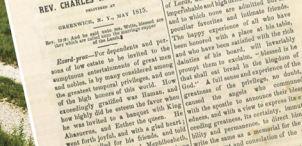
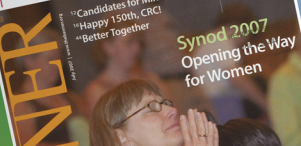
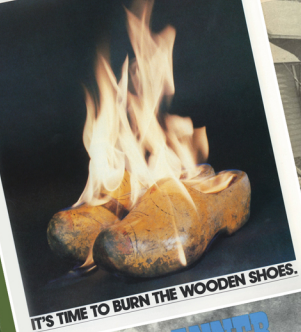
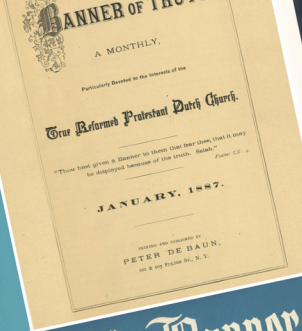
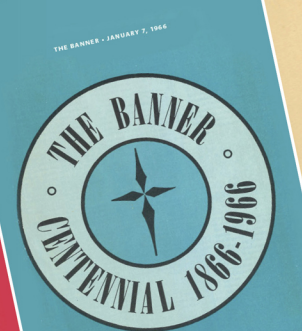
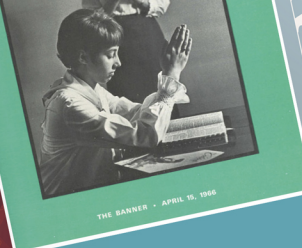
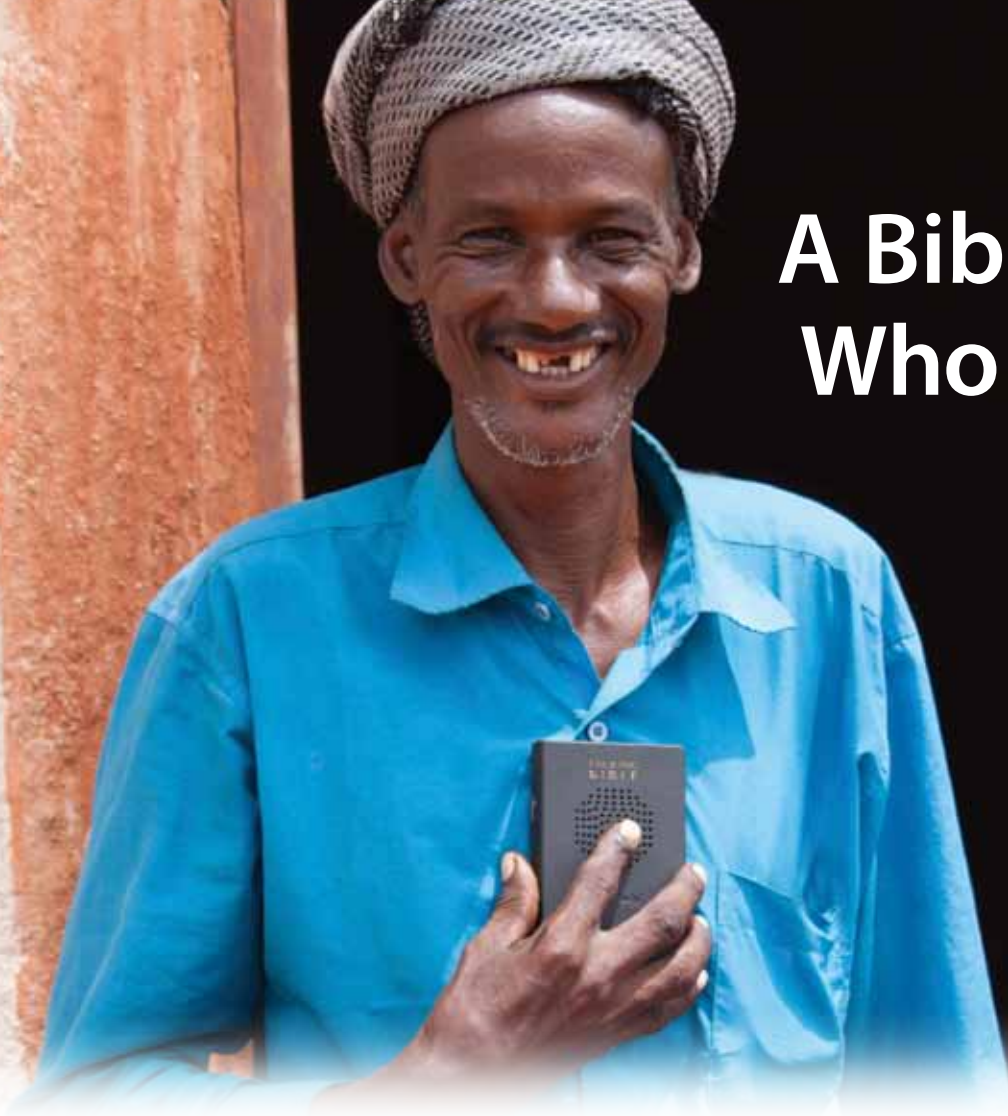
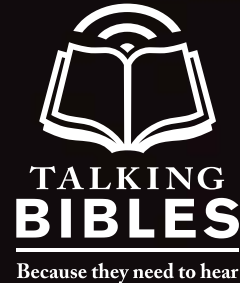


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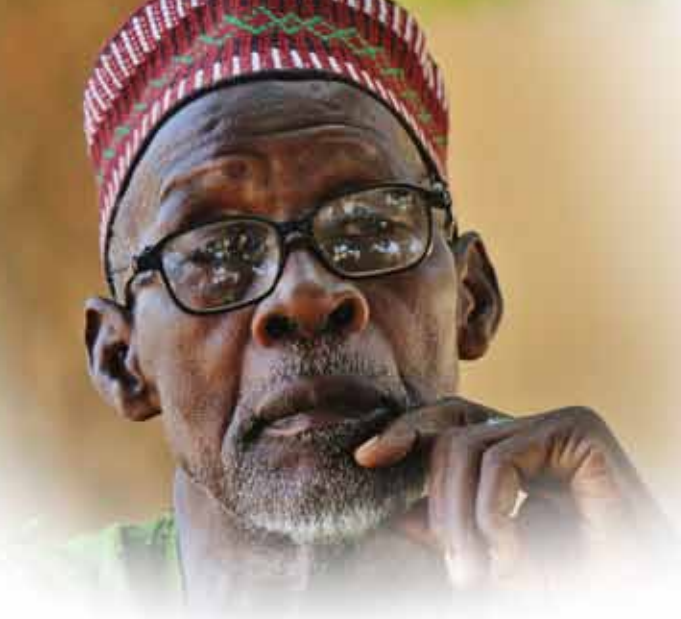
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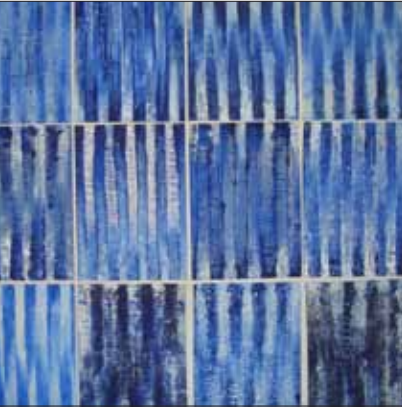
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Volume 151 | Number 06 | 2016

# BANNER



## FEATURES

**19** **The Banner and Me—and Us**  
*Prophets, priests, and kings in the Information Age.*  
by James Calvin Schaap

**32** **The Church Behind Bars: Ten Years Later** STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE  
*The movement of God to bring healing to broken lives and systems has already begun.*  
by Troy Reinstra

## DEPARTMENTS

**Editorial: From the Voice to the Voices: The Banner at 150** by Leonard J. Vander Zee **6**  
*What's the role of the denomination's magazine at this time in our history?*

**Catch Your Breath: Petals on My Shoes** by Joyce Kane **7**  
*I am aware that I am treading on something precious.*

**IMHO: The Community of Believers** by Harry Boessenkool **8**  
*How do we go about our task of representing Christ's mercy to all people, especially believers?*

**Letters to the Editor** **8**

**News: Banner Editor Nominee Seeks to Be a Shalom-Maker** **10**

**Just for Kids: God Made Feathers** by Rachel Lancashire **30**  
*Feathers aren't just for flying.*

**Reformed Matters: Abraham Kuyper and Dorothy Day** by Richard J. Mouw **34** STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE  
*Reclaiming every square inch for the kingdom may mean suffering alongside those in desperate situations.*

**On the Journey: Nothing Is Wasted** by Debra Rienstra **35**  
*Are all those missed futures held in the mind of God?*

**Tuned In: The Great Escape** **36**  
*Break out of boredom with these top-notch tales.*

**Frequently Asked Questions** **39**  
*Does the CRC recognize dedication as a valid option to baptism?*

**Happy Birthday, Banner!** **47**

## TOGETHER DOING MORE

**Religious Persecution Comes in Many Forms** by Chris Meehan **22**  
*Religious persecution is on the rise worldwide.*

**The View from Here: Break Down the Walls** by Steven Timmermans **26**



### July-August issue Synod 2016

Synod 2016 will be held on June 10-17 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. Look for updated articles at *thebanner.org*, Facebook (*TheBanner-magazine*) and Twitter (@crcbanner) throughout synod.

You can also follow synod via webcast and synod news office press releases, all of which can be accessed via the Synod 2016 website (*crcna.org/synod*).

The July/August issue will arrive in your mailbox a little later than usual so we can cover synod right up to the closing doxology. Our website will have fresh content posted throughout the summer.

# From the Voice to the Voices: The Banner at 150

**I'M OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER THE DAY** *The Banner* was surreptitiously distributed around the Calvin College campus with its masthead designating it as the magazine of the "Christian Deformed Church." *Banner* editor John Vander Ploeg was furious, and Calvin President William Spoelhof of Calvin was embarrassed but perhaps also a little pleased with the resourcefulness of his students.

I bring this up for the 150th anniversary issue of *The Banner* because I think it marks more of a watershed moment than the much ballyhooed burning wooden shoes cover of the 1980s. For many years *The Banner* was *the* voice of the Christian Reformed Church. Readers of editors Henry Beets and H. J. Kuiper knew exactly what its values and commitments were and where the boundaries stood.

Now *The Banner* is less "the voice" of the CRC and more a reflection of its *voices*. The CRC is no longer your grandparents' denomination. Where once you could travel its length and breadth and find an identical order of worship, now you can experience everything from a praise band to a liturgy that resembles a Roman Catholic mass. Where once there was wide agreement on moral and social issues in the CRC, now there's a spectrum of views as broad as the whole gamut of Protestantism.

From young earth creationists devoted to a literal reading of Genesis to theistic evolutionists devoted to the validity of Scripture and science. From those who uphold traditional marriage to those who see same-sex marriage as an answer to the legitimate needs and desires of our gay and lesbian members. From Canadian to American, from Korean to African American, from Latino to largely Dutch ethnic congregations—that's who we are today. Where in the world does *The Banner* fit into this magnificent hodgepodge?

I would argue that it occupies an even more important role than ever. The diverse viewpoints and congregations that I describe here tend to occupy their own bubbles. We gravitate to groups of our own kind and pay attention to the media that reflect our own biases. We don't really hear, much less understand, the other voices of the CRC.

I participate in an email listserv called CRC Voices with a wide variety of CRC members. There I daily encounter a staggering diversity of opinions. Participants sometimes go on rants, but someone usually calls us back to our common identity in Christ and in the CRC. There is, in the end, a sometimes grudging but still genuine mutual respect and a commitment to listen attentively to one another.

Given our present diversity, for the CRC to work we need to have a place to listen to each other besides the floor of classis or synod. We need to listen not just with the prejudice of our own opinion but with a genuine effort to understand the standpoint of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

That's the critical place of *The Banner* today. It can no longer be *the* voice of the CRC, captured by one or another of its factions with each new editor. It must reflect our voices in a way that's fair, balanced, respectful, and committed to the unity of the CRC. But our readers have their own obligations. They must not assume that when a contrary opinion appears on these pages that it's *The Banner's* position. Rather, it's one of the many voices of our denomination that we all need to hear and critique with respect and generosity. ■

FOR MORE, SEE  
**AS I WAS SAYING**  
at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org)



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

Where in the world does *The Banner* fit into this magnificent hodgepodge?

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The Magazine of the  
Christian Reformed Church

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# Petals on My Shoes

**I**T'S SPRINGTIME in western Washington, and the landscape around my apartment complex is strewn with pink flower petals from surrounding trees—so splashy and lavish. It's as if spring refuses to be taken for granted and demands our awe and wonder.

Some of the falling petals stick to my shoes; others litter the entrance to my building, where, stripped of their once-regal form and blown by the wind, they are considered a nuisance that needs to be swept up. But when I step on them as I pass, I'm aware that I am treading on something precious.

Shortly after he was ordained, Fr. Greg Boyle, a Jesuit priest, was asked to say mass in Bolivia. Feeling insecure because he did not know the native language, and having misplaced his notes, Fr. Boyle stumbled through the service with the help of an interpreter. Afterward he felt spent and humiliated. But when the crowd had dispersed, he was approached by an old man who seemed to appear out of nowhere. The man said, "Thanks for coming" in his native tongue, and

then proceeded to reach into his pocket to retrieve two, three, four handfuls of rose petals.

Standing on tiptoes, the man dropped the petals over Fr. Boyle's head, handful after handful—"and the store of red, pink, and yellow rose petals seem[ed] infinite." With head bowed, Boyle just stood there staring at his shoes, by then covered with tears and rose petals.

On this spring day I make a trip to the store while pink blossoms keep falling on the ground before me. But now I'm distracted by a number of things: did I lose the dog leash? Why hasn't my friend called me back? How much money do I have left for groceries? My mind is like a crow, picking up anything that glimmers and displacing any peace and gratitude I may have had earlier in the day. But a comment from a person at the grocery store who mistook the petals stuck to my shoes for some kind of funky art helps my mind dissolve the stream of worry and preoccupation and brings me back to the miracle of the present moment.

Singer-songwriter Carrie Newcomer's song "Holy as a Day Is Spent" voices prayers of praise and gratitude for the

ordinary events of everyday life. She says, "Redemption is everywhere I look," and, "It's all a part of a sacrament." She knows that it's all gift.

I've decided that when all the blossoms are gone there will be other things that will fill me with wonder: a dog running in a field, the lines on an old person's face, the beauty of a baby, fresh herbs on a salad. Maybe even things that bring me to my knees and cause doubt and grief—because it's all a gift and it all contributes to the person I am constantly becoming through Christ, who loves me just the way I am.

I've decided to be mindful of unexpected gifts and of the Giver, no matter what the season. ■



Joyce Kane, a former *Banner* staff member, lives in Washington state.



Just to be is a **bl**essing.

Just to live is **h**oly.

— ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

# The Community of Believers

**The church should assist Syrian Christians.**



**THE HISTORY OF SYRIA** and its neighbor, Lebanon, is a complicated one. Civil war in Syria started shortly after its occupation of Lebanon from 1983 to 2006. It's clear that the refugee crisis sparked by this war is an enormous human disaster: the death of 250,000 Syrians and the displacement of another 3 million-plus defies comprehension.

In this very complex environment, millions of people—85 percent of them Muslim—are fleeing to camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. Others (usually wealthier), are paying their way to get to Europe.

Civil war in Islamic countries puts immediate pressure on local Christians, Jews, and unbelievers. Those groups become the most vulnerable. Syrian Christians, for example, are shunned and persecuted in the predominantly Muslim refugee camps divided between Sunni and Shia.

As Christians, we have a responsibility to do something about this humanitarian crisis. But we have to plan our assistance very carefully. From a corporate church point of view, this involves local deacons who coordinate their congregation's efforts to help resettle refugees, and, in the case of the denomination, World Renew.

Synod 2016 will be receiving a report by its Committee to Study Religious Persecution and Liberty (full text at [crcna.org/persecution](http://crcna.org/persecution)). The report asks synod to urge the CRC's Office of Social Justice and World Renew to urge churches to work on this problem. Another committee report on the role of deacons includes the following quote: "The deacons shall represent and administer the mercy of Christ to all people, especially to those who belong to the community of believers."

In my opinion, this is the point. The church should, ideally, assist Syrian Christians who do not want to return to their home country. To publicly state that our efforts to help refugees should *not* take into consideration a family's faith does Christian refugees—and ourselves—a disservice.

I know from firsthand experience how difficult it was for my parents who came from another country to become integrated in Canada. The Christian church community was indispensable to their ability to acclimatize. Muslim families who are sponsored by Christian church communities may be conflicted when they accept the church's help but are not able to worship with that church. They may also find it more difficult to integrate into their own religious community.

The government has a responsibility to screen all refugee applicants and to do this thoroughly. I believe it's up to the church to decide who to help. ■



**Harry Boessenkool** is a retired banker who spent 5 years with a Dutch bank in Amsterdam, then 37 more years with a Canadian bank. He and his wife, Joanne, are members of First Church of New Westminster, BC.



## Elephant in the Room

Re "The Elephant in the Room" (Apr. 2016): I am a CRC member; most of my friends are also. But a widespread discussion of same-sex marriage is seldom brought up. Is this happening in Grand Rapids? Churches should air what the Bible reports on the subject. I attended synod at least three times and was on my classis Home Missions committee for a number of years. It seems the CRC and I are on an opposite course of thought. But I do see much good in the church.

—Robert Wunderink  
Roselawn, Ind.

## CRC Ministry to Navajo

I take exception to the judgmental language in the report regarding the Doctrine of Discovery task force ("Synodical Committee Rejects Doctrine of Discovery, Criticizes CRC Ministry to Navajo," Mar. 2016).

I grew up in Zuni in the 1940s and 50s, the child of one of those missionaries. I viewed flawed people who brought the good news with love and compassion. Throughout history we see imperfect people (Moses, Jonah, the prophets) bringing God's message and accomplishing his purposes.

Would the Navajo/Zuni be better off today if the missionaries [had] never brought them the good news? I think not.



# TTERS

Today many of them are leaders in the churches, schools, and tribal governments.

We definitely made mistakes. We have apologized, and, with God's help, will continue to flourish.

—Carol De Vries Carlson  
Taylorsville, Utah

## Movies

I recall a similar experience when I was young (“Why Dad Sent Me to the Movies,” Mar. 2016). But when my parents learned of it the result was the opposite of them condoning it.

Three significant things occurred later in life: (1) I encountered and considered the argument for atheism but concluded that an Intelligent Being created the universe; (2) I became a Christian Reformed pastor; (3) I taught a course for three years with an atheist as part of the continuing ed program at Iowa State University on whether there is a God, and what difference it makes.

Life continues to be interesting. I look forward to receiving *The Banner*.

—Bill Brouwers  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Same-Sex Marriage Report

The committee's report is flawed (“Michigan Classis Accepts Study Report on Same-Sex Marriage, Offers It to Synod 2016,” Mar. 2016). If we accept gay behavior and relationships, then we are going to have to figure out if and why other sexual behaviors and relationships outside of traditional marriage are wrong. . . . The more we “accept” and “celebrate” our culture's pathologies, the more vulnerable we and our children are to evils that harm us spiritually, emotionally, and physically because they contradict the way our Creator made our minds, bodies, and souls. We can only hope that God will be as merciful to us if we are disobe-

dient in this area as he has been to us in other areas where we were disobedient in the past. God bless us all.

—Raymond Opeka  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

The study committee of Classis GR East makes very clear that we must understand some of the Scripture passages related to homosexuality (eg. Rom. 1; 1 Cor. 6) (“Michigan Classis Accepts Study Report on Same-Sex Marriage”).

It is so very easy for us to come to a “black or white” position by simply quoting Scripture while Scripture itself is subject to and in need of interpretation. Surely homosexual activity of “God-lovers” is not what Paul describes in the above passages, for [people who are same-sex oriented and who want to be part of the fellowship of believers] very much want to serve God. Their understanding of and loyalty [to the Reformed faith] is contrary to the evil mess and wrongdoing described by Paul when people turn their backs to God. These evil attitudes do not include the sincere Christian who knows his or her sexual orientation.

It is my sincere prayer that Synod 2016 will consider the merit and clarification provided by this report.

—Henry Numan  
Vancouver, B.C.

## Calling All Shepherds

This opinion by Gertrude Pool is something I so agree with (“Where Have All the Shepherds Gone?” March 2016). The CRC seems to be saying more and more that the congregation is responsible for visiting the sick and the lonely. But I also feel we need a shepherd in our midst. When church members feel that no one cares, it is very easy to walk away from church.

—Corry Horsman  
Edmonton, Alta.

I felt compelled to respond (“Where Have All the Shepherds Gone?”). Sadly the article implies that a pastor isn't working hard enough now that they may not be “preaching twice a Sunday.”

Imagine a congregation where church members, small groups, elders, and pastors all took the time to lovingly and graciously shepherd each other. Such a dynamic would create healthy pastors and thriving church communities.

We can't put too much weight on one member (the pastor) of a church. After all, our denomination believes in the priesthood of all believers. Let's support our pastors, encourage them, pray for them, befriend them, and not just overload them with expectations.

—Beverly Roorda  
Beamsville, Ont.

## Interfaith Dialogue

Much as I appreciated the articles written by Mast (“Apocalypse Now”) and Vander Zee (“The Trinity”) in the March 2016 issue, both do raise a very timely and extremely urgent question. We live in a time of increasing interfaith dialogue, not to compromise or to find common denominators, but to listen to and learn from each other. We should, therefore, distinguish between biblical (Holy Book) language and theological language, be it Christian, Muslim, or the theological language of any other faith community. The word “Trinity” and its derivatives are strictly theological. The use of theological language makes any meaningful dialogue with other faith communities, especially Jewish and Muslim, very difficult, if not impossible.

—Simon Wolfert  
Surrey, B.C.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

# NEWS

## Banner Editor Nominee Seeks to Be a Shalom-Maker

**S**hiao Chong, 48, is the nominee to be the new editor of *The Banner*. The Board of Trustees interviewed him on May 5 and is recommending him for appointment by Synod 2016. *The Banner* is the official publication of the CRC.

"My long-term vision is that *The Banner* become known as a voice of wisdom and shalom, that the average CRC reader would choose it as their magazine of choice," he said, noting the increasing polarization in the CRC. "I'm not sure it is right now for all CRC members. I've heard there are



**Banner editor nominee Shiao Chong.**

some people who never read it, who throw it in the recycle bin."

He told the board that it is no revelation that same-sex issues are a very polarizing issue right now, as well as issues of faith and science. "Underlying some of these things is how we engage culture as a whole," he said. He said that people on both sides of issues have to ask themselves how they can be Christ to the other person, and how they can allow the other person to be Christ to them. "We can be drawn into 'us and them,'" he said, "but if we ask the questions, we bring it back to Christ."

In the midst of polarization, Chong said he feels called to the middle as a peacemaker, a shalom-maker, which can be "a dangerous and vulnerable position because everyone is firing at you."

In the short term, he hopes to bring more voices to the conversation, those of young people, those from various cultural backgrounds, those with disabilities.

Chong told the board of his journey from Malaysia, where he was born to Chinese parents, to Canada as a young man. He said that his journey from east to west,



both culturally and spiritually, gives him empathy for people both cross-culturally and cross-theologically.

The youngest of six children, Chong came to Christ through the ministry of a church in his hometown at age 14. After moving to Canada at age 20 to study English literature at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, he suffered a major depression in his second year of university, eventually seeking out help from CRC campus chaplain Tom Oosterhuis. "Part of [the depression] was a faith crisis. All kinds of new philosophies were coming out. The narrow, rigid faith I had didn't equip me to deal with this intellectual wrestling," he said. "God used the Plymouth Brethren church to bring me into faith. God used the CRC and campus ministry to save my faith. The Reformed world and life view equipped me to deal with the questions that came up in my studies."

It was also through campus ministry that he met his wife, Martha Schreiber. They have three daughters, ages 9 through 17. Chong told board members that his youngest daughter has Down syndrome, which introduced a new spiritual dimension in his

family. Admitting that he has a tendency to be overly intellectual, he said the fact that his daughter has cognitive delays is a reminder that worthiness and imagebearing of God is not dependent on his mind.

Chong has been a contributor to *The Banner* for nearly 20 years, including writing for the Frequently Asked Questions column on ethics. He has a Master of Arts degree in English literature. A commissioned pastor, he has been a CRC campus pastor at York University in the Toronto area for 15 years. He and his family are members of Rehoboth Fellowship CRC in Toronto.

Chong will be interviewed by delegates to Synod 2016 for appointment.

—Gayla R. Postma

### For more news

about the churches and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, visit [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).



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## What to Watch for at Synod 2016

A cursory glance through the *Agenda for Synod 2016* makes it obvious that the main item on this year's agenda will be homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Synod is the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church.

The *Agenda* includes the report (including a minority report) from the committee appointed by Synod 2013 to provide pastoral advice in light of the legalization of same-sex marriage. The *Agenda* also includes 26 overtures (requests) about the issue. Most want synod to reject the report outright. Some want the recommendations of the minority report adopted. Others want the Church Order (the rules that bind Christian Reformed churches) changed to note in a supplement to Article 69c that marriage is only between a man and a woman, so clergy officiating at a same-sex marriage will be in violation of the Church Order.

### Synod 2016

Delegates will convene for Synod 2016 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., from June 10-17. *The Banner* will post articles at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) throughout the week and keep readers updated via Twitter (hashtag #crccsynod) and Facebook (The Banner Magazine). There will also be a live webcast, live blogging, and press releases from CRC Communications. The July/August 2016 print issue of *The Banner* will include a roundup of news from Synod 2016.



Another report likely to generate discussion is from the committee that studied the Doctrine of Discovery. That report calls for the CRC to repent of and lament its trespasses against the Navajo and Zuni peoples. However, congregations that grew from the ministry to the Zuni and Navajo communities have voiced their opposition to that report.

A third study committee report deals with religious persecution and liberty. That report calls the church to refocus on the problem of religious persecution, citing insufficient action from various CRC ministries and committees. The authors of the report want each congregation to appoint a prayer coordinator to keep up on religious persecution and liberty issues and to foster regular prayer for those suffering from persecution. They also want the CRC's Office of Social Justice to ensure collection and distribution of up-to-date information about religious persecution to the congregations. »

*What to Watch* continued on page 13

## The Banner Awarded Top Honors by Press Associations

*The Banner* was honored by both the Evangelical Press Association (EPA) and the Associated Church Press (ACP) for work published in 2015.

Awards from the ACP included the following:

### Awards of Excellence

"As I Was Saying," online blog by *Banner* editor Leonard Vander Zee

"The Christmas Blues and the Gospel That Transcends Terror" by John D. Witvliet

"Annual Ministry Report" by Henry Hess

### Awards of Merit

Synod Coverage 2015 by Gayla Postma

"The Trouble with Outrage" by Rebecca Warren

### Honorable Mentions

"How Hard Could It Be?" by Judy Hardy

"I Became a Grandfather Today" by Paul Zigterman

"A Luminous Mystery" by J. Todd Billings

Awards from the EPA included the following:

### First Place

"Yet in My Flesh" by James C. Schaap (*Fiction*)

### Second Place

"The Good News about Election" by Leonard Vander Zee (*Biblical exposition*)

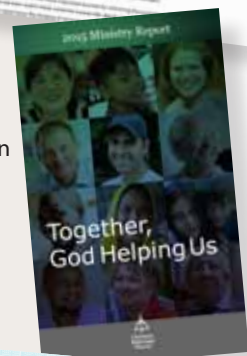
"Holy Catholic Church" by Leonard Vander Zee (*Editorial*)

### Third Place

"Bruce Cockburn's Sonic Life" by Robert Hosack, "Tuned In" editor Kristy Quist (*Critical review*)

### Fifth Place

"A Luminous Mystery" by J. Todd Billings (*First person*)



# NEWS

## IN MEMORIAM



### Rev. George Frederick Vander Weit

1942 - 2013

George Frederick Vander Weit, remembered by many as the proverbial “Energizer Bunny,” was an outspoken man who threw himself into the life of every church and community to which God called him. When he died on July 5, 2013, following a struggle with severe depression, the Christian Reformed Church lost a man passionately invested in its activities.

Vander Weit served congregations in Michigan and Ohio, getting involved in the communities in which they were located. After his retirement in 2008, he continued preaching.

Vander Weit was known as a leading advocate for women in ecclesiastical office. He was a frequent contributor to *The Banner*—writing articles and contributing to the Q & A page. He had a good sense of humor as evidenced by the jokes he submitted to *The Banner* and the Friday humor emails he sent out to many people. He loved to garden and travel.

Vander Weit is survived by Bonnie, his wife of 48 years, by four children and their spouses, and by nine grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Further information on recently deceased ministers is available at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).

## Canadians Hold National Gathering

From Vancouver Island to Prince Edward Island, from young adults to retirees, about 200 people traveled to Waterloo, Ont., in early May to talk about how to do ministry as the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. Participants from 12 classes (regional groups of churches) were joined by many denominational staff members.

The weekend provided opportunities for participants to share stories of local ministry and for denominational personnel to hear how those stories relate to the denomination’s new ministry plan. The Canadian gathering is one of four leading to a binational gathering planned for August 2017.

Elly Boersma, 29, and Chris de Winter, 33, came from St. Catharines, Ont. Both expressed a desire to learn about how the denomination is helping local churches. Richard Wikkerink, 50, of Ancaster, Ont., echoed that desire. “I came to learn more about direction of



Glenn Smith: “Local congregations have been shoved to the sidelines of life.”

the denomination as it relates to the local church,” he said. “I want to take back a larger story of the denomination and the great resources that are coming to us.”

Victor Chen, 70, is from Richmond, B.C. “I came hoping to hear stories that would inspire me and my congregation to be better



Participants shared their stories in small groups.

ambassadors for Christ. There are many diversities across Canada and we need to use those diversities to further the kingdom.”

The ministry of the local church was central to the conversation. Glenn Smith, part of the CRC’s Mission Montreal, noted the ministry context of a very secular country. “It is virtually impossible to publicly believe in God. This is the Canada we live in,” he said. “It shows up in hyper individuality, hyper sexualization, hyper consumerism. No church can think about mission without taking that seriously. Local congregations have been shoved to the sidelines of life. When we embrace Canada, we need to think about that change.”

Michelle Visser-Wikkerink shared stories from her work as director of the CRC’s Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg, Man. She told of the many ways she was mentored by people who had been in jail, people with addictions, and people who live on the street in learning how to minister



A small group at Waterloo gathering.

in her local context. “They were the message, I was the stranger. They fed me, they clothed me, they invited me in,” she said.

She explained the tradition of a Native circle, drumming four times and asking everyone to pray facing in each of the four directions. She explained the significance of eagle feathers and passed around bowls of tobacco. “[Tobacco] is the currency of thanks. You give it as a thank you, you give it as a covenant. If you accept the tobacco, you have said yes to what I ask,” she explained. She noted, “Just

and for participants to tell the denomination what they need to create healthy ministry.

Three U.S. regional gatherings are planned for the coming year. The first, with a multiethnic focus, will be held in June in Grand Rapids, Mich. In November another gathering, with a focus on servant leadership, will be held in Florida. The third, with a “glocal” theme, will be held in California in early 2017. The culmination of all the gatherings will be a binational event in Detroit, Mich., in August 2017.

—Gayla R. Postma



**Michelle Visser-Wikkerink: “Just because the church may not understand the traditions of the Native community, that doesn’t make them wrong.”**

because the church may not understand the traditions of the Native community, that doesn’t make them wrong.”

As people gathered in groups, sometimes with people from across the country, and sometimes with people from their own region, they shared their stories.

Canadian ministries director Darren Roorda said he hoped the event equipped and encouraged people to “be really contextual in their regions”

*What to Watch* continued from page 11

» Of course, annual synods deal with many other items as well. This year, two new appointees to the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary will be interviewed. Synod will also interview Shiao Chong, the nominee to be the new editor for *The Banner*.

Along with the Board of Trustees’ request for a 2 percent increase in the ministry shares amount churches are asked to pay in support of shared ministries, there may also be discussion of how that system is working. One overture is asking synod to completely overhaul how funds are designated, reducing funding to some of the major missionary agencies to zero, thus requiring those agencies to raise funds through donors and special offerings.

### **Diversity and Change**

While the church continues to strive for ethnic diversity in its representation at synod, on boards, and in denominational staffing, the *Agenda* reveals that the CRC is increasingly diverse in its contexts for ministry, its needs, and its practices.

One of the most visible changes will be at synod itself, where, for the first time, deacons will be delegates. Instead of two pastors and two elders, each classis (regional group of churches) will be represented by one pastor, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer. This year’s synod will see the return of a panel of female advisers, in response to a request by last year’s synod because too few women were delegated to synod. In fact, this year’s delegation shows a marked increase in female delegates, especially among the newly seated deacons.

For much of the denomination’s history, congregations all used the same forms for baptisms, professions of faith, and communion. This year several new forms are being presented to synod for approval to accommodate the wide variety of practice in local churches.

Pastor-Church Relations is seeking approval to change its name to Pastor-Church Resources. The office is bringing a summary of its “Better Together” report, which addresses the increasing incidence of churches and pastors separating. Synod will hear about the need to assess pastors for better ministry fit. One size does not fit all.

The role of commissioned pastors and Church Order Article 23 that governs the role is also up for discussion. The marked increase in the number of commissioned pastors and the diverse roles they are filling also speaks to the change happening in CRC leadership.

Synod will hear updates on major initiatives approved by Synod 2015: the unification of Christian Reformed World Missions and Christian Reformed Home Missions; the changing of the Board of Trustees into a much larger Council of Delegates; and a plan to review the format of synod itself.

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

## The Weirdest Little Church in Texas

**A**s we take the off-ramp of US-290 West, I am shocked to see groups of homeless individuals huddled in the darkness beneath the overpasses. A short block later, on the right, more groups of men and women are gathered on a patio around some picnic tables. A sign on the lawn reads, "Hot diggity! You've made it to the Weirdest Little Church in Texas."

That church is Sunrise Community Christian Reformed Church in Austin. Here, those from under the overpasses and those on the patio who are poor, hungry, addicted, or mentally ill will find welcome, food, hot coffee, clothing, medical assistance, and even an address they can use for receiving mail. They will find restrooms and showers. I'd traveled to Sunrise to meet the people who work here, to speak with some of those touched by its many ministries. And maybe I'd discover why they call themselves weird.

On any given Sunday morning at Sunrise, they say, you could be sitting next to a person who is chronically homeless, a Ph.D. student, someone reeking of alcohol, or someone with a six-figure income. Although we tried to look inconspicuous, my husband and I are noticed

**Members of the church tell Janet Greidanus (back row) what they would like others to know about Sunrise.**



immediately as visitors and warmly greeted by a number of people. Had we lingered in the foyer before the service, we would have seen many people going in and out, using the restrooms and helping themselves to the contents of the fridge.

A young woman gives her testimony during the service. A former meth addict, she confesses her frailties and failures, including how she had to surrender her two children to the care of her mother and how at one point, she lived out of her car. She's maintained sobriety for the past 11 months, she says. She confesses her faith in Jesus and hopes the congregation will accept her as a member of the church. Only then do I realize that I'm witnessing a profession of faith. When pastor Mark Hilbelink asks the congregation if they will promise to love, encourage, and support her, there is no solemn "We do, God helping us." Instead, their response is a spontaneous standing ovation accompanied by much enthusiastic clapping and shouting.



**Mark Hilbelink became pastor of Sunrise Community Church six years ago at the age of 25.**

Over lunch with eight people from the congregation, I asked what they would like others to know about Sunrise.

"It's okay to come here even before you believe."

"I feel welcome and not looked down upon because I am different."

"I had wounds that were healed through this church."

"I feel safe in this church."

On Monday morning, Emily Grace Clark, the church's case manager, sits at her computer with Forest, helping him fill out an online application for work. "Forest is such a success story," she said later. "When he first came to the church he was drunk and homeless. Now he is sober, has a home, and works."

Forest describes his new home, a small camper with a sink, a toilet, a fridge, and a bed. All he needs, he says. It's situated on the property of Sunny and Sher, a lesbian couple from the church who invited him to stay after he did some temporary work for them.

Clark warmly greets every person who comes through the door. "Have you slept?" "How are you feeling?" Of one man, she asks, "Are you staying clean?" "I have to," he replies, "or I'll go back to prison." Clark said, "We give dignity back to people when we inquire about how they're doing and also when they have someone to complain to."



**Case manager Emily Grace Clark helps Forest fill out online job application.**

Her job includes helping people find a place to live, helping them find a birth certificate or a child they may not have seen in a decade. She obtains food stamps and distributes bus passes, 1,314 of which were awarded to Sunrise as part of a grant. One person comes daily to get his blood pressure medication, which she keeps locked in her desk. She shows the drawer where mail is kept for the 200 homeless individuals for whom the church is their mailing address. Another drawer holds many of their important documents for safe-keeping.

In the lobby, a volunteer is sorting piles of donated clothing. A man named Frank arrives with a load of donated donuts, cakes, and other pastries. Frank is a gleaner, visiting stores and bakeries throughout the city and delivering day-old baked goods to a half-dozen nonprofits and churches like Sunrise. Soon after, 300 breakfast tacos are delivered from a local restaurant, as they are every Monday, and placed outside beside a microwave and the fridge. Fifteen pots of coffee are brewed each morning.

Every weekday, the Sunrise Neighbourhood Youth Program offers after-school care to around 100 children from low-income homes who are picked up from eight different schools and brought to the church. They receive help with homework and a meal. The church also runs summer camps.

Not everyone in this south Austin neighborhood, however, is happy about the church's

ministry to people who are homeless, and many believe the problem is getting worse. Currently, tensions are high. "They think our free sandwiches are bringing more people around here indefinitely," Hilbelink says. "In fact, we've helped more than 25 individuals get off the street and into permanent housing in the last 12 months." Sunrise has even rented a house in the neighborhood where five formerly homeless individuals live together. Although Hilbelink has met with disgruntled community members more than once, every week there are at least three angry emails or phone calls.

In spite of neighborhood discontent, Sunrise is growing very quickly. "I think the reason," offers Hilbelink, "is that people have a subconscious appetite for being a part of a community on a radical mission. We're a weirdly attractive church, not for the regular reasons such as programs, great bands, good-looking pastor, or nice building, but for reasons that transcend time. The church is at its best when it is radically meeting the greatest needs of the community and building a diverse community of people we're generally too scared to hang out with."

At Sunrise, being a member of a small group is essential. In the intimate community of a small group, members confess, pray, study, eat, serve together, take care of each other, and hold each other accountable. Hilbelink believes that people who are connected to a small group grow faster than those who aren't.

I attended a small group taking place at Hilbelink's home where they are studying the book *Pastrix* by Nadia Bolz-Weber. As we prepare to end the meeting, Hilbelink reads a passage that was particularly meaningful for him: "Death and resurrection, the recurring experience of seeing the emptiness, weeping over our inability to fill it or even understand it, and then listening to the sound of God speaking our names and telling God's story is a messy business. But it's my business, and it's the most beautiful thing I could tell you about."

"This is my life at Sunrise," Hilbelink concluded. *Nothing weird about it at all*, I think as I leave.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Jeong Jin Yoo**

1958 – 2016

Jeong Jin Yoo, a loving pastor and theologian who devoted his life to church planting and teaching and a faithful friend to many, died on January 27 of cancer. He was 57.

Prior to his call to ministry, Jeong Yoo was a graphic designer, winning awards for his designs and serving as one of the designers for the Seoul Olympic Committee.

Yoo earned a bachelor's degree in theology from Auckland University in New Zealand. He was ordained in 2000 and also earned a master's in theology from Fuller Theological Seminary. He served two congregations in Auckland before emigrating to the U.S.

Yoo served Christian Reformed congregations in California. He also served two other churches in Pasadena. He was serving the Just Jesus Mission at the time of his death.

Rev. David Kong, peer relations coordinator for Classis Greater Los Angeles, said Yoo was always bright and deeply devoted to the Lord, his family, and friends.

Yoo is survived by his wife, Yoonhee, and one daughter, Yeusul.

—Jonathan Kim

*Further information on recently deceased ministers is available at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).*



## Website Supports Traditional Marriage, Rejects Synodical Report on Same-Sex Marriage

Returning Church, an informal group of pastors and other church leaders who take what they view as an orthodox view of marriage, has published a website in support of traditional marriage in response to the report from the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance Re: Same-Sex Marriage going to Synod 2016, the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church.

CRCNA Biblical Marriage went online in February. Rev. Chad Steenyk of Holland, Mich., is one of the steering committee members for that website. "We wanted to provide information . . . on contemporary sources that were consistent with our 1973 report," he said, referring to the study committee report adopted in 1973 as the CRC's position on homosexuality. The 1973 report states that homosexuality is not sinful but homosexual activity is. "We hope to provide CRC congregations, church leaders, classes, and future synodical delegates with information that will help them to promote and defend biblical marriage both in the CRCNA and in the broader society. We believe that God is clear in his Word that marriage is a union between one man and one woman."

A document on the website entitled "Biblical Reflections on the Synodical Report," written by three CRC pastors, states that the report going to synod "hardly cites or quotes Scripture."

"The world is exerting much pressure to approve of same-sex sexual activity," they wrote. "There has been a well-organized effort in society and in the church to orchestrate public approval of same-sex intimacy. Yet the committee condemns phrases such as 'gay agenda' and offers no pastoral guidance for discerning the sexual revolution as a manifestation of the wicked power of the world."

The authors of the critique charge that the "throughout the report, the bottom line seems to be avoidance of hurting anyone's feelings."

The website includes more than 20 overtures (requests) and communications to Synod 2016, most rejecting the synodical committee's report.

The Returning Church has been around for nearly 10 years. It now functions primarily as a Facebook group that includes some 400 men and women from Christian Reformed churches across the U.S. and Canada.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Ministry Funding Receives New Scrutiny

The funding of the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church will gain attention at Synod 2016 as a result of an overture from Classis Iakota that focuses on the ministry shares system. Synod will also receive a report from the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church that focuses on financial sustainability. Ministry shares are the monies congregations give to support its shared ministries.

Churches are remitting less and less of the ministry shares amount requested. As a result, Classis Iakota (a regional group of churches) sent an overture (request) to Synod 2016 recommending radical changes to the system. A financial sustainability report from the Board of Trustees addresses some of the concerns raised in the Iakota overture. Both support the ministry shares system as a way of raising funds, but both acknowledge the need to make the system work for the next generation.

The concept of ministry shares, which used to be called quotas, and, before that, assessments, goes back to the CRC's beginnings. Every year, synod (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) decides how much money to ask from the churches to support denominational ministries. Last year synod approved a per-member amount of \$339.48. The board is recommending a 2 percent increase for 2017. In 2002, congregations contributed 71.7 percent of the requested amount. By 2015, the contribution of min-

istry shares had dropped to 59.8 percent. This despite the fact that it costs the denomination only 20 cents to raise \$100 through ministry shares. It costs \$25 to raise that same amount of money from individual donors.

Classis Iakota states that many churches are being forced to choose between funding denominational ministries or local ministries. It proposes that the designation of the funds be overhauled. Funding to the major mission agencies would drop dramatically, or in some cases be eliminated altogether, and major reductions to congregational services and synodical services would be made. The result would be a per-member ministry share of \$67.10, based on 2014 statistics, a drop of nearly 80 percent. In several cases, it calls for either a reduction in costs or an increase in "third-stream giving" to accommodate that loss of ministry shares.

The board is sending its own report on financial sustainability, which addresses some of the concerns raised by Iakota, to Synod 2016. Its report acknowledges the stresses on local churches. "As demands on local resources expand, ministry shares, which is often one of the largest single line items in the church budget, become a focus of budget reductions, especially as there are currently no direct consequences of reduced or eliminated support," the report states.

The report also noted that some congregations see the work of the denomination as being





driven “top down” by the denominational leadership. Director of finance and operations John Bolt said that many people don’t understand that the missions supported by ministry shares are those that came from requests from the churches via synods over the years.

He used the analogy of being sent to the grocery store. The master (the churches) sends the worker (the denomination) to the store with a long grocery list. When the worker arrives at the checkout, the cashier tells the worker what the cost is. But the master decides that he only wants to give the worker some of the money. “I think that describes our situation here,” Bolt told the board. “The churches have given the Board of Trustees a list of ministry to do through synod, but when we turn to them to fund the ministry, they tell us they need to focus on the work they are doing locally.”

That leaves us with several possible actions, he said. One is to start putting some items back on the shelf (to stop doing some of the ministry), and another is to have the church own the request and fund the ministry. “Like all such issues, the real answer lies probably somewhere in the middle,” Bolt said.

The board endorsed action steps contained in the report on financial sustainability, requesting the executive director to develop a strategy for implementation. A first step is helping churches understand that the work being done is at their request through synod. Another step is to evaluate if there has been “mission creep,” making sure the work is still what the congregations want, rather than ministry growth based on leadership’s desires.

A significant change included in the report is the role of classes in the determination of how funding will be allocated among the

individual congregations. The report suggests that the ministry funding request would go to each classis, which would then decide the fair levels of financial responsibility of each of its congregations, sharing the responsibility as a classis. “Allowing each classis to determine the best method of requesting funding from the local churches to meet their allocation may be the best strategy for long-term sustainability,” the report said.

If Synod 2016 adopts the report, the Board of Trustees intends to bring the strategy and implementation plan to Synod 2017 for its consideration.

Synod 2016 will receive both documents when delegates gather at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., from June 10-17.

—Gayla R. Postma

## News Digest



### Texas Churches, World Renew Provide Aid after Record Flooding

New Life Christian Reformed Church in Spring, Texas, and Peace Community CRC in Houston stepped up to help those affected by record flooding that occurred in mid-April. World Renew is also providing resources to the area.

### West Michigan Church Observes Centennial Anniversary

Hope Christian Reformed Church in Grandville, Mich., celebrated its 100th birthday in April and May.

### Michigan Church Celebrates 50th Anniversary with a Seminary Scholarship

Celebrating 50 years as a congregation, North Hills Christian Reformed Church in Troy, Mich., looked toward the future by establishing a scholarship to Calvin Theological Seminary, the CRC seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich.

### British Columbia Churches Provide Chaplain for Refugees

Churches in British Columbia appointed Dena Nicolai as refugee chaplain and community mobilizer in Vancouver, B.C., supporting newcomers and Christian Reformed churches seeking to welcome refugees.

For more on these and other stories, please visit [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).

—Banner Correspondents

# NEWS

IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Winston Charles Boelkins**  
1930-2016

Winston Charles Boelkins was a gentle and kind man who cared for others with a presence that was deeply comforting. He died peacefully on March 27 at the age of 85.

Boelkins served Christian Reformed congregations in Michigan, Alberta, New Jersey, Illinois, and California. He retired in 1992.

Boelkins wanted his children to learn everything they could about the history and importance of the places they lived. For example, in 1969, after the astronauts returned from walking on the moon, Boelkins took his four daughters, ages 12 and under, to New York for the ticker tape parade. He wanted them to experience history in the making.

Boelkins was a gifted pianist and organist. He loved photography and caring for his fruit trees and roses.

Boelkins was instrumental in forming a Facebook group for CRC pastors. "The group now has 668 pastors and is a source of help and encouragement to many of us in the ministry," said one pastor.

Boelkins was preceded in death by Grace, his wife of 58 years. He is survived by four children and their spouses and by 14 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## Rehoboth, Zuni Churches Criticize Doctrine of Discovery Synodical Report

**T**he church councils of Rehoboth (N.M.) Christian Reformed Church and Zuni (N.M.) CRC denounced some of the conclusions in the report going to Synod 2016 from the Doctrine of Discovery Task Force.

In that report, the task force criticized the CRC's ministry to Zuni and Navajo people, which was established more than 100 years ago and included mission churches and Christian schools. Rehoboth Christian School was at one time a boarding school.

The two church councils sent communications to Synod 2016 as part of an overture from Classis Red Mesa (the regional group of churches) that asks synod to withhold adoption of the report until there is further study.

The Doctrine of Discovery (DOD) was the belief that North American lands were uninhabited until Europeans arrived and placed white Christians in a position of power over non-Christian peoples and lands. The Rehoboth council agrees with the task force's condemnation of the DOD but refutes that the CRC ever advocated that view and accuses the task force authors of being uncharitable. "[The authors] selected some of the ugliest moments of that past in order to make their accusations against these early missionaries stick," the council wrote. "They assigned questionable motives to the missionaries which fit the story the task force desired to tell." The council said the historical story told in the task force's report is skewed, out of balance, and unfair.

In its report, the task force noted that the CRC "drinks downstream" from that history and "the effects of that corporate sin linger today." The Rehoboth CRC council said that cuts both ways. "We enjoy the blessing of Native culture and live downstream from it," the council wrote. "Native Christians also live downstream. They benefit from the message of saving light which the early missionaries, doctors, and teachers brought them. . . . Many Rehoboth Christian School students would give thanks for their Christian education."

The Zuni CRC council echoed many of the same concerns. It asked how the writers of the report could speak on behalf of the Zuni CRC "when, to our knowledge, no one here was ever consulted prior to the writing of the report."

It went on to state that the doctrines of Manifest Destiny and of Discovery were not doctrines of the CRC but rather political doctrines used to justify the westward expansion of the United States of America. "Was the thinking of the church tainted by these doctrines? Maybe," the communication said.

In 2003, at the 100th anniversary celebrations of Rehoboth Christian School, a ceremony of apology and reconciliation was held. The task force calls for further confession, lamentation, and repentance, and acknowledgment of the CRC's trespasses against



Indigenous peoples generally and, specifically, against the Navajo and Zuni peoples of the U.S. Southwest. "The DOD report leaves us with a sense that public acknowledgments of wrongdoing will never end—it will never be enough," the Zuni CRC council wrote.

Both churches expressed concern that the report leaves the impression that the Native people would have been better off without the missionaries. The Zuni church said, "When the early Christian Reformed missionaries came to the American Southwest, they found the Navajo and Zuni people living in abject poverty. We believe that they were moved with hearts of compassion and truly came to love the people God called them to serve."

That was echoed by the Rehoboth council. "Mistakes were made as missionaries carried out the work, but the work itself was not a mistake! It was obedience to the Lord. Therefore, we ask synod to develop a balanced report which not only articulates the sins of the missionaries but also affirms the precious biblical value of mission."

—Gayla R. Postma

BY JAMES CALVIN SCHAAP



THE  
BANNER AND ME—  
AND US

150 YEARS

**E**ARLIER THIS YEAR, the front page of the Canadian biweekly *Christian Courier* featured a headline that, to me, was perfectly stunning: “100 Ordained Women in the CRC Ministry Today.” Pardon me for having to draw a quick breath, but those of us old enough to remember the women-in-office wars may do a double-take when stumbling across that tally. You’re not kidding? A hundred women pastors? What hath God wrought?

Seems like yesterday I sat in packed synod galleries intensely attuned to discussions as rigidly polarized—or more so—as United States politics during the Obama era. Packed rows of staunch believers were praying that our church

doors wouldn’t swing open to women’s ordination, while even more men and women in that gallery were storming the gates of heaven with a polar opposite request.

I was a *Banner* reporter back then, not a synodical delegate. Editor Andy Kuyvenhoven had asked me to help his staff cover synod, so although I was decidedly “liberal,” I was largely unaffiliated with either side. I used to tell people it was very difficult to go to war with good friends and family. On my own church council, if I wasn’t alone I was part of an almost non-existent minority. Still, all of us worked together and prayed together. Often.

During those years, many people left the denomination in confounded exhaustion. War kills in many ways.

Twenty years later, that headline: “100 Ordained Women in the CRC Ministry Today.” Amazing.

### Words Matter

I bring all of that up because I wonder whether, in my lifetime at least, those years may have been among the best years of the official magazine of the Christian Reformed Church. Words mattered because issues mattered. Thousands left the denomination for more progressive churches; even more left for more conservative fellowships. But everyone read *The Banner*. Not everyone loved it, but everyone read it.

Who my age will forget a pair of wooden shoes blazing away on the cover, set there by an immigrant preacher/editor who may well have been more Dutch »

## Bananer



than most of his readers? People cared deeply about issues, probably too deeply. Words counted. *The Banner* put 'em out there, and people read *The Banner*.

An even higher percentage of denominational readership read the magazine from 1928 well into the 1950s, when Rev. H. J. Kuiper—a preacher who came as close as anyone to being a CRC pope—was editor. I was a kid in the 50s, too young to care about any magazine or editor, but my parents read *The Banner* eagerly and loved editor Kuiper, who, said James Bratt in his *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*, was “the authority on all matters of truth and morals, a voice whose every word was to be eagerly awaited, treasured, and—most of all—heeded.”

It was a wholly different *Banner*, a wholly different CRC, and a wholly different age. Back then, in the spring when the magazine published pictures of seminary grads, lots and lots of grandmas cut out those pictures and pasted them in scrapbooks. People followed “our Indian cousins” in New Mexico, and 18-year-old kids bound for college rarely considered going anywhere but Calvin in Grand Rapids, Mich. Dutch Bingo wasn’t all that popular because everyone already knew everyone else.

My parents in Wisconsin could not have imagined Sunday morning without listening to Rev. Peter Eldersveld preaching on WHBL, Sheboygan. They loved his passion and his thoughtfulness—in part because he was ours. *Ours* is a strange word no one uses today. Rev. B. J. Haan, the founder of Dordt College, frequently talked about “our people” from the pulpit and from behind the radio microphone: “Our people have to talk about this or that,” he’d say, as if we were a tribe or a bowling team. Even if you weren’t one of us back then, you knew very well who he was talking about.

All of that has changed, and *The Banner* has become an entirely different magazine

In the spring of 1970, I was a senior in college and assistant editor of the Dordt College *Diamond* when some Calvin College delinquents published a spoof they called *The Bananer* that included fulsome shots at Dordt (“Warp College, mid fields of golden corn”). I loved it.

Envy devoured my system like gangrene. I’d never seen anything so masterful, a pitch-perfect parody, cover-to-cover hilarious, but oh my goodness, how naughty!

My parents were aghast. One of the articles featured a pregnant girl in Oostburg, Wisconsin. People who called Oostburg home were livid. I know. They told me.

The nation was at war right then, in Vietnam but also at home. Just a week later, after the shootings at Kent State, I’d be marching in Washington. That violent generational divide meant there were probably only two ways to read *The Bananer*. First, with a belly laugh that came to me only after my jealousy flat-lined. Second, with righteous horror, my parents’ way. To them, *The Bananer* may not have been outright blasphemy, but Lord a’mighty, it was a definitely sacrilege. “How to View the Second Coming”—can you imagine?

*The Bananer* succeeded in doing what it attempted only because *The Banner* itself was so greatly loved. Everyone knew *The Banner*, and everyone got the joke. Many didn’t laugh. Some cried. Today, a response to the same effort would be ho-hum.

In late April 1970, the late 60s crashed headlong into my parents’ blessed denominational culture. Things would never be the same.

Neither would the Oostburg CRC, I suppose. Neither would *The Banner*.

to serve a vastly different readership in a whole new world.

Not long ago, my wife and I visited a Christian Reformed church where the screen up front ran announcements, including a line announcing the topic for that day’s adult Sunday school: “Why we should no longer read *The Banner*.” I thought Rod Serling might step in suddenly to tell me I’d entered *The Twilight Zone*.

### Changing Times

The big alterations *The Banner* has gone through in my lifetime have resulted, at least in part, from far more comprehensive changes than the varying politics or theological reflections of its editors and staff. *The Banner* is new, and it must continue to be new in our ever-changing world.

I grew up at the very end of an era when a nap was the path of righteousness come Sunday afternoon—a nap and a *Banner*. My father’s father, a pastor, was immersed in denominational culture. When my dad came home from World War II, he longed for the stability and peace he believed he could find in that

same tradition. *The Banner* continued to hold as deified a place as it had maintained with his father before him, required reading. That’s the way my parents chose to live.

But I remember sitting down between a driveway basketball court and home on a Sunday afternoon, sitting still so my shirt could dry where it was wet from a pickup game far enough away from our place not to be seen or heard. I simply didn’t dare go home full of sweaty sin.

When, in the mid-60s, strict Sabbath observance began to loosen, *The Banner* lost its place and probably many readers, not because editorials had changed (either too liberal or too conservative), but because *we* had changed. In Wisconsin, where I grew up, Vince Lombardi and the championship Green Bay Packers playing on TV every Sunday may have done as much to diminish *Banner* readership than any series of articles inside the magazine. The world of H. J. Kuiper was history.

Since 2005, there’s been a new plan: every CRC family receives *The Banner* free of charge either at church or in their

# WORDS MATTERED BECAUSE ISSUES MATTERED

mailbox at home. It's a monthly, not a weekly. And just this morning, I watched a video of Dr. Steve Timmermans, executive director of the CRC, explaining a brand-new program that will put most of the CRC library of materials in the hands of churches and individuals. Books of mine will likely be included—at least I hope so. Books, videos, and most other resources will be free to CRC members so we can use them on any computer or tablet or smartphone.

The CRC Digital Library is yet another emblem of immense change. Lots of folks call the era in which we live “the Information Age” because the mass of information we access night or day, on our desks, in our laps, in our hands, is endless. Today *Time* weighs a quarter of what it did two decades ago. *Newsweek* is gone. General interest magazines still exist, but they're strapped for subscribers. What happened to *The Banner* happened also to countless other periodicals.

## Me and *The Banner*

While I know all of that to be true, some of us still have to reach for the Kleenex.

In 1981, I led a young people's retreat in northern Ontario. The hosts put me up at a little farmhouse just east of Emo. It was the home of the Veldhuizens, a family of more than a dozen kids, a household already putting up five or six out-of-town guests visiting for the retreat—and me.

One morning I watched dad and the boys butcher a cow. “What are you going to do with the guts?” I asked when they were scooping them up into the loader.

“Dump them out back in the bush,” one of the boys said, climbing aboard the tractor.

“Seriously?” I said.

“The bears'll eat 'em.”

They weren't pulling my leg.

I knew I had a story. I wrote it and sent it to editor Kuyvenhoven, along with a note proposing that I do a whole series of stories of ordinary people in the CRC, stories that highlight our lives. I told him I thought it would be interesting to ask

people what they thought of being CRC at a time when—looking back—we were just moving forces into position for the wars to come.

Kuyvenhoven liked the idea. He told me he'd give me \$6,000 for travel and let it be known that I had to go to Ontario, California, New Mexico, and Florida. Then he let me find the stories. For two years those stories of ordinary people appeared each week in *The Banner*; when it was over, they came out in a book.

It's not my place to judge whether readers liked those stories or simply turned pages. But I learned far more than I'd ever imagined by just listening to people spin out the story of their lives and answer that single question I always posed: “What do you think of the CRC?”

I heard this particular line quite often in response: “the preaching of the Word.” Men and women on both sides of the issues that divided us used those words reverently, as if the idea was, after a fashion, the very heart of things in the denomination, maybe even its soul.

When I told that to people, some claimed the line was repeated unthinkingly, by rote, no more to be valued than any other cliché repeated ad infinitum. I didn't believe that then, and I still don't. After all, I was the only one who heard those people say it.

All of that is just part of my own *Banner* story.

I made a copy of the first check I ever received from the *Banner* office—\$25 for a book review that filled up most of a page. No book reviews get that much ink today. Recently a review of a new book of mine came out in *The Banner*, four sentences long—but I'm not complaining.

I can't tell you how thrilled I was to get that check, as well as a note from editor Lester DeKoster asking me to write more, which I did.

Years ago, *The Banner* ran essays and short stories of mine, some in a long series. I wrote about Diet Eman, a hero in the Dutch Resistance, in a series that appeared in *The Banner* before *Things*

*We Couldn't Say* was ever published. And in the early 80s, *The Banner* ran the harrowing story of a Tai Dam refugee who became a Christian Reformed evangelist: a man named Khay Baccam.

Editor Suk gave me the green light to write an entire novel, *Touches the Sky*, that was serialized for a more than a year in *The Banner*—the story of immigrant Dutch in South Dakota at the time of the Massacre at Wounded Knee. Hard to imagine, but I've been a part of *The Banner's* story for forty years and never lived in Grand Rapids.

It's been a joy to work with *Banner* staff, from Gertrude Haan to Sandy Vander Zicht, from Lil Grissen to Malcolm McBryde, Jennifer Parker, Jena Vanderploeg, and today, Judy Hardy. Over these many years, *Banner* editors—DeKoster through Vander Zee—have been bountifully good to me.

Our lives as believers include three separate office doors: we're prophets and priests and kings, all of us. I have some problems being a king, but then poet Stanley Wiersma used to say most of us have some trouble knowing what a king is, not living in a monarchy.

The other two I understand. To be prophetic is to whisper—occasionally shout—into the ears of others the vital truth we're missing. *The Banner* has done that—and occasionally been beaten up for it, I'm sure.

Me? I've never been particularly prophetic. I prefer the robes of a priest. Tim Keller says, “As prophets, Christians call neighbors to repent, but as priests they do so with sympathy and loving service to address their needs.”

I hope I've done that. I know through all the years my many friends at *The Banner* have. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



James Calvin Schaap is a writer who lives in Iowa.

### Religious Persecution Comes in Many Forms

by Chris Meehan

Pastor E. Umoh was eating in a government high school in southern Nigeria several years ago when he drank a glass of orange juice that had been poisoned.

“I had started a Scripture union in the school,” said Umoh, who now lives in the United States, where he is the pastor of Strong Tower Ministries, a church plant of Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Grandville, Mich.

“When Muslims who were members of another tribe found out that the Scripture group was going strong, they decided to carry out the attack.”

E. Umoh—he prefers to be known by his first initial—nearly died. Although he received medical treatment, he credits his healing to a prayer service.

He said the experience of being prayed over led to the ministry he now does among refugees who are fleeing religious persecution in countries across Africa.

“When I was so sick, I gave my testimony to God,” said Umoh, who came to the U.S. to attend Bible college. “I vowed if he saved my life, I would work for him among those who tried to kill me.”

Ministering out of a small warehouse in Wyoming, Mich., Umoh seeks to bring

the gospel, as well as a range of services, to refugees—most of whom were victims of Muslim-on-Muslim violence and who are now Christians.

“I see so many people who come here who have cuts and marks on their heads and arms because of persecution,” he said. “They are very thankful to God when they are able to come to this country.”

Umoh’s work is on the front lines of an issue that is chronicled in a study committee report coming to Synod 2016.

More than three years in the making, the report of the Committee to Study Religious Persecution and Liberty defines



Children wait in the Dadaab refugee camp in Somalia where they had fled because of hunger.

PHOTO CREDIT: SADIKGULEC

You add.  
God multiplies.



Pastor E. Umoh

the scope of the issue and also touches on threats to religious liberty in North America.

The heart of the report, however, focuses on religious persecution worldwide.

Among other things, it cites data from the Pew Research Center, which studies threats to religious freedom.

The Pew data suggests that religious violence or harassment by nongovernmental entities “has increased at a particularly shocking rate,” said Kevin den Dulk, a Calvin College political scientist and chair of the study committee.

In 2007, 45 percent of the world’s population lived in countries with social hostility rates labeled as “high” or “very high.” By 2014, that percentage had grown to 73 percent.

“This is an increase of ordinary people doing violence to one another in the course of ordinary life,” said den Dulk.

Governmental restrictions on religious freedom also increased during this time.

In part, the increases stem from the rapid growth of Christianity in densely populated areas of the global south and east, where “its emerging presence has put the Christian faith at odds with established religions and/or unsympathetic governments,” the report notes.

But some of the most serious conflict has come in the Middle East, where Christianity has its deepest roots. In Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, entire Christian popula-

## Missionaries Report Struggles, Roadblocks

Kevin den Dulk, chair of the study committee, said the committee had finished its report prior to the recent flood of refugees fleeing from war in Syria.

He said it is likely that the committee will address this issue at synod and will suggest that the church continue working and, where possible, expand the effort to find homes for Syrian refugees in North America.

Den Dulk said that an especially important part of the report focuses on the work of Christian Reformed missionaries serving overseas.

A survey was conducted, asking them to discuss challenges they face. No one reported serious persecution, he said. But they did mention struggles and roadblocks to their work.

“Very few had experienced severe punishment as a result of their activities, but the survey results did suggest that some CRCNA field staff had experienced violence and property confiscation, either directly or, more often, vicariously through affected ministry partners.”

In addition, den Dulk said, “The report talks about the real opportunities we have to engage our field staff by learning more about who they are and what they are doing and to engage in prayer for them.”

—C.M.

tions are being wiped out by groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS.

“After the Iraq war began in 2003, things got extremely dangerous for us,” said Joe, the youth leader of a Presbyterian church in Baghdad.

“Christians got kidnapped, ransomed, killed. Women had to put scarves on their heads. Churches got bombed. We had to ask ourselves, ‘What do we do? Do we stay there or flee?’”

Joe and his family eventually made their way to a refugee camp and then came to the U.S., where he worked for several years as an employment specialist for Bethany Christian Services, a refugee resettlement agency in Grand Rapids.

“I ask Christians in this country to do something to help my brothers and sisters in the Middle East,” said Joe, who asked



PHOTO CREDIT: SSAMIR DELIC

Syrian refugees enter the train at the railway station in Tovarnik, Croatia.

that his full name not be used. “They are suffering. It is a very sad situation.”

Many of those with whom he worked at Bethany were Muslims from Iraq and Syria who were forced to leave the »

““ The study committee report focuses on religious persecution worldwide. ””

Immigrants enter the border crossing at Miratovac, Macedonia, on the way to the European Union.



PHOTO CREDIT: WABENO

church for fear of what their non-Christian neighbors or employers would say.

“[Religious persecution] is a pretty complicated topic,” Selles noted. “It should be discussed with care and with the effort to understand what is going on.”

In China, religious persecution occurs mainly through government sanctions on churches, requiring them to follow strict guidelines.

This, in turn, has led to a movement of underground house churches, which are also closely monitored, said Rev. Paul

» Middle East when members of ISIS demanded that they follow its strict tenets or die.

Rebecca Walker, World Renew’s refugee coordinator in Canada, said the vast majority of refugees the agency is resettling in Canada are Muslims.

“The Middle East is imploding,” she said. “A major war is going on.”

Ronald Geerlings, West Africa director with Christian Reformed World Missions, said religious persecution can be complex.

Recently, he said, a Christian woman in an African country returned to her

home village. Once back, her brother, who was running for mayor, asked her to renounce her faith and embrace Islam.

“Is that religious persecution or trying to enforce the norm? Is that social ostracization?” asked Geerlings. “People look at the same thing and put different labels on it.”

Christians in some parts of India have been persecuted because of Hindu nationalism, said Rev. Kurt Selles, director of Back to God Ministries International. And in Japan, some Christians won’t go to



PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL MCKINNON

People gather on Parliament Hill in Ottawa to bring attention to the plight of the Hazara people.

Yu, Eurasia director for Christian Reformed World Missions.

To discourage the growth of churches, youth groups and youth ministries are prohibited, and Christians are punished if they seek to live out their faith too publicly, Yu said.

But, he added, “Our Christians are enduring in China. Ironically, the church is growing because of persecution.” ■



Chris Meehan is news and media relations manager for the Christian Reformed Church.

## Study Committee Recommendations

The report of the Committee to Study Religious Persecution and Liberty includes the following recommendations:

- That synod encourage each congregation to appoint a prayer coordinator or team who will keep up on religious persecution and religious liberty issues, advise officebearers about developments, and foster regular prayer for people suffering religious persecution.
- That synod direct the Board of Trustees (BOT) to instruct the Office of Social Justice (OSJ) to continue and expand the practice of urging every congregation to participate in the International Day of Prayer, devoting worship services that day to religious persecution.
- That synod instruct the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee and direct the BOT to instruct World Renew and the Centre for Public Dialogue to consider their work with interfaith and refugee groups and to strategize ways to communicate about the injustice of persecution with the rest of the denomination.
- That synod direct the BOT to ask OSJ to ensure the collection and distribution of up-to-date information about persecution to Christian Reformed congregations and to those who join the OSJ network.

To read the entire report, visit [crcna.org/resources/synod-resources](http://crcna.org/resources/synod-resources). For additional resources put together by the study committee, visit [crcna.org/persecution](http://crcna.org/persecution).



You add.  
God multiplies.

## Canadian Churches Celebrate National Aboriginal Day

“When I first came to Christ, I was told to throw it all out,” said Betty Krohn, speaking of her Aboriginal culture.

“I struggled for years with my identity . . . and it’s only here at Indian Metis Christian Fellowship that I’ve pushed back against that. God doesn’t make mistakes. God made me Aboriginal.”

Krohn has been the Chimatawa family youth supervisor for eight years at Indian Metis Christian Fellowship (IMCF), a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in Regina, Sask.

“I’m more like a *kokum* now,” she said, using the Cree word for grandmother.

Krohn, who grew up in foster care without a connection to her home reserve, sees her work now as relearning and retaining culture.

“The question I always ask myself is: Is what I’m teaching growing and developing the kids for Christ, as Christian Aboriginal people? I tell the kids, ‘God loves you—all of you.’”

Krohn and her 27 “grandchildren” have been working on their powwow regalia for months now. She said the

### Dancers in their powwow regalia.



PHOTO CREDIT: JONI ADAMCIEWICZ

### Indian Metis Christian Fellowship dancers perform on National Aboriginal Day.

dancers express their personalities through the colors of their regalia.

“Their sewing isn’t always straight, and sometimes we have to do some of the work for them. But it’s not about the regalia looking perfect; it’s about the kids taking pride in their culture.”

The dancers will be wearing their regalia at IMCF’s annual celebration of National Aboriginal Day on June 21. People across Canada celebrate Indigenous culture on this day, which has been a national day of celebration since 1996. It is held on the summer solstice because that is a sacred day to many Aboriginal peoples.

Christian Reformed churches across Canada also mark the day in their worship services on the Sunday closest to National Aboriginal Day. Worship materials are available through the Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee (CAMC) at [bit.ly/AboriginalSunday](http://bit.ly/AboriginalSunday). In 2015, almost 10,000 bulletin covers and inserts were ordered, and many churches also used the litany and prayer available on the CAMC website.

This is the eighth year that dancers from the IMCF have participated in the celebration. “We teach them a couple dance steps and then tell them to dance to the glory of God,” said Krohn.

Gary Duthler has also been on a journey of learning about the beauty of

Aboriginal cultures. An elder at Bethel CRC in Edmonton, Alta., Duthler is part of a committee that is considering how to respond meaningfully to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

He said his learning began by listening to the stories of survivors of residential schools. “My first reaction when the stories from the TRC started to come out was to take it with a grain of salt. Things like this can be exaggerated.” But as the stories continued to surface, he had to rethink that attitude.

Duthler used to teach Canadian history at elementary schools, but the curriculum rarely covered residential schools. “If it was covered, it was seen as a good thing for Aboriginal peoples. The concept that we live on Aboriginal land never really entered the textbooks. Thankfully that curriculum is changing now.

“I’m passionate about making sure that we respond in a meaningful way,” Duthler said. “I have to make up for a whole lot of omission in my teaching in the past.” ■



Danielle Rowaan is Justice Communications Team coordinator with the Christian Reformed Church.

PHOTO CREDIT: IMCF STAFF

## Break Down the Walls

Recently I received this email from a colleague in Ethiopia:

*This is to inform you that 10 of our local church buildings were destroyed and some were burned to ashes by the radical Muslim movement groups in the Oromiya Regional State, Siraro Woreda. . . . Our church members are under great threat and in a trauma. Therefore, we kindly request you to pray for the comfort of and strength for our church members and Christians in this area. Also please pray for the peace in our country.*

Note what I've just done—something the synodical Committee to Study Religious Persecution and Liberty, commenting on news reports published in *The Banner* between 2001 and 2014, describes as sharing “brief and passing notes about a conflict in a far-flung region with no serious framing or context for the event.”

The writer of the email is a colleague and a friend because of an emerging ecumenical partnership with the Ethiopian *Kale Heywet* Church, which he serves as deputy general secretary.

There isn't enough space here to tell you the history of Ethiopia—that it's the second-oldest Christian nation in the world; that the Orthodox faith is practiced by millions there, yet the Protestant church is growing rapidly; and that the Muslim minority is growing as well.

There isn't enough room in this issue to explain how societies like Ethiopia and Indonesia have addressed the joint presence of Islam and Christianity largely by insisting upon careful distance between religious groups. But I want to share one story.

Last fall, the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships held a conference at Howard University

in Washington, D.C. The conference focused on the President's Interfaith and Community Service Campus Challenge, an initiative whereby college and university campuses provide community service in ways that bring those of various faiths together.

My son, a sophomore at Trinity Christian College and a participant in this initiative, spoke on a panel about whether universities in other countries would benefit from such an

approach. He told the group that until religious groups in countries such as his native Ethiopia figure out how to talk together instead of building walls, their societies will face problems and catastrophes.

The email I received five months later proves his point. Despite separation between religious groups in Ethiopia, the flames of discord are jumping over the walls and burning down churches.

The Religious Persecution and Liberty study report doesn't stop, however, at ecumenical relationships and the

interfaith engagement they engender. Consider this observation from the report:

Churches have the greatest influence when their advocacy is strategic, not tactical—that is, when they present a moral vision and communicate the breadth and depth of support for it rather than getting into the nitty-gritty of whom to lobby, where to litigate, or how to craft policy language. Church members as Christian citizens can and should be engaged at both the broadest and most specific levels. But churches as institutions should shape the moral vision of their members and speak prophetically to the larger society while refraining from the technical and specific work of public policy.

This observation deserves careful reflection and discussion, for our witness is critical and desperately needed in a world filled with strife and increasingly marked by persecution. ■



Samuel Poghisio, Abdel Elsidig, Marlene Wall, Kathy Engelken, Getenet Timmermans, and Steven Timmermans participated in a panel discussion hosted by the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Churches as institutions should shape the moral vision of their members.



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

## The Power of Our Faith Stories

**K**risten De Vries wanted to encourage her high school Sunday school class at Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., to articulate their own faith stories while they learned the Heidelberg Catechism.

One way she tried to do this was by having adults from the congregation tell their faith stories to help build a vocabulary of faith for the students. She encouraged each teen to ask an adult in the church, “Why are you a Christian?” Then she invited some of those adults to speak to the class.



Jim Polet talks to students at Fourteenth Street CRC.

friends to help keep them safe. Jim, 15, went to live with a family friend who was a butcher.

One day while Jim was out peddling meat, he saw his father walking in town. So as not to put his son in danger, Jim’s father passed by without any sign that he recognized his son.

This was difficult for Jim; after all, he had not seen his father in six months. This caused Jim to consider whom he really belonged to. It felt like he no longer belonged to his family.

He turned to the psalms he had sung in church and knew that he belonged to God. Whenever Jim hears Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism, it has a special meaning for him. He remembers a time when belonging to God was all he could hold on to.

This story stayed with Kristen De Vries’s Sunday school class throughout the year.

Stories like Jim’s can help make the Heidelberg Catechism come alive to younger members of our church.

Sharing our stories with each other is an important part of our faith formation, especially when we share them in intergenerational settings—and is exactly what Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) seeks to support in other congregations.

If you face a faith formation question or challenge, let’s talk! Contact FFM at [faithformation@crcna.org](mailto:faithformation@crcna.org), or visit the website at [crcna.org/FaithFormation](http://crcna.org/FaithFormation). ■

by Laura Keeley and Paola Fuentes Gleghorn

Faith Formation Ministries is looking for 20 congregations to participate in a cohort project that will work together to strengthen existing faith formation practices and develop new ones. Are you interested? Contact Christine Dekker at [cdekker@crcna.org](mailto:cdekker@crcna.org) or check out the FFM website.

## SHORT TAKES



M.Div. student Jennifer Palkowski shares a lighter moment with her case study panel of Professors Weima and Hoezee and Rev. Erika Dekker (not pictured).

## Case Studies Bring Learning to Life

*You made this up, right? This didn’t really happen, did it?*

These are some of the comments Calvin Seminary students express upon reading case study scenarios assigned to them. But every scenario is based on actual ministry experiences (duly masked for confidentiality).

Calvin Seminary followed the lead of elite graduate schools like Harvard Business and Johns Hopkins Medicine when they introduced a case study learning course for M.Div. students called the Capstone Integrative Seminar, developed by Professors John Witvliet and Scott Hoezee. Students are challenged to draw upon their work in prior courses and ministry experiences as they consider specific ministry situations typical of those faced by 21st-century pastors. ■

by Jinny De Jong

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

## Families Face Food Shortages in Ethiopia

**S**elfinsh Tasew has nothing left. “I planted maize, beans, and other grains in my field, but all of them dried up,” the 35-year-old mother of six explained. “To feed my family, I started selling my cattle, sheep, and goats. My remaining animals are getting thin and weaker. Soon they will be worth nothing.”

Tasew is not alone. She lives in Dugda district, Ethiopia, where she raises livestock and farms a small piece of land—livelihoods that depend on rain for success. For the last two years, however, this part of Ethiopia has had no rain at all.

In the worst drought the country has seen in 32 years, hundreds of thousands of people like Tasew are facing severe food shortages.

World Renew is responding. Using funds from its Canadian Foodgrains Bank account and matching funds from the Canadian government, World Renew is providing food rations to 41,043 people in Ethiopia: vegetable oil, maize, and pulses to meet daily food requirements. Families like Tasew’s with children under 5 also receive Famix—a protein-rich food supplement for young children.

“Unfortunately, unless we can find more resources, these food supplies will only last until families can plant their next crop. There will be a huge and painful gap as the families wait until the harvest,” said Ken Little, World Renew’s Senior Project Manager overseeing this project.

Ethiopia is one of several countries struggling as a result of El Nino weather. Disasters have also been declared in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Indonesia.

“Millions upon millions of people will soon find themselves without food—families who normally have enough to eat and also those who struggle to get enough food for their families even in a



**Selfinsh Tasew at food distribution.**

typical year. With this year’s lack of rains, their situation will be impossible,” said World Renew’s Jacqueline Koster.

Tasew’s smile as she receives her family’s food rations is a testament to just how much this support means to her and

her family. She prays that it will continue until she can harvest her own food again.

To learn more or to support this effort, please visit [worldrenew.net/el\\_nino](http://worldrenew.net/el_nino). ■  
*by Kristen Vanderberg*

## Kingdom Business

**W**hen Freddy Mendez was growing up in Nicaragua, he heard more sermons, messages, and other lessons than he could count, he said. Still, he doesn’t remember a single one that talked about why God created business or money.

“What I can remember are phrases such as ‘Businesses are not from God, they are from the world’; ‘You can not serve God and at the same time have money’; and ‘God does not love the rich.’”

For this reason, Freddy grew up believing that Christians are not called to take part in business. Many other Christians in his area had the same understanding.

Today Freddy sees business in a much different light. He even leads others to start their own businesses through his work at the Nehemiah Center—a transformation center that began with the collaboration of Christian Reformed World Missions, World Renew, and other organizations.

One of the Nehemiah Center’s many programs seeks to demonstrate how God can use businesses to further the



**Freddy Mendez, right, has served with the Nehemiah Center since its beginning.**

kingdom. Participants in the Kingdom Business Program study values like integrity and stewardship and learn how to apply these values to their own businesses.

“The program is helping participants understand that business is part of God’s plan and should also serve the kingdom of God,” said Freddy. “One of the first things God reaffirmed in my life is that everything belongs to him.” ■

*by Brian Clark,  
Christian Reformed World Missions*

You add.  
God multiplies.

## New Ministry Emerges from the Ashes

In January 2015, Rev. Soumaila Labo, pastor of an Evangelical Church of Niger (EERN) congregation in Niamey, was at the church when he saw a small group of young Muslims turn off the water source to the building. They then threw burning tiles onto the building and watched as the structure was totally destroyed.

Labo, his wife, and their four children lost everything when their adjacent home was also destroyed in the fire.

Church members responded peacefully to the arson, calling for justice but not vengeance. While the community expected anger, the church demonstrated an attitude of forgiveness.

“We’ve seen good come out of this evil,” reported Rev. Kurt Selles, director of Back to God Ministries International.

Selles and ministry partners from Words of Hope met with church and community leaders in Niger last December. They explored ways they can work together to share the gospel with people through media in this country, where Islam is practiced by 94 percent of the population.

“We are looking to the expansion of our French media ministry in Niger. Back to God Ministries would come alongside the local church to provide long-term sustainable ministry,” Selles added.

The EERN already has some broadcast ministry in urban areas. BTGMI is looking to partner with Rev. Labo to head up the new ministry in Niger.

Labo, who studied and taught at a Bible college in Niger, has since moved to Maradi, the country’s third-largest city. He has a heart for reaching out in urban areas and is working as the director of the Christian broadcast studio in Maradi.

“Please pray that God will provide both the means and opportunity to start our media outreach partnership in Niger,” asked Selles. ■

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



Rev. Soumaila Labo, pastor of an Evangelical Church of Niger congregation, stands outside their destroyed church.

## SHORT TAKES



Members of Resurrection Life outside the elementary school where they meet.

## Living the Resurrection Life

When she called a Craigslist seller in Holly Springs, N.C., Anna (not her real name) never expected to meet a pastor from her hometown or to become a member of a church plant. A Grand Rapids native, Anna was surprised when she called on an ad for a treadmill and the seller, pastor Mark Knetsch, recognized her 616 area code.

Anna had stopped attending church, but after talking for a while and discussing their Michigan and Christian Reformed roots, Mark told her about Resurrection Life, the church he was planting right down the street. Anna attended a service. Two years later, she is still an active member of the congregation and leader of the Sunday school program.

“Seeing God work through the simple things, and getting people who understand what we’re trying to do is important,” explained Mark. “We need that kickstart of getting people back into the church.” ■

by Annemarie Byl

To read more, visit [thebanner.org/together](http://thebanner.org/together).

## Disaster Relief Continues in Detroit after 2014 Flood

The Detroit, Mich., area suffered one of the greatest North American disasters of 2014 when massive flooding hit the area in August of that year. The historic rain left immense damage in its wake and thousands of people’s lives were devastated by the destruction. Almost two years later, there are still many who need help rebuilding. Your church or family can make a difference this summer by volunteering for a week-long reconstruction mission trip through World Renew. Visit [worldrenew.net](http://worldrenew.net) to learn more and to volunteer. ■

by Kellie Scholma



Carol Szarek and DRS volunteers who helped clean up and fix her home after massive flooding in Detroit.

# God Made Feathers

On the fifth day, God made feathers. All birds have feathers, but not all birds fly. Feathers come in lots of shapes and sizes and colors, and

they have lots of different jobs. It's easy to see how awesome God is when we look at huge mountains and towering trees, but we can also

see how amazing our God is when we study some of the tiny details of creation. Let's take a closer look at feathers.



## Feathers Aren't Just for Flying

- Ask a parent to take you on a walk to a pond, lake, river, or marshy area to watch the ducks splashing around. Notice that water beads up and rolls right off a duck's back! Ducks and some other water birds have a little gland at the base of their tail. When the duck preens, it rubs a waxy oil from this gland over its feathers. **Feathers make ducks waterproof!**
- Some birds use their **brightly colored feathers to attract a mate**. There are birds in every color of the rainbow. Many brightly colored birds are tropical, but we have lots of colorful birds right here in North America. See if you can find pictures of the wood duck, cardinal, blue jay, scarlet tanager, yellow warbler, indigo bunting, and Baltimore oriole. How many of these can you find outdoors?
- Other birds' **feathers provide camouflage** to keep them safe. Imagine if you were a bright-red cardinal sitting on its eggs. You probably wouldn't feel very safe! That's why the parent who sits on the eggs (usually the female) is duller and browner than the male. Other birds that use their feathers for camouflage are whip-poor-wills, who blend in with dried leaves, and brown creepers, who look like tree bark. Ptarmigans living on the tundra get white feathers for the winter so that they blend in with the snow and brown feathers in the summer to match the brown leaves.
- **Feathers also help birds keep warm**. The female eider duck, who nests in the far North, lines her nest with her own down feathers to keep her eggs and babies warm. If you live in a cold climate, those same down feathers, used as stuffing in a jacket, might be insulating you too!

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



# FuN Facts

Feathers are made of **keratin**, just like our hair and nails.

The Great Blue Heron has a special **comb-like claw** for grooming its feathers.

Some feathers are patterned with skinny, squiggly lines, called **vermiculations**, from the Latin word for worm. Can you see why?

The green heron sometimes uses a **floating feather** as bait to lure fish.

The shimmering iridescent color on hummingbirds is produced by light traveling and reflecting through layers of tiny **air bubbles** on the surface of the bird's feathers.



## Different Kinds of Feathers

**Contour feathers.** This is the outer layer of feathers that covers the body and includes the wing and tail feathers used for flight.

**Down.** Small, fluffy feathers found underneath the contour feathers trap air for insulation.

**Powder down.** As these small, fluffy feathers grow, the ends break down and form a water-resistant substance.

**Semiplume.** A cross between a contour and down feather, these provide shape and insulation.

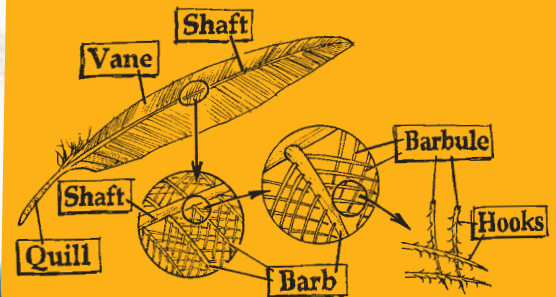
**Filoplume.** These hair-like feathers grow around the base of flight feathers. Scientists think they may be part of the bird's sensory system.

**Bristle.** These hair-like feathers are found around the bird's eyes and bill. They act as filters (like eyelashes) and are also associated with a sense of touch.



## A Forest of Feathers

If you look closely at a feather—especially if you have a magnifying glass—you'll notice that it actually looks a lot like a tree. The feather has a trunk, or **shaft**, with lots and lots of parallel branches called **barbs**. If you look extra carefully, you will see that the barbs have branches too. These are called **barbules**, and the barbules have tiny thorns called **hooklets**. The hooklets and barbules lock together, forming a smooth surface that acts as a barrier.



## Special Feathers

**Woodpeckers** have special stiff tail feathers with narrow pointed tips. These help to prop the woodpecker up against the tree as it works. Brown creepers also have these feathers.

The feathers of an **owl's** wing have a soft velvety surface, a comb-like leading edge, and a soft fringe on the trailing edge. These characteristics affect air flow over the wing and allow the owl to fly silently.

**Snipe** have special narrow outer tail feathers that vibrate when they fly, producing a sound called **winnowing**. Similarly, the **American woodcock** has narrow outer wing feathers that make a twittering sound.

**Ptarmigans** have heavily feathered feet—built-in insulated snowshoes!

## Feathers in the Bible

Feathers and wings are mentioned all through the Bible, especially in the psalms. You might also see the word *pinion*. Pinions are the outer flight feathers of a bird's wing. Here are some verses to look up:

- |                   |              |              |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Exodus 19:4       | Psalms 57:1  | Psalms 91:4  |
| Deuteronomy 32:11 | Psalms 61:4  | Isaiah 40:31 |
| Job 39:13         | Psalms 63:7  | Luke 13:34   |
| Psalms 55:6       | Psalms 68:13 |              |



**Rachel Lancashire** is a nursery worker (plants, not kids) and freelance writer with an educational background in

wildlife. She grew up in the CRC but currently attends Gilmour Memorial Baptist Church in Selwyn, Ont.

# THE CHURCH BEHIND BARS: TEN YEARS LATER

**T**EN YEARS AGO, I wrote a *Banner* article called “The Church Behind Bars” (Sept. 2005). When I begged for your mercy, asked for your forgiveness, and prayed to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to join me and other followers of Jesus behind bars, I really didn’t know what to expect.

In that article, I presented readers with suggestions for partnerships with prisoners in the areas of church adoptions, missions, discipleship, and social programs. Through the formation of meaningful and restorative relationships, people on both sides of the prison walls are experiencing the forgiveness, mercy, and hope that can only be found in Christ.

In this article I want to highlight where God has richly blessed the church behind bars during the past decade—and how we as the church of Jesus Christ are being called to do even more in the areas of social ministry, restorative justice, and reform in our criminal justice system.

## Church Adoptions

Following the model of the Cornerstone Prison Congregation in the South Dakota Penitentiary, Christian Reformed Home Missions has supported the development of congregations in Michigan and Iowa: Celebration Fellowship at three sites in Ionia, Mich., and New Life Congregation in Newton, Iowa.

Each week hundreds of imprisoned believers are joined by volunteers from congregations in the community around the prison to affirm one another as fellow citizens of God’s kingdom and equal members of God’s household.

At Celebration Fellowship’s inaugural worship service, Rev. Richard Rienstra, the pastor-developer of that congregation, proclaimed, “You are now an emerging church within our denomination. You have the responsibility to grow and develop your own disciples here, and we’ll help you do that. This is your church, and you are welcoming us in.” This statement embodies the vision for church adoptions.

## Missions

Visits from prominent members of the community have helped the church behind bars cultivate the mission field in prison. For example, many from beyond the prison congregation heard messages delivered by Rich DeVos, cofounder of Amway; and Kirk Cousins, quarterback for the Washington Redskins. After a study of his *Ten Powerful Phrases for Positive People*, Mr. DeVos responded to an invitation to speak at Bellamy Creek, a correctional facility in Ionia. Upon hearing the testimony of one prisoner’s deliverance from a debilitating addiction to heroin, DeVos responded, “You see, we have something in common,” referring to his 1999 heart transplant and their shared relationship with Christ. “We both needed a change of heart.”

On a hot summer day in 2012, just months before his 24th birthday, Kirk Cousins visited the Life Change discipleship group at Michigan’s Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility, once called Gladiator School because young, violent offenders would fight for survival. He challenged the audience of more than a hundred prisoners and administrators with two questions: “Who will be your Master?” and “What will be your mission in life?”



In parting, Kirk encouraged his listeners with this reminder: “Your life is not over. God wants to redeem your life and use it for his glory and the good of others.”

### Discipleship

In 2011, Calvin Theological Seminary began offering graduate-level classes to prisoners at Handlon for personal enrichment, in response to applications sent to the seminary by several prisoners.

Last year, Calvin College placed a capstone on the Christian Reformed Church’s commitment to partner with the church behind bars when it launched the Calvin Prison Initiative, offering cohorts of prisoners gathered from around the state the chance to earn a bachelor of arts degree in ministry leadership.

As the seminary enters its 15th semester of classes, Celebration Fellowship its eighth year of cultivating worshiping communities, and as the Calvin Prison Initiative prepares to receive the freshman class of 2021, hundreds of people—prisoners, college students and professors, prison staff, Christian Reformed Church members—are being challenged to think deeply, act justly, and live wholeheartedly as ministers of reconciliation wherever they are called to serve.

## THE MOVEMENT OF GOD TO BRING HEALING TO BROKEN LIVES, COMMUNITIES, AND SYSTEMS HAS ALREADY BEGUN.

### Social Programs

While celebrating these successes in church adoptions, missions, and discipleship, the church behind bars continues to search for new ways to implement social and restorative programs in the lives of broken people, communities, and systems.

Over the years, many of us in prison have asked for ways to be engaged as full citizens, rather than only as recipients of services. Clearing a path toward reconciliation will help us contribute toward healing the harm we have caused. We feel an obligation to make things right.

At Synod 2005, the Christian Reformed Church adopted the resolution from the Committee to Study Restorative Justice. “We support the restorative justice movement’s concern for the restoration of offenders. The path of return specified by restorative justice is a hard one. It involves taking responsibility for the wrong done, working to restore the harm where possible, and suffering whatever consequences result from the criminal offense. Restorative justice provides a clear path back to the community, which is often not the case in our criminal justice systems” (*Acts of Synod 2005*, 558).

Encouraged by this call to action, I joined family members and friends to organize Prisoners in Christ (PinC), a prison and justice ministry at Church of the Servant, Grand Rapids, Mich. This team has worked with prisoners, organizations, institutions, and government agencies to create opportunities for people to experience hope and healing after suffering from crime and incarceration.

PinC is now partnering with interested inmates, the Restorative Justice Coalition of West Michigan, the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University, and Starting Up Now Business Solutions to organize its newest initiative, Network for Real Change, or Net4REAL.

Net4REAL is focused on providing opportunities for in-prison training in restorative practices and principles, equipping participants with tools on their journey toward reconciliation with God, themselves, and others. Net4REAL will also offer education in entrepreneurial skills, preparing students to enter the workforce or perhaps start their own small business once they reenter the community.

### Looking Ahead

Ten years ago I had no idea that readers of my article would respond with so much support. Considering everything that has been accomplished thus far, would you agree that it’s time to believe that God plans to do much more through our partnership in the years to come?

When asked what he envisions for the future, Todd Cioffi, co-director of the Calvin Prison Initiative (CPI), said, “My hope and my goal is that CPI can be a part of a complete transformation of Michigan’s prison system. Over the years, I’ve become convinced that change begins from the grassroots with the ones who need real change the most. And then it involves real change for ‘average’ Christians. If change can take place with them, then we will perhaps see a movement that will be impossible to deny by those at the top. So here’s to thinking 10 years out.”

From my vantage point, the movement of God to bring healing to broken lives, communities, and systems has already begun. My prayer is that we keep working together until we hear our King say, “Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what’s coming to you in this kingdom. It’s been ready for you since the world’s foundation. And here’s why. . . . Whenever you did one of these things for someone overlooked and ignored, that was me—you did it to me” (Matt. 25:34-40, *The Message*). ■



**Troy Rienstra** is a member of Church of the Servant Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was sentenced to life imprisonment as an accessory to armed robbery in 1995 and is incarcerated at Lakeland Correctional Facility in Coldwater, Mich. While awaiting parole, he is serving as a mentor in the Michigan Department of Correction’s Violence Prevention Program and designing the curriculum for Network for Real Change. For more information, visit [networkforrealchange.org](http://networkforrealchange.org).

## Abraham Kuyper and Dorothy Day



I still wish that Kuyper could have met Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day.

**TWO FRAMED PHOTOS** sit side by side on a shelf in my office: one of Abraham Kuyper and the other of Dorothy Day. I got the idea from Dirk Jellema, a historian at Calvin College when I joined the faculty in the late 1960s. He had photos of the two of them on the wall in his office. When I moved to Fuller Seminary in 1985, I did the same in my new office.

I never asked Dirk—a long-time historian at Calvin—why he paired Kuyper’s photo with that of the American-born founder of the network of Catholic Worker houses. After encountering Christ and converting to Catholicism in the 1920s, Dorothy Day devoted herself to peacemaking activities and lived among the poor, providing them with food and shelter on a daily basis. This was a far cry from Kuyper’s role as the founder of a university and a national leader in Dutch politics. I have always assumed, though, that Dirk saw Dorothy Day as providing a necessary supplement to Kuyper’s social and economic thought.

In my book *Uncommon Decency*, I pointed out that when Kuyper referred to Jesus—which he did quite often—he seemed to be especially fond of depicting the ascended Christ. His well-known manifesto about Christ ruling over every square inch of the creation is an obvious case in point. That is not an emphasis that showed up in Dorothy Day’s talk about Jesus, or in that of Mother Teresa, another Roman Catholic who also worked among the poor. These women were all about

finding Jesus among the poorest of the poor—in Mother Teresa’s case, dying lepers on the streets of Calcutta.

In my book I warned against a triumphalist tendency in Kuyperian thought. Jesus has indeed redeemed the whole creation from the curse of our fallenness, and our task as followers of Christ is to reclaim those square inches for the cause of the kingdom. But this may often mean committing ourselves to suffer alongside those who live in desperate situations. A good corrective, I argued, is to identify with the concerns of Jesus that Mother Teresa took so seriously, following him to those lonely square inches on the margins of society: among the homeless, the abused, the dying lepers.

In preparing a lecture on Kuyper’s social thought, I reread an address he gave in 1891 to the first Christian Social Congress in the Netherlands, a large gathering of Calvinists engaged in bringing a Christian witness to the labor movement. A good English version of that speech was published in *The Problem of Pain*, a small book translated by James Skillen.

Reading Kuyper’s speech again, I discovered more of Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa in what he said than I remembered seeing before. “When rich and poor stand opposed to each other,” Kuyper told his audience, the Savior “never takes His place with the wealthier, but always stands with the poorer. . . . Powerful is the trait of pity, which is imprinted on every

page of the Gospel where Jesus comes in contact with the suffering and oppressed.”

Jesus, who is himself the Bread of Life, Kuyper observed, also takes ordinary bread very seriously. In ministering to a hungry crowd, “he breaks the loaf into many pieces and gives them an abundance of precious fish.” And then this remark from Kuyper,\* which suggests that he might have felt a special attraction to the 20th-century ministry of Mother Teresa to dying lepers in Calcutta. Jesus, Kuyper told his 1891 audience, “does not hold back His hand from the touch of leprous flesh.”

I still wish that Kuyper could have met Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day. But having discovered this reference by him to the way Jesus ministered to lepers, I am now confident that he would have warmly greeted the two women—as I am sure he already has, in the direct presence of the Savior whom the three of them loved and served during their earthly journeys. ■

\*From an out-of-print translation of Kuyper’s speech by former Calvin history professor Dirk Jellema.

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



**Richard J. Mouw** is president emeritus and professor of faith and public life of Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.

# Nothing Is Wasted

**I**'D LIKE TO BELIEVE that when someone dies young, say from cancer at age 42, leaving a young family behind, I'd like to believe that "nothing is wasted."

That's the sort of well-intentioned thing we say to reassure each other: "We don't understand, but his life was complete." "God called him home." "He's in a better place." "God's grace is sufficient." Now he's with [loved one who previously died]." Most days, I believe all that.

Other days, I cannot get over that terrible sense of waste.

When the bad news piles up, when three colleagues—all too young—die in the same month, when I remember other people I've loved, their cancers and accidents and rare diseases—I wonder about what could have been, all the beautiful possibility now lost—wasted.

In Michigan, late July on a day after a rain, blueberry bushes are so laden they look blue from a distance. If you pick berries on such a day, they roll right off the stems in bunches. Your bucket fills quickly. In the straw beneath each bush, though, are the berries that dropped, rotting on the ground. The bushes produce far more than pickers will ever gather, far more than the rolling machines will shake into metal bins. Thousands of berries will drop on the ground and rot.

Of course, nothing is wasted in nature. The dropped berries are broken down by microbes and they return to the soil and fertilize the bushes, or they pass through the digestive systems of birds and return nitrogen to the soil somewhere a mile away.

Nature depends on the principle of redundancy, even gross overabundance. Berries, cottonwood seeds, tadpoles, spermatozoa, sparrows, mosquitoes. A deer produces twin fawns. If one is weak,



Nature revels in waste, glories in it, spins it into the swirling patterns of life.

PHOTO BY VEETERZY/PEXELS

it will be abandoned. No matter. The other survives, and the weaker fawn feeds the wolf cubs. It's the circle of life. Nature never wastes.

Or does it? Maybe it's more honest to say that nature revels in waste, glories in it, spins it into the swirling patterns of life.

Is that how God sees the patterns of our lives, like so many twin fawns? Some will live long, some will die young. They succumb to the wolves. No matter. It's the circle of life.

What about those who died in the church in Charleston, what about all the black lives who matter but are cut short in snarls of hate? Or all the children who have died—so far—in the American scourge of gun violence in schools, or the soldiers killed in mistaken wars, or the innocents killed by bombs or machine guns, randomly, senselessly?

I can't bring myself to say "nothing is wasted" about these lives. The missing futures, the lost possibilities, the dreadful, sudden emptiness. Even my high view of

Providence can't get me past my anger—some days—at this awful sense of waste.

I know that lives diminished or cut short are still meaningful, purposeful, beautiful. People leave behind legacies in their families, friends, work. Untimely deaths motivate people to fight for good causes. I know there's a way to cherish something precious for every name on our personal lists of sorrow. It's tempting, in fact, to regard a life as more precious when it is somehow limited or cut short.

But those missed futures, all-that-could-have-been, is it all held in the mind of God? Is that enough?

Does God revel in what seems to us like waste, glory in it, spin it into the swirling patterns of life?

"See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands" (Isa. 49:16). ■



Debra Rienstra teaches literature and writing at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich.

# The Great Escape

Here's the Ticket to Your Summer Reading Adventures

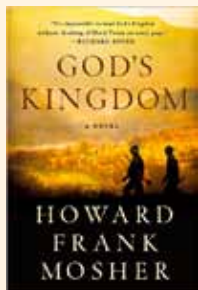


## God's Kingdom

by **Howard Frank Mosher**  
 reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

In the 1950s, 14-year-old Jim Kinneson is a budding writer and a keen observer of life as it unfolds in God's kingdom in northeast Vermont. Nature, community relationships, and family history capture his interest. Though Jim abhors violence of any kind, he is forced to come to

terms with his ancestors' crimes. In an area where different ethnic groups—white, Native American, escaped slaves, and French Canadians—converged and often clashed, Jim “was more aware than ever that he dwelt in no peaceable kingdom.” Mosher is a master storyteller who weaves together themes of justice, the nature of evil, and the power of love in this affecting novel for adults. (St. Martin's Press)



## The Piano Maker

by **Kurt Palka**  
 reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

In 1933, Helene Giroux, ready to start a new life, drives into a small town in Nova Scotia with all that she owns in her elegant vehicle. The town begins to whisper. After discovering a Molnar piano in the local church, she is soon directing the choir, giving the congregation good music and drawing the community around her mysterious persona. Even as they come to love Helene, her past is brought to light in a public forum. The author slowly unfolds the plot moving from past to present, revealing more about Helene with each chapter. Like the folk of St. Homais, the reader is invited to give Helene the possibility of redemption. (McClelland & Stewart)



## Ruby on the Outside

by **Nora Raleigh Baskin**  
 reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

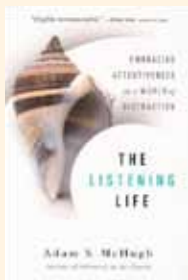
Eleven-year-old Ruby has never told any of her peers that her mother is in prison. She has learned to juggle her private life and her public life, never allowing them to intersect. When she meets Margalit, Ruby hopes for a true friend, but she must decide: will she divulge the truth? This novel gives young readers insight into the pain and loneliness children suffer when parents are incarcerated. They'll learn that families and communities can be a healing presence for children who are also serving time, not on the inside, but on the outside. Ages 8 and up. (Simon & Schuster)



## Let's Play!

by **Hervé Tullet**  
 reviewed by **Gwen Marra**

Do you want to read or play? Pick up *Let's Play* and you can do both at the same time! This interactive book encourages the reader to point to the line and embark on the adventure as a yellow dot is tracked through a journey of shapes and colors. It's the perfect fit for an active preschooler or a beginning reader. The colorful illustrations and engaging text pull young learners into a playful reading experience. Ages 2 and up. (Chronicle Books)



## The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in an Age of Distraction

by Adam McHugh  
reviewed by Adele Gallogly

In Adam McHugh's new book he explains that listening well—to others, to God, and to ourselves—does not come easily. It is difficult, often tiring work. Yet it is enriching work that leads us closer to others and to the heart of God. McHugh pulls from his ministry experiences, including his time as a hospice chaplain and his everyday experiences of building relationships. *The Listening Life* is an observant, humorous, Scripture-led journey into practices that can reawaken us to our humanity and attune us to God's leading in all areas of life. (InterVarsity)



## Pax

by Sara Pennypacker  
reviewed by Kristy Quist

War is coming, and 12-year-old Peter is evacuated to his grandfather's home. Peter must leave his pet fox Pax in the woods, a place Pax has never known. Wise about people, foxes, and friendship, this juvenile novel explores the ways fear and compassion compete for our hearts. With beautiful prose, Pennypacker shows the devastation that war and loss wreak on people and nature. The book does refer to the Buddhist idea of non-duality, "two and not two," as a way to explain the way that Peter is connected to Pax; parents may want to help young readers compare this with our understanding of being the handiwork of the Creator of all things. Ages 10 and up. (Balzer + Bray)



## Everyone Brave Is Forgiven

by Chris Cleave  
reviewed by Adele Gallogly

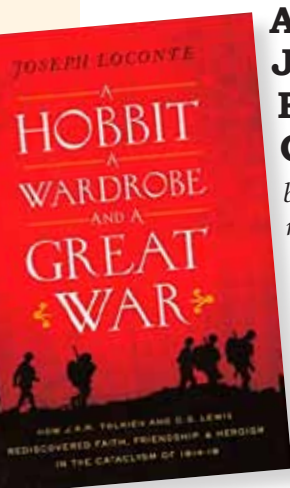
Beginning in London in 1939, this novel spans the eerie, increasingly devastating first years of World War II. Mary North, a wealthy, idealistic 18-year-old, volunteers to serve as a teacher. She is assigned to the children who have not been evacuated to the countryside—those of color and those with disabilities. Mary falls in love with Tom, a young teacher, and eventually befriends his best friend, Alistair. Through multiple relationships, Cleave examines how people are altered by the visceral trauma and uncertainty of the times. This tragic, richly atmospheric novel is impressive in its scope and realistic in the striking moral questions it asks about living out loyalty, honor, empathy, and forgiveness in a time of war. (Simon & Schuster)



## Don't Throw It to Mo

by David Adler  
reviewed by Gwen Marra

Do you have a beginning reader in your household? Someone who loves football? David Adler writes a great story that will have you cheering for the underdog in his book, *Don't Throw It to Mo*. Young readers will relate to Mo, who loves football but is small for his age and ends up sitting on the bench a lot. Working with a coach who believes in him, Mo gets his chance to make a big play. Will the team win? Read the book to find out! Ages 6 and up. (Penguin Young Readers)



## A Hobbit, a Wardrobe, and a Great War: How J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis Rediscovered Faith, Friendship, and Heroism in the Cataclysm of 1914 - 1918

by Joseph Loconte  
reviewed by Jenny deGroot

For anyone intrigued by the friendship between C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, this study provides insights into the lives of the two authors. Historian Joseph Loconte weaves a compelling narrative of the parallel experiences of a war, an Oxford education, and a passion for literary thought and writing. While Tolkien was influential in nudging Lewis to faith, Lewis, in turn, was the encouragement that Tolkien needed to bring his tales to completion. Anyone who loves the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *The Chronicles of Narnia* will want to spend time with this book. (Thomas Nelson)

**MORE REVIEWS  
ONLINE**



## The Pug List

by Alison Hodgson  
reviewed by Lorilee Craker

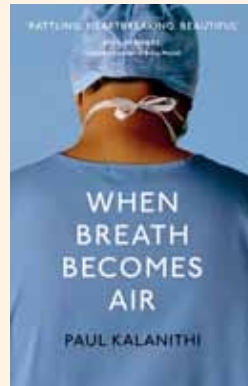
When an arsonist sets fire to Alison Hodgson's house, she doesn't know if her family will ever feel at home again, even though they rebuild in the same spot. The trauma and vulnerability linger and insurance battles rage on. Daughter Eden campaigns for a pug and Hodgson and her husband cave in, only to find out that sneezing, incontinent Oliver is the answer to their prayers, the key to finding home and belonging once again. A heartwarming, debut. (Zondervan)



## Secrets of the Dragon Tomb

by Patrick Samphire  
reviewed by Francene Lewis

Twelve-year-old Edward Sullivan's family is kidnapped, and his father, a famous inventor, is forced by the evil Sir Titus Dane to help locate a lost Martian tomb. Edward, his two sisters, and his hopeless cousin, Freddie, have to track down the rest of his family, free his father, and stop the dastardly Sir Titus. This fast-paced tale is set on a Mars that has been colonized by British settlers; native Martians still sail the ancient canals, and you can get anywhere using an airship. Edward learns who he can really trust and that he can count on friends and family in this rollicking science fiction. 10 and up. (Henry Holt & Co.)



## When Breath Becomes Air

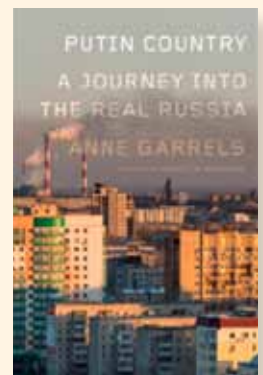
by Paul Kalanithi  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

When he was 36 years old, neurosurgeon Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer and became a patient, a role he had encountered in the lives of others every day for decades as an outsider looking in. As he and his wife, Lucy, grappled with their changed circumstances, they decided to become parents; Kalanithi passed away eight months after his beloved daughter was born. Kalanithi's wise and heartbreaking memoir, published posthumously, reveals a brilliant young man's thoughts on the relationship between Christianity and science, medical ethics, and the importance of relationships. (Random House)

## Putin Country: A Journey into the Real Russia

by Anne Garrels  
reviewed by Otto Selles

In 1993, Anne Garrels set out to discover what Russia was like outside of Moscow. She threw a pencil at a map and it landed on Chelyabinsk, a military-industrial town that had just opened up to foreigners. She returned repeatedly to interview locals and provides engaging stories on topics that range from the business world to medical care and freedom of religion. Garrels offers a fascinating window into the lives of contemporary Russians, their general admiration for Vladimir Putin, and the "identity crisis over where their country fits into the overall global scheme." (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux)



## Girl in the Blue Coat

by Monica Hesse  
reviewed by Kristy Quist

Eighteen-year-old Hanneke Bakker has determined to keep herself and her parents alive by being part of the black market during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. When one customer wants her to find a person rather than goods, she is reluctantly drawn into the Resistance. She starts to look at things differently when she sees the reality of the threat to others, including a Jewish friend and a gay friend. Author and journalist Monica Hesse deftly demonstrates the way war can challenge people, bringing out both the best and the worst in us. This suspenseful young adult novel is part history, part mystery, and will keep readers hooked until the last page. Ages 14 and up. (Little, Brown)

# FAQs

## Ethics

**Q** Is it important for Christians to seek out and support candidates who are also Christians for political office?

**A** Underlying this question is a good desire to help further God's kingdom ways in our countries. Let me suggest a few points to consider:

First, are the candidate's values and actions consistent with biblical norms for integrity and leadership? This is more important than whether a candidate self-identifies as Christian. Character counts more than labels.

Second, in choosing candidates, we should not only seek those whose policies favor or benefit only Christians. Seeking the common good is a venerable Christian tradition. We are asked to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:39). And by seeking everyone's peace and welfare, we too will prosper (Jer. 29:7).

Finally, we need to apply biblical principles and themes in helping us discern which public policies can best help achieve God's peace and welfare for the common good. For instance, the biblical principles of justice, truth, and shalom, among other principles, can guide us in discerning policies.

Shalom is a biblical Hebrew word that is usually translated as "peace" in English. But shalom means more than lack of conflict or violence. It means flourishing, prosperity, harmonious relationships—the way things are meant to be.

Biblical justice is always tied to shalom. It is not treating everyone the same but giving everyone their due in order to achieve God's shalom. Policies based on lies and false information should not be supported by Christians who value God's truth.

In short, we need to immerse ourselves into the biblical worldview and research political promises or policies in order to discern how to vote. Of course, we will never find perfect candidates or perfect policies. We need prayerful wisdom to choose the better option. I recommend Steven Monsma's book, *Healing for a Broken World: Christian Perspectives on Public Policy* (Crossway 2008), as a helpful resource.

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

I experience our adherence to baptism as liberating.

## Church

**Q** A few years ago the CRC synod warned against replacing infant baptism with dedication. Since then, has the denomination lightened up at all and at least considered giving parents of newborns the option?

**A** No, we haven't. Synod 2012 called on us to "refrain from leading rituals of infant or child dedication" in part because they are "not required by the Bible" and "not consistent with the Reformed confessions" (*Acts 2012*, pp. 774-75). I agree entirely. Question and answer 74 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks whether infants should be baptized and answers with a definitive yes.

Since I signed the Covenant for Officebearers, I am bound by that. Delegates to synod rise each year to indicate that in their decision-making they will stay true to the church's creeds and confessions. The only thing that can change this situation is for someone to file a request (called a *gravamen*) seeking to revise Q&A 74 or declare it no longer binding on us and have synod approve that request.

I do understand that many evangelical churches offer folks the option of infant dedication and that they and our culture generally want us to move away from "rigidity" in this matter. But I experience our adherence to baptism as liberating. Dedication speaks of our believing approach to God. That's all. Infant baptism goes far beyond that to speak also of God's faithfulness and promises to us. It is a sacrament that celebrates the comforting mysteries of God's sovereign grace. As such it is not just a family event but a people-of-God event. It profoundly blesses our congregations with regular assurance every time a child is born.

Let's not rob our membership of these experiences. And let's sensitively persuade parents to share in the joy.

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

## Relationships

**Q** Is abortion always wrong, at every stage of conception? About 15 years ago, when I was a college freshman, I was raped. I told no one at the time, other than my best friend and her doctor. He recommended what was known as the "morning-after pill." Eventually I told my parents, and they were very supportive. Lately, however, I have been wondering and feeling guilty about what I did.

**A** Such a personal and invasive assault has the capacity to cripple emotionally, even years after it happens to someone. The most important message you need to internalize is this: you did the best you knew to do under extremely difficult circumstances. Living in guilt is not the answer.

Keep in mind that the experience of rape cannot be equated with the experience of consensual sexual intimacy. When consensual sex results in a pregnancy, both parents bear the responsibility for deciding how this new life will develop. Allowing the baby to develop to term would seem to be the only choice consistent with a faith in our God of life.

But you were raped. You somehow had to come to terms with having been violated and with having lost, at least temporarily, a sense of control over what happens to you. You then also had to decide whether to immediately terminate a potential pregnancy or not. But this would not have been a real choice if your only choice, as a Christian, was to wait and see, and if pregnant, to carry the child to term.

In hindsight, your present maturity in years and faith might have led you to a different decision, but it is unfair to judge yourself—and create guilt—on that basis. Be reassured that God, as affirmed by your parents' support, does not judge you either.

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

# ADS

**Deadlines:** July/August issue is 6/20/16; Sept. issue is 8/8. Details online.

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

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## Denominational and Classical

### 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

### Admitted into the Ministry

**DR. NEVADA DE LAPP** sustained his examination as a candidate for Minister of the Word by Classis Heartland on March 5, 2016. Dr. De Lapp was ordained on March 6, 2016, at the Calvin CRC of Le Mars, Iowa.

### Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that Jason Terpstra has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word.

Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

### Calls Accepted

**REV. RODOLFO GALINDO** Please be advised that Rev. Rodolfo Galindo has accepted a call to Living Hope Church Fox Lake, Wisconsin effective April 14th Ken Prol - Stated Clerk - Classis Wisconsin

### Meetings of Classis

**CLASSIS HEARTLAND** will meet in regular session September 10, 2016, at the Ireton, Iowa, CRC. Agenda items are due to the stated clerk by July 15. Rev. Robert Drenten, SC, 1405 Albany Ave NE, Orange City, IA 51041. [robert.drenten@gmail.com](mailto:robert.drenten@gmail.com) 712-737-8388

### Retirement

**DR. DOUGLAS R. FAUBLE** Pastor of Hanley CRC, plans to retire as of August 1, 2016. A congregational dinner will be held in his honor on Saturday, June 25, 2016 followed by an Open House from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Hanley, 0-372 Jackson Street, Grandville, MI 49418. A special worship service will be held at 10 a.m. on Sunday, June 26, 2016 at Hanley. All are invited to come to the Open House and worship service to give thanks to God for the Fauble's 37 years of faithful service. Pastor Doug and Claire served churches in Holland, MI (Park, South Olive, & Bethany), Chicago, IL (Western Springs), Ada, MI, and Grandville, MI (Hanley). For more information, contact the church office (616-534-4844 or [hanleychurch@att.net](mailto:hanleychurch@att.net)).

**REV. JOHN TENYENHUIS** will retire from Ministry at the end of June, 2016. Pastor John served congregations in Bleinham, ON, Montreal, QC, and the last 28 years at our church in Etobicoke, Ontario. Our congregation will mark this occasion by hosting an "Open House" on Saturday, June 25th, 2016, from 2:00 – 4:00 pm, at Rehoboth Fellowship CRC, 800 Burnhamthorpe Rd., Etobicoke, ON M9C 1Y1. Pastor John will preach his last sermon on Sunday, June 26th, at 10:00 am followed by a coffee social. All are invited to attend and give thanks to God with

us for John's faithful service to the Lord. For further information, please contact the church office at 416-622-9647 or email: [rehofellowrc@bellnet.ca](mailto:rehofellowrc@bellnet.ca)

## Congregational

**FIRST JENISON (MICHIGAN) CRC** will be closing its doors. Our final worship service of thanksgiving and praise to God for 141 years of blessing will be held Sunday, July 10, at 9:30 a.m. Former members and friends are invited to celebrate God's faithfulness with us.

### Church's 150th Anniversary

**GRACE VALLEY CRC** in German Valley, IL will be celebrating their 150th Anniversary on Sunday, August 28, 2016. Please join us as we celebrate 150 years of God's Unwavering Grace. Hymn sing at 9:30 a.m. Worship at 10:00 a.m. with a meal to follow. Please register for the meal on our website [www.aplaceforgrace.com](http://www.aplaceforgrace.com), by phone 815-362-6601 or by email [gracevalleycrrc@gmail.com](mailto:gracevalleycrrc@gmail.com).

### Church's 50th Anniversary

**HOPE CRC IN RAPIDS CITY, SD** is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2016. We are planning a celebration weekend culminating with our morning service and activities to follow on September 4, 2016. We invite all who have been part of our church over the years and others who have participated in our ministry to join us for a weekend of fellowship and celebration for all the Lord has provided to us in the last 50 years.

## Birthdays

### 100th Birthday



**JOHANNA (VELDHOUSE) POTTER** will celebrate her 100th birthday with an open house on June 4, 2016 from 2-4 at Ivanrest CRC. All family and friends are welcome. The children, grandchildren and great grandchildren praise God for His faithfulness and blessings to her.

### 95th Birthday



**HAROLD BOONSTRA** 16300 Louis Ave. #622, South Holland, IL, 60473, will celebrate his 95th birthday on July 1. His children (Richard and Trena Boonstra, Jackie Archer, Donald and Janet Kosmal), 9 grandchildren, and 14 great grandchildren thank God for his amazing life and

wish him God's richest blessings. We love you Dad/Grandpa! Open house at the Holland Home (address above) on Sat. July 2 from 2:30 – 4:30 PM.

**JENNIE VISSER (DE JONG)** will celebrate her 95th birthday on June 9, wife of Simon (dec'd 2013) for almost 72 years. Her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren are Blessed by her prayers, Christian living and the hugs she loves to give and receive.

### 90th Birthday

**ELAINE GEERS** will celebrate her 90th birthday on July 2. We are thankful for God's faithfulness to her. Birthday cards can be sent to: 725 Baldwin, B-12, Jenison, MI 49428



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**REV. EDWIN AND ALMA WALHOUT** (2818 Mulford Drive, Grand Rapids, MI 49546) both celebrated 90 years of life in 2016! Alma on Feb. 13, and Ed on May 14. Their 5 children, 12 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren thank God for parents who taught us well, yet gave us the freedom to think "outside the box." We love you, Mom and Dad!

## Anniversaries

### 70th Anniversary

**VANDEN HEUVEL** Dennis and Angie, 121 Parkside Dr., Zeeland, MI 49464 celebrate 70 years of covenantal marriage on June 27. Their children, Rev. Jack and Karen Vanden Heuvel, Dawn and Doug Terpstra, and Nancy and Rev. Doug Einfeld, 18 grandchildren and 19 great grandchildren rejoice in Dad and Mom's example of faith and joyful living, and praise God for His love and faithfulness to them.

### 65th Anniversary



**BYMA** Henry & Janet (DeBoer) of Sussex NJ, celebrating 65th anniversary on April 19th. Love your children: Rich & Rosina, Anna & Jake, Ben & Linda, Audrey & Roy, Betsy & Ed (deceased), Joan & George, 22 Grandchildren, 40 Great Grandchildren. 309 Rt. 519, Wantage, NJ 07461. Praising God for His grace and faithfulness!

**LUBBEN** Vernon and Wilvina celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on June 12. They are blessed with four children, eight grandchildren, and one great grandchild. Praise the Lord.

**WONDAAL** On June 22, 2016, Marty and Norma Wondaal will celebrate 65 years of marriage. 1505 Pinehurst Lane, Schererville, IN 46375. Children: Carl and Jan Vandermolen, Steve and Jo Boender, Russ and Marcia VanDrunen, Marty and Michelle Wondaal. 12 Grandchildren, 11 Great-grandchildren. We love you, Mom and Dad.

### 60th Anniversary

**BREEMS** Byron and Carol (Dykema) celebrate 60 years of marriage June 16, 2016. They and their children, grandchildren & great grandchildren praise God for His faithfulness.

**BUTEYN** Arthur & Doris (VandeWege) 3103 N 11th St, Sheboygan, WI 53083 celebrate 60 years of marriage on June 15. Children Keith (Tammy), Kurt (deceased), Karla Engbers (Mike), Kent (Sue), Karl (Kelly) and Kris Doorn (George), grandchildren and great grandchildren. Thanking God for His faithfulness and blessings.



**GRIFFIOEN** Don & Martheen, 517 Worcester NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503, celebrate their 60th Wedding Anniversary on June 7. Children David (deceased), Tom & Sherri Griffioen, Trent & Cheryl Chambliss. We have been blessed with nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Don &

Martheen are both graduates of Calvin Theological Seminary and have joyfully served many churches from coast to coast throughout their life together.

**HOP** Robert and Thelma (Dykstra) of Holland MI will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on June 29, 2016. They along with their children Rick and Kathy Diemer, Mike and Brenda Hop and Dale and Kim Walters, their 15 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren give thanks to God for His love and faithfulness that continues on from generation to generation!

**JONGSMA** Rev. Allan and Joyce, 1157 Bayshore Drive, Byron Center, MI 49315, will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on June 16, 2016. Children: Rev. Dan and Gloria Jongsma (Michelle and Rick Arthur, Lisa Jongsma, Julie and Luke Augspurger), Scott and Linda Jongsma (Rebecca and Bryan Hoekstra, Joshua and Lauren Jongsma, Samuel Jongsma), Brenda and Jon Holesinger (Emily, Andrew, Erica and Annie), Lynda and Kevin Kiekover (Brandon, Alyssa and Alexis). Mom and Dad, we praise God for your example of Christian marriage and what it means to walk with God!

**KUNNEN** Bernie & Ila (Borgerding) celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on April 26, 2016. Their children, Kevin & Barb Kunnen, Karl & Jan Kunnen, Kristy & AJ Smith, Kurt & Tracie Kunnen, Kyle & Becca Kunnen, 16 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren thank God for His faithfulness and many blessings. We love you both very much!

**MULDER** Harold & Gert, 763 Wilcox St., Waupun, WI 53963, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on June 14. Their children, Linda (Don), Dennis (Deb), Lois, Laura (Tim), and Mark (Dawn), along with 14 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren, are grateful for the blessing of godly parents and thank God for his providence and faithfulness.

**NYENHUIS** Jacob E. "Jack" and Leona M. "Lee" Nyenhuis (1274 St. Andrews Drive, Holland, MI 49423) will celebrate 60 happy years of marriage on June 6. They and their children, Karen J. Louwsma, Kathy J. & Arthur G. Kurtze III, Lorna J. & Chris Cook, Sarah V. Nyenhuis & Joel P. Servais, their nine grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren give thanks to God for his steadfast love and constant faithfulness.

## Obituaries

**HANENBURG** Preston, passed away on Feb. 20, 2016. He leaves his loving wife Ramona; his children, Linda (Bill) Hoekstra, Larry, Debra (deceased) (Bill) Buikema, Dan (Marilyn), Paul, Peggy (Scott) Homerding. 17 grandchildren, 13 great grandchildren.

**HUITSING** Jay, age 87, of Tucson, AZ died on April 16. He is survived by wife Betty of 65 years, sister Grace, children Jay, Jayne (Terry), Jim (Paula), 7 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

## 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](mailto: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](http://CRCNA.org). Contact Leslie Kolk at [lskolk@yahoo.com](mailto:lskolk@yahoo.com) or 231-924-3596

**PASTOR**: West Leonard CRC in Grand Rapids, MI is undergoing Renewal and is searching for an energetic and talented person to help lead the transformation. Contact Sue Lettinga at 616.456.1994 ext. 201 or email [wlcrcsearch@gmail.com](mailto:wlcrcsearch@gmail.com) for a church profile and job description.

**PASTOR** Tillsonburg CRC, a rural/small town church in Tillsonburg, ON is looking for a full time pastor to walk with us as we step out in the "Going Local" program. Please contact Harry Dykxhoorn at [hdykxhoorn@gmail.com](mailto:hdykxhoorn@gmail.com) for more information and our church profile.

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR** of Outreach and Integration: Grace Valley CRC, German Valley, IL, a vibrant, growing, outward-focused community, who has a passion for Christ and our neighbors, is looking for an energetic, people-oriented individual to staff our associate pastor position. This individual will be asked to connect with the community and also integrate recent guests currently attending Grace Valley more fully into the life of the church. For more information about our church check out our website at [aplaceforgrace.com](http://aplaceforgrace.com). For further information on the position contact Jake Ritzema at [jritzema@aeroinc.net](mailto:jritzema@aeroinc.net)

**PASTOR** Reaching Up, Reaching In, Reaching Out! Christ Community Church in Victoria, BC is inviting qualified candidates to lead and feed our congregation. Our congregation is firmly rooted in God's love and is committed to practicing love, promoting dignity and discipleship, and living our faith. We are seeking someone to nourish the spiritual growth of the congregation, provide pastoral care and promote the intergenerational, multi-cultural and accessible vision held by the church. To learn more about this position, go to [www.cccvictoria.ca](http://www.cccvictoria.ca)

**PASTOR** Coopersville CRC of Coopersville, Michigan is seeking a full time minister to preach God's biblical truths and shepherd our congregation of 140 members. Our church profile is available at [CRCNA.org](http://CRCNA.org). Contact Calvin Dyke at [cjd.dykevale@gmail.com](mailto:cjd.dykevale@gmail.com) or 616-304-5822.

**YOUTH MINISTRY DIRECTOR** We need your help to share God's Grace and Hope! Drayton CRC, located in southwestern Ontario Canada, is seeking a highly relational youth pastor/director who will engage the youth of DCRC in spiritual growth by coordinating and administering an effective youth ministry. As a member of the pastoral team you will provide discipleship and pastoral care for the youth and young adults, as well as lead the congregation through shared preaching. Please contact Andy Knetsch at 519-638-3341, or [andyknetsch@hotmail.com](mailto:andyknetsch@hotmail.com)

**WORSHIP MINISTRY COORDINATOR** Bellevue CRC, in Bellevue WA, is seeking a part-time employee to help our well-established, vibrant worship ministry continue to grow and flourish. For details, see <http://www.bellevuecrc.org/jobops.html>.

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Visit [crcna.org/network](http://crcna.org/network)



**GROENBOOM** Roger Bruce, 76, of Elmhurst, IL, entered heaven on April 21, 2016 after courageously fighting a ten-month battle against cancer. Roger was predeceased by his parents, Henry and Angelyn (Klein) Groenboom, and step-mother, Marie

DeKruyter) Groenboom, and is survived by his beloved wife of 56 years, Henrietta "Ticks," nee Tameling; his children Maria (Karl) Vos, and Roger (Alison) Groenboom; his grandchildren Leia (Steve) DeMaagd, Emily (Ryan) Evenhouse, Aimee Vos, Angelyn (Michael) Kuiper, and Grant and Heidi Groenboom; his brothers- and sisters-in-law, Ben (Corrie) Tameling and Leona (Roger) Boerema; and many nieces and nephews. Memorial contributions to Timothy Christian Schools or Chicago West Side Christian School are appreciated.

**KLADDER** John, went to be with his LORD, April 1st, 2016, 5980 80th Street North, #115, St. Petersburg, FL, 33709. Beloved husband of Dorothy, nee Bolt; loving father of Mary (Angelo) Cosentino, Michele (Gary) Drska, Meredith (Robert) Capocci, and the late Marcia Kladder (Kurt Gubitz); devoted grandfather of 9; great grandfather of 5; fond brother of the late Evelyn Stob and the late Henrietta Beckus; uncle of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to Samaritan's Purse, PO Box 3000, Boone, NC 28607, are appreciated.

**KUIPERS** Bertha (Westerhuis) 93, of Platte, SD went to be with her Lord on March 14. Predeceased by her husband, Harm (2013). Remembered lovingly by her children: Donna (Ron) Kaemingk, Darrell (Gretchen), Arla (Mike) Mattock, Bonnie (Mike) Danielson, Dennis, Kurt (Gaik), Kent (Nancy), Lori (Mike) Holcomb: 15 grandchildren; 5 great-grandchildren; and sister Clairice Little.

**NYLAND** Freda (Roosma), age 90, Lynden, WA, went to be with her Lord on April 19, 2016. She was predeceased by her husband, John, her first husband, Ed, and all of her brothers and sisters. She is survived by her children: Gladys (Gale) Senti, Marj (Dave) Van Boven, Joyce (Jerry) Libolt, Ron Roosma, Keith (Roxie) Roosma; 15 grandchildren and 31 great grandchildren. Also stepchildren: Judy (Dale) Bedlington, Gale (Nancy) Nyland, Joanne Hooff, and Don (Julie) Nyland and their families.

**SJAARDEMA** DUANE R., 84, of Centennial, CO died Feb. 19, 2016. He is dearly missed by his wife, Violet; 6 children: Sandy (Mark), Dave (Marilyn), Rick (Michele), Vonda (Greg), Wes (Kim), Viet (Chuc); 19 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.

**STOB** Margaret nee Doornbos age 98, of Jenison, MI died April 4, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband Siebert, and daughter Pat. She is survived by her children Bill & Becky, Taffy & Bob Falkena, Rick & Sandy, Mark & Laurie; 19 grandchildren, many great-grandchildren; sister, Fennetta (Kuiper) Stoub.

**VAN ZYTVELD** David C. age 81 of Byron Center MI passed away April 17, 2016 from Acute Leukemia. Surviving are his wife Esther (Hoitenga), children Joel and Julie Van Zytveld, Rachel Keesee; grandchildren Nicolaas Van Zytveld, Annika Van Zytveld, Forrest Keesee. Sisters: Connie Wiersma, Anne and Rog Bouwman, sisters-in-law: Kay Hoitenga, Rose Kossen, Lois and Marv Roelofs: many loving nieces and nephews.

**VISSER** Edith (Osinga), 85, of Seattle, WA, went to be with her Lord on April 18, 2016. She was preceded in death by husband, William J. (1994), and will be lovingly remembered by her children Brenda (Brian) Heath, Bill (Shelley) Visser, and Elonna Visser, and 5 grandchildren. We thank God for her faith, courage, and love. Memorials to Bethany Christian Services are appreciated.

**WARREN** Marla Boelkins, died at age 60. Survived by husband Tom, and adult children Mike, Joe and Holly. Member of River Terrace CRC, Lansing MI. Child psychiatrist. A brilliant and devoted child of God.



# SYNOD 2016

Synod 2016 of the Christian Reformed Church will take place June 10-17 on the campus of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Visit [crcna.org/synod](http://crcna.org/synod) for coverage before and during synod, and to subscribe to the daily Synod News email. Or follow the CRCNA on Facebook or Twitter (#*crcsynod*).

The synod of the CRC represents the churches of all the classes (regions).

Synod meets annually in June with 192 delegates: one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one other officebearer from each classis.


The tasks of synod include responsibility for creeds, the Church Order, liturgical forms, hymnals, principles of worship, and moral/ethical positions.

Synod also provides general oversight for the ministries undertaken jointly by CRC churches.



You can find the *Agenda for Synod* and other related documents online at [crcna.org/synod](http://crcna.org/synod). Printed copies of the agenda have been sent to each church.

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**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

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## Employment

**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

## Products and Services

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

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**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.

**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

**TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS** is an agency that offers in home (non-medical) care to seniors. We are intentionally small allowing us to build relationships and tailor our services to each clients unique needs. Learn more about us at truebluecaregivers.com or call 616-406-6819. Owned, by Calvin alums who serve the greater Grand Rapids area. True Blue Caregivers, the small company with a big heart.



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OF CARING.  
A WORLD OF  
DIFFERENCE.*

LuVern Newhof  
102 years young,  
Fulton Manor Resident

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World Renew's Global Volunteer program is more than just a mission trip. It is a unique opportunity that nurtures the desire of your teens and young adults to serve God.

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at 800-552-7972, ext. 2162

Canada: Iona Buisman  
at 800-730-3490, ext. 4321

[globalvolunteer@worldrenew.net](mailto:globalvolunteer@worldrenew.net)

[worldrenew.net/gvp](http://worldrenew.net/gvp)   



**GLOBAL  
VOLUNTEER  
PROGRAM**



## 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](http://calvinseminary.edu/distance) and see if our distance program might be a great fit for you, too.

[calvinseminary.edu/distance](http://calvinseminary.edu/distance)



# underthefigtree

"Under The Fig Tree is a once in a life time experience. The vision it gives you for life is unlike any other experience I have ever had. If you have ever thought of visiting the Holy lands, Under The Fig Tree should be your first call."  
- Bruce Gritter, Pastor of The River CRC

"I will never forget the moments when I felt like God's word and truth just jumped off the Bible and came alive like never before during this biblical land study trip. This is a once in a life time experience that I strongly recommend!"  
- Moses Chung, Director of Home Mission

# Happy Birthday, Banner!

## Treasures from the Attic

Want to find out more about the history of *The Banner*? Read these articles from *Banner* archives. They're posted on our website.

### A Quick Trip through History

by Arthur W. Hoogstrate, July 1, 1966 (Centennial issue)

### The Banner: In the Church But Not Just of It

by James D. Bratt, Nov. 25, 1966

### Burning Shoes and Banana Peels: 125 Years of Banners

by Herbert J. Brinks



## It's Time to Burn the Wooden Shoes

In 1980, editor Andy Kuyvenhoven famously drew a line between the CRC's ethnic and Reformed roots. The resulting controversy burned as brightly as the flames enveloping the wooden shoes on the cover. In a letter to the editor, one outraged reader responded: "Why don't you burn *The Banner*? I don't want to receive *The Banner* anymore." Another reader, one of the few remaining artisans who make wooden shoes, stopped by the *Banner* office to present a brand-new pair to the editor.

“Please could we have *The Banner* written in simpler language?”

—ZEELAND, MICHIGAN, 1966

“Hope the staff see fit to continue to include articles that stress the danger of conforming to worldly habits and temptations.”

—WORTHINGTON, MINNESOTA, 1966



## The Bananer

By the 1960s, *The Banner* was a target ripe for satire. In 1970, a group of Calvin College students—many of whom went on to become leaders in the CRC—took up the challenge, publishing a parody edition never since equalled. Find the complete issue on our website.



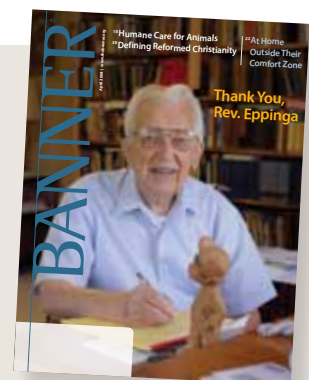
Although most *Banner* readers no longer heat their houses with coal, and Herpolsheimers is long gone, some things never go out of date!


These ads are from the July 7, 1921, issue of *The Banner*.

## Cabbages and Kings

For 40 years, Jacob D. Eppinga wrote his beloved column “Cabbages and Kings.” Here’s how he concluded his final essay, “Sesquicentennial.” Though written for the occasion of the 150th birthday of the Christian Reformed Church, we think it applies equally well to *The Banner*’s birthday.

“What of our future? When someone in our family has a birthday, he or she gets to blow out the candles on the cake while making a secret wish. I would like to blow out 150 candles and make a public wish—a wish that in the years ahead the Christian Reformed Church in North America may see a growing unity in a time of increased diversity.”



A man with a beard is shown in profile, painting a world map on a wall. The map is partially completed, with blue oceans and green/yellow landmasses. A thick red line curves across the top of the image, underlining 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.



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