Greg Chandler



IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Floyd Robert De Boer
1930-2016

A man of conviction and faith, Rev. Floyd De Boer found great joy in being a minister in the Christian Reformed Church. His mind was sharp until his death at age 86 on February 21 following a four-year struggle with lung disease.

De Boer served five Christian Reformed congregations in Michigan, New Jersey, and Iowa. When his hearing failed, he retired sooner than he would have liked in 1992.

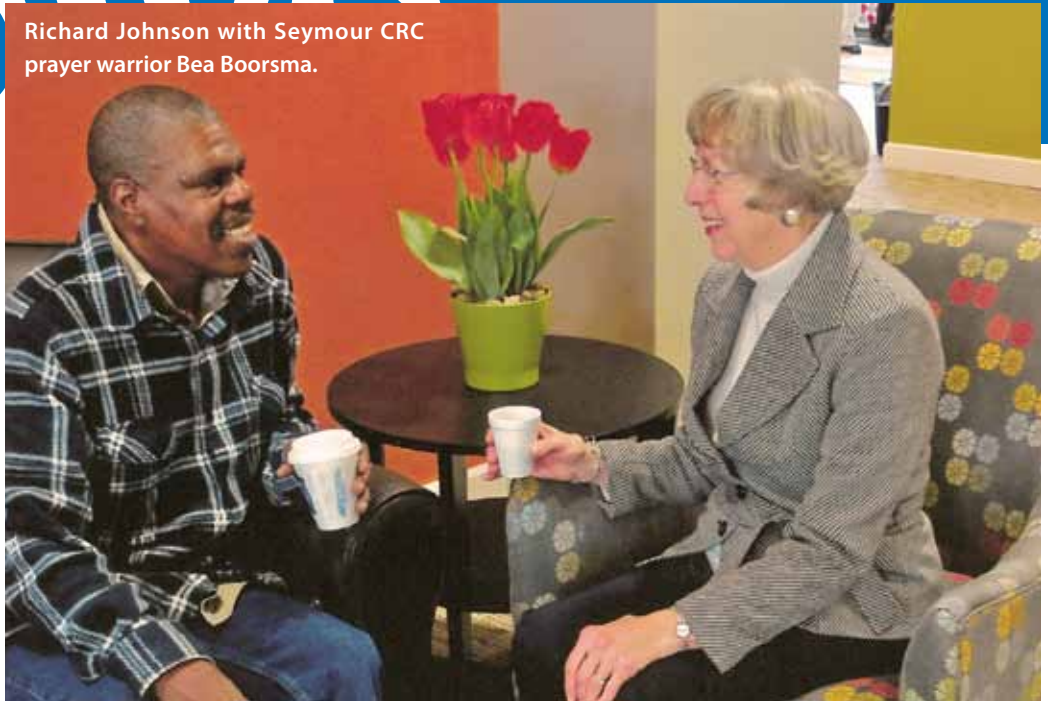
An avid sports fan, his family members remember the many Saturday afternoons spent with him watching sports. Most of all, though, it's his love for the church and for their mother that leaves a legacy for his sons. "By his actions," they said, "he taught us boys how to be loving husbands, fathers, and men of faith. He will be sorely missed!"

De Boer was predeceased by his wife, Ruth, in 2011. He is survived by four children and their spouses and by 12 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Further information on recently deceased ministers is available at thebanner.org.

Richard Johnson with Seymour CRC prayer warrior Bea Boorsma.



Michigan Church Welcomes Returning Citizens

For people leaving correctional institutions, Seymour Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., provides a healing community that welcomes them as they return to society. The church is part of Healing Communities, a nationwide fellowship of churches that welcomes and nourishes returning citizens.

Larry Van Zee has been involved in reentry ministry for six years on behalf of Seymour CRC and Celebration Fellowship CRC. Celebration Fellowship is a congregation within a correctional facility. Van Zee serves on the outside as a mentor to returning citizens. As part of his role, he introduces returning prisoners to the Seymour congregation.

"The welcoming part is very significant," Van Zee said. "This is especially true when it comes to returning citizens who have served time for sexual offenses."

While the church welcomes ex-prisoners, it tries to strike a balance between Christian hos-

pitality and member safety. Van Zee said, "We, as Christians, must welcome them, realizing that we are also sinners, while at the same time providing a 'safe church.'" The Michigan Department of Corrections requires returning citizens with criminal sexual conduct (CSC) cases to be monitored by surveillance, including an unobtrusive GPS tether and an escort who accompanies them to restrooms.

Van Zee engages with returning citizens during the week, taking former prisoners out for lunch, accompanying them to the parole office, or picking them up and taking them to church on Sunday. Seymour reimburses Van Zee for ministry expenses.

Members of Seymour CRC play a less structured role with the returning citizens. Van Zee said, "Various people engage with returning citizens who attend Seymour. I may not know when a returning citizen is invited for dinner or taken out for coffee. [Bea Boorsma] is a prayer warrior on behalf of returning citizens. This is greatly appreciated."

Three returning citizens have become members of Seymour CRC. All three had been charged with criminal sexual misconduct. In a promising start to their new lives outside the correctional facility, these men have told Van Zee they feel welcome at Seymour.

Richard Johnson, a returning citizen who does not have a CSC case, has been attending Seymour CRC and meeting with Van Zee for more than two years. "Chaplain Larry spent a lot of time with me in the Word," said Johnson. "He's a wonderful guy, and the church makes me feel welcome. It's an all-Caucasian church, which I'm not used to. But being a black African American, I'm feeling like there's no color in this church. That's how welcome they make me feel!"

Johnson has been getting to know the people of Seymour CRC. "I know quite a few people, but I don't remember their names. But they remember mine, so to me that's good enough."

—Rachel Baarda



Aaron Romo with his piano instructor, Abraham Perez.

California Community Center Helps Church Reach Out

“Watching the children perform is amazing. Wow!”

That was the reaction of Stewart Treiling at a music recital at the Sol del Valle Community Center in Sun Valley, Calif. Treiling is president of the community center’s board and a member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Sun Valley.

Sol de Valle offers music lessons to kids at four times less the rates charged by private instructors. Georgette Soderlund-Baza, executive director of the center, said “We are excited to have music instructors open up those gifts in the children of our community who may not otherwise have these opportunities.” There is also a weekly free children’s choir.

The center was established by Bethel CRC in 1987 as a space to interact with the community in a non-church setting, according to pastor Micah Bruxvoort. Located on Bethel’s campus, the center hosts art classes, after-school enrichment and tutoring, sports, summer day camps for children and youth, adult citizenship, job search skill development courses, and ESL classes—all needed services in the community.

Abraham Perez, Sol de Valle’s music director, said, “Bethel CRC supports our community by offering time and gifts. Our community is mostly Latino/Hispanic families where both mother and father are working the whole day. We give their children part of our day.”

“Los Angeles is a hectic, busy place,” said Treiling. Through donors, 11 staff, and 20 volunteers, the center “is a safe haven for parents, children, and young adults.”

—Shashi DeHaan

News Digest



Global Gifts Offers Hope around the World

Global Gifts, a Fair Trade store supported by several Christian Reformed churches in Grand Rapids, Mich., is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year and recently reopened at a new location.

Inclusion Is a Team Effort for Silver Spring Church

Education and resources about mental illness at Silver Spring (Md.) Christian Reformed Church are the result of a team effort. The church regards inclusion of all people, regardless of ability or disability, as a justice issue.

Indiana Church Explores Islam and America

Close to 100 people gathered at Church of the Savior Christian Reformed Church in South Bend, Ind., for a discussion on Islam and America. John Haas, organizer of the event, said, “We want our Muslim neighbors to know Christians are peacemakers. We also want our church members to be well informed about our American traditions of tolerance and the free exercise of religion, the rule of law, as well as our history of at times overreacting out of fear towards various minorities. We want to take seriously the application of our faith to world events and our community.”

Ontario Young Adult Event Continues to Grow

Organized by and for Christian Reformed young adults in Ontario, the fourth annual Young Adult Winter Retreat continues to draw more people every year. “It’s [an] event that seems to be meeting an important need,” said Phil Nywening. By gathering and connecting young adults, he said, the event helps “tackle issues relevant to young adults and our role in church and society.”



For more on these and other stories, please visit thebanner.org.

—Banner Correspondents

NEWS

Highlights of 2016 Winter Classis Meetings

Two or three times each year, Christian Reformed churches send representatives to their classis, a regional grouping of churches. Delegates at those meetings review and make decisions about shared ministries and practice mutual accountability for their congregations' individual ministries. Here are the highlights of some of the most recent classis meetings.

Several people were **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church**,

including seminary graduates Hyeon (Tony) Bang, Blake Campbell, Shelby Gemmen, David Groen, Daniel Jin Su Hwang, Ed Jiang, Erick Kamp, Brandon Kim, Kristy Manion, Janina Mobach, Karis Mpindi, Mark Vander Werf, Corey Van Huizen, and Lesli Van Milligen.

Transferred in from other denominations were the following: Jeff Funk, Julius Umawing, Sherman Lii, Kei Lian Mang, Shu-Min (Grace) Cheng, Tomas Ivens, Wonki Kim, and Jong Kim.

Karis Mpindi, Chris Fluit, and Dongwon Na were **loaned to other denominations**.

Revs. Sam Gutierrez, Ron Smeding, Walt Vanderwerf, Sam Perry, Richard Jones, Alison Jones, and John Koster were **released from their congregations**.

Ferry Yang, Richard De Vries, Jin Soo Yoo, Chris Mitchell, DongEun Woo, and Timothy Van Zalen were **released from ministry in the CRC**. Ron Black and Joshua Holwerda were **dismissed from ministry in the CRC**.

An emerging church does not have its own council and is under the care of a council of a neighboring Christian Reformed church. An organized church has its own council. **The following churches were organized:** Celebration Fellowship Prison Church, consisting of congregations in three correctional facilities, and Hope CRC, Ann Arbor, Mich.

Blanket Exercise

Synod 2015 encouraged churches and classes to hold the Blanket Exercise in preparation for Synod 2016's discussion of the Doctrine of Discovery. Classes Toronto and Hamilton held the Blanket Exercise.

Synod 2016—Doctrine of Discovery

Classis Red Mesa overtured Synod 2016 to **suspend adopting the Doctrine of Discovery** report until further discussion among the Navajo and Zuni churches.

Synod 2016—Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-Sex Marriage

Classis Grandville overtured Synod 2016 to declare that the Canadian and United States **governments have acted outside their sphere of legitimate authority** by redefining marriage so as to include same-sex relationships.

Classes Illiana, Zeeland, Pacific Northwest, Heartland, and Toronto overtured Synod 2016 to **reject the report** of the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-Sex Marriage.

Classis Holland overtured Synod 2016 to reject the report from committee and **acknowledge the report's dismissive**

Dordt College Hosts Global Agriculture Summit



KYLE HOOGENDOORN

Kisongo Mbelaulu from Minnesota works with chicken farmers and women starting businesses in his native Republic of Congo.

his work with chicken farmers and women starting their own small businesses. He came to this conference to get help with these projects and said he was very encouraged by what he learned.

Over 650 people attended the summit. According to Sonya Jongsma Knauss, director of public relations for the college, Dordt doesn't plan on holding a big ag summit like this every year, but they do hope to have some regional summits. "This was the first time Dordt has hosted something of this magnitude. The goal is to host something on this scale again, potentially every second or third year," she said. "In the other years, Dordt will continue hosting the more regionally focused ag summit."

—Kyle Hoogendoorn

Sanjeev Sable and Nikhil Ratnam came to share their mission. The successful entrepreneurs presented their work with hydroponics—cultivating plants by placing them in liquid nutrient solutions instead of soil—as well as micro-dairy goat farming. They explained how these practices are being used in their native India in the two companies they started. But they also ended up learning from others.

They were part of Dordt College's first Global Agriculture Summit held in early March in Sioux Center, Iowa.

People and businesses from the local community and from around the world took part in sessions on many topics, including "Rangelands: Unique Peoples, Unique Challenges, Soil Care and Management." This conference was put on by the college as well as several other organizations including Partners Worldwide, Bread for the World, and World Renew.

Sable and Ratnam were not the only ones who took something tangible home with them. Kisongo Mbelaulu is from Minnesota. He goes back to his native Republic of Congo twice a year for a couple of weeks to continue

tone toward the church's ethnic minority community.

Classis lakota overtured Synod 2016 to, in areas of disagreement, **adopt the minority report of the committee**, specifically regarding officiating weddings, playing a role in weddings, and membership.

Several classes requested that Synod 2016 **recommit the report to the current committee, dismiss the committee, or form a new committee.**

Classis Grand Rapids East sent a **communication** to Synod 2016 **offering its own report** on same-sex marriage.

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan overtured Synod 2016 to **appoint up to seven advisors who are same-sex oriented** to each synod in the same manner that ethnic and women advisors are appointed.

Synod 2016—Other Overtures

Classis Holland overtured Synod 2016 to **maintain a panel of female advisors to synod**, regardless of the number of female delegates.

Classis Hamilton overtured Synod 2016 to form a task force to address the **equity in classis-based funding for students** attending Calvin Theological Seminary, including the challenges faced by Canadian students.

Classis lakota overtured Synod 2016 to **redesign the ministry shares system** with an eye toward resourcing and equipping the local congregation.

—Banner Staff



Faryn Gysen with all 287 purses at the purse-packing party.

Thunder Bay Teen Collects Purses for Women in Need

"Every woman loves a purse, and every woman should have one." This simple idea inspired Faryn Gysen, 14, to bring the hope of Christ on Easter to 287 women in need. Each woman received a purse filled with toiletries, a New Testament, devotional book, gift cards, and more. Gysen, who is a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Thunder Bay, Ont., calls it Project Purse.

"My mom saw a Facebook post from Texas where the idea was pack [a] purse and keep it in your vehicle, and when you see a woman [who is homeless], give it to her," said Gysen. "God put it on my heart to take it further."

What started in late January as a small drop box for purses and toiletries at her church turned into seven drop-off locations and a Facebook group with over 900 members. On March 21, approximately 30 people participated in a purse-packing party complete with door prizes and refreshments. "I felt very blessed. People want to help," said Gysen.

Gysen distributed the purses to seven charitable organizations in the Thunder Bay area that sup-

port women who are homeless, recovering from addictions, fleeing abusive situations, transitioning into society following incarceration, or have other needs. Geysen and her family members passed out some purses directly to the women on Easter weekend.

Angela Gysen, Faryn's mom, said, "[The women] especially seemed to like picking out their purse. We were able to talk to many of them while helping them do this. It was so awesome to see them all leaving the Shelter House with a purse on their shoulder!"

The Gysen family visited the organizations and learned how

they are actively supporting women in their own community. Faryn said it was eye-opening to see how the organizations help people who are homeless.

Gysen hopes to make Project Purse an annual event. Angela Gysen said, "Faryn would like to encourage others to start a Project Purse where they live. You will most certainly be blessed while being a blessing to others!"

—Amy Toornstra

Faryn Gysen with the purse drop-off box at First Christian Reformed Church.



Americans See Religious Liberty Sliding While Intolerance (and Whining) Rise

Most U.S. adults say religious liberty is declining in America, and Christians face more intolerance than ever. But nearly four in 10 also say Christians “complain too much about how they are treated,” according to a new LifeWay Research survey.

The Nashville-based researchers surveyed 1,000 Americans in September 2013 and again in September 2015. The 2015 survey was conducted a few weeks after Kentucky clerk Kim Davis served five days in jail and made international headlines for refusing to sign marriage licenses for gay couples.

The survey, released in March, found that

- 63 percent of U.S. adults overall say Christians face increasing intolerance, up from 50 percent in 2013.
- 60 percent say religious liberty is declining, up from 54 percent.
- 43 percent say American Christians complain too much about how they are treated, up from 34 percent.

“The significant increase is worth attention,” said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research, because it is about the rights of faith-based institutions such as schools, colleges, and charities to hire according to their faith, “not about a faux ‘War on Christmas.’”

However, he said, while Christian organizations are fighting for their liberties, “some Christians are whining about Starbucks’ red cups (that did not say “Merry Christmas” on the side). There are real issues here, but Christians need to pick their battles like discerning adults, not complaining children,” said Stetzer.

The survey didn’t ask about the rights of business owners, based on their religious beliefs, to refuse gay couples’ request to rent a venue or purchase cakes or flowers for a wedding. The issues of employment and public accommodations for LGBT people are being fought in several state legislatures.

The Supreme Court is wrestling with a case in which faith-based groups refuse to comply with the Affordable Care Act’s mandate to allow their insurer to cover free contraception for employees.

In addition, 65 percent of people of other faiths, including Jews, Muslims, and other minority religions, agree. Stetzer noted that even 46 percent of “nones”—people who claim no religious identity—also saw religious liberty declining.

Seven in 10 Christians—including 82 percent of evangelicals and 76 percent of people who say they attend church at least once a week—say they face increasing intolerance. However, only 43 percent of people of other faiths and 48 percent of religiously unaffiliated agree.

Those who say Christian complaints about treatment are “excessive” include

- 38 percent of Christians.
- 39 percent of Americans of other faiths.
- 59 percent of nones.
- 53 percent of Americans—secular or religious—who rarely or never attend worship.

—Religion News Service



Panelists (L-r): Rabbi Aaron Greenberg, Imam Muneeb Nasir, and Father Damian MacPherson.

CRC Campus Ministry Organizes Interfaith Panel on Religious Violence

Why is interfaith dialogue important? For Rev. Shiao Chong, collaboration is an important part of working toward the common good. In February, Chong, a Christian Reformed chaplain at York University and director of LOGOS Christian Community, organized an interfaith panel discussion titled “Not in God’s Name” at York’s Vanier College in Toronto, Ont.

The panelists, including representatives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, addressed the stereotype that religions are the source of conflict and explained that religious violence is not condoned in each of these faith traditions.

After the Paris terror attacks, Chong knew that a panel discussion on religious violence was timely and would be relevant as interfaith interaction is a daily part of campus life.

“The Paris shootings in November crystallized the topic of our interfaith event,” he said. The event title, “Not in God’s Name,” came from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks’ recent book with that title. Speaker Rabbi Greenberg drew from Sacks’ ideas to suggest that religious justification results from a narrow reading of the text and that violent religious groups take Scripture out of context. Greenberg also highlighted how the Hebrew Bible stresses loving the stranger, the “other” who is different.

Father MacPherson spoke about the doctrine of holy war, lamenting the past when Christians used religion to justify violence even though Jesus preached nonviolence and loving our enemies. Imam Nasir pointed out how religion becomes a scapegoat. Looking at our common humanity, what draws us together, is vital in building interfaith relationships and dispelling the myths, he said.

“With the three main monotheistic religions working together to speak out against violence done in the name of religion, we hope to demonstrate that different religious groups can collaborate peacefully toward shared goals for the common good,” said Chong. “I think we achieved that goal.”

Attendee Greg Sinclair, a member of New Hope Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ont., attended because interfaith dialogue is important in his role with Christian Reformed World Missions. “I appreciated the questions asked; [there was] a good spirit of dialogue and engaging with each other,” said Sinclair.

—by Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

Why I Want You to Invite Me Out for Coffee

As part of the Jubilee Fellows program at Calvin College, I get to meet every week over dinner and engage in a seminar-style class with other pre-ministry students. One of the greatest joys of my time as a student has been getting to know professors and pastors who have shaped my life with their wisdom and care. In the midst of a discussion about young people and the church, Rev. Dale Cooper asked, "How could someone like me, in this later season of my life, be of service to young people like you in the church?" As students wrestling with our own calls to various types of ministry, we care deeply about both the churches that raised many of us and the churches in which we are all active now. The following is my response to Dale Cooper's question.

WHY WOULD I, a millennial, want you, a pastor, to ask me out to coffee next Sunday?

It occurs to me that I never told you why this is so important to me, and why it meant so much that you asked. Forgive me, I hadn't yet gotten to the bottom of it, but I think have now.

It's love. When I say I want you to ask me to coffee, it's because I long for relationships and community. Which are really just fancy ways of saying that I long for love from other people.

As an average millennial, I don't honestly know that much about love. Facebook doesn't love me. Neither does my church's Twitter feed, or my Netflix addiction, or my textbooks, or my overloaded schedule, or the stuff I buy. Teach me how to love. Please. The television I grew up watching while my parents were in the room next door arguing about their divorce couldn't teach me that. The mishmash of schools and churches I attended in all the displaced places I've lived didn't teach me either. Neither did my resume of extracurricular activities or community service experiences.

You want me to come to church. But I, a millennial, don't love it.

I might like it, or be accustomed to it, or appreciate it, or tolerate it, or be interested in it. But I don't really love it. Yet. Because, chances are, it didn't love me first. It offered me programs and small groups and pizza and games and a new website and songs for my generation and podcasts and mission trips and »

Teach me to love, and I'll know what to fall back on when I have to deal with my college debt and the national debt crisis and whatever comes my way.



comfy seats and sex ed and a worldview and a vocabulary and good theology and parking spaces and books and more books and maybe even a whole education. Good things.

But it never taught me the first thing.

You, though, can. You can love me first. God showed you how. He loved us first, took the initiative, won our hearts. So take the initiative. Ask me to coffee. This Sunday. And no, I don't need you to love me perfectly—you can't. I have God for that. Love covers a multitude of sins, and it will cover ours. But I need you teach me what love looks like in person. In the church. To break through the barriers of my technology and trust issues and anxiety and debt and depression.

And, by the way, if you do this, you better believe I'll be back next Sunday. Win my heart for Christ and his church and you've given birth to something that will go on forever even after you die. Teach me to love, and I'll know what to fall back on when I have to deal with my college debt and the national debt crisis and whatever comes my way. Because even when my faith fails me and my hope turns to despair, that love will still be there. I will fall back on it—I will have to. It will remain, because it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

Love is not passive. Or disinterested, or disengaged. It overcame death, and it can certainly overcome my apathy and cut through my fear of making choices.

So ask me to coffee. The conversation might be awkward. Some of us millennials aren't always the best at talking to older people. Or people in general, for that matter. T.V. and daycare didn't teach us that either. Vulnerability in relationships is awkward and hard. It's part of the reason I want to put off getting married or putting down roots or having kids. That terrifies me. It's part of the reason I travel around to different churches and get my fix of whatever I think I need by tinkering with truth. That feels like enough, or at least all there is. To be "rooted and grounded" in love that is deep and wide and high is something I most likely haven't seen modeled (or fully realized and engaged with, even if it was there). It's a bit of a foreign concept. So, this going-out-for-coffee thing might very well be a bit uncomfortable for both of us. Risky things generally are.

And, to be clear, I don't need you to impart some kind of perfect wisdom or healing in this conversation. I know you're not God, so the pressure's off. In fact, it might be kind of nice

just to sit with you. To share in one of your moments in between the big, trying, Hebrews 11-y moments when your faithfulness is something simple that could otherwise be mistaken for a mundane waste of time. Let's *be* together, before we *do* together. I don't know what we'll talk about or where the relationship will go next. Maybe we can teach each other.

But you taking that first simple step, that risk, that initiative, would mean the world to me.

I don't want you to do this. I live in a world that caters to my wants and manipulates them in every commercial. I know that game. No, I *need* you to do this. And I need you to do it without any strings attached. In my over-committed, over-caffeinated world, it's hard for me to receive love when I feel like I have to immediately make room in my schedule to return the favor. I will give back. Trust me. But it will be oh-so-much richer for all of us when I can give back the true love that I have received. Without guilt, from the abundance of my heart.

You showing me love might be the introduction I need to the God who so desires to win my heart. Or, if I already know and love God, it might be the love I need to receive again before I can go forward and disciple the freshmen in my dorm, the eighth graders in my church, or my family members who don't yet know Christ. Regardless of where I am in this journey, I need my church to show me love. So that I can love it back, and so you and I can both go into the world and make disciples.

I'm a millennial. I'm over here, in the church lobby, by the books. I'm the one glancing at my smartphone, holding program pamphlets, chatting with other people my age. Maybe I look closed off. Don't let that scare you. Come say hi.

Ask me out for coffee. ■



Hannah Biggs, a student at Calvin College, is from Zionsville, Ind. She is a member of Madison Square Church.



What Millennials Need from the Church



THE CHURCH has always had a problem keeping its young adults, it seems. How many parents and pastors have watched their kids grow out of the church like a hand-me-down sweatshirt? It's almost a given that your average church will have programming for kids, teenagers, families, and seniors, but not much for young adults. Some churches have tried. Pizza and movie nights, "what's on tap" discussions at local pubs, meet-and-greets for young singles, and a whole host of creative if not desperate programming has been targeting young adults for some time. But with little success.

What should we make of all this?

The Exodus

Theories abound as to why young adults are leaving the church. The wild 60s? The secular 70s? The abundant 80s? The who-cares 90s? And so on. Surely there are significant cultural or social reasons for why our youth are leaving the church as young adults, perhaps only to return upon marrying or having children, if at all. »



TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS AREN'T LOOKING FOR "CHURCH LITE." INSTEAD, THEY WANT IN-DEPTH STUDY OF THE BIBLE, OF THEOLOGY, AND OF THE CHURCH'S TRADITIONS.

Some contend that the problem is not in the big cultural shifts, it's closer to home. It's the church. The church's music is unappealing to young people, or the preaching is irrelevant to their lives, or worship needs to be more lively.

In the end, the possible reasons for this exodus seem endless. And people in the church are left with confusion and anxiety.

But we are beginning to understand the problem. In recent years several important studies have been conducted on young adulthood, faith identity, and church life. Some of the most important findings in the last decade come from sociologist Christian Smith's studies of teenagers and young adults (see sidebar).

What is striking about American teenagers and young adults, he says, is not that they don't care about religion or spirituality, but that they do. Young people do care about religion and spirituality, he suggests, just not in conventional ways. Contrary to widespread conversations around the coffee pot at church, American young people are no more secular, no more hostile to God, and no more anti-religion than previous generations. There remains an openness to God, religion, and spirituality among young adults.

While this is good news, it is cold comfort to the pastors who preside over the empty pews where teenagers once sat. Or to the parents who fret over their children's exodus from church. They're left asking, "So where have all the young people gone, and what do we do about it?"

A New Category

Christian Smith points out that throughout the first half of the 20th century, achieving adulthood was a straightforward process. For young men the goal

was to get a job right out of high school, or, for a few fortunate ones, to attend college first. Then get married, have children, and settle down. For young women the aim was to get married and start a family. The transition from adolescence to adulthood took little more than a few years and followed well-established patterns.

Following the 1970s, there was a sharp increase in the median age for marriage: by 2006 the average age was 27 for men and 25 for women. Not only were young adults marrying later, but they were having children much later too. By the end of the 20th century, the process of becoming an adult was far less clear.

Today the transition from adolescence to adulthood may well take 10 years or more. These days it's not unusual for people to come to the conventional marks of adulthood—a stable job, marriage, and children—in their late 20s or early 30s. Because of this, Smith suggests that we are seeing a new category of development: emerging adulthood. During this longer period, young people may be neither fully adolescent or fully adult, but share features of both. They may move fluidly between the two stages, sometimes seeming stable and independent and other times unstable and dependent. The upshot is that we can no longer assume that by her early 20s a young person will be ready for all the tasks and responsibilities of adulthood.

What does all this mean for how today's young adults relate to the church? Smith discovered that while young adults do not practice their religious faith in the same way their parents or grandparents did—for example, by attending services and participating in programs—they are not necessarily more secular or anti-religious than previous generations.

So why do emerging adults participate less in church life? A key reason is that they tend to be disconnected from structured institutions like the church.

And churches don't always help. They tend to focus on families, with programs for children, parents, empty-nesters, and even seniors. In other words, churches tend to focus on features of the life cycle that emerging adults have yet to achieve, namely, marriage, children, and being settled.

What, then, to do?

Identity Grows Out of Involvement

As we've noted, pizza parties and praise bands are not the answer. Researchers have found that the single most important factor predicting whether a young adult will remain active in church is the role that adults have played in that person's life from childhood into adulthood. In fact, parents play the biggest role when it comes to nurturing church life for young people. To the degree that parents are actively engaged in the life of their church, their children are likely to follow. In a similar way, the more adults that are engaged in a young person's life—as teachers, mentors, role models, friends—the more likely it is for that young person to remain engaged with the church. The influence of parents and other adult relationships in a young person's life has more impact than the influence of her peers, youth group, mission trips, Christian schooling, or any other activity or program the church offers.

Beyond that significant adult interaction, churches need to engage and involve children, teens, and young adults frequently and consistently in the real life of the church. Churches often carry out "youth ministry" by shunting teens and young adults off to the side of their main activities. Young people have their own room, their own pastor, and their own activities. Instead of strengthening their identity with the church, this trains them to find their identity in these specialized youth activities and ministries rather than in the main hub of the church.

Churches would do far better by including youth and young adults in worship and worship planning, placing them in leadership roles, and having them weigh in on what they want and expect from their church. In other words, young people's identity with the church grows out of real involvement with the church.

One of Smith's researchers, youth ministry expert Kenda Creasy Dean (see sidebar), uses the term "consequential faith" to describe what happens when young people benefit from learning and experiencing such involvement with the church. Consequential faith has confessional and creedal depth, a sense of intimately belonging to a community, and a vital belief that God has a purpose for our life. Teens and young adults aren't looking for "church lite." Instead, they want in-depth study of the Bible, of theology, and of the church's traditions.

I suggest that this more in-depth learning should not take place in separate programs for teenagers or young adults. It's better if they take place within an intergenerational setting and during regular church events, such as the Sunday school hour or on Wednesday evening gatherings.

One church I know of has a monthly intergenerational Sunday school class, with people across generations gathering

around tables. These classes are fostering relationships that help people of all ages identify as belonging to one another. Not only is that church offering a "creed to believe," but it is also building community in which to live it out.

If a sense of belonging to a Christian community is the biggest predictor of a lifelong faith and commitment to the church, it follows that young adults ought to be involved with mature adults. To make this happen, perhaps every church should intentionally foster significant involvement of three to five adults with each young person in the congregation, encouraging adults to serve as mentors, church school teachers, or even Facebook friends. With that kind of friendship, mentoring, and modeling, young people find it much more natural to take on responsibilities and leadership in the church.

From the foundation of a sense of real community can come a sense of purpose for one's life. When young people are exposed to the red-hot faith of the living saints in our churches, their own commitment grows, and they are more clearly attuned to hearing God's call for their life. So let's encourage the mature believers in our midst to tell their stories of God's work in their lives and their own discipleship as a way to connect young people with the challenges and blessing

of a life of faith. Sharing our stories need not come by way of a formal program if we provide lots of opportunities to do it by way of educational and mentoring moments. The key is not the delivery mechanism but the stories that must be told by everyday Christians in an effort to raise up the next generation.

Dean urges churches to stop getting young people "involved" in the church by merely setting up chairs and taking out the garbage after a potluck dinner. Far from it, in an effort to instill consequential faith into their youth, churches need to include young people—from an early age—in the most important aspects of church life. In other words, we need to tell and show young adults that they matter tremendously for the wellbeing of the church. To accomplish this, churches should strive to be as intergenerational as they can in all things—in worship, in study, in mission, in leadership.

The problem of young adults leaving the church is real. But the solution, as we've seen, may be closer than we think. The more young people are involved in the real life of the church, the more likely they are to be engaged in the church for the long haul.

There is no magic formula or perfect program when it comes to engaging young people in the life of the church. Contemporary music, dynamic preaching, and engaging programs may be less important than we imagine. More to the point, young people need a creed to believe in, a community to belong to, and a hope to bet their life on.

Building meaningful relationships across generational lines will carry the day. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE

Digging Deeper

This article is based on a number of published research findings, including the following:

- Jeffrey Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)
- Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010)
- Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).



Todd Cioffi is assistant professor in the Department of Congregational and Ministry Studies and co-director of the Calvin Prison Initiative at Calvin College.



Groups of believers play a significant role in missionaries' ongoing efforts to share Christ in West Africa.

Shining a Light in the Darkness

by Brian Clark

Around the globe, many people are following the command from Isaiah 60 to “arise, shine” in a world that is “covered in darkness.” They let their love for Christ shine around the world in unique ways. Here are three stories from places where the darkness is being overcome.

When Becca* arrived in a rural West African village more than 20 years ago, she felt a sense of confirmation. She knew that she was exactly where God wanted her to be.

Living in an area with almost no other Christians, she recognized the challenge she was facing: to show through her words and actions what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Becca quickly became friends with her next-door neighbor. Her visits with this woman over a cup of tea were a natural way to develop her language skills while also beginning a genuine friendship and sharing her faith.

“From the very beginning, I felt God calling me to reach out to this woman,” recalled Becca. “Our conversations didn’t really seem to bear much visible fruit, but we’ve remained friends over the years.”

Becca isn’t sure exactly how it happened, but her home quickly became a community center. The open-door policy she adopted early on turned her home into a gathering place for youth in the community.

“It’s a place where young people come and play games, share meals, and just hang out,” she said. “When it’s less crowded, there are times of sharing meaningful conversa-

tions. I am always looking for teachable moments.

“It’s like they are my kids.”

Gambo* is one of Becca’s “kids.” Several times each week, he walks over from the house where Becca first went for tea many years ago—his grandmother’s house.

While these events are great for building friendships, Becca also sets aside time for conversations about faith.

When she first began, she led the conversations, but today this West African town is home to a group of believers that she has helped to disciple over the years. Now they play a significant role

You add.
God multiplies.

in her efforts to share Christ with others.

“When people see me living out the gospel, they aren’t sure if it’s because of my culture, ethnicity, nationality, or religion,” said Becca. “But when they see their own people transformed by Christ, they begin to understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus.”

Becca and some of these believers take part in overnight faith retreats with small groups of Muslims who have expressed interest in the Christian faith. Together they share what they believe and break down misconceptions that they might have about one another’s faith.

Not long ago, Gambo joined others on one of these retreats. He fell asleep pondering the conversations he had been having, and that’s when he found Christ. He dreamed that while he was away, someone had left a cross at his home. That vision spoke to him of taking up his cross and following Jesus.

Typically at this stage, new believers would be disciplined in private by more mature believers. They would not be pushed to immediately make a public confession of faith or to stop going to the mosque but would be encouraged to follow the Spirit’s leading for the timing of these events.

But Gambo’s case was different. Right away, he boldly confessed his newfound faith, accepting the persecution that would inevitably follow.

“I believe that Gambo is the fruit of years of praying for and sowing into his extended family,” said Becca. ■

“When they see their own people transformed by Christ, they understand...”



Overcoming Persecution in the Middle East

The Christians of the Middle East can’t forget,” said Noah,* referring to a long history of persecution.

Noah, who serves with Christian Reformed World Missions in this region, explained: “That’s why they’re also wary whenever it comes to a person converting to the Christian faith.”

“Not only will such a person be considered a black sheep who incites pain and anger among their fellow Muslim villagers, but that person may also be a wolf in sheep’s clothing who will bring more suffering and pain to the church that’s already bruised and bleeding.”

Noah disciplined Abdu,* leading him first to take small steps in faith and later bigger ones.

One of the greatest struggles Abdu has had to endure is keeping his faith a secret from his in-laws—who live in the same apartment building as he does and who watch his children and take them to school.

They are conservative Wahabi Muslims, and Abdu’s father-in-law is a high-ranking official with the secret police.

Still, Abdu has been able to share his faith with his wife, and he wants deeply for her to believe as he now believes. So he lives out his faith through his actions to her and his family.

“I’ve never seen anyone who loves his wife like Abdu,” says Noah. “Abdu not only supports his family, but he also helps his wife experience freedoms that the other veiled women in her extended family will never have.”

Abdu’s wife has agreed to go to church a few times, and she says she sees herself as somewhere in between her “black sheep” husband and her family’s beliefs.

A conversation that Noah recently had with Abdu and his wife gives him hope. She was reflecting on her most recent church visit and said that through her interactions with the people there she realized something.



Believers in the Middle East are shining their lights amid spiritual darkness.

“She said she saw us in our many ethnicities and ages and the closeness between us,” said Noah. “She felt the warmth of our fellowship, and she heard the worship and prayers and knew she was seeing something of God.”

“God is giving light to her eyes and making our little church be a beacon of authenticity and truth.” ■

»

» Overcoming Gang Violence in El Salvador

For the last few years in San Salvador, El Salvador, Fernanda participated enthusiastically in every Timothy Leadership Training module offered by Christian Reformed missionaries.

“As myself and a man named Gerardo facilitated her second-to-last course, we saw her eyes brighten even more than usual,” recalled Rachel Beveridge, who serves with World Missions in El Salvador.

The reason was Fernanda’s plan to help transform her community. She recognized that youth spend a lot of time on the street—where they are susceptible to gang recruitment—or at home alone or with other siblings because their parents are at work.

Fast-forward five months: Fernanda is the director of Timothy Homework Club, a center that serves 28 children and youth ages 6 to 17. Kids go five days a week, either in the morning or afternoon, depending on their school schedule.

“They receive help with their homework, have access to computers, do crafts, play foosball, and have a safe place to hang out,” said Beveridge.

What’s more, Fernanda joined other leaders who are part of the leadership network established by Seeds of a New



Creation, World Missions’ ministry partner in El Salvador. Here she receives further leadership training and gains inspiration from others who have similar ministry projects.

At a recent “Seeds Breakfast,” a time for leaders to share their projects with one another, Fernanda reported on the Timothy Homework Club.

“Seeds is thrilled to play a role in this project and to provide training that inspires and strengthens this and other initiatives,” Beveridge added.

Missionaries and the people they work alongside are shining light into some of the world’s darkest places. In many cases, they are regularly reminded of the power of sin.

Since leaving for school, Gambo has faced more persecution in his new community. Abdu must continually hide his true source of joy from his in-laws. Fernanda has faced threats from gang members, and the Timothy Homework Club had to close for a few weeks.

Still, the missionaries recognize that they are called to continue letting their

Rachel Beveridge works alongside believers like Fernanda to improve the lives of youth in San Salvador.

light shine and leave the rest up to the Holy Spirit. They recognize that this hard work is already leading to a brighter future.

“The church is waking up. The church is taking courage. There are times when I think that believers living in these dark places will renew the faith of us all,” said Noah. ■

**Names have been changed.*

Please Pray for Missionaries

- Pray that new believers will find the guidance they need for dealing with possible persecution.
- Pray for the safety of those who live in communities with gang activity.
- Pray that Christians in North America will recognize ways that we can learn from people living in persecution.



Brian Clark is a writer with Christian Reformed World Missions.

You add.
God multiplies.

Proclaiming the Gospel to Children

For the past six months, Indonesian youth in North Sumatra and West Kalimantan have been studying and discussing the Bible.

Teachers using Indonesian-language children's devotionals produced by Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) are helping students learn what it means to follow Jesus.

Delima works as a coordinator for a welfare community in North Sumatra. She is passionate about mentoring young people. During a visit in May, the BTGMI Indonesian team learned that she regularly met with a group of five to 10 primary school students in her home to assist with homework and share Bible stories.

Reverend Lukas Banne, the listener community coordinator for BTGMI Indonesian outreach, said, "Since that visit, we have routinely sent Delima copies of our *Kiddy* devotional booklets."



Children in Delima's classroom show their *Kiddy* devotionals.

Kiddy, a daily devotional for young children, is available online and in print.

"We are thankful to report that the group has grown," Banne added. "Now there are about 35 children who come together every week."

While Delima is mentoring youth on the island of Sumatra, Mr. Robin T. is reaching junior high youth in West Kalimantan.

Creating Lifelong Followers of Jesus

Scott is a dad who recently wrote to *Kids Corner*, the children's outreach of ReFrame Media. He and his family live in Texas, where they attend church regularly, send their son to the local Christian school, and raise him in a Christian home.

Like many Christian parents, Scott aims to engage his family in faith and biblical understanding through every aspect of life.

Driving to work one Saturday morning, Scott found the *Kids Corner* broadcast while scanning his radio. He came home and immediately shared the Bible program with his 7-year-old son.

"We introduced our son to the *Kids Corner* online episodes before bedtime," Scott wrote.

Kids Corner is produced by Reframe Media, BTGMI's English outreach.



Kids Corner can be found at kidscorner.net

"*Kids Corner* tells stories of individuals who are trying to find their role within God's story," explains Ron Vandenburg, *Kids Corner* producer. "Children and families hear the fun adventures of characters who are living within God's story, applying biblical truths, failing and stumbling, but still finding ways to serve God and serve each other."

Robin, a Christian religion teacher at a middle school, works with 85 students. Ten of his students are Christians, while the others practice Confucianism.

The BTGMI Indonesian ministry team met Robin last September and discovered his need for Christian resources to share with his students.

"Starting in October, we've sent 85 copies of our *Teens for Christ* devotional booklets for religious study materials," said Banne. In addition to the devotional, the team is also working to send Bibles, since the students currently only have the New Testament.

Robin asks his students to take notes while reading *Teens for Christ* and their Bibles every day. They continue to have weekly discussions in class about their faith-based discoveries.

Please pray that God will use these opportunities to open the hearts of these Indonesian youth so they will know Jesus and accept him as their Savior. ■

—by Kristen Fergus Van Stee,
Back to God Ministries International

Since incorporating the program into their daily routine, Scott's family has been touched by its message. He testifies, "It is a blessing to our family to have *Kids Corner* stories reinforcing what our son learns in school, at church, and at home. I am confident the stories have had a good influence on our son."

"A lot of media choices are out there," acknowledges Vandenburg, but this program is different. He continues, "*Kids Corner* stories, along with KC family resources, give families important moments to talk about how to live out God's story."

As a result of listening to *Kids Corner*, young Christians like Scott's son are developing a lifelong relationship with Jesus. Learn more at kidscorner.net. ■

—Kristen Fergus Van Stee

Practicing Civility in an Uncivil World

“**C**ivility: formal politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech” (Oxford).

I’m afraid that the word *civility* has dropped out of many of our vocabularies, for behavior and speech today are often anything but polite or courteous.

As I often do before writing this column, I read what others are saying. While Richard Mouw’s book *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* has sat on my bookshelf for a couple of decades, I noticed that he recently revised this book. He explains why in the introduction.

When he first wrote the book, said Mouw, “I was thinking mainly about the incivility that was running wild on the international scene, especially insofar as religious differences

seemed to be at the root of much of the mean-spiritedness: growing tensions—soon to be vicious warfare—between Muslims and Christians in Bosnia; Arabs versus Jews in the Middle East; Catholic versus Protestants in Northern Ireland.”

In his new edition, Mouw notes that incivility is now much closer to home: “Bloggers sit daily at their keyboards to spew forth hatred. ‘Experts’ shout at each other on our 24/7 cable news channels.”

I don’t think we need a walk through the whole Bible to convince us that civility should be part of witness. Let’s focus on Galatians 5: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” While *civility* is not specifically mentioned, I believe words like forbearance (patience), gentleness, and self-control suggest that civility is among the fruits of the Spirit.

Are the fruits of the Spirit influencing our society today? And what do we see within the Christian Reformed Church?

Maybe the Canadian approach to plurality results in greater civility—or maybe it’s just because the election season doesn’t

drag on—but it is clear that the civility barometer in the U.S. is dropping precipitously. I don’t need to quote examples of the incivility that has been spewing forth in the presidential campaign.

Is it because society is becoming increasingly godless, as T.S. Eliot wrote in *Choruses from ‘The Rock’*?

*But it seems that something has happened that has never happened before:
though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where.
Men have left GOD not for other gods, they say, but for no God;
and this has never happened before
That men both deny gods and worship gods, professing first Reason,
And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race, or Dialectic.
The Church disowned, the tower overthrown, the bells upturned,
what have we to do
But stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards
In an age which advances progressively backwards?*

Are we standing with “empty hands and palms turned upwards,” shrugging our shoulders, admitting that the church has lost its voice and influence on society?

Our Reformed understanding compels us to step into the public square. But we must find another way than by shouting back, complaining about certain candidates on our social media pages, or pretending we don’t hear the vile words because we secretly like the underlying messages.

It is time for more, not fewer, candidates to emerge from the church and seek public office. It’s not about winning; it’s about demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit.

And what about civility within the CRC? I subscribe to one CRC-related social media group and, while many seek the high road of civility, I’m amazed at how quickly words are used that convey superiority, harshness, and anger. Is civility evident in our council rooms, classis meetings, at synod?

So how are we to promote the practice of civility in an uncivil world? As Franklin Roosevelt once said, “Peace, like charity, begins at home.” If we practice civility in our homes and churches, we will be serving as Christ’s witnesses to the world. ■



Our Reformed understanding compels us to step into the public square. ”



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

You add.
God multiplies.

Taste and See: The Bible Comes to Life for Calvin Seminary Students

It's not every day that you get to ride a boat on the Sea of Galilee, float in the Dead Sea, and explore the caves in which David hid from Saul.

PHOTO BY STEVEN HULL



James Zwier, a Master of Divinity student, presents information to his classmates at En Gedi, an oasis along the Dead Sea.

Calvin Seminary students didn't do all of these activities in one day. They're just a sampling of their activities over the course of a 13-day for-credit tour of Israel and Palestine in January.

Led by professors Amanda Benckhuysen and Sarah Schreiber, group members immersed themselves in the world of the Bible, engaging

all their senses in the study of the culture, geography, and history of Israel and Palestine.

All participating master of divinity students received a generous scholarship from a donor who wanted to enrich the preaching of future pastors by offering the opportunity to experience the Bible in the

land where the events of Scripture took place.

Twenty-seven students from both the distance and residential programs explored sites including the Western Wall, the Mount of Olives, Qumran, Gethsemane, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

"This week has been a beautiful combination of deep reflection and profound illumination," said Brian Tarpy, a third-year M.Div. student. "I've seen the face of Christ on the quiet waters in the Sea of Galilee; I've pondered the temptation of Christ as I gazed upon the wilderness he wandered. Following in his footsteps has been deep and profound."

For first-person summaries and reflections as well as pictures and videos, visit GTI-tours.org. The Calvin Seminary blog is listed under "Follow a Study Tour." ■

—by Emily Sajdak,
Calvin Seminary

Hearing Loss Is No Obstacle

Diagnosed with hearing loss at the age of 3, Sarah Faber attended a variety of schools prior to college and learned to cope with her hearing difficulties through sign language, lip reading, and other techniques.

A natural athlete, she also played four sports in high school—basketball, softball, soccer, and track—and earned a record 12 varsity letters.

"I never felt like my limited hearing should hold me back," she said.

At the age of 18, Faber was selected to the U.S. women's national team for the Deaflympics, where her team won the gold medal.

She then played basketball for Liberty University before transferring to play at Calvin, where Calvin provided an interpreter for her classes.

Faber started out in special education but shifted to recreation with a psychology minor. She worked as a recreational therapist after graduation.



Sarah Faber (second from left) discusses strategy during a basketball game.

At age 30, her hearing deteriorated even more. She had to quit her job and return home to assess her options.

"This was a very hard time for me," she said. "I lost my independence. Hearing aids helped, but not as they had before. It was faith that pulled me through."

Fortunately, said Faber, she was eventually able to land a job in the Chicago area, where she now works as a program specialist with deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their families for the Chicago Park District.

At the age of 39, Faber experienced yet one more traumatic loss of hearing abil-

ity. She spent a year living in a totally silent world. "I decided to get cochlear implants, and that's been very successful in my case," she said.

In addition to her current job, she coaches a women's hard-of-hearing basketball team and supervises two men's teams.

"I have this passion that I want to give back to others with the same challenge that I've faced," she said. ■

—by Mike Van Denend,
Calvin College



Map shows where CRC chaplains are stationed.

Chaplaincy Fair Attracts Wide Interest

Students from schools all over West Michigan joined students at Calvin Seminary in March for the first Chaplaincy Fair sponsored by the CRC's Chaplaincy & Care Ministry.

Several chaplains spoke to students about fields of ministry including the military, hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, workplaces, and other areas of chaplaincy, said Rev. Ron Klimp, director of Chaplaincy & Care Ministry.

The day-long fair was held in response to the growing interest on the part of students to serving as chaplains after graduation.

In the CRC, the number of chaplains has been rising steadily over the last few years—from about 10 percent of total seminary graduates to 15 percent today.

Klimp said reasons for the interest include the fact that chaplaincy is gaining a higher profile and students are experiencing a call to that field. Also, it is harder for seminary graduates to find positions in churches.

"The churches just aren't growing, and the need for graduates is not like it used to be," said Klimp. "So graduates are turning to and considering the chaplaincy as a ministry." ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

At the Water's Edge

After much deliberation and prayer, members at Water's Edge Church in Birch Bay, Wash., decided to keep their church open and to call Jim Carberry as a temporary pastor.

Almost five years later, Carberry is still there and Water's Edge has grown significantly from the original congregation of 15.

Because of its tendency toward failed churches, Birch Bay has been dubbed "the graveyard of church plants."

As Jim Carberry describes it, "The one thing [Birch Bay] people have in common is the fact that they're not very Christian."

The diverse community of 9,000 consists of a spectrum ranging from wealthy gated communities to poor trailer communities.

"We have to get into the community," said Carberry. He has brought this strategy to Water's Edge, and God has blessed the church.

Katy is a single mother of three. On a door-to-door food drive, Carberry and other volunteers knocked on Katy's door. Despite having trouble putting food on her own table, Katy felt God's call and

graciously contributed to the food drive. Carberry invited her to church that Sunday.

Throughout the following months, Katy and her children became faithful attendees at Water's Edge and invited next-door neighbors to attend with them.

God continued to work through this community connection, and 1½ years later, Katy and two other mothers and four of their children were baptized and made professions of faith.

God has grown Water's Edge to a congregation of 70. New members don't transfer from other churches. Rather, the church's mission is to grow by bringing in people from the community.

Funding for Water's Edge comes in part from the Whatcom County Kingdom Enterprise Zone, a cluster of Christian Reformed and Reformed Church in America congregations supported by Christian Reformed Home Missions. This Kingdom Enterprise Zone continues to make a difference in Birch Bay and within the broader network of CRC and RCA church planters. ■

—by Annemarie Byl,
Christian Reformed Home Missions



Pastor Jim Carberry baptizes a new member of Water's Edge.

You add.
God multiplies.

Less Can Mean More for Hungry Families

In central Kenya, most farming families have only half an acre of land on which they must produce enough food to eat year-round.

On his half acre, Paul Kamau tries to grow enough to feed five children, his wife, and himself.

Kamau and his family live in the Kiganjo community, where most families are dependent on agriculture and where the increasing population has forced families to farm on smaller plots of land.

Over the years, poor farming methods have led to unhealthy soil. Other changes, such as distorted seasons and reduced rainfall, have contributed to years of suffering for many families.

Like Kamau, many families in Kiganjo were barely producing enough food to last their family one month. Relying on commercial food was becoming expensive and draining the little bit of money they had.

To help this hurting community, World Renew began working with its local partner, Anglican Development Services Mount Kenya, to teach local farmers about new farming techniques. Through conservation agriculture, the families in the Kiganjo community could increase their crop production on their small pieces of land.

Eager for change, Kamau participated in World Renew's training. For 10 days, he learned new methods to prevent soil erosion and retain moisture.

By using mulch he is able to prevent weeds from growing and repel some of the bugs. Using natural techniques helps Kamau establish healthier soil and reduce the cost of producing food.

In a four-month span, World Renew and its local partner trained 182 farmers.

To keep the momentum going in his community, Kamau volunteered to help other farmers learn. His land served as a training ground for 16 additional people from his village.

To test what he had learned, Kamau used the new techniques to plant maize and beans on one-eighth of his land. When it came time to harvest, Kamau had doubled his crop production even though he used a smaller piece of land. He was amazed.

More amazed were Kamau's neighbors. After seeing his success, they started preparing their land in the same way. Kamau has now prepared all of his land for crops and anticipates enough food to last his family until the next harvest. ■

—by Taylor Smith, World Renew



Paul Kamau checks his maize crop.

SHORT TAKES



World Renew Responding to Food Shortages

As a result of El Niño weather conditions, there are food shortages in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Indonesia, Ethiopia, and many other countries.

World Renew is responding. In the Dugda district of Ethiopia, for example, World Renew is providing food to 41,043 individuals. Learn more at worldrenew.net/elniño. ■

—by Kristen deRoo Vanderberg, World Renew

Churches Welcome New Digital Library

Christian Reformed churches and members have been signing up for access to the CRC's new Digital Library, which aims to make it easier and more cost-effective for them to access Faith Alive Christian Resources materials to support their local ministries.

Those who sign up can access the Library at any time of day or night, from anywhere, on any device connected to the Web.

The Digital Library will include the majority of Faith Alive's products, including Bible studies, children's ministry curricula, worship resources, small group studies, and youth resources. There will be some exclusions, however, such as hymnals, due to copyright restrictions and song royalties. ■

—by Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



Goin' on a Bug Hunt

It's May, the perfect time to go bug hunting! Most of God's littlest critters have hatched or crawled out of their winter bedrooms. So why not arrange a few meetings between you and them? Bug

watching can be fun if you know how. It can be even more fun if you know what to look for. So read these pages to learn more about bugs. Then go out and observe these fascinating critters.

Catch and Release

Here are three easy ways to find these little critters.

1. Shake a bush. Lots of bugs and spiders hide in bushes when they see you coming. To capture them (carefully!), first spread the pillowcase flat on the ground under the bush. Then gently shake the branches that are above the pillowcase. You'll probably see several bugs fall onto the pillowcase. Some of them will try to run away. Those are the bugs you want. Clamp a plastic container onto the ground over a bug. Then work the lid gently under it. Keep the lid on the container and turn the container over. Now you can look carefully.

2. Look under rocks and logs. This is where you can find pill bugs, beetles, roaches, and some worms. Have your container ready before you roll anything over. These little critters react to light and run away quickly. Handle worms carefully. They need their slimy covering.

3. Sit still and look for motion. Little critters out in the open "freeze" when they see you coming. If you sit very still for a while, they'll begin to move again.

If you want to study a bug more carefully, make sure the lid of your container is on tight. Then put that container into your backpack to take inside with you. When you go inside, put the tightly closed container into your fridge for a while. The bug won't die, but it will move more slowly.

When you're finished observing the bug, always return it to the same place you caught it. Some bugs can eat only one kind of leaf or live in only one exact type of place. Always release these creatures. God made each of them for a special purpose.

I think you might be sitting a little too still...



A Word of Warning

For you: Be careful when you handle these critters. Try not to touch them at all. They don't like to be caught, so they may try to bite and/or sting. Remember, they are trying to defend themselves!

For the bug: Be careful when you handle these critters. They're very small and very tender. Some tend to lose legs or wings very easily. Then they can't move well. If you pinch them too hard, some will collapse and die. God put people in charge of his creation to care for it, not to mess it up. Please be careful!

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



What Kind of Critter Is This?

If you want to know more about the creature you caught, start with this brief guide.

1. How many legs does it have?

- A. If it has six legs it's some kind of insect. Go to number 2.
- B. If it has eight legs, it's probably some kind of spider or "Daddy-long-legs." There are more than 35,000 different kinds of spiders in the world. Each kind has its own special place in creation.
- C. If it has more legs than you can count, it's a probably a centipede or millipede.

2. How many wings does it have?

- A. If it has no wings, it's probably an ant. There are more than 12,000 species of ants in the world. Each kind of ant has its own purpose in creation.
- B. If it has two wings, it's some kind of fly. There are more than 87,000 kinds of flies in the world. Each fly has a job to do in creation.
- C. Most other insects have four wings.

No one knows for sure how many different insects there are in creation. We know only that God made each insect with its own special place to live and its own special purpose.



What's It For?

Here's what some common little critters do.

- Bees pollinate flowers. They're hairy and have pollen baskets on their legs. As they collect nectar and pollen, they spread pollen between flowers. Then the flowers can make fruits.
- Flies clean up messes. Think of the garbage where flies live. Do you want to clean that up? Someone must. Young flies love to do that.
- Brown and yellow paper wasps help keep flies in check. They feed their young "flyburgers."
- Spiders keep the bug population in check. Centipedes help spiders. They also prey on bugs and little creepy-crawlers.
- Lots of black wasps help keep spiders in check. Each wasp hunts only one kind of spider.
- Daddy-long-legs keep fields and forests clean. They eat dead and dying plants. Millipedes and pillbugs help Daddy-long-legs. They eat old vegetation and dead stuff.



You get the idea? Give thanks to God for how creation fits together so very well.

Gear Up

Here are some things you'll need:

- Newspaper to sit on
- Clear plastic containers with lids
- Light-colored pillowcase
- Magnifying glass, if you have one
- Backpack

Be sure to dress warmly enough for the weather. Remember that you'll be sitting still in shady places at times. Then stuff all your "stuff" into the backpack. Now you're ready to go!



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



BY MARY VANDEN BERG

The Fabric of **Creation**: Understanding Genesis

Editor's note: How do Christians reconcile the creation story in Genesis with the findings of science? We asked Mary Vandenberg, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, to tell us what she teaches future Christian Reformed pastors on this issue.

MANY PEOPLE STUDY THE BIBLE as a piece of interesting ancient literature. But Christians believe that the Bible is an ancient book written by people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16). The Bible is the Word of God for the people of God. It is the foundation of our understanding about God and God's interactions with the world. Every other teaching must ultimately submit to this God-breathed Word.

But we cannot pick up this book and expect to understand everything in it without knowing some things about it.

Understanding the Text

The first thing we need to recognize is that the Bible is a literary work. In other words, it reflects the literary conventions of its day. So one of the things we need to do as we approach any text is to figure out what sort of text it is. Is it poetry or narra-

tive or prophecy or a letter? We would not read a letter from our child in exactly the same way as we read a newspaper article or a novel or a poem. Each type of literature requires a certain kind of reading and understanding. And identifying the type of literature we are dealing with as we read the Bible will affect our interpretation.

The second thing worth noting is that the Bible was written in several ancient languages and in a particular historical context. Our English translations are generally good, but they reflect judgment calls made by the translators wherever ambiguous words or grammatical constructions occur. Sometimes we miss details if we are not reading the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek.

More important, however, is acknowledging that the words and phrases of the Bible come out of a culture and context we are not familiar with. Many people in the ancient near East, for example, believed that humans were created to be slaves for the gods. How surprising it must have been for them to read the Israelite account in which humans were made not to be slaves but in the image of God, who intended humans to represent him on the earth like royalty! Clearly part of the

purpose of this text was to contrast what the ancient world was saying about human persons with what God says about human persons. But in order to recognize that detail, we need to know something about the context of the ancient Near East.

Biblical scholar John Walton writes that good interpreters must enter the culture of the biblical text in order to read these culturally shaped texts properly. If we do not attempt to enter and understand these cultures, we run the risk of reading Scripture on our terms rather than its own terms.

This does not mean, however, that these texts are in some way bound by their cultures and not relevant to us today. Rather, this principle entails hearing the text *within its culture* in order to better understand the teaching of the text for the people of God today.

What about Genesis?

So how does this principle apply when reading the early chapters of Genesis? Taking into account the type of literature we are dealing with and the cultural context in which it is situated, including the other literature of that era, we find that the creation account has as its primary purpose to instruct God's people that the God of Israel—not the sun, moon, or stars—is the only true God. And that this God created the heavenly bodies and everything else.

The poetic structure of Genesis 1:1-2:4 is more like a “drawing of the far-distant past,” as Henri Blocher suggests, than a detailed historical-scientific description of how the material world came to be. Although Genesis 2-11 has a narrative rather than poetic structure, a similar argument could be made about these unusual narrative chapters, particularly when noting the shift in the tone of the narrative at Genesis 12.

Using the metaphor of a book, the Belgic Confession teaches that God makes himself known to us in two ways. First, God reveals himself through the creation and providential care of the world. Second, God reveals himself through Scripture. In fact, it is through Scripture that God makes himself known “more clearly.”

'Brighter Views of God's Glory'

John Calvin writes that we *first* encounter God through creation. Drawing on Romans 1, Calvin writes that on each of God's works “his glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious” that there is no excuse for ignorance of God. Calvin goes on to describe the natural sciences and those who study them as having the opportunity “to obtain brighter views of God's glory.” Nonetheless, also drawing on Romans 1, Calvin makes clear that, left to our own devices, we will stifle or distort this knowledge of God and his attributes that is all around us. Scripture, says Calvin, provides the “spectacles” needed to read nature and come to a correct understanding of God.

For Christians who may at times become anxious about the work of science, it might help to remember that God created

The work of thinking and wondering
about God's world through
experimentation, exploring geological
or paleoanthropological evidence,
and other scientific means seems a
fitting exercise for God's vice-regents.

humans with the expressed intention that they rule over the created world. Good and responsible rulers know their territory and subjects well. The work of thinking and wondering about God's world through experimentation, exploring geological or paleoanthropological evidence, and other scientific means seems a fitting exercise for God's vice-regents. Furthermore, Calvin suggests that through the work of discovering how the world works, “the Providence of God is more fully unfolded.”

The work of scientists has the potential to enhance our lives in many practical ways. For that we should all be thankful. But it also has the potential to help people delight in God and his attributes through the discovery of the intricacies of God's world. Calvin suggests “it is impossible to contemplate the vast and beautiful fabric of creation without being overwhelmed by the weight of God's glory.”

It would be good to end this brief discussion where we began. Sometimes theologians behave as though we have all the answers to the difficult questions regarding Genesis and its intersection with science. Likewise, sometime scientists behave as though they have all the answers, or someday will have all the answers, to the sorts of questions that arise from the early chapters of Genesis. In reality, although God has given us a magnificent world to explore and his marvelous Word to interpret, there is much here that we will likely never know.

Theologian Thomas Weinandy suggests that the best theological inquiry begins with the acknowledgment of mystery, takes time and effort to explore the mystery, and ends with an acknowledgment of mystery. I suggest the same sort of method should be employed in scientific inquiry.

Ultimately all conclusions from human experience must submit to the authority of Scripture. It is the first word and the last word. Very simply, that means that in many cases we won't have all the answers to every question we have.

But we do have all we need for salvation. ■



Mary Vanden Berg is a professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary who teaches in the area of faith and science.

Of God and Gladiator



I HAD MET THE YOUNG MAN MONTHS BEFORE, and we talked often, though I was a grandmother and he in his 20s. He went by the nickname “Gladiator,” and it seemed intrusive to ask his real name. I was careful not to push but to be there in case he wanted to talk more. Now and then something would slip into the mostly light conversation that hinted at his real suffering. He might mention “some difficulties” or tell me suddenly that he had to be gone for a few days. I waited, praying for him and wondering when God would open his heart to the help I so wanted to give and he so needed.

The day finally came when Gladiator told me of the painful depression eating at his life. And then I knew why God had wanted me to wait and earn his trust before we talked together. It was not just his story that needed to be told, but my own too. And so when he asked for my faith testimony, I gave it to him with tears in my eyes. He heard the truth of it, recognized our common experiences, and let trust and friendship open doors that would have stayed shut under other circumstances.

Perhaps you are wondering where a young man and a baby boomer would

meet every day, learn to trust each other, and finally cry together as healing began. No, it was not in a coffee shop or a therapy session or part of an organized group or program. While playing an online game, we found ourselves talking of faith and God’s love as earnestly as if we had been sitting across the table with cups of coffee between us. Perhaps more so, as our age difference mattered little, our geographical and cultural differences were of no importance, and our common interest gave us an easy arena for conversation.

I want to suggest the gaming world as a mission field like any other in your life. If gaming is something you already love, it could also be a way to reach people you would be unlikely to encounter otherwise, and sometimes it results in a surprising depth of conversation.

There was the day that I received an in-game message that one of our team players had died suddenly. Having no idea of his age or the circumstances, I decided anyway to attempt a small note of condolence in a chat window to a player I knew had been his friend. I could not have guessed that, after an hour of talking with him about prayer, sorrow,

our common love of music, and his love for his young friend, I would log off thanking God for opening this avenue of ministry. I still play with this saddened young gamer, and he knows I continue to pray for him.

Gaming as ministry may seem an odd thing to consider. Then again, maybe not. There are real people, often hurting ones, on the other side of those screen names. And as in any ministry, the opportunity to make a difference through your words will be uncovered through gentle listening and caring. ■



Jennifer Harrington recently retired from a career in computer technology and enjoys freelance writing, computer games, and movie nights with her husband and four children. She is a Presbyterian elder serving at Centerpoint Community Church in Roseville, Calif.

There are real people on the other side of those screen names.

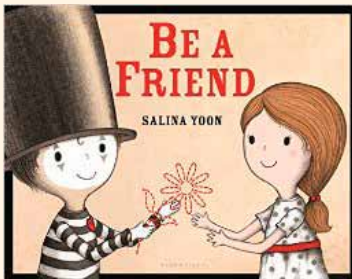
God Don't Never Change: The Songs of Blind Willie Johnson

by various artists

reviewed by Robert N. Hosack



Blind Willie Johnson was a gospel blues singer and guitarist who recorded only thirty songs between 1927 and 1930, but his music was covered by artists like Bob Dylan, Led Zeppelin, and Bruce Cockburn. His growling bark and masterful slide guitar were designed to attract the lost on city street corners. This new collection honors the bluesman with eleven hand-clapping, soul-stirring interpretations of his original songs. From start to finish, the musical pastiche is held together by a gritty simplicity, infectious energy, and spiritual urgency that made Johnson's music so influential. (Alligator)



Be a Friend

by Salina Yoon

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Meet Dennis, an “ordinary boy” who is anything but ordinary. Dennis's hero is Marcel Marceau; he mimes all day long. At school, everyone calls him Mime Boy. Being different is not easy, and Dennis feels a deep loneliness—until he meets a girl named Joy. Their friendship grows, and Dennis discovers the joy of having and being a friend. Yoon's predominantly black-and-white illustrations are subtly highlighted with red, and they complement the simplicity of the text. This is a picture book to be read over and over. Ages 3 and up. (Bloomsbury)

Church Clothes 3

by Lecrae

reviewed by Jordan Petersen

Lecrae's latest mixtape continues the hip-hop artist's earnest reflections on justice and reconciliation. Righteous in its anger and precise in its delivery, *Church Clothes 3*, at its best, serves as a call to action for the church. Lecrae offers education on racism and its manifestations today, and he calls out complacency and the selective hearing the church has when it comes to social issues, all while maintaining a gospel-centric worldview. (Reach Records)

Life's too short to pretend you're not religious

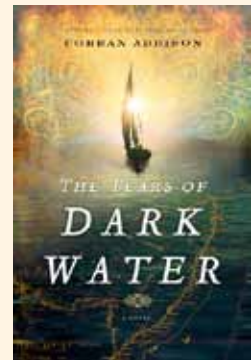
David Dark

Life's Too Short to Pretend You're Not Religious

by David Dark

reviewed by Phil Christman

Religion is one of the most-abused words in the lexicon. Cultural critic David Dark restores it to its true complexity in this smart and warm little book. Your religion, argues Dark, is simply the set of non-provable stories and ideas that you love—what he calls your “attention collection.” This is the book to give to those friends who love hard, fight for lost causes, and practice “mindfulness” but think you're weird for going to church. (InterVarsity)



The Tears of Dark Water

by Corban Addison

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

This lengthy, complex novel tackles a timely issue: piracy in the Indian Ocean. Two Americans are captured on their boat by Ismail and six other disillusioned Somali youth. They despise the U.S. for its intervention in their nation. When the U.S. government sends in the Navy and top negotiator Paul Derrick, tragedy results. Derrick's sister Megan, a lawyer, agrees to defend Ismail when he is brought to trial in the U.S. This is Addison's third novel to deal with challenging, at times uncomfortable, issues that present readers with the choice of seeing or ignoring the humanity of all people, including their enemies. (HarperCollins)

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

Millennials and the Great Commission



THERE'S A SHIFT HAPPENING throughout North American Christianity.

Young adults—popularly referred to as millennials (born roughly between 1980 and 1995)—are beginning to find their way into church leadership. As one of the oldest millennials, I've noticed a significant difference between myself and previous generations of church members and leaders when it comes to our understanding of the Great Commission.

Just so we're on the same page, that's Jesus' call to his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20a: Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Perhaps a few observations regarding this shift can open doors for conversation and understanding between the young adults entering church leadership and the previous generations that have been leading and participating in the life of the church for so many years.

Discipleship over evangelism

For people who have been inspired by the evangelical success of some of the well-known megachurches, this may be confusing, frustrating, or perhaps even downright infuriating.

But for young adults, the trend away from prioritizing evangelism is not so much a rejection of those churches as it is a feeling that their ministries didn't go far enough.

Being used by God to bring about mass conversions and explosive growth is exciting. But that's just the beginning. When Jesus left his disciples with the Great Commission, he told them to "go" (that is, don't keep it to yourself; share it with others). He also told them to "make disciples" who are baptized and to "obey everything I have commanded you."

If we continue to see the Great Commission as only concerned with evangelism, we miss half the message. Millennial Christians increasingly see the Great Commission pushing us to "make disciples." We do need to "go," but we do so in order to "make disciples."

Discipleship and evangelism are not the same thing

Evangelism is the act of proclaiming the good news of the gospel of Jesus. Discipleship, on the other hand, is the lifelong process of becoming like Jesus. When we read the Great Commission in Matthew, we see that Jesus never lays out a detailed plan for how to do it. It's assumed that the disciples know what Jesus is talking about. It's assumed they know what it means to be a disciple.

Where would they have learned this? From Jesus. From watching him and living with him for three years. How can we learn this? From reading the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Discipleship assumes that evangelism has taken place. But that's when the hard work of learning how to be like Jesus begins. This is what the Great Commission is ultimately pushing us toward.

The role of baptism

There's been a lot of debate over the last few years about the role of baptism in our churches, especially in church planting. The influence of the broader evangelical community has caused some of us to wrestle with our Reformed understanding and practice of baptism. The Reformed understanding of baptism is dramatically different from that of most of our evangelical brothers and sisters. Those who talk the most about the Great Commission as evangelism have a theological framework that equates baptism to conversion. The Christian Reformed understanding of baptism is different. It's not an obedient response brought about by our expressed faith in Jesus. Instead, it's God placing his mark on a child or adult and claiming that person as a member of his covenant

community. Baptism is God's action, not ours. When the Great Commission is considered in this light, the reference to baptism is a part of the discipleship process, not evangelism.

Quality versus quantity

The popular understanding of the Great Commission pushes toward quantity: conversions, members, baptisms. Increasingly my peers are becoming more interested in quality over quantity. This is not to say that we don't care about reaching non-believers. I can safely say that every conversation I've had with a fellow millennial about this has reflected an incredible passion and desire to see their non-Christian friends come to faith.

Believing in Jesus as our Savior might secure our place in glory, but it's only the first step. It says nothing about the sort of life we live while waiting for the great day of Christ's return. Discipleship is the lifelong process of becoming like Jesus, but how many of us even reflect a faint shadow of Jesus?

The average 1,000-member church is great, but a congregation of 150 people, where all 150 are passionately pursuing discipleship, will have a bigger impact on their community and world. After all, look at what was accomplished through just 11 disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit and committed to continuing Jesus' ministry after his ascension!

So where do we go from here?

First, commit to being a disciple. Ideally, we all want to be disciples who make disciples. But before any of that happens, we need to take personal responsibility for our own discipleship. Often that's not something we do well on our own. We need someone to help us and model the path of discipleship. Your pastor is a great resource for this; so is the retiree who's been faithfully serving the church

for the past 75 years. But only people who are disciples themselves can make disciples.

Second, know what Jesus commanded. The Great Commission is about going and making disciples who "obey all that I have commanded." We cannot do this without knowing what Jesus commanded.

The single most effective strategy for growing as a disciple and learning what Jesus commanded is spending daily time in the Word and in prayer. If this isn't a habit you've developed, or if you're intimidated by the thought of reading the Bible on your own, start by reading either one psalm every day or one of the gospels over a period of time. You don't have to read a lot, but make sure you feel like you have a good grasp on what the passage may be calling you to do. Then pray that God will give you opportunity and boldness to do what you just read. If you pray for God to use you, he will certainly answer that prayer!

I sense a longing for something more than warehouse churches, rock band worship, or hip preachers among my peers. Instead, there is a growing desire to lead congregations into disciple-making communities where true transformation is taking place that challenges every facet of life. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Jason De Vries is pastor at Faith Christian Fellowship in Walnut Creek, Calif. He longs to see the CRC become a denomination known for both its academic excellence and its passion for discipleship and missions. You may follow his musings on leadership, biblical studies, and discipleship at his blog "The Everyday Disciple."

Millennial
Christians
increasingly see
the Great
Commission
pushing us to
"make disciples."

FAQs

Outreach

Q Some of my young adult children have stopped going to church. I'd like to talk to them about it, but I don't know how to approach the subject without sounding judgmental.

A The most important thing you can do is to accept and love your children unconditionally. You need to let them know that you are concerned about their relationship with the Lord without having them feel that they have failed you as their child. This understanding will maintain a healthy relationship between you and them and open faith conversations in the future.

You also want to avoid a danger of "evangelizing" them too zealously. I had an opportunity to counsel a high school student who said, "I understand that my faith in God is important to my dad, but he is trying too hard to convince me to believe. I have a lot of doubt, and I need to work it out somehow, but I feel like my dad is always on my case. And it's driving me further away from church."

Instead, share with them your own faith journey. Let them know how you have wrestled with your own doubt and obstacles prior to committing yourself to the Lord. Let them see how your faith in God is relevant to your life, in terms of finding joy and meaning in your daily living. Do this not in a spirit of debate but of empathy.

And pray. Be encouraged by Jesus' parable of the persistent widow not to give up but to pray persistently. Every conversion is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit, who works when we pray. I know of a single mom who prayed for the salvation of her wayward son for 15 years. He became a fervent believer during his adult years and accomplished much for the Lord.

You might have heard of him: St. Augustine.

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

Let them see how your faith in God is relevant to your life.

Justice

Q Caring for children and others is widely accepted as a moral good. Why do public policies often work against caregiving instead of supporting it?

A Good question! As an advocate for children I have long puzzled over this. Every religion preaches caregiving. The United States is often considered the most "religious" nation; yet it ranks low among nations for policies that support and encourage caregiving.

Research and common sense show that policies such as parental leaves at childbirth, more flexibility in hours of work, leave time to care for sick relatives, and affordable community health services support the development of caring families and communities.

Nations that support care for children with policies like these, including Canada, Sweden, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, and Australia, do well economically. So one common reason for not offering these policies—a lack of resources—is not an adequate explanation. It would take more space than this column to explore the deeper values that might explain it. Further discussion in our churches would be helpful.

But for now I prefer to look forward because I see signs of hope. New movements to build an economy of care show promise. Current leaders in the women's movement, including Anne-Marie Slaughter in her book *Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family*, are focusing on equitable treatment for caregiving, whether it is done by women or men.

If Christians spoke up as loudly in support of caregiving as they do in opposition to some other moral issues, more workplaces and governments at all levels would adopt policies that recognize and support the caregiving roles of all men and women.

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

Faith Formation

Q What can we do? Our congregation is blessed with creative and energetic leaders in ministries related to children, youth, worship, and seniors. But we also have two or three people who are vocally negative about these creative approaches, which has led one of these (volunteer) leaders to leave our congregation for a nearby church. I've heard of similar struggles in other churches, and it discourages me.

A Frankly, your question makes me want to weep.

I would guess that the fundamental issue here is not the negativity but the power it has been allowed to wield. Negative voices are just a normal part of life in communities. The problem occurs when congregations and their leaders allow these negative voices to wield the kind of power that drives others away. Often this happens when leaders are afraid of the negative voices, because fear suffocates the movement of the Spirit in congregations.

Many years ago I was serving as an elder. During a difficult discussion, one elder reported, "Brother X will leave our congregation if we decide to do A." Brother X was the wealthiest person in the church. After a stunned silence, our pastor quietly said, "We are here to discern the Lord's leading. If the Lord leads us to decide B and not A, we will pray that Brother X will find a strong new church in which to use his gifts." After his comment, fear left the room, and godly wisdom took over.

Maybe your situation requires that kind of leadership.

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

ADS

Deadlines: June issue is 5/9/16; July/August issue is 6/20/16. 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

Calls Accepted

DAN ROEDA to Orland Park Christian Reformed Church, as the Pastor of Congregational Life. His service of installation will be March 13.

JEREMY VANDERMEER Centrepointe Community CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada is excited to announce that Jeremy Vandermeer has accepted a call to be our pastor, along with his wife Julie and their children Caleb and Isabel. They started their ministry with us on February 1, 2016.

REV. STEVE BUSSIS Bethel CRC of Manhattan, MT joyfully announces the installation of Rev. Steve Bussis as their pastor on April 3, 2016.

Call To Synod 2016

The council of North Hills CRC, Troy, Michigan, calls all delegates to Synod 2016, elected by their respective classes, to meet in the College Chapel on the campus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Friday, June 10, at 8:00 a.m. for a joint opening worship with the Engage 2016 and Chaplaincy conferees.

All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday afternoon, June 12, 2016, at 3:00 p.m. at the Calvin Chapel, 3201 Burton St. SE, Grand Rapids. Dr. John M. Rottman, former intern at North Hills CRC, will deliver the message; Dr. Randall Engle, North Hills CRC pastor, will play the organ; and the Calvin College Alumni Choir will provide special music.

All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 5, and Sunday, June 12.

Council of North Hills CRC, Troy, Michigan

Retirement

PASTOR JERRY VAN GRONINGEN plans to retire as of June 30, 2016. His retirement will be marked with an Open House on Saturday, June 25, 2016 and a Special Worship service on Sunday, June 26, 2016 at Baldwin Street CRC, 2101 Baldwin St, Jenison, MI 49428. The open house will be from 2-4:30 p.m. at the church and the morning worship service is at 9:30 a.m. All are invited to come on either or both of these days to give thanks to God for the Van Groningen's devoted service to God's Kingdom and church, and recognize them for 37 years of faithful service. Pastor Jerry and Sherri served churches in Beavertown, MI, Calvin, Rock Valley IA, Bethel, Lynden, WA, and Baldwin Street, Jenison, MI. For more information, contact either Rich Meyer at 616-457-0425 or Dorothy Wallinga at 616-780-6806. Soli Deo Glori

REV. BRYCE MENSINK, Minister of the Word, retired from full-time ministry in 2012. Since that time he has continued to serve the Palos Heights CRC in a part-time capacity as Pastor of Congregational Care. The congregation has been blessed by his faithful service and his preaching of God's Word. Effective May 22, 2016, he will fully retire from serving the Palos Heights CRC and relocate to Byron Center, Michigan. A retirement dinner will be held May 20 in his honor at Trinity Christian College and will be commemorated at the May 22 morning service. (Anyone wishing to attend may contact the church office at 708.448.0186 for details.) We give thanks to God for his 40 plus years in ministry to our denomination.

Birthdays

100th Birthday

ALICE (DE HOOG) FLASMAN will be 100 on May 8, 2016. Please join her, family, and friends to celebrate from 1-3 PM in the Activity Room at The Holland Home, 16300 Louis Ave, South Holland, Illinois.



ELEANOR BOSSCHER (MOLHOEK) turned 100 on April 30. Her Milwood friends thank God for her faithfulness to Him. Park Village Pines, Rm 431, 2920 Crystal Lane, Kal. MI 49009.

90th Birthday

JOANN BAZUIN turned 90 years old on March 22. Her 5 children and spouses, 16 grandchildren and 29 great-grandchildren thank God for 90 years of blessings!

ARNOLD TOERING husband of Lillian (deceased 2009) will celebrate his 90th birthday with an open house on May 15 at Calvary CRC, Wyoming, MI, from 2-4pm. All friends and family are welcome. Cards also appreciated and can be sent to 5862 Bayberry Farms Dr., Apt. #10, Wyoming, MI, 49418.

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

EDEMA George Sr. and Margaret, 8209 Stoney Lane sw, Byron Center, Michigan, 49315, will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on May 29. Their four children, Peter Edema (Mary), David Edema (Linda), Mary Sytsma (Daniel), and Ruth Frederick (Ken) praise God with them

for this blessing. Celebrating this milestone with them are their 10 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

KUIPER Richard & Ruth (Osinga) 11710 Spring St., Mt Pleasant, WI 53177 OUR SPECIAL DAY MAY 10. Children Cynthia & Michael Owens, Marcia & Ken Brondyke and Dennis Kuiper. 4 Grandchildren and 3 Great Grandchildren. We thank God for His faithfulness and blessings.

65th Anniversary

HOOKER Marv & Gerry (Swart) 5330 Highland Ct, Crestwood, IL 60445, June 8. Celebrating with an Open House on May 28, 1-4 pm, Orland Pk CRC. They, with their children: Vicki, Sandi/Tom, Gary/Kim, Jim/Lisa, Mary/Peter, Carol, Bob/Christy, 20 grandchildren, 7 greats, praise God for His many blessings through the years.

50th Anniversary

VLIETSTRA Pup & Carol (Harkema) of Crown Point, IN will celebrate 50 years of marriage on May 20. They and their family praise God for His faithfulness.

Obituaries

BATTERINK Tena (Fluit), aged 93, Shalom Manor, Grimsby, ON, went to be with her Lord on March 3, 2016. She was predeceased by her husband, Leo (2009) and is survived by her children, Mary and Ed Faber, Annette Westra, Len and Nienke Batterink, Clarence and Jeri Batterink, 12 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren.

BIELEMA Alvin G. went to be with his Lord and Savior on March 21, 2016. He was preceded in death by his parents Martin and Lizzie (Acterhof) Bielema; brothers and sisters, Martin and Alice Bielema, Roy and Esther Bielema, Grace and Clarence Bolhouse. He is survived by his wife Jean (Van Vliet); his children, Cynthia (Larry) Terlouw, Sally (David) Koll, Mary Winters; his six grandchildren; and his two great grandsons.

From one of **2.3 MILLION** U.S. prisoners

"To know I have people who care enough to help me change my life, to be better, to live right... That is an incredible feeling."

-Paul, Crossroad student in South Carolina



**Want to get involved?
Go to crossroadbible.org/volunteer**

Equipping the church to guide prisoners on their spiritual journeys

BOS Ann, age 88, of Grand Rapids, passed away on Tuesday, March 22, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband, Jerry Bos; and by her sisters, Janet (Marty) Ozinga, and Jenny (Rich) DeBoer. Ann is survived by her three children, Carol (Mark) Hebden, Jay Bos, and Jack (Julie) Bos; five grandchildren, Jessica Hebden, Rachel (Harrison) Meadows, Emily (Matt) DeWit, Jessica (Ryan) Ogle, Jacqueline Bos; and three great grandchildren, Ethan, Hudson and Isla Ogle.

CARRELL Janet C., nee Lanenga, age 75, went to be with her LORD on March 19th, 2016, 1818 S. Austin Blvd, Cicero, IL 60804. Loving mother of Pamula Sue Carrell; fond sister of Ann (the late Peter) Vanderveld, and Flora (Paul) DeGroot; aunt of many nieces and nephews; devoted friend of Darlene Van Dyke, Fran Herring and so many others. Memorials to Moody Bible Institute, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, or Lombard Christian Reformed Church, are appreciated.

DIETPSTRA Andrew, age 101, went to be with his LORD on March 20th, 2016; 311 Hambletonian Drive, Oak Brook, IL, 60523. Beloved husband of the late Marie C, nee Tazelaar; loving father of Dorothy (Tom) Allen, Dr. Al (Jan) Diepstra, and Lori (Gary) Custard; devoted grandfather of 8; great-grandfather of 17; preceded by two sisters Laura Rhode and Jessie Springer. Memorials to Trinity Christian College, Providence Life Services, or Lombard Christian Reformed Church are appreciated.

SLAGTER Evelyn G., nee Zeilstra, age 93, of Orland Park, IL. Beloved wife of the late Ira R. "Ike" Slagter, Sr. Loving mother of Ira Jr. (Judy), Robert (Daeng), Sandra (Rev. Carl Jr.) Kromminga, and Sheila (William)

Olson. Cherished grandmother of 14. Dearest great-grandmother of 12. Dear sister of Donald (Verna) Zeilstra and the late John (Evelyn) Zeilstra. Fond sister-in-law of the late Sydney (the late Nina) Slagter and the late Dorothy (the late Arend) Overbeek. Dear aunt of many nieces and nephews.

VANDE KOPPLE Nella E., age 104, went to be with her Lord on Monday, March 14, 2016. Awaiting her in heaven are her husband, Richard; her daughter, Kathy; two sons-in-law, and a great grandson. She is survived by her daughters, Elaine (Carl) Peterson and Donna (Jack) Miller; six grandchildren; eleven great grandchildren; nieces and nephews, and many faithful friends.

VAN ECK Cornelia Johanna (nee Van Apeldoorn), age 97, passed into the loving arms of her Heavenly Father on Monday, January 25, 2016. Cora was preceded in death by her parents, William and Harmina Dijkstra Van Apeldoorn; her husband, James E. Van Eck. MD; and her two sisters, Harmina Van Eck and Johanna DeBoer. She was also preceded in death by her brothers-in-law and sister-in-law, Gerald Van Eck, Erwin Van Eck, Donald Van Eck, Maynard Van Eck, Lester Van Eck, and Joyce De Vries. She is survived by her children: Carol Van Eck, and James and Meredith Van Eck; her grandson James Van Eck; brothers-in-law and sister-in-law Philip Van Eck, and Thelma and Warren Vernier.

VAN ELDEREN Vivolyne Maxine Ross of Grand Rapids, Michigan, died on Monday, March 21, at the age of 95. She is predeceased by her parents, Albert and Viola Ross; her stepmother, Jennie Ross; her

husband, Bastiaan Van Elderen; and her son, Marlin. She is survived by her children: daughter-in-law Meribeth Van Elderen of Geneva, Switzerland; son Nelson (Carol) Van Elderen of Rockford; and daughter Anita (Bill) Eerdmans, of East Grand Rapids; 8 grandchildren; and 4 great grandchildren.

WIERSMA John L., of Grand Rapids, went home to be with his LORD on Sunday, March 6, 2016. John was preceded in death by his daughter, Karen Jelsema; his daughter-in-law, Eileen Wiersma; and his brothers, Ken Wiersma and Bob Wiersma. John leaves behind his wife of 67 years, Marge; daughter, Jane & Dave Thomas (of Santa Fe, NM); son, Mark Wiersma & Anne Lucasse-Wiersma (of Jos, Nigeria); son-in-law, Tom Jelsema; grandchildren, Jeff Jelsema, Chad & Marla Jelsema, Matthew Thomas, Michael Thomas, Daniel & Jenna Wiersma, Andrew & Kailyn Wiersma, Beth Wiersma; great grandchildren, Taylor, Brayden & Chainey; sisters & brothers-in-law, Eleanor & John Slagter, Jo & Herm Zylstra, Mill & Andy Cammenga.

Employment

ESTATE PLANNING ATTORNEY Barnabas Foundation has an opening for an Estate Planner working in the western region of the U.S. We are looking for an experienced Estate Planning attorney who would like to work in a vibrant ministry setting where their gifts and abilities could be used to support kingdom causes on behalf of our 200 member organizations. Qualifications include a Juris Doctor degree with training/experience in the field of Gift and Estate Taxation and Estate Planning. Familiarity with the field of Charitable Planned Gifts and Biblical Stewardship Principles is preferred. Inquiries of interest should contact Amy Bakker Baty, Director of Planned Giving Services, 18601 North Creek Drive, Suite B, Tinley Park, IL 60477, phone: 888-448-3040, email: jobs@barnabasfoundation.com. More about Barnabas Foundation or to view the job description go to www.barnabasfoundation.com.

Church Position Announcements

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES Faith CRC, Elmhurst IL, is seeking 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

PASTOR 1st CRC of Fremont, MI (50mi N of GR) is seeking a full time pastor to preach the Word and shepherd the 180 member congregation. Our church profile is at CRCNA.org. Contact Leslie Kolk at lskolk@yahoo.com or 231-924-3596

LEAD PASTOR East Saugatuck CRC, a rural community near Holland, MI is seeking a lead pastor. We provide Biblical preaching geared toward new and established believers. ESCRC is a growing church focused on outreach and discipleship. Contact searchteam@espoint.org.

LEAD PASTOR: West End CRC in Edmonton Alberta is seeking a lead pastor. We are a large vibrant church with a wide range of ministries located in the heart of the West End in Edmonton Alberta. Information on our congregation can be found at www.westendcrrc.ca. For more details about the position and to view the church profile please contact Michelle Rooker at bmrooker@hotmail.com

GROWING OUTREACH CHURCH Living Water Community Church in NW Iowa is seeking someone with a passion for discipleship, community, and outreach to serve as **Campus Pastor** for their new Sheldon campus. LW is a young, vibrant, mission-minded church that seeks to follow Jesus by loving God and loving others. The campus pastor will be responsible for equipping ministry leaders, preaching, and connecting with new attendees at our Sheldon campus, as well as serving on council and working alongside the ministry team from the Orange City campus. If you feel that God may be calling you to this ministry, you can find a complete job description and apply online at livingwateroc.com/jobopenings/

NEW FAMILY PASTOR POSITION Living Water Community Church in NW Iowa is seeking someone with a passion for strengthening families and helping youth to discover who they are in Christ, to serve as **Pastor of Family & Youth**. LW is a young, vibrant, mission-minded church that seeks to follow Jesus by loving God and loving others. The Pastor of Family & Youth would serve both campuses and primarily be responsible for overseeing our junior high and high school youth programs by recruiting and equipping volunteer leaders,

building relationships with parents and youth, as well as, overseeing the children's ministry, and preaching monthly at each campus. If you feel that God may be calling you to this ministry, you can find a complete job description and apply online at livingwateroc.com/jobopenings/

YOUTH DIRECTOR POSITION We, Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of Lethbridge Alberta, are seeking a full time Youth Director. We are searching for a dynamic candidate who would facilitate programs and encourage growth in faith. Show leadership development and have a passion for leading and mentoring our youth. 2 years of education at a Christian College or University in youth ministry is recommended. For the job description and full church profile please visit our website at www.maranatha-crc.ca If this position interests you please send your resumes to mrcrleth@telusplanet.net All resumes need to be submitted by June 1, 2016.

SENIOR PASTOR The Delavan (WI) Christian Reformed Church has begun a discernment process with hope that it will lead to the discovery of her next pastor. Pastors interested in joining the conversation may request additional by email: info@chapter-next.com

MUSIC AND WORSHIP DIRECTOR Grace CRC of Kalamazoo, MI, will hire a part time, paid, Music and Worship Director. (15-20 hrs. week) If interested, email to: directorofmusicandworship@gracecrc.net.

SOLE PASTOR Covenant Christian Reformed Church, located in Woodstock, ON is looking for a full-time minister, strong in biblical preaching for a multi-generational congregation that loves the Lord and wants to serve our community. For more information, contact Search Committee chair; Daryl Spyskma at spyskmad@rogers.com

CRC CAMPUS MINISTRY ~ University of British Columbia ~ Okanagan Campus (UBCO) ~ Classis BCSE is seeking a new pastor for its campus ministry at UBCO in Kelowna. To learn more about this position (job description, qualifications and how to apply) check: <http://www.ubcochaplaincy.com> Contact Ken at: ubcochaplain@gmail.com

DIACONAL COORDINATOR Classis Zeeland is looking for a Coordinator for the Classis Zeeland Diaconal Conference. This paid position requires approximately eight hours per week with flexible scheduling. For a detailed job description and application process, please contact Rev. Mark Neymeijer at neyfamily6@juno.com or 616-895-6735.



MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Senior Pastor
Delavan (WI)
Christian Reformed Church

Director of Worship & Outreach
Thrive Ministries
Morrison/Fulton, IL

Senior Pastor
Crossroads Fellowship CRC
West Des Moines, IL

For more information on opportunities from ChapterNext, the leader among pastor search firms serving RCA & CRCNA congregations, visit www.chapter-next.com or email info@chapter-next.com.

Hundreds of titles. Anytime. Any device. And it's all free for the CRC.



crcna.org/Library



With the new Digital Library, you and everyone in your church can access hundreds of Faith Alive titles in a more convenient way—anytime, from anywhere, on any device that's connected to the web.

If you attend a Christian Reformed church, you qualify for free access as part of this new pilot program. Sign up now and spread the word!

For details and to sign up: crcna.org/Library

Plus, CRCs get 20% off print



Christian Reformed Church
Digital Library

...powered by Ministry Shares

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

Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

SAN CLEMENTE CA 200 yards to beach access close to outlet mall & restaurants. 1 bed 1 bath comfortably sleeps 6. vrbo.com 795245 or 209-552-6139

NAPLES, FL CONDO FOR RENT 2nd Flr Preserve View. 2/2+den-murphy bed Sleeps 6. Lanai+Garage, Gated comm/3 pools. Minutes to beaches. \$3800/mo Call 616-560-4507

ANNA MARIA ISLAND, FL CONDOS pool, beach access, linens, fully equipped. 1 and 2 bedrooms. \$650-750/wk. D. Redeker, 941-778-1915. redekercondos.com

WEEKLY RENTAL: Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Newly built Lake Michigan family guest house, 2br, loft w/ 2.5ba - sleeps 8. Lake Mi view & private beach. Call Ken @ 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com

COTTAGE 4 RENT 4 bed, 3 bath, updated. Sleeps 12, Hess Lake, MI private waterfront. \$1,400/week. Call Lonnie 616-942-0048

GLEN LAKE COTTAGE June 25 - July 16. Max occupancy 6. \$3500/wk; \$3300 if 2 consecutive wks. Crystal clear water, sandy beach, row boat, kayak, paddle boat, raft, boat mooring. 1 mi. to Glen Arbor; 5 min drive to Sleeping Bear Dunes. 269-345-9854 for info/pics

THORNAPPLE LAKE LODGE Near Hastings, MI - Relax and enjoy a pleasant lakeside home that sleeps 16. A beautiful natural scenic view

on a quiet all-purpose lake. Central to Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Lansing. \$800 - \$1200/wk. For details and reservation requests email ThornappleLodge@gmail.com

COZY LAKE MI. Cottage-Holland, 3Bdr/1Ba, sleeps 6, deck overlooking the lake, beach access, 950.00 a wk 616-292-8158.

COTTAGE FOR RENT on Lake MI - Montague/Whitehall area. 4BR/2BA Sandy beach, beautiful view \$1500 week. 616-452-6621

LAKE MICHIGAN COTTAGE FOR RENT Large lakefront cottage near Pentwater available for weekly summer rental. Secluded wooded setting with 300 ft of private sand beach. Sleeps 14, 3 full baths \$2500. per week. 616-350-0777

COASTAL, NC 4 cottages: 3 br on water; two 1 br and 1 effc. in historic Beaufort. WiFi, TV, grill, ac & more. www.theshellcottage.com (252) 504-6262 (w) or 252-504-6201 (h).



SLUITHEK BNB - LUXURY APARTMENT - Central NL. Two room 110 sq m. self contained fully furnished luxury flat on ground level. Suitable for one couple. Extra bedrooms-bathroom available in mansion.

Rentals, week: Euro 455,- incl VAT. Longer periods on application. Details on www.sluithekbnb.nl. Non smoking. Mail to info@sluithekbnb.nl or call 011-31-33-4343500 (leave message)

Travel



HOLIDAY IN HOLLAND in our self-contained cabin or suite. We also offer vehicle rentals and tours. www.chestnutlane.nl

NIAGARA FALLS CANADA Come stay with us at Trillium Bed & Breakfast. We have 3 guest rooms with private bathroom facilities. Call or text us at 905-354-3863

Products and Services

BOERS' TRANSFER & STORAGE, INC Offering professional moving services within the United States and Canada. EXCELLENT CLERGY DISCOUNTS and an approved mover for retired CRC clergy! 13325 Riley Street, Holland, MI; 1-800-433-9799 or 616-399-2690 email: larry@boerstransfer.com; www.boerstransfer.com Agent for Mayflower Transit, LLC.

ABSOLUTELY BEST PRICES paid for religious books. Contact Credo Books, 1540 Pinnacle East SW, Wyoming, MI 49509, ph. (616) 249-9291. gvsbooks@gmail.com

CARING FOR AGING PARENTS? Visiting Angels offers in-home assisted living. Our caregivers will prepare meals, do light housekeeping, run errands, provide transportation to appointments, and joyful companionship. Whether you need a few hours a day or live-in care, for assisted independent living in your home anywhere in West Michigan call Trish Borgdorff at 616-243-7080 or toll free at 888-264-3580. TRIP Participant.

TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS is an affordable and dependable agency that offers in-home (non-medical) care to seniors. Let us help you stay in your home! We are a small company with a big heart. Learn more about us at: truebluecaregivers.com or call (616)406-6819. We are owned by Calvin grads and serve the greater Grand Rapids Area.

I CAN SELL YOUR HOUSE FOR \$1000 or 1.5%. Local Calvin grad will sell your house for \$1,000 or 1.5% commission. Full, complete service but with savings! The system works! 100 closings in 2015 alone. Ranked in the top 2% of all West Michigan agents. Call or email Doug Takens: 616.262.4574 takens@sbcglobal.net

REMODELING? Call Ken DeVries today for an estimate on your next project. 616-457-5880. Serving West Michigan since 1985. www.homework-construction.com

Engage 2016
Christian Reformed Church

A Multiethnic Gathering
Building Bridges of Unity in Diversity
June 8-10, 2016, Calvin College

People from every background and walk of life are invited to engage in two days of conversations, relationship-building, and worshipping the God who unites us.

Engage 2016 will feature worship, workshops, creative interactions, and keynote addresses by authors Christena Cleveland and Anthony Carter.

Register at
crcna.org/gatherings

“Everyone within our denomination with a passion for racial reconciliation, social justice, and intercultural competency (even those with a developing passion or curiosity) should plan to attend Engage 2016 as a faithful response to God’s call to us as a church.”

—Michelle Loyd-Paige,
Executive Associate to the
President for Diversity and
Inclusion, Calvin College



Dr. Richard J. Mouw

Richard J. Mouw taught at Calvin College for 17 years and served as President of Fuller Theological Seminary for two decades. He is currently Professor of Faith and Public Life at Fuller. He is the author of 19 books, including *Calvinism in the Las Vegas Airport* and *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*. His book, *Adventures in Evangelical Civility: A Lifelong Quest for Common Ground*, is due to be released in 2016.

Loving Your Neighbor Today

Living the Second Great Commandment in Today's World
A conference for pastors, ministry leaders, and lay members

July 19-21, 2016 – Calvin Theological Seminary

Keynote Speaker – Dr. Richard J. Mouw

Other presenters:

- Dr. Mariano Avila - *Learning to Love from Jesus in the Gospels*
- Dr. Amanda Benckhuysen - *Learning to Love from the Old Testament*
- Dr. Danjuma Gibson - *Loving Neighbors Who Suffer Trauma*
- Dr. Mary Vanden Berg - *Loving Neighbors with Dementia*
- Dr. Cory Willson - *Loving Neighbors of a Different Religion*



**CALVIN
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY**

For more information and to register, visit: calvinseminary.edu/loving-neighbor-today-conference/

Consider yourself here

Kathy Vana lives in a cozy, little town about 100 miles north of Calvin Theological Seminary's campus. She is happily rooted in the rhythms of her community, her church and her busy family. Yet she feels closely bonded with Calvin Seminary's faculty and fellow students in her distance-learning cohort, thanks in part to intensive, week-long, on-campus sessions each semester.


"I was surprised by the relationships I was able to cultivate," Kathy says. "The distance program opened up a door for me that I never thought would be available."

**CALVIN
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY**



Learn more about Kathy's story at calvinseminary.edu/distance and see if our distance program might be a great fit for you, too.

calvinseminary.edu/distance

A man with a beard is shown in profile, looking up and to the right, painting a colorful mural. The mural features abstract shapes in blue, green, and yellow. A thick red line curves across the top of the image, partially overlapping the text.

Think you can
change the world
with a brush stroke?

We do.

CHANGE can be big, like Sistine Chapel big. Or it can be small, like a sketchbook full of possibilities small. It's about what you choose to do on the one hand, and who you are on the other. You are more than your job, and changing the world is more than making something or helping someone.

To change the world, we need to listen, communicate, research, create. God has a calling for each of us, wherever we go. And that changes everything. Including you.



REDEEMER
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

redeemer.ca

A degree you can believe in.

2016 RESOURCES

for you and your church!

Faith Alive offers a variety of resources that support faith formation for people of all ages, from preschoolers to adults, including

- Sunday school curriculum
- youth group resources
- small group studies
- resources for worship planning
- products to support church leaders
- and much more!

Shop online today and view a PDF of the **new 2016-2017 Resource Catalog!**


**FAITH
ALIVE**[®]
Christian Resources



36259

FaithAliveResources.org/Catalog | 800-333-8300

Visit LibrosDesafio.org for Reformed materials in Spanish.



Impacting the World for Christ

Katilyn Dyer
Social Work

Making a Difference

Kuyper College is focused on equipping students to make a difference in God's world. And they are doing so successfully, as they use what they've learned at Kuyper to make an impact in the lives of others for Christ.

Extraordinary Results

As social workers, pastors, teachers, radio and video producers, aid workers, and in many other professions, our graduates are helping to build God's Kingdom in the U.S. and in more than 50 countries around the globe.

Academic and Biblical Integration Plus Spiritual Maturity

At Kuyper, we center the Bible in the academic experience of our students through the integration of a high-quality academic curriculum and a biblical worldview. This helps them become knowledgeable and spiritually mature, and develop the ability to see and live all of life through the lens of Scripture.

It is all of this, plus the results-driven commitment of our students to serve others, which makes Kuyper College unique.

KUYPER  COLLEGE

Bringing God's Grace into Today's Culture

Grand Rapids, MI 49525 | 800.511.3749 | kuyper.edu

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!

My wife deservedly slept in one morning, but the time had come for me to rouse her. As I opened the bedroom door to let hallway light spill in, I woke her with the words, "Arise, shine, for your light has come."

Her groaning reply: "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

—Dan Roels

When I was about 5 years old, I knelt by my bed with my mother for my nightly prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. . . . God bless Mommy and Daddy and. . ."

One night I added, "But don't bless the boys that hit me. Amen."

"You shouldn't ask God NOT to bless anyone," my mother admonished.

So the next night I closed with, "And God, bless the boys that don't hit me."

—Marilyn Gordon

My 3-year-old grandson, Parker, is fascinated with deep-sea aquatic life. Some of his

favorites include sharks, giant squids, killer whales, and man-of-wars.

He and his 5-year-old brother fish in a small lake in Michigan. Once Parker told me his brother had caught a hammerhead shark.

"Oh my, what did he do with it?" I asked.

"Threw it back in," was the reply.

—Kitty Given

A rich man lived in a large mansion and had many staff. One day the man decided he was in the mood to eat some steak. So he told one of the cooks to make some for him. She asked him how he wanted his steak prepared.

After a moment's thought, the rich man said, "Matthew 25:21."

Puzzled, the woman looked up the text. And then it made perfect sense: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

—Robert Revington

A vulture carrying two dead raccoons boarded an airplane.

The flight attendant looked at him and said, "I'm sorry, sir. Only one carrion allowed per passenger."

—R. Smit

My hearing aid occasionally emits a brief, high-pitched squeal that can be heard by anyone near me. One day my little niece was sitting on my lap when the device started to beep. Sur-

prised, she looked up at me and said, "Uncle John, you've got mail."

—Jan Veltkamp

One Sunday afternoon we were reading a children's story Bible with our children and grandchildren. The story was about Samuel going to live in the temple with Eli; it continued with Samuel hearing his name called and thinking Eli was calling him.

After the story, Allie, about 4 years old, asked, "Does God really talk to little kids?"

"Yes," we replied.

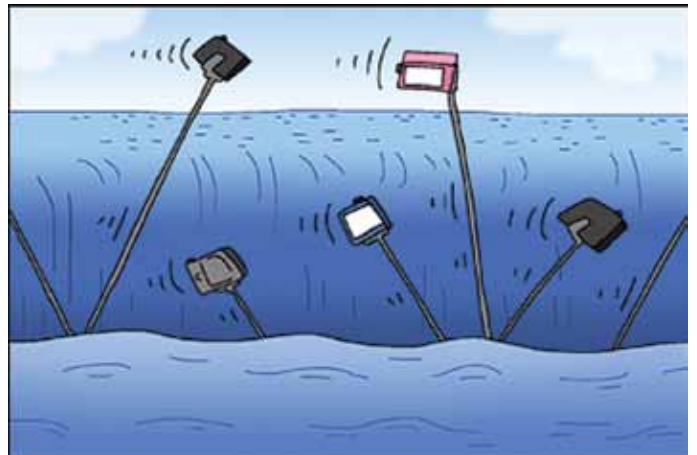
"How?" she wondered.

"Well, he may talk to you just like we are talking to you now, or you may hear him in your head, or in your heart," we explained.

After a few minutes of unaccustomed silence from a usually very chatty Allie, we asked, "What's wrong?"

"Shhhhhh," she said. "I'm listening."

—Annette Zylstra



THERE WERE SO MANY SELFIE STICKS AT THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA THAT IT WAS NEARLY CLASSIFIED AS ANOTHER PLAGUE.

Copyright © 2010 The Zondervan Corporation. Please go to reverendfun.com/artchives.



Let it
SHINE

Through the work of Christian Reformed World Missions, churches and individuals are shining the light of Christ in the darkest corners of the world. Thank you for your partnership.

www.crwmm.org

CRWM's work focuses on four main areas: Christian Education, Leadership Development, Evangelism and Discipleship, and Transforming Communities. For more information, for opportunities to serve, or to order materials visit us online at www.crwmm.org.



**Christian Reformed
WORLD MISSIONS**