

BANNER

November 2016 | thebanner.org

¹⁸ Peace for the Persecuted
²¹ Pain Does Not Equal Shame
³⁸ Unoriginal Sin

²² From the
Jungles
to Jesus

³² A MEMOIR IN PSALMS

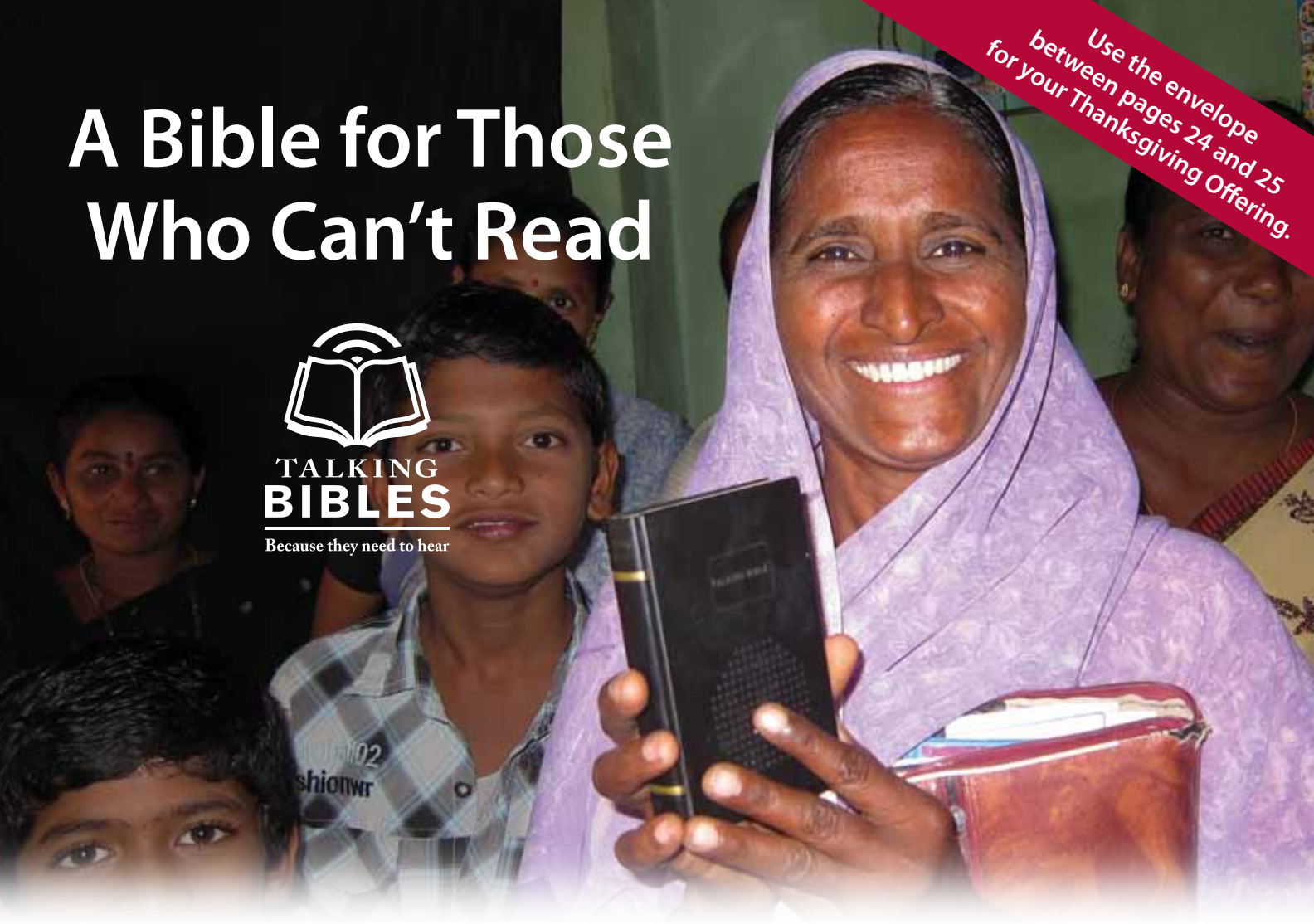
150 YEARS

PSALM 138
O LORD, HEAVEN'S
HEAVENS ARE
YOUR THRONE
AND YOUR
FOOTSTOOL
IS HEAVEN.
YOU ARE
GOD, O LORD,
AND YOUR
NAME IS
Glorious
THROUGHOUT
THE HEAVENS.
YOUR
MERCY
REACHES
TO THE
HEAVENS,
AND YOUR
FAITHFULNESS
REACHES
TO THE CLOUDS.
O LORD, YOUR
MERCY IS
AS GREAT AS
THE HEAVENS,
AND YOUR
FAITHFULNESS
REACHES
TO THE CLOUDS.
O LORD, YOUR
MERCY IS
AS GREAT AS
THE HEAVENS,
AND YOUR
FAITHFULNESS
REACHES
TO THE CLOUDS.

PSALM 131
O LORD, DO NOT
REBUKE ME
IN YOUR
ANGER,
AND DO NOT
DISPLEASE
ME IN
YOUR
WRATH.
O LORD, BE
GRACIOUS
TO ME,
FOR MY
SIN IS
GREAT,
AND MY
WICKEDNESS
IS
MULTIPLIED.
O LORD, DO
NOT
REBUKE
ME
IN
YOUR
ANGER,
AND
DO
NOT
DISPLEASE
ME
IN
YOUR
WRATH.
O LORD,
BE
GRACIOUS
TO
ME,
FOR
MY
SIN
IS
GREAT,
AND
MY
WICKEDNESS
IS
MULTIPLIED.

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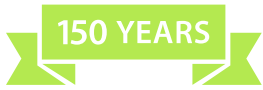
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A Little Wisdom

ALTHOUGH I AM NOT FLUENT IN CHINESE, I do know the Chinese meaning of my name. My full name is Shiao Choong Chong. Shiao Choong, in Chinese, means “little wisdom.” Hence, calling me only “Shiao” is calling me little! You can see why I prefer being called Chong.

But why *little* wisdom, you say, and not big wisdom? Part of the answer lies in my father’s desire to keep his children humble. And I believe he made a wise choice.

Perhaps my name sparked my enduring interest in biblical wisdom. Ever since I converted to Christianity at age 14, I have prayed for wisdom. Of course, unlike King Solomon, I’ve had to seek wisdom the hard way—through learning and experience. And I am still seeking.

Wisdom is neither intelligence nor knowledge, although they are related. You can be knowledgeable but still be a fool. A doctor who smokes, for example, is knowledgeable but foolish. What, then, is wisdom?

Twice the book of Proverbs says, “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death” (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). Wisdom, for me, is the ability to discern the genuinely right paths for life from those that merely appear to be right. This is no easy skill. It requires insight to see beyond appearances, as Solomon did (see 1 Kings 3:16-28).

How do we acquire such wisdom? I believe it begins with two steps: fearing the Lord and humbling yourself. Scripture states that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10). This “fear” is a holy reverence of God that brings about faithful obedience and turning away from sin and evil.

Second, this fear of the Lord is intrinsically connected to humility. “Humility is the fear of the Lord” (Prov. 22:4). No one who truly knows God and his holiness can remain arrogant in one’s own abilities, knowledge, or intelligence. If we do not humble ourselves to learn God’s ways and walk in them, we will never be wise: “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom” (Prov. 11:2). *Humble* and *wise* always go together, as do *foolish* and *proud*.

Now, perhaps more than ever, Christians need wisdom to navigate a sea of change. How do we respond to new scientific theories? To multiple biblical interpretations? To new sexual ethics? How do we engage these phenomena while faithfully following Jesus? How do we work to help our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ in the global church? Or, to use the kite metaphor I introduced in my first editorial (Sept. 2016), we need wisdom to fly the kite, to know how hard to pull the confessional string, and how much to lean into the contextual winds.

There’s no quick fix to gaining such wisdom. It starts with humility before God’s Word. But it also means learning from our neighbors, even those—maybe especially those—with whom we disagree. Without a humble posture of listening and learning and recognizing that we are fallible, we will always fall for the ways that appear right in our own eyes but ultimately lead to death.

This November, American Christians need such humble wisdom to choose a new president. Whatever the outcome, my prayer is that this election would not further divide Americans and especially CRC Christians. I pray for God’s providence and wisdom for the United States. ■



Shiao Chong is editor-in-chief of *The Banner*. He attends Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Toronto, Ont.

Christians need wisdom to navigate a sea of change.

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In the Deep of the City

I KNOW CHILDREN in the deep of the city who grow where they can like chicory squeezing up between the sidewalk cracks in front of abandoned stores where spray-painted graffiti announces “Thuggin for life” one day and proclaims “huggin for life” the next.

I know children in the drought of the city who squat like street musicians in church doorways and call out to strangers— where they leap up in the air, flip mid-jump and land on their feet like cats in the grass.

And I know children in the dust of the city who wait for a word of applause like weeds wilted from the heat waiting for a drink to quench their thirst— where roots hold their ground— so they can grow, huggin for life like chicory after a summer rain. ■



Sylvia R. Cooper is a writer and retired teacher. For almost 20 years she directed a tutoring program at Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich. This poem appears in her book *A Writer's Vine* (Chapbook Press, 2015). Used by permission.

A Hot Iron

What should Rick do?



PHOTO BY PEKELS.COM

I BELIEVE that synod had the right to rule that homosexual marriage is morally impermissible, and that such marriages may not be performed in Christian Reformed churches or by Christian Reformed clergy. In so doing it shows that the Christian Reformed Church does not sanction gay marriage.

But when it cautions against the “involvement of officebearers” in a gay marriage ceremony, I believe that it applies this judgment too widely. And in so doing it overrules the conscience of many of its members.

Consider this scenario.

Rick is an elder in the CRC. His brother Gary is gay. Gary’s family, church, and friends have known this for decades. Gary plans to marry his partner and has asked Rick to be the best man at his wedding. Following the advice of the recent synodical decision, Rick may feel he shouldn’t even consider this request.

But Rick reasons as follows: Gary knows that I don’t believe he is doing the right thing, and everyone understands that. My role in his wedding will not signify my, or the church’s, approval of gay marriage, but will express my deep love for my brother. In fact, by standing up at Gary’s wedding, others may see that my Christian love for my brother is stron-

ger than my disapproval of his sexual practice.

You may not agree with Rick, and that is fine. But by recommending to the churches the pastoral guidance of the minority report of the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance re Same-Sex Marriage, synod seems to overrule the possibility that Rick should even engage in such conscientious reasoning.

So what should Rick do? Resign as an elder? Leave the CRC? Stand up for Gary and see himself as a heretic?

Jesus condemned religious leaders of his time for this kind of over-reach. Jesus well understood that the Sabbath must be kept holy. But he rejected the right of the Pharisees to specify how this command should be applied. The Pharisees bound the consciences of the people of God by applying their laws to the number of steps, which meals, what kind of labors, and so on, were permissible under God’s Sabbath command.

Scripture speaks of those whose consciences have been “seared as with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:2). It goes on to condemn not the resulting licentiousness, but the strictness of the religious leaders who “forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods . . .” (v. 3).

Those whose conscience demands that they cannot participate in a gay marriage ceremony should refrain. Just as those who do participate should do so in the light of their own conscience. ■

Editor’s note: Please see news article on p. 10 and Acts of Synod 2016, pp. 914ff.



Kent VanTil is a minister in the CRC who has served as a missionary in Central America. He teaches at Hope College in Holland, Mich.



Where Was God?

Tears formed a lump in my throat as I read this article (“Where Was God?” Sept. 2016). I thank the author for the courage it took to try to protect a child in spite of tremendous family pressure. I pray that this person can feel God’s loving care through the support of other Christians.

I too experienced abuse at home. I not only question at times “Where was God in the midst of this pain,” but “Where was my church?” Was it a safe haven? Could it be more so now? How can we better educate our congregations about abuse so that those who suffer can ask for support?

For those abused who sit in the pew, hearing predominantly the message of the necessity of forgiveness can easily increase their burden when they already have the tendency to blame themselves.

How will the church do more to support those affected by the sin of abuse?

—Name withheld
Ontario

Editor’s note: Out of concern for the safety of this letter writer, we have decided to make an exception to our policy of not printing anonymous letters in Letters to the Editor.

Sexual abuse is experienced by one in four girls and one in six boys (“Where Was God?”). This article raises a very good question: Why isn’t the church talking

LETTERS

about it? Why are we not taking a stronger stand against it? I long for the day when our congregations can become places of healing for those who have suffered abuse (it's a lot of people!). And I know that it can never happen as long as the silence remains. Thank you for sharing this one story. Lord, give us open ears and open hearts, willing to listen to the stories of so many others who now suffer in silence among us.

—Bonnie Nicholas,
Safe Church Ministries
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Through no fault of my own I have lived with cancer for one year. My illness is public and my church family is lovingly supportive. You, through no fault of your own, suffer from the unspeakable evil of abuse at the hands of those who were supposed to love and protect you. You suffer alone and in silence. As a child of God, you cry, "Where was God?" My heart bleeds with you as you continue to experience the evil done to you in your childhood. Your younger brother is sadly mistaken that since this happened in the past, it is over and done with.

Thank you for your courage in telling your story to the churches. If anyone in the CRC doubts the need for an abuse prevention ministry, I trust that your cry for help will be heard and acted upon.

—Gerald Hogeterp
Brantford, Ont.

Women in Ministry

Re "A Single Story" (Sept. 2016): I'm concerned that the invaluable work of the Committee for Women in the CRC (CWCRC) has been forgotten. Many women, and later men, worked for about 30 years for the ordination of women at Calvin Theological Seminary. We rallied around Rev. Marchiene Rienstra who was definitely gifted and called. We supported

others in those early years and formed a scholarship fund under the CWCRC name, which still exists. Now there are many young women at Calvin Seminary who seem to know nothing about this effort.

—J. Jonker Bredeweg
Grand Rapids, Mich.

I just read "A Single Story" by Heidi De Jonge. I was really touched by her story; her faith in the Lord is so strong. I truly enjoy *The Banner* and really loved Heidi's story.

—Julie Scholten
Lynden, Wash.

Drama of Doctrine

In "The Drama of Doctrine" (Sept. 2016), Rev. Len Vander Zee rightly points out that our youth "often lack an adequate understanding of the Christian faith." In addition to growing up with midweek catechism classes, I'll wager Rev. Len also had daily Bible reading and prayer with his family at supper, and that he read a passage from the Bible as part of his daily devotions. None of these disciplines are common today. Before our youth are ready for doctrine, they need to delve directly into the drama of biblical stories. Jesus didn't discuss doctrine with his followers, he told them stories. For many of our youth, when they study the Bible in depth, it will be "told afresh" because it will be the first time they hear it.

—Douglas Daining
Grand Rapids, Mich.

New Editor and Sophia

How interesting that the September issue of *The Banner* featured an article written by a first-grader praising God for everything ("God Is Bigger Than Everything"). On the opposite page was an editorial ("Flying the CRC Kite") written by the new editor written in a style that was so

intellectual that even though I read it twice I failed to get the message! By the way, I have a master's degree in psychology. I'll enjoy more articles should Sophia choose to wax eloquent again.

—Thelma Battjes
Novi, Mich.

Thank You

In response to the news article "Synod 2016 Recommends Pastoral Advice for Same-Sex Marriage" (Jul/Aug 2016), which states that the delegates voted in favor of the more restricted advice of the study committee, the council of Lamont Christian Reformed Church says thank you.

—David H. Holm
Lamont, Mich.

FAQ

Ms. Cook suggests that this young woman did not have a choice if her only choice was "to wait and see, and if pregnant, to carry the child to term" (FAQ, "Relationships," June 2016). The choice, for a Christian, is to allow God to carry out his plan for our lives or to take matters into our own hands and leave God out of the equation. Had there been no child, without having taken the morning-after pill, she would have known she was guilt-free. Had there been a child, nobody can know what grace God would have shown as a result of her allowing him sovereignty.

—Vicki Gunn
Sharon, Ont.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

NEWS

Clarifying Synod 2016's Decisions on Pastoral Advice Regarding Same-Sex Marriage

It's been several months since Synod 2016 made decisions about the reports from the Committee to Provide Pastoral Guidance Regarding Same-Sex Marriage. (Synod is the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church.)

In that time, there has been considerable confusion regarding what synod did when it recommended the more restrictive advice from the minority of the committee. Did synod make binding decisions or were the decisions simply recommendations?

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What follows is an interview with Rev. Peter Hoytema, pastor of Westmount CRC in Strathroy, Ont. Hoytema was the reporter for the synodical committee that dealt with the report.

The Banner (TB): Why is there such confusion about what Synod 2016 decided?

Hoytema: Synod received both the majority and minority reports from the study committee. It's the phrase "recommend to the churches the pastoral guidance of the minority report" that has led some to wonder whether synod adopted official policy that churches must follow, or if it simply recommended guidance that is pastoral and non-regulatory in nature. (See *Agenda for Synod 2016*, pp. 436-43.)

TB: So is what Synod 2016 decided binding or not?

Hoytema: In fact, it is both. It decided that officebearers in the CRC are prohibited from solemnizing same-sex marriages, based on the minority report's determination that such marriages are in conflict with the Word of God. To reinforce the binding nature of what it adopted, synod placed a reference to this decision in the Supplement to Article 69-c of the Church Order.

However, it should be remembered that while a pastor who solemnizes a same-sex marriage may be disciplined for doing so, this new Supplement to Article 69-c indicates that a same-sex marriage is *one example* of how synod has determined that a mar-

Rev. Peter Hoytema at Synod 2016



KAREN HUTTENGA

riage is considered to be in conflict with the Word of God. Discipline ought not to be given to that pastor any more eagerly or severely than it is given to one who solemnizes a marriage that is contrary to the Word of God for completely different reasons, examples of which are numerous.

TB: What parts of Synod 2016's decision are not binding?

Hoytema: The advice recommended by synod indicates that "participating" in a same-sex wedding ceremony is something officebearers should avoid. It does not specify exactly what such participation entails, nor does it prohibit it outright. It conveys a tone that is more cautionary than rigid. Nothing about the prospect of officebearers being disciplined for even participating at a same-sex wedding ceremony was ever recommended or adopted.

TB: What does this decision say to churches regarding enfolding those who are same-sex attracted?

Hoytema: This was not the focus of synod's work. The focus of this synod's work was on determining

the legitimacy of same-sex marriage and on providing pastoral guidance in that specific context.

The question you raise is something previous synods have considered. It is also something the newly appointed Committee to Articulate a Foundation-Laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality will address.

TB: What are your hopes for the report from that committee?

Hoytema: It is my personal hope that the subject of homosexuality will actually occupy a small place in that committee's report.

It has become clear to me that committee reports and the adoption of denominational code are not the most effective strategies in dealing with this issue. What's more, there are other aspects of human sexuality that are deeply pastoral in nature (such as pornography) that I believe we have ignored for too long and therefore require more urgent attention.

—Gayla R. Postma

Senior Volunteer Honored by State of Michigan

Whoever said age is just a number may have had Jim Polet in mind. This 87-year-old member of Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church (Holland, Mich.) was named Senior Volunteer of the Year at the 2016 Governor's Service Awards. He was honored by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder for his volunteer work for Habitat for Humanity and other organizations.

"It was a very humbling experience," Polet said. "I had no idea of the [extent of] volunteerism in the state. I'm convinced a lot of things on the local level simply wouldn't happen without volunteers."

Polet was honored alongside three other seniors, as well as honorees in a handful of other individual and group categories,

including youth and lifetime achievement awards.

Polet began volunteering in the Holland community after retiring in 1993. He spent two memorable weeks serving with International Aid in New York City after 9/11.

Currently he works at Habitat three full days a week, framing,



drywalling, painting, hanging siding, laying flooring—just about



Jim (center) on stage with Governor Snyder (left of Jim) and other award winners.

Jim Polet working at Habitat for Humanity.

anything aside from electrical wiring, pouring cement, and roof-

ing. He estimates he and his teammates build about four houses a year.

Polet's service comes as a natural outgrowth of his faith. It is part of living in community with others, part of loving one's neighbor as yourself, he said.

—Susan Vanden Berg



Dutch Hymn Sing Connects with Song

Songs have a way of connecting people to others and to their past. That connection helped to start an event that has been growing for over a decade in Strathroy, Ont.

About 200 people gathered from all over southwestern Ontario at the end of the summer for the 12th annual Dutch hymn sing at Westmount Christian Reformed Church. Some drove more than two hours; many come each year to meet friends and make a day of it.

Organizer Marianne Kingma said the event was inspired by her mother, who had

dementia in her later years. Kingma visited her in the nursing home and sang Dutch hymns with her mother as a way of connecting. "She sang every note and every verse from any song that I picked," said Kingma. "She could not speak, but she could clearly sing the words."

When someone suggested she organize a Dutch hymn sing in the church, she started small. But the event has grown every year since, now bringing about 200 people together for 90 minutes of singing, with fellowship and goodies after the program.

Two hundred people from around southern Ontario gathered in Strathroy, Ont., for the 12th annual Dutch hymn sing.

"People are very emotional about some of the songs," said Kingma. "I often see people wiping tears. The energy in the sanctuary is amazing."

—Anita Brinkman

NEWS

CRC Leaders Issue Statement on Racism

With deep sadness for recent violent events in the United States and Canada, we join others in grieving the deaths of Terence Crutcher, Colten Boushie, and many others across the world. These events, in light of our love for Christ, compel us to speak.”

So begins a statement released by the Christian Reformed Church on September 23. It was signed by the seven directors of the CRC’s agencies and educational institutions, as well as by executive director Steven Timmermans; Colin Watson, director of ministries and administration; and

Darren Roorda, Canadian ministries director.

The statement continued, “We recognize that we have remained silent about racial injustice and unjust actions in our nations all too frequently.” To that end, denominational leaders called for CRC pastors to preach reconciliation from their pulpits and referred them to resources for preaching and worship from the CRC Office of Race Relations.

Watson said that the denomination has called for prayer for victims of gun violence and police officers in the past. But this has been sporadic, and it seems that



Colin Watson, the CRC’s director of ministries and administration.

the number and frequency of such incidents is increasing. “There have also been requests from local

church members to make a more proactive denominational statement on these issues plaguing many communities,” he said. “So, in a sense, the idea to publish a statement and to provide a more comprehensive list of resources came as a result of a felt need from many members as well as the increased frequency of racially tinged events.”

The statement also lamented that the CRC has often found unity in shared ethnicity rather than in Christ. Watson said the hope of the signatories is that pastors would “boldly proclaim the unity we have in Christ.”

In addition to grieving those who have died as the result of violence, the statement urged congregations to pray for police officers.

Watson said that having all the leaders sign it rather than having it come only from the executive director’s office was to make the point that “in Christ, we are all bound together in unity. This is something that touches all of us as Christians. It is not the purview of any particular ministry area, or agency, or educational institution. This affects us all as the body of Christ and as a denomination.”

The statement asked churches to share litanies and other elements of worship that were meaningful. Watson said the resources will be shared on The Network (network.crcna.org).

—Gayla R. Postma

Synodical Committee on Human Sexuality Membership Announced

When the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church met at the end of September, it was informed of the membership of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-Laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.

Synod 2016 (the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church) appointed the committee to articulate a “foundation-laying biblical theology of human sexuality that pays particular attention to biblical conceptions of gender and sexuality.” Synod said that the members of the committee must “adhere to the CRC’s biblical view on marriage and same-sex relationships.” That view, first established in 1973 and reaffirmed in 2002, is that while homosexual orientation is not sinful, homosexual activity is.

The committee will report to Synod 2021, with an interim report to be made at Synod 2019.

The following people have been appointed to the committee:

- Rev. Mary-Lee Bouma, pastor, downtown friends CRC, Vancouver, B.C.
- Pastor Charles Kim, leader, Home Missions Korean Ministries Team
- Mr. Jose Rayas, pastor, Valley Ridge Community CRC, Socorro, Tex.
- Rev. Paula Seales, pastor, Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- Dr. Matthew Tuininga, assistant professor of moral theology, Calvin Theological Seminary
- Rev. Dr. Mary VandenBerg, professor of systematic theology, Calvin Theological Seminary
- Dr. Jim VanderWoerd, social scientist, Redeemer University College
- Pastor Richard VanManen, campus minister, University of Alberta
- Dr. Jeffrey Weima, co-chair, professor of New Testament, Calvin Theological Seminary
- Dr. Albert Wolters, co-chair, emeritus professor of religion, Redeemer University College
- Dr. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (*promotor fidei*, sometimes called “devil’s advocate”), recently retired from Eastern University, now living in Ottawa, Ont.

—Gayla R. Postma



CASA Connor: Creating a Living Legacy

Five years after the death of 15-year-old Connor Vanderveen, CASA Connor opened in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. CASA Connor, an earthquake-proof, two-storey building of 29,000 square feet, will provide vital care and treatment for children with disabilities and their families, free of charge. It was created as a living legacy to honor the life of Connor, who died in 2011 of complications related to Hunter Syndrome (or MPS II), a rare genetic disorder. During his life, Connor worshiped at Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, Alta., where his parents, Geraldine and Jerry Vanderveen, and grandparents Peter and Teena Oudman are members.

Over the years, the Oudmans wintered in Puerto Vallarta, with Teena flying home several times to care for Connor so his parents could spend more time with their other children. On a return trip to Puerto Vallarta, she said, "God gave me a vision to build a facility for the disabled [in Puerto Vallarta]. Wow, that was something. . . . This is when our difficult journey started . . . but God was always beside us and got us through those hard times."

The hard times included serious fund-raising as well as partnering with other organizations such as Pasitos de Luz, a nonprofit organization founded by mothers of children with disabilities from low-income families in the Puerto Vallarta region. Pasitos de Luz will be responsible for operat-

ing CASA Connor. The name CASA comes from the Caring Abroad Society of Alberta, which gives financial support as well as helps to raise funds.

Both the Vanderveens and Oudmans raise awareness of the need for support for children who are underserved. "We are so privileged to live in a country that provides incredible support to kids [with disabilities] and their families, and knowing that other countries don't is heartbreaking," said Connor's mother.

"The situations those children [in Puerto Vallarta] live in are so sad," added Teena Oudman. "There is nothing for them, and most of them have just a one-room house where everybody lives."

Connor's family and friends are deeply grateful to all those who have helped make CASA Connor a reality. "Our family truly feels this was a God-inspired and God-led endeavor that gives purpose to our son's life in a tangible way," said his mother.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Iowa Church Celebrates 150 Years

First Christian Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa, was the first CRC west of the Mississippi River, a fact that was noted when the church recently celebrated its 150th anniversary.

The church's weeklong celebration focused on God's faithfulness. Former pastors Jeff Sajdak and Harvey Brink led services. A service in a nearby park was led by current pastor Brad Meinders.

Celebrations also included a barbecue supper in the park with activities for all ages.

Brink, First CRC's 24th pastor, led both services on August 28. The evening service included a balcony band and a bell choir. The evening service ended with the playing of the "Hallelujah Chorus."

"I am in awe of how God faithfully maintains the church he plants," said Meinders. "He planted [this church] in a different time and culture and has her still present today for the purpose of people being transformed by Jesus so that they are leading people to him!"

—Kyle Hoogendoorn



First CRC in Pella, Iowa, celebrated 150 years.

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Clarence John Vos

1920-2016

Patient and kind, intellectually and spiritually curious, Clarence Vos was a gifted teacher who enjoyed sharing what he knew. Vos died on July 28 in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was 95.

After serving in the U.S. Air Force during World War II, Vos graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary, earned his Masters of Theology from Westminster Theological Seminary, and his doctorate at the Free University of Amsterdam.

He served congregations in Washington, New Jersey, and Dordrecht in the Netherlands, before being appointed to the faculty of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., as a professor of religion and Old Testament. During those years, he served on many denominational committees. He retired in 1985.

After retirement, Vos and his wife, Jeanne, served 18 churches as interim pastorates.

Vos is survived by his wife of 72 years, by three children and their spouses, and by four grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first grandchild, Nick Bremmer.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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

NEWS

The Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees meets three times each year to conduct the business of the denomination's ministry between the annual synods. It met most recently from September 29-30. These are just a few of the decisions that were made.



Race Relations and Office of Social Justice Roles to Be Combined

At its recent meeting, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church approved integrating the role of Race Relations director with Office of Social Justice's (OSJ) coordinator role.

But the decision was not made easily. Trustee Rev. Emmett Harrison from Grand Rapids, Mich., worried that the work of Race Relations would get less priority if absorbed into OSJ, that it could lead to "a diminishment in terms of money, time to do the job," he said. "That is the view from the ground level in a minority community."

Ms. Aaltje Van Grootheest of Victoria, B.C., was also concerned that there not be a perception that Race Relations was "moving down a peg but remains a top priority."

Executive director Steve Timmermans assured trustees that the intent of the move is to amplify the work of both offices.

The board approved the change but also wants ongoing reporting to ensure that race relations does not lose prioritization and that it have a healthy budget allocation as a part of the whole ministry.

—Gayla R. Postma

CRC Begins Exploring Curriculum Options

At the behest of Synod 2016 (the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church), staff is exploring options for providing distinctively Reformed curricula for children and teens. The CRC's Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) prepared an extensive report for the September 2016 Board of Trustees meeting.

The report included a brief history of the CRC's publishing efforts, which began in 1937. Some of its most popular curricula included *Bible Way* (produced in 1972); *LiFE* (produced in 1994); *Walk With Me* (released in 2004); and *Kid Connection* (released in 2007). The most recent curriculum, released in 2011, is *Dwell*. Due to financial constraints it was never properly launched or fully marketed.

The report noted that when Synod 2013 dissolved Faith Alive Christian Resources, it intended to continue the publishing ministry's core functions, including producing curriculum for children and teens. But no plans or resources were put in place. In the year following, the report stated, "the few remaining Faith Alive curriculum editorial staff either retired and were not replaced, were not re-hired after maternity leave, or were reassigned." Additionally, only one editorial staff member with an intimate, experienced teaching knowledge of *Walk With Me*, *Kid Connection*, and *Dwell* remains on staff. "Staff with that level of familiarity with resources for middle school and up (including grades 6-8 of *Dwell*, catechism resources, and profession of faith resources) are gone," the report noted.

The report laid out some options for the board to consider. Creating an entirely new curriculum would require a mandate from synod and the board, as well as significant funding—in the neighborhood of \$2-3 million. It would also require three to five years and increased staffing. FFM reported that, given the resources available, it is "virtually impossible to plan a new curriculum at this time."

Another option, the report authors said, is to focus on communicating Reformed distinctives by providing other tools to help churches communicate to children, youth, and adults what being Reformed means and why it matters. Ideas include accessible online tools for explaining the Reformed worldview with children of various ages; a "Sunday School Toolkit" to help church leaders select, revise, and/or write their own curriculum for their church, which could include a "benchmarks" assessment document; and age-appropriate Sunday school sessions titled "Why Is Our Church Called Christian Reformed?" For teens, there could be resources for new catechism models or youth group sessions.

The report also raised the question of what would happen if the CRCNA stops offering distinctively Reformed children's ministry curricula. To what extent would that contribute to the erosion of Reformed identity in the CRC?

The board asked Faith Formation Ministries to explore these options:

- A refresh of *Walk With Me* or *Dwell*.
- A Sunday school toolkit.
- A vetting process for existing curriculum available from other sources.
- Partnering with other curriculum providers.

The board asked for an update for its February 2017 meeting.

—Gayla R. Postma



Trustees Approve Allocation of Ministry Shares

Delegates of Synod 2016 declined to increase the amount of money churches are asked to remit to support the shared ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. (Synod is the CRC's annual general assembly.)

The Board of Trustees had recommended a 2 percent increase in that support, known as ministry shares. In an unusual move, delegates chose instead to hold the line at \$339.48 per active adult member when synod met in June. That meant denominational personnel had to take another look at budget allocations, working with approximately \$200,000 less revenue.

Since the ministry shares increase was intended for Con-



gregational Services, the major ministry agencies and educational institutions will receive their budgeted ministry shares revenue. They include Back to God Ministries International, the combined mission agency, Calvin College, and Calvin Theological Seminary. Once those ministries receive 100 percent of their allocation, addi-

tional ministry shares revenue will go to Congregational Services.

Congregational Services is a group of smaller ministries, including Faith Formation, Worship Ministries, Disability Concerns, Office of Social Justice, Race Relations, Safe Church Ministry, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry, Pastor Church Resources, and Ministry

Support Services, which includes *The Banner*. These ministries primarily serve local congregations.

The board also noted that the initial budget was based on an exchange rate of .75 CDN/US, when in fact it seems that it will be stronger, which may allow the original budget to be met.

—Gayla R. Postma

Council of Delegates to Be Launched Early

The transition from a 30-member Board of Trustees to a 52-member Council of Delegates (COD) will happen earlier than planned.

Synod 2015 (the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church) mandated the transition to happen no later than 2018. Senior staff recommended to the board that it be moved to 2017, and the board agreed.

Details about launching the new council will be presented for approval to Synod 2017. The process of recruiting and nominating members for the council will begin immediately.

Ashley Bootsma, one of two young adult representatives appointed to the current board, asked if young adult representatives will be included on the council. Synod has had young adult representatives for several years; this is the second year they have been part of the board.

Executive director Steven Timmermans said, "With 52 delegates, the churches ought to make sure some of them are younger. We made a conscious choice to not create new seats." Trustee Chris DeWinter was skeptical that would work, noting that at age 33, he is at least 10 years younger than all other trustees. "It's disconcerting to me," he said. "We have intentional procedures to ensure diversity and inclusion. But with [the council] we've passed the buck to the churches. A fair assumption is that it will be hard to get younger representation unless [the council] is intentional about getting younger representation."

Other trustees expressed concern about the workload for delegates on the new council. "The workload seems to go up even more than what it is for current board members," said trustee Darrell Bierman.

The transition is a sweeping change to the Christian Reformed Church's governance structure. Instead of delegates representing large regions, each classis (regional groups of churches) will have a delegate. Instead of 50 percent Canadian representation, as exists on the board, Canadian representation will drop to a quarter, though the executive committee will remain half Canadian.

Back to God Ministries International and the new ministry agency that amalgamates both Christian Reformed World Missions and Home Missions will be represented by a missions committee of the new council rather than having their own boards.

—Gayla R. Postma

NEWS

Canadian Youth Ministry Pilot Project Expanded to U.S.



Twenty-five youth ministry leaders met for consultation in Chicago.

Since its kickoff in April 2015, the Canadian Youth Ministry Pilot Project has been so successful that staff has been increased and the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees decided to expand it to U.S. churches.

The pilot project is 18 months into a two-year experiment, led by Syd Hielema, Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) team leader, and Ron DeVries, youth consultant in Classis Alberta North. It is funded by the FFM operating budget and a grant from the CRC Foundation. "Because the first year went better than expected . . . this process will be incorporated into the long-term denominational ministry and is no longer considered a temporary experiment," Hielema said. "I'm very grateful and surprised and moved by how well it's gone."

Reactions from youth workers experiencing support through the project have been positive. Rev. Anthony Elenbaas, a pastor working with youth, discipleship and outreach at Immanuel CRC in Hamilton, Ont., said, "The greatest

impact I've seen has been on our youth who participated in the Leadership Studio. One of them said to me [that] no one had ever pointed out their gifts for leadership before. Another noticed how members in the congregation have been surprised to see their mature, adult-like participation in small group sermon discussions. In a sense, the faith of the whole congregation has been impacted through this one, catalytic event!"

The backbone of the project's approach is the appointment of youth ministry champions in each classis, mostly volunteers, to serve as advisors and encouragers for youth group leaders. Their role is to provide a stabilizing presence in a ministry area that experiences high turnover. All 12 classes (regional groups of churches) in Canada have appointed a champion.

Now invitations have gone out to classes in the U.S. to send a representative to Chicago next spring. A \$5,000 donation is making it possible to subsidize half of

the cost of each participant. The ongoing development of support for congregational youth ministry will be part of existing denominational support structures.

Hielema's initial goal with the U.S. expansion is to see 10 classes sign on per year in the first four years of implementation. In the spring, FFM hopes to hire someone to work half-time to develop the initiative in the U.S. and provide continued support for the Canadian youth ministry project.

This project complements the work of Youth Unlimited (YU) within the CRC. "This [new approach] will enhance programs such as YU's SERVE," Hielema said. "This is putting programs in a larger context: a holistic vision of how a congregation carries out its baptismal vows so that congregations in their entirety become places where teens are walked alongside with and loved on the way to growing in Jesus."

—Alissa Vernon

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Simon Wolfert

1935 - 2016

Simon Wolfert "loved life, loved people, and loved his family. He was funny and made us laugh," said his family. Wolfert was an optimistic and grateful man. After suffering a stroke, he remained positive.

"What a testament to faith and trust in God he was!" said his daughter. "From the wheelchair he reached out to people, participated in activities and symposiums, wrote articles, and learned to use the computer, typing with one finger."

Wolfert died on August 6 in Surrey, B.C. He was 81.

After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary and obtaining a doctoral degree from the Free University of Amsterdam, Wolfert went to Brazil as a missionary. He planted five churches that continue to thrive today.

After 18 years in Brazil, Wolfert served a congregation in Ontario and as chaplain for the CRC's Ministry to Seafarers in Vancouver until his retirement in 2003. A return to Brazil was cut short by a stroke.

Wolfert is survived by Jean, his wife of 54 years, by three children and their spouses, and by five grandchildren. He was predeceased in 2003 by daughter Raquel.

—Janet A. Greidanus

FAQs

Outreach

Q What are some conversation starters that might lead to deeper spiritual discussions with my friends?

A Here are a few suggestions:
What are you thankful for? What joys you are experiencing in your life these days?

Most people feel comfortable talking about good things happening in their lives, but they are afraid others won't care. Just by asking and listening, you open the door for great interaction. You can then share what you are thankful for in your own life, and your conversation may lead to the source of all good things.

What challenges and struggles are you facing, personally and professionally?

People will share their hurts with someone who cares about them and takes the time to listen. You may want to share your own challenges and struggles first. In this way you are allowing your friends to reciprocate. This may become an opportunity to point to the grace of Jesus and how that has sustained you in your own hardship.

What is your personal religious history?

This question is not so much about what people believe as it is about their personal histories. A person might say, "I have no history of faith," or "I grew up going to Mass every week, and my parents are quite devout," or "I have always been very spiritual and I still read my horoscope daily and do a lot of meditation."

No matter what answer they give, you'll learn something about their journey that may allow you to move the conversation to a deeper level.

What do you believe about God? And how do you feel about Jesus Christ?

This question moves into more personal convictions and beliefs. No matter how the person answers, listen and learn to gain a sense of where she still needs to go on her journey toward Jesus.

(Adapted from *Organic Outreach for Ordinary People: Sharing Good News Naturally* by Kevin G. Harney.)

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

Justice

Q Should I respond to unfair or disrespectful comments about others or ignore them?

A Every situation requires wise judgment. Here are some factors to consider:

Silence in the face of injustice adds to the harm done. The Bible repeatedly calls us to speak up in support of those being wronged by others. Words matter, especially in today's culture where reputation and identity play a big role and communication is quick. Each of us plays a part in shaping a culture that treats all people with the dignity they deserve as imagebearers of God.

The significant role of the bystander is highlighted in research on the prevention of bullying, harassment, and racial or gender discrimination. The bystander faces the choice of either condoning injustice or taking some action. Safety considerations may determine whether that action is direct or indirect.

Responding wisely in any given situation requires thought and readiness. Anger or other emotional responses are likely to reinforce negative attitudes and could escalate to violence. In a social situation, letting the offender know that you are also hurt when others are hurt can be effective. If the offender is a family member or someone close to you, a separate personal conversation may be more appropriate.

If a direct response might be unsafe or is likely to make the situation worse, it is time to consider how you can be part of or even start a larger initiative to change the culture that creates such situations. History shows that such efforts by persons who refuse to be silent have changed unjust practices. Changing attitudes toward persons with disabilities and campaigns to make child labor and child abuse socially unacceptable are just two examples.

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

Faith Formation

Q After 30 years of youth ministry, I see so many young people leaving the church and even the faith. Have we let them down by failing to adapt our faith formation practices to their changing world?

A Our cultural and societal landscape is shifting radically; we're not in Kansas anymore! And we're in a season of significant discernment concerning how our traditional faith formation practices might be translated to our "non-Kansas" context and what new practices we might be called to explore.

But the struggles you describe have left many of us with a sense of shame, and the significant discernment that our changing context requires can become paralyzed by this shame.

How do we deal with shame? Perhaps these observations may help. We need a worshiping/fairth formation community in which we are led to

- trust in our Lord's sovereign leading and faithfulness in a challenging season.
- be honest and transparent about the confusions we experience.
- grieve our sadness about our children's faith struggles (without comparing ourselves to "perfect" families).
- humbly confess our dependence on the Spirit's leading for discernment.

In other words, grace-shaped wisdom brings healing to our shame. Novelist Louise Penney identifies four phrases that embody wisdom: *I don't know; I need help; I was wrong; I'm sorry*. Shame tends to leave us hiding behind smiling masks, easily prone to anger, and suspicious. Humble vulnerability builds capacity for communally following the Spirit to the place he leads.

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



PEACE FOR THE PERSECUTED

I WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOU about some friends of mine. They are Christian brothers and sisters around the world who have welcomed me into their homes, introduced me to their families, and invited me to worship in their congregations. They are deeply committed to discipleship and service.

But I can't say any more about them. The risk is too high. That's because these friends live in regions of the world where the threat of persecution is very real.

There is no doubt that religious persecution is a global—and growing—prob-

lem. Nearly three-quarters of the people across the planet live in areas of persecution. Some face unjust restrictions from government. Others suffer violence and abuse from their neighbors. One of the most distressing recent patterns is the dramatic growth of religion-based conflicts between ordinary citizens, often in the form of organized terrorism, mob violence, or so-called “honor” killings.

While Christians bear a great deal of this suffering, the scourge of persecution affects believers of every faith—and those with no religion at all. Some of the chief culprits have become familiar to North Americans—ISIS in Syria and Iraq or

Boko Haram in Nigeria, for example—because of their grotesque combination of media savvy and tremendous brutality. But persecution is also commonplace in countless regions we rarely hear about in news reports.

Synod 2013 commissioned a committee to study persecution in light of its increasing breadth and intensity. The committee's mandate called for the church to respond to the injustice of persecution.

But how should we respond?

THE NORTH AMERICAN CHURCH HAS BEEN SURPRISINGLY QUIET ABOUT PERSECUTION. WE CAN DO BETTER.

Putting up with Faith

A common approach in Western democracies is to assert the right to religious freedom. We are accustomed to legal guarantees that protect a space for religious belief and practice free from the undue interference of the state. And we have civil and criminal laws to protect that space from the hostile actions of fellow citizens.

Our religious freedom is not absolute, of course. Sometimes a religious practice comes in conflict with other important rights or societal values. In some cases a restriction on religious practice is warranted, for example, when religion is a pretense for child abuse. In other cases, restrictions may seem arbitrary or excessive—so much so that many Christians have become worried about what they see as a steady decline of religious freedom in the United States and Canada.

But North Americans continue to enjoy more freedom to believe and practice religion in comparison to most people across the globe. We often take that for granted. It's important to remind ourselves that religious freedom is not simply the legal possession of a citizen of a particular country. It is a human right, a moral claim that any person of any faith can make. It should not matter if we're in Grand Rapids or Jos, Bangalore or Beijing. It also should not matter if we're Christian or Muslim, Buddhist or Jew.

Christians in the Reformed tradition have good reasons to embrace the principle of religious freedom as a human right—even though our forebears did not always put that principle into practice. Let's start with some basic beliefs we affirm in our confessions: we are created to live in shalom, that is, in relationships of peace and joy with God, with each other, and with the creation. The fall shattered those relationships. But we worship a God who did not give up on the creation he loves. We are redeemed by his grace through Jesus Christ.

How do persecution and religious freedom fit into this picture of creation, fall, and grace? Persecution is, first of all, a clear breaking of shalom, a consequence of our fallen relationships. It is also, in a sense, a kind of idolatry, because it is often a human attempt to coerce belief, even though God has the sole power of salvation. To support the same freedom for nonbelievers as ourselves is an acknowledgment of God's authority. What's more, just as we live out our faith through the gift of the church, other religions also organize into congregations. Religious freedom protects this diversity of religious communities.

So Christians ought to object on the grounds of religious freedom when governments in Pakistan, Malaysia, or Sudan use anti-apostasy or anti-blasphemy laws to subject Christians—and other religious minorities, including the non-religious—to human rights violations. Or when the Chinese state cracks down on the peaceful worship of believers in unregistered congregations. Or when governments in India or Nigeria fail to protect people of faith from abuse and displacement at the hands of neighbors. And these are just a few examples.

It's worth noting that our own governments have responded to these violations of religious freedom. The U.S. Congress,

for example, passed the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998, which established monitoring bodies and prescribed punitive sanctions for countries with egregious religious freedom records. Canada established a similar Office of Religious Freedom in 2013 (though it closed the office earlier this year). Numerous non-governmental organizations also do the work of monitoring and advocating for religious freedom worldwide.

This advocacy work is important. Faith needs space to breathe, and enforcing religious freedom by law helps create that space. But it is tempting to see monitoring and sanctions as the primary way we should respond to the problem of persecution. For Christians—especially Christians acting through the church—it shouldn't be. We don't rebuild the peace God wishes for his children through mere tolerance.

I don't mean to suggest that enforcing tolerance of religious freedom through legal rights is a bad idea. It would certainly alleviate the suffering of many people if their governments and fellow citizens would simply allow them to practice their religion.

But tolerance is a pretty thin strategy if our goal is to address the deeper causes of persecution. Tolerance is a ceasefire, a laying down of arms. It is not a change of heart.

Moving Beyond Tolerance to Peace-Building

If Christians are created to live in relationships of peace and joy, then we are called to do more than avoid conflict. We have to move beyond a perspective on religious freedom rooted in mere tolerance. We're called to be reconciled to one another. In this alternative view, religious freedom opens up a space to foster peace by working across lines of difference: a "confident pluralism," in the language of legal scholar John Inazu.

Moving beyond mere tolerance is hard, complex work. An American friend »



who has worked overseas for years uses a youth sports program to build peace in an area that is a hotspot of persecution. He told me that he didn't even start the program until he had been immersed for a full decade of cultural learning and trust building. When he did take his first steps by inviting local kids to play basketball together, he initially had some success. Through their children, the parents began to see the possibilities of engaging others despite their differing faiths and ethnicities. But then a nearby flare-up of interfaith violence brought the effort crashing down. My friend was dismayed yet persistent, and now the program is beginning to transform the conflict and restore people to each other despite long-standing animosities. No program geared toward mere tolerance could bear such fruit.

Does responding to persecution, then, mean many of us should be heading to regions where there is persecution in an attempt to build peace? Far from it. In reaching beyond our borders, we generally do best by supporting organizations that do this work over the long term, such as the Institute for Global Engagement or the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, or the ministry staff who work on our behalf around the globe for World Missions, World Renew, and Back to God Ministries International.

The North American Church and Persecution

But that doesn't absolve us as communities of believers of the obligation to address persecution where we are. Unfortunately, the North American church has been surprisingly quiet about persecution. We can do better.

One critical way the church can engage is through ecumenical and interfaith learning. Since persecution affects people of all faiths, we can learn a great deal by looking outward from our own faith tradition. The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee of the Christian Reformed Church has always been a

platform for ecumenical dialogue across national borders, but individual congregations can sponsor interfaith opportunities too—and many in the denomination already have.

Christians have a related opportunity to extend hospitality to refugees who are making their way to the U.S. and Canada. Recent persecutions, especially in northern Syria and Iraq, have resulted in the massive displacement of believers of all faiths. It's a challenge with no end in sight. The CRC's Office of Social Justice has taken important steps in both advocacy and education about the refugee crisis, and organizations such as World Renew and Bethany Christian Services are helping to meet the challenge of resettlement. Scores of churches across North America have answered the call to help displaced persons as well.

But all of this outreach must be accompanied by internal practices of spiritual formation. Worship, for example, can focus congregational life around stories of persecution. The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, a Sunday set aside in early November to remember Christians who suffer for their faith, is a good place to start. Adult education classes, Bible studies, prayer gatherings, and other small groups are also places to testify to the plight of the persecuted. The Christian Reformed Church has developed some liturgical materials, including prayer litanies, songs, and a video about persecution in Syria and Iraq. Nevertheless, we've barely kept pace with the urgency and scale of the problem.

We must pray for both persecuted and persecutor. Indeed, prayer is the most important starting point for a response to persecution that seeks to bring shalom. Violence and abuse in the name of the divine is bewildering. But we can pray with humility and boldness, knowing that God listens when we call out for protection of vulnerable brothers and sisters. What's more, the practice of praying about persecution—of naming the people and groups who suffer and calling

to account those who do harm—orients us toward the goal of restoration.

National and transnational organizations such as Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, which sponsors the International Day of Prayer, and Open Doors USA provide helpful maps and other tools to get us into the habit of prayer. But let's start with the people we probably already know: with field staff in denominational ministries including World Renew, World Missions, and Back to God Ministries International. Many of them report that their ministries are often in harm's way, directly or indirectly. Part of our congregational sponsorship of these ministry partners should be regular prayer for their safety.

The global experience of religious persecution is one of the great moral challenges of our time. But persecution has always been with us. We have to be clear-eyed about the immediate prospects for peace-building. That means we must be patient, not paralyzed. We are called to act.

As the 2016 report of the synodical Committee to Study Religious Persecution and Liberty concludes, "To be faithful does not necessarily mean we will see clearly the fruits of our activity. In places where religion-based conflict is deeply entrenched, we shouldn't even expect to see change in our lifetimes. When the prophet Isaiah calls out, 'How long, Lord?' God does not offer a timetable. But he does make a promise." ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Kevin den Dulk is director of the Henry Institute and chair of the department of political science at Calvin College, Grand Rapids. He is coauthor with Robert Joustra of *The Church and Religious Persecution* (2015). He served on the synodical Committee to Study Religious Persecution and attends Eastern Avenue CRC.

Pain Does Not Equal Shame



Those of us who are in Christ should not desire to forget our past.

IT IS A MISTAKE to believe that your past no longer affects you. If that were true, we would not remember all the lessons we've learned from our experiences: from the simplest of things like learning to ride a bike to the more difficult realities that have caused us pain. Our understanding of past experiences teaches us how to respond to similar situations. Almost always we react instinctively to the things we've already experienced when we encounter them again.

Many of us have prayed for the difficult memories of our past to be erased. In fact, I'm convinced that every individual ever born has wanted this at some point in their lives. Yet those of us who are in Christ should not desire to forget our past. It was in darkness that we saw his light. In the depths of human depravity, Christ sustained us. Why then would we want to forget what we've been sovereignly rescued from? Should we forget what the Lord has done?

We mustn't confuse our sins being washed away with our past being washed away. The "sea of forgetfulness" contains our sins, not our memories. I don't know about you, but I still cry from the abuse

and hurt I endured in my life. A face, a smell, a sight, a touch can bring back the pain.

But when you are in this place, do not hide in shame, for the Lord inclines his ear to you and does not hide his face.

The healthy way to respond to a past experience that has caused pain is to trust what God is teaching you, to forgive, to be aware of what can happen. And then to use wisdom and discernment going forward. The unhealthy way of responding is to doubt God's love for you, to become fearful or unforgiving, to never trust anyone. All of us have reacted to our past experiences in both ways.

God has proved himself true, and he always will.

Joseph spent years as a slave and was falsely imprisoned. In the end, it was all part of God's sovereign plan. I wonder if haunting memories of being thrown in a well by his brothers, being sold as a slave, and the smell of his former prison cell ever truly escaped him. Probably not. When he saw his brothers again, imagine what went through his mind. Did he relive his painful past? We know he didn't forget because he sought a place to weep after seeing them again.

Nonetheless, he forgave them: "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" (Gen. 45:4-5).

Joseph saw his family reconciled and restored. He knew God had not abandoned nor forgotten him. God proved himself true. He always does.

So to you who are beloved of Christ: it's OK if you find yourself reliving the pain of the past. For it only magnifies Christ, who was by your side. He was there with every tear, providing you with comfort and strength. "All things must work together for good for those who love God," says the apostle Paul. We seldom see that in the moment of our pain. It may take years, but God's promise never fails. ■



Crystal Diaz is a homeschooling mother of a 5-year-old boy as well as a teacher, certified EMT, writer, poet, and health and fitness advocate. She attends North Shore Baptist Church, a Reformed Baptist Church in Bayside, Queens, N.Y.

The remote jungles and mountains of northern India are home to many people who are hungry for the gospel.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY WORDS OF HOPE

From the Jungles to Jesus

by Kristen Fergus Van Stee and Nancy Vander Meer

Abhay and his wife, Priya,* don't hide the fact that they used to be Naxalites (a guerrilla terrorist group) who lived in the jungles of northeastern India and frequently terrorized Christians. In a time of chronic unrest, the couple served as area commanders of their Naxalite battalion.

"We thought of ourselves as the sworn enemy against Christ followers," they said.

One day Priya heard a Hindi radio program, *Mahima Ke Vachan* (*Words of Glory*), produced by Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) and its partner organizations in India.

"I was skeptical at first," Priya recalled about her first exposure to the story of

Jesus' birth. "I refused the message as a wild imagination of some unknown writer, but I wanted to know more."

At great personal risk, Priya bought a Bible and began to read it. Eventually convinced that every word in the Bible was true, Priya gave her life to Christ.

Abhay then began listening to the program and was similarly filled with questions about what he heard. He spoke to a local pastor who gave him a Bible to read and encouraged Abhay to keep listening. As Abhay continued to hear God's truth, his heart was transformed, and he too submitted his life to Jesus. The couple immediately left the Naxalite group.

Today Abhay and Priya are strong witnesses for the Lord. They are members of the Mennonite church in India and they encourage others to tune in to *Words of Glory*.

A Force for the Gospel

Stories such as Abhay and Priya's motivate Rev. A. K. Lama, Hindi ministry leader for BTGMI.

Lama has served as a pastor and church leader in India for more than 25 years after initially studying to become a veterinarian. "When I left the veterinary practice, my family thought I was crazy," he admitted. "They knew that ministers didn't make nearly as much money. They

“ Our vision is to bring the gospel to people who are unreached, using various kinds of media. ”

also knew I would be targeted for my beliefs and profession.”

Still, Lama could not ignore the voice of God calling him to share the gospel and disciple others. He told his family and friends, “I want to give 100 percent to the Lord.”

The work can be dangerous. Lama has been publicly ridiculed and beaten by government officials. He has been forced out of towns and villages where he ministered. Yet he persists because of his passion for sharing the gospel and giving people the opportunity to come to faith in Christ.

“Compared to what God has given, we are very insignificant,” he says of the suffering he has endured. “The Lord has rewarded.”

Former guerrilla militants are now strong witnesses for the Lord.

His ministry is greatly needed. The majority of people living in northern India are Hindus who practice a variety of mystic religious rituals.

“Many people live in darkness, poverty, and isolation,” Lama explained. “Ninety-seven percent of India’s 1.3 billion people have not accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. Many have never heard the name of Jesus.”

A Partnership for the Gospel

Rev. Lama joined the BTGMI ministry team in 2014. He oversees the northern India media outreach partnership between BTGMI, India-based Good Books Ministries, and Words of Hope, the media outreach associated with the Reformed Church in America.

His team of 39 full-time and 12 part-time staff members produces three radio programs in the Hindi language, plus

adaptations of the programs in several local languages. In places where radio signals are weak or people don’t have access to radios, the team distributes the programs through CD, cassette, and MP3/SD devices.

Members of the team take long treks by foot into remote mountain villages to visit listeners and share ministry resources with seekers. In addition to the audio programs, they distribute *Masihi Ahwah* (*Christian Calling*), a monthly discipleship magazine that contains daily devotionals, information about health, and biblical articles about issues that pertain to family life and culture.

“This is a vast mission field,” added BTGMI director Rev. Kurt Selles. “Our vision is to bring the gospel to people who are unreached, using various kinds of media. We also offer leadership training to equip those who are discipling new believers.”

The Hindi ministry team has established 35 listener groups throughout northern India. These groups meet together—sometimes weekly—to listen to the program, discuss its content, and pray for one another. They also invite neighbors, family members, and seekers to join the group. »

At-a-Glance

- BTGMI uses media to proclaim the gospel and disciple Christians in 10 major world languages.
- In 2009 BTGMI began Hindi outreach in partnership with Good Book Ministries and Words of Hope.
- Last year BTGMI distributed the *Masihi Ahwan* (*Christian Calling*) magazine to 1,400 homes.
- The Hindi team provided five training events for pastors and church leaders in 2016.
- At least 90 volunteers help facilitate discipleship of listeners in remote regions.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY WORDS OF HOPE

In spite of being ridiculed and beaten, Rev. A.K. Lama has persisted in sharing Christ.



» Ali* came to faith through one of the seekers' meetings. "I was born and brought up in a Muslim family," he testified. "There were a lot of struggles in my family. Being a staunch Muslim, I offered prayers and performed all religious duties, but it all proved of no avail."

A friend gave him a copy of the New Testament. "I began to read and learned that Jesus died on the cross to forgive all the sinners. I believed that Jesus died for me," he said.

Ali was invited to a seekers' meeting where he met the producer of the BTGMI program in his local region. "He helped me to understand the truth of the gospel.

Now I have accepted Jesus as my personal Savior and Lord."

Jesus in the Hard-to-Reach Places

BTGMI also does ministry in the primarily Hindu remote Garhwal region of northern India, located in the Himalayan Mountains.

"Garhwali people are very simple. Most [are] farmers. They are facing a lot of problems," producer Ajay Kumar explained. "People want to know about the Christian faith, so the ministry is

growing very rapidly. We are getting a very good response from our listeners."

Senior producer Rev. Rajesh Mansell added, "Our phone is always open. People call late at night. Sometimes 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock, saying, 'I have listened to [the BTGMI Hindi] program. God changed my heart.' Others ask for prayer."

Asked whether these late night calls bother him, Mansell said, "God never sleeps; we also never sleep. And I never puzzle about this because we are the servants of God. And always we are ready for the Lord's work."

"One of the things I see among our listeners, they do respond," Lama added. "They are excited about what we are teaching them. I see some level of deepening of their faith, their understanding of the Bible, their participation with our producers."

Amarjeet Singh, a former Hindu, is one such listener.

"When I heard about God on the radio, I felt so good. I kept listening for some time and now my life is on the right path," said the 23-year-old pharmacy student. He encouraged his family and

Rev. Rajesh Mansell baptizes new believers.

Please join BTGMI in praying for

- Rev. A.K. Lama and the Hindi staff who sometimes work in risky places to share the gospel.
- Amarjeet, Ali, Abhay, Priya, and all those who recently have embraced Christ as Savior. Pray that God will use BTGMI's ministry and believers in India to grow their faith and witness.
- the 97 percent of India's 1.3 billion people who have never heard the name of Jesus or responded to his call to believe in him.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY WORDS OF HOPE

You add.
God multiplies.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY WORDS OF HOPE

After Amarjeet came to faith in Christ, he invited his family to listen to the BTGMI Hindi program—and now they believe!

friends to listen to the program so they could also be blessed. “Now I praise God that each member of my family believes in Jesus and lives a happy life.”

Whether it’s former militants such as Abhay and Priya, people struggling with another religion such as Ali, or young people such as Amarjeet who are seeking answers, many people across India are turning to Christ as a result of radio ministry.

“People are coming, they are calling. The church is growing and growing and growing,” Mansell concluded. “We are seeing that God is working.”

*Names changed for security reasons. ■



Kristen Fergus Van Stee and Nancy Vander Meer, Back to God Ministries International



Called to Serve as Chaplains

“I’ve probably had more opportunities to engage in missional ministry here in three months than [in] 11 years prior,” said Lloyd Wicker after his first few months as a U.S. Navy chaplain. “Not to discredit the importance of parish ministry in the least, but this is what I was ordained for, and I’m loving it!”

Lloyd Wicker loved being a pastor, but something drew him to look beyond the local church as an area of ordained ministry. Serving military troops in the field appealed to him, so he began to pray and investigate military chaplaincy. Lloyd recently returned from his latest deployment, this time with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit in the Near East.

The military isn’t the only area where chaplains can serve. Individuals are drawn into chaplaincy for a variety of reasons, to meet a variety of needs at different seasons of their lives. Trent Elders approached the Chaplaincy and Care office while finishing his final year of Calvin Seminary. He has been accepted into an intense training program known as Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at UCLA Medical Center.

Wenda Salomons started out in her teens and twenties as a visual artist in Edmonton, Alta., before hearing the call and beginning to train for chaplaincy. She is now serving as a long-term care chaplain while also continuing her involvement in visual arts.

Tim Blackmon grew up in the Netherlands and began his post high school education at the European Bible Institute in Lamorlaye, France. In college, Tim was drawn to Reformed theology and moved to the U.S. to study at Calvin Theological Seminary. Today, he serves as the chaplain of Wheaton College in Illinois.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of official chaplaincy ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. The first “unofficial” chaplains began serving 25 years before that without an official ministry to support or endorse them. Over the course of these years, the number of CRC chaplains has grown. Today there are nearly 150 CRC chaplains serving around the world, and 70 additional men and women have inquired about chaplaincy or are actively preparing for this type of service.

For a quick look at the 140+ faces, names, and service details of our chaplains, go to crcna.org/chaplaincy/faces. ■



Trent Elders is enrolled in a Clinical Pastoral Education course. He hopes to join the ranks of nearly 150 men and women who serve as chaplains through the CRC.

—by Ron Klimp, CRC Chaplaincy

What Makes Us Who We Are?

There was a baptism in our church during a recent Sunday morning worship service. As with all baptisms, I was moved. My mind raced to memories, not of my own experience, but to what I've learned about my adopted children's past and what I know to be true about our faithful God, in whom we find our identities.

Our adopted Ethiopian sons were baptized, as is the custom in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, on the 40th day after their birth—years before they came into our family. Even after their parents died and left them orphaned, God was faithful as they moved to a new continent, a new family, a new church.

The Heidelberg Catechism teaches that baptism involves being washed with Christ's blood and with Christ's Spirit—setting “me apart to be a member of Christ so that more and more I become dead to sin and increasingly live a holy and blameless life.”

Baptism provides us—who were created in God's image, but tainted by the sin of our first parents—with the sign and seal of being members of the body of Christ. Because of God's enduring faithfulness, our core identity is in Jesus Christ. This is who we are in our Spirit-led journey toward a holy and blameless life.

The journey of our adopted sons has taught me much about what it means to have this core identity. Their baptism was a sign and seal of their new identity in Christ, and they didn't lose that identity when they were orphaned. There was never the possibility that it could be misplaced or stripped away. The sanctifying work of the Spirit

continued in the Christian orphanage where they lived and the Christian school they attended.

Nor did coming to a new country and culture require dropping this identity, as Bethany Christian Services helped to guide the adoption process every step of the way.

We must recognize too that there are other important aspects to our identities. For example, our sons have kept their Ethiopian first names because names are also part of our identities. They have held on to their language and, as much as possible, their culture. Ask them, and they will proudly tell you that they are Ethiopian.

God delights in the differing characteristics that make us who we are. So too for the identity of the church. In the church our core identity is rooted in Christ, yet there are many denominations, each expressing unique characteristics. The Christian Reformed Church is no exception. An emphasis on the covenant, a conviction of God's sovereignty with a worldview to match, a story of Dutch or Korean immigration for some, and a growing inclusivity for all.

Just like my sons, let's embrace the parts of our identities that make us unique while recognizing the all-important core that we share. We need not assimilate into a bland North American Christian identity, tossing aside our deeply-rooted biblical understandings or forgetting our task of claiming every

square inch of this world for Christ.

In the words of our ministry plan, *Our Journey 2020*: “We will grasp—and be grasped by—a richly Reformed world and life view so that we are able and eager to express what it means to belong to God's diverse and unified family . . . so that people from many cultures and experiences are drawn to see and know themselves as God's beloved ones.” ■



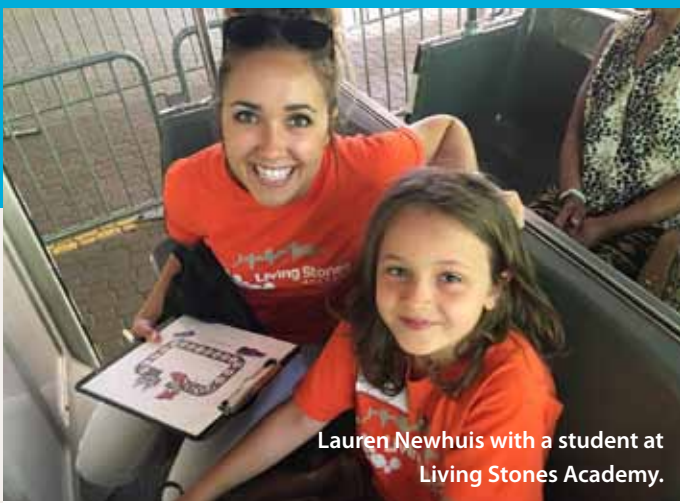
Because of God's enduring faithfulness, our core identity is in Jesus Christ.



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

P.S. To learn more about the ministry plan, including compelling stories and videos that show how God is at work in and through the CRC, visit crcna.org/OurJourney.

You add.
God multiplies.



Lauren Newhuis with a student at Living Stones Academy.

Reaching People with Special Needs

Lauren Newhuis was first inspired to pursue her profession by an unlikely character—King Nebuchadnezzar.

“I was doing a Bible study on the book of Daniel,” recalled Newhuis, a 2015 Calvin College graduate.

“King Nebuchadnezzar chose the strong, smart, and beautiful by the world’s standards [to work for him], and it dawned on me that that’s how our world is—we tend to choose the strong, smart, and beautiful by worldly standards.

“I then felt a huge calling to serve those who can be cast aside or are falling behind in school, and help their families see them for who they can be.”

As a result, after graduating with her degree in special education, Newhuis began working at Living Stones Academy (LSA), an elementary school in Grand Rapids, Mich., for kindergarteners through sixth graders.

Newhuis started as a behavior and academic interventionist.

In fall 2016, Newhuis became the new educational support services coordinator, overseeing all services that students receive and providing some of those services herself.

Newhuis uses different supportive methods to help students struggling with everything from reading to organizational skills.

These interventions can be challenging, but they are challenges Newhuis looks forward to.

“I love working with these kids and their families,” she said. “LSA does a very good job at being intentionally diverse racially, socioeconomically, and even spiritually.”

While helping students with special needs, she also wants to work with students whose needs are sometimes overlooked or unnoticed.

“I want to find those kids who don’t necessarily have a clear disability—those kids on the margins who look like they can follow along in class easily but are getting passed by and falling behind.” ■

—by Jacquelyn Hubbard, Calvin College

A Mother’s Loving Faith

Jaewoo Jeong did not have the opportunity to experience the love and faithfulness of an earthly father. His father, a major in the Korean Army, died in a helicopter crash when Jeong was 1 year old.

But Jeong’s relationship with his mother grew and thrived. While working to care for her two young children, Jeong’s mother responded to a pastoral call.

After receiving advanced degrees from Kosin University, she founded a family counseling center, taught pastoral care, and

pastored and counseled for more than 20 years. “I saw God work through her to restore many people. She was my good friend, mentor, and fellow. I desired to be a pastor just like her,” said Jeong, a new master’s degree student at Calvin Theological Seminary.

After studying mass media in college, Jeong served in the Korean army for several years. During this time, he experienced a dramatic rededication to his faith after a pastor and lay member from his church were kidnapped and martyred by the Taliban while serving on a mission trip in Afghanistan.

“Their deaths challenged me,” he said. “Most Christians live very comfortable lives—that was my problem. I thought over and over, *Could I have done what they did?* The Holy Spirit let me know that living for him meant giving my whole heart and even my life—just like them.”

He felt a calling to be a pastor and decided to focus on children’s ministry, parent education, and Christian education.

At Grace Saemmul Church in South Korea, he and his wife, Jaeun, disciplined children and formed close relationships with their families.

“We have seen the kids’ growth. Their parents have changed too—they have developed the ability to talk to their kids,” he said.

When he finishes his studies at the seminary, he and his wife plan to return to the church in South Korea so that he can direct education there.

In the meantime, he and his mother still converse frequently. “I often talk to her about ministry issues, and she also consults me on her ministry plans.” ■

—by Amanda Smartt, Calvin Seminary



PHOTO BY DEBORAH HOAG

Jaewoo Jeong is studying educational ministry in the master of theology program at Calvin Seminary. He and his wife, Jaeun Park, are from South Korea.

Navajo Pastor Finds Forgiveness in Christ

Growing up as a Native American, James said he spent most of his life within the shadow of the United States' oppression of his people.

The canyon in which James grew up was the same canyon in which the U.S. government rounded up Navajos and sent them to an army enclosure in the late 1800s.

James said his father and grandfather taught him that the power he had over the white people was the hatred he had for them.



Members of the Leadership Training Network.

Then, after he had grown older, God worked a miracle in his life.

While out for a drive, James felt a strong urge to pull his truck to the side of the road. At that moment, he felt the Lord call to him, speaking in Navajo, his mother tongue. God convicted him that he needed to forgive those who had abused his ancestors, he said.

After accepting the Lord into his heart, James contacted some Anglo pastors in his area. He started hosting Bible studies but knew he needed to grow deeper in his faith.

At that point, James heard about the Leadership Development Network (LDN), a pastoral training program supported by Christian Reformed Home Missions that is dedicated to preparing trained leaders to serve congregations in Classis Red Mesa.

James and his wife, Darleen, enrolled in LDN's first class in 2008. After graduation, James began ministering to a local reservation church. Darleen serves as LDN's dean of students and as an instructor.

"Classis Red Mesa used to be a mission field; now we desire to be mission senders," notes LDN instructor Rev. Lora Copley. "Reconciliation, truth, forgiveness, and ministry are happening in Classis Red Mesa." ■

—by Brooke Bonnema,
Christian Reformed Home Missions

Movie Making Brings Youth to Christ

As the youth coordinator for more than 60 churches in the Christian Reformed Church of Sierra Leone, Rev. Alpha Kargbo faces the familiar challenge of engaging young people in the church.

Kargbo has responded by organizing movie-making events in several communities in Sierra Leone.

"Many young people come and give their time because they want their friends to see them in movies," said Kargbo. "But during their time acting, they decide to be a part of our church. Some of them were even Muslims who gave their life to Jesus."

The idea for making films began in the midst of the Ebola crisis in 2014. Kargbo gathered youth to help create a video on Ebola prevention. Although several Ebola educational resources were already available in English, few movies were in native languages.

"Many people here don't speak English or don't speak it well," said Kargbo.

With help from Christian Reformed World Missions and World Renew, thousands of copies of the video were distributed to villages in Sierra Leone, and interest in making other movies grew.

Kargbo is now working on his fourth film with youth, which deals with some of the challenges young people face in school.

"These movies catch the attention of many people in the villages," said Rev. Istifanus Bahago, a Nigerian missionary who serves in partnership with CRWM. "They have enhanced the growth of the church, and I see them as a good tool to reach people with the gospel message." ■

—by Brian Clark, Christian Reformed World Missions



Rev. Alpha Kargbo leads a movie-making ministry in Sierra Leone.

You add.
God multiplies.

Aisha Is Empowered to Protect Child Rights

Aisha*, who lives in Bangladesh, was just 15 years old when her parents told her they had arranged for her to be married.

They were struggling with poverty, and having their daughter marry meant they would no longer have the financial burden of providing for her.

The situation Aisha faced is not uncommon. In many poor communities, girls marry before the age of 14—often against their will.

Illiterate teenage girls living in poor communities are not always aware that early marriage is a violation of human rights that can harm a young girl's development. Girls who marry young are less likely to continue their education or find paid employment. If they

become pregnant, their age can place them at increased health risks.

Aisha's family belongs to the low Hindu Dom caste. Women and girls in this group are more socially restricted than men, making them especially vulnerable to early marriage and other human rights violations.

Fortunately, by the time Aisha's parents came to her about the marriage, she had started to learn about her rights. Through World Renew's local partner, SATHI, she had joined a community group where peer educators taught her about issues related to child rights.

Aisha decided to stand up to her parents. At first her parents did not listen to her, but she was determined. She asked leaders of her peer group for assis-

tance, and they went with her to talk to her parents. Eventually they understood that their daughter had a legal right to refuse marriage and accepted her choice.

Today, Aisha has hopes for her future. Recently she received a Secondary School Certificate and plans to be a nurse. She also has greater harmony and respect in her family relationships. Her mother and sister have joined her community group and are learning to protect children's rights.

"Now my mother listens to me and understands me. I love my family," said Aisha.

**Names changed to protect privacy. ■*

*—by Adele Konyndyk,
World Renew*



Aisha (middle, in white dress) has participated in community events to raise awareness about protecting child rights.

SHORT TAKES



Come to Detroit for Inspiration

Steve Timmermans, executive director of the CRC, is inviting all of those who are involved in ministry in their local churches to consider attending Inspire 2017 next summer in Detroit, Mich.

By attending the binational event, which is set for Aug. 3-5, 2017, participants can meet and be encouraged by others who are also involved in doing the work of God in communities, large and small, across North America and beyond.

Inspire 2017 will gather people engaged in different ministries from around the CRC for three days of workshops, inspirational speakers, worship, and conversation. ■



Sea to Sea 2017

Sea to Sea 2017 is a transcontinental bicycle tour that raises funds to fight poverty through World Renew. Find out more about this exciting summer ride at seatosea.org ■

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

Lots of Leaves

Think about some of your favorite fall activities. Maybe you enjoy hayrides on a farm and munching crunchy apples. Or riding your bike in the chilly fall air and eating fresh donuts and cider after dinner.

One of my favorite fall activities as a kid was jumping in the gigantic piles of leaves my dad used

to rake up. The pile seemed as high as a mountain! Once the leaves were raked just right, my brother, sister, and I pretended the huge piles were swimming pools—and we took turns diving right in!



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

Thanks for Leaves

Leaves are lots of fun to play in, but leaves are also very good for the earth. We can thank God for the loads of leaves around us. Here are just some of the reasons why.

Good Air

Leaves give us good air to breathe each day. As leaves make food for the rest of the tree or plant, they also help clean the air we breathe. It would be a lot harder to breathe if we didn't have leaves!

Good Homes

When leaves fall to the ground each year, they make great homes for bugs and animals like mice, chipmunks, salamanders, turtles, toads, and earthworms. Many animals lay eggs in leaves and even find food from the leaves. Squirrels use dried leaves to build their nests in trees. The leaves keep those nests warm during the winter months.

Good Dirt

As dried leaves break down into smaller pieces during the fall, they make the soil healthier. Many people use chopped leaves from lawn mowers to help their yards grow better. It's kind of like giving the ground good vitamins!

FuN Facts

Check out these cool facts about leaves—and then quiz your family!

The food that leaves make is a sugar called **glucose**—leaves actually make and eat their own sugar!

The average 60-year-old oak tree grows around **200,000** leaves each year!

Dead leaves also make great **compost**. Compost is made up of leftover vegetable parts that gardeners use to make garden soil healthier. Adding dead leaves to your compost will actually help your garden grow even better!

The leaves from a large tree give off 260 pounds of **oxygen** per year!

The leaves from two large trees provide a year's worth of clean air for a family of **four!**



Leaf Projects

Try some of these fun leaf activities with your family and friends!

Leaf Wreaths

Make an awesome wreath to hang on the door of your room or the front door of your house!

What you need:

- Paper plate
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Construction paper
- Glue
- String

What to do:

Cut a large circle out of your paper plate.

Cut colorful leaves out of construction paper. If you like, collect some real leaves and trace around the outside edges, then cut out. Glue the leaves around the paper plate to make a leaf wreath. You could even write the words of Psalm 1:3 on your wreath!



Thankful Tree

Since Thanksgiving is right around the corner, make this tree as a way to thank God for all of his blessings.

What you need:

- Construction paper, different colors
- Scissors
- Markers
- Glue or tape

What to do:

Make the trunk of the tree out of two pieces of brown construction paper. Use another piece of brown construction paper to cut out branches. Draw and cut out leaves of different colors like yellow, red, and orange and write down something that you are thankful for on each leaf. Tape your thankful tree on your wall for everyone to see!



Leaves That Never Fade Away

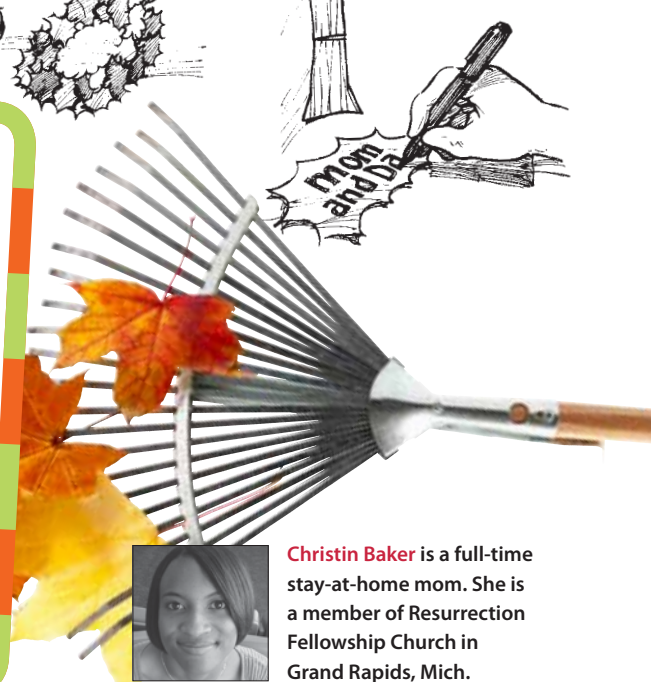
Did you know that the Bible says we are like leaves? It's true! Psalm 1 says that people who love God are like leaves because they obey his commands and are filled with joy. Let's have a listen:

They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season without fail. Their leaves never wither, and in all they do, they prosper.

—Psalm 1:3, NLT

Those who honor God and listen to what he says are like mighty trees planted by clear, flowing water. They are strong and happy. Their leaves are always healthy and green because the sunlight of God's love never stops shining!

How about you? Are you like the leaves on a tree firmly planted in God's Word? The next time you see a leaf fall to the ground, remember that God loves you—and your leaves will never fade!



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

BY DEBRA RIENSTRA

A MEMOIR IN PSALMS

EARLIER THIS YEAR, Fuller Theological Seminary's Brehm Center made a short film featuring internationally acclaimed rock star Bono in conversation with internationally acclaimed biblical scholar and writer Eugene Peterson. Bono and Peterson, it turns out, are good friends. They bonded many years ago, as the film explains, over their shared love of the psalms.

The film reminds us that the psalms, these prayers of God's people, cross boundaries and generations. Ancient yet modern, enduring yet ever malleable to new forms and uses. The Reformed tradition, from the beginning, was powered by psalms, and the Christian Reformed Church draws on a heritage of fierce loyalty to these rough-edged, soaringly beautiful poems at the center of Christian devotion. As John Witvliet, director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, recently wrote: "The psalms are about a way of life."

A way of life. John's comment led me to reflect on how the psalms have shaped me since girlhood, and I decided to page through them and note the ones I have loved deeply—creating

a kind of "memoir in psalms." I realize once again through this exercise how psalms have soaked into my spirit. Snippets, verses, songs, liturgies. Round after round of reading through them as the seasons turn. Prayer and study, including my scholarly field. My life is rich with the psalms, and I am so grateful.

Here are a few of my favorites. Perhaps you can make your own list.

Psalms 1 I loved this one during the years I was writing my dissertation and giving birth to my first two babies. "She is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither." This encouraged me when I needed patience and felt fatigue. At the time, I was reading Marchiene Rienstra's wonderful devotional book on the psalms, *Swallow's Nest*, which gave permission to change the pronouns to "she"—a transformative exercise.

Psalms 13 Prayed this one with a student I met with often as she tried to find God in the wilderness of trouble, sorrow, and hurt. We wondered together: When will her life turn from verses 1-4, "How long, O Lord?" to verses 5-6, "My heart rejoices in your salvation"? We're still waiting and praying.

These texts ripen in my spirit over time, coming back to me when I need them.

Psalm 19 Memorized during Lent once. “The heavens declare the glory of God,” and “The commands of the Lord are radiant.” I always think of artists and scholars when reading this.

Psalm 23 Of course. At the very heart of the faith. I memorized this as a tiny child and continue to drink from its still waters.

Psalm 25 Got me through a time when I felt betrayed by someone I loved. The potent mixture of shock and helplessness was all there in the words “Do not let me be put to shame.” Followed by the urgent cry “Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.”

Psalm 27 Meant a lot to my mother. I know this because I now keep her Bible, and this psalm is all marked up. Verse 13 is circled: “I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” She did.

Psalm 30 This one helped get me through postpartum depression after baby number three. “When you hid your face, I was dismayed.” I prayed it so hard.

Psalm 34 Memorized this during Lent a few years ago. Full of joyful riches for any occasion. “Taste and see that the Lord is good.”

Psalm 40 Memorized the first half before giving birth to my oldest. “Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders you have done . . . ; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.” My beautiful daughter was indeed a wonder. She still is.

Psalm 51 Memorized as a high schooler. “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.” Did I feel guilty about something? No, someone just told me it was an important psalm. Knowing it has served me well over the years, especially for my scholarly work on the psalms during the English Reformation. Everyone wrote a metrical version of this psalm in the sixteenth century, it seems. In the old *Book of Common Prayer*, morning prayers begin: “O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.”

Psalm 90 When my mother died a year ago, my husband and I went together to sit with her body for a while. I asked him to read this psalm. “The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.” We cried and prayed, needing these words when we had none of our own.

Psalm 95 I still remember the setting of this that we sang in junior high, jagged and syncopated and urgent. “In his hands are the depths of the earth.”

Psalm 100 We memorized this in elementary school every year around Thanksgiving: “We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.”

Psalm 103 Sang the old *Psalter Hymnal* version of this at my wedding. We sing it from memory at all family functions: funerals, weddings, ordinary Sunday meals. It’s a multigenerational tradition. “O come, my soul, bless thou the Lord thy maker.”

Psalm 119 Not many people love this psalm, but I do. I’m always glad when I get to it in my regular round of psalm-reading. It celebrates the beauty and freedom of righteousness: “I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.”

Psalm 121 Preached a sermon on this psalm in 2011. Evidently it was a sermon I needed, as I continue to think of it often. God is a *shomer*, a guardian, a watcher—“he will watch over your life.”

Psalm 130 Sang the John Rutter setting of this, from the “Requiem,” with my beloved choir at Second Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa, around 1995. “Out of the depths have I called unto thee, O Lord. O Lord, hear my cry.” Cannot read this psalm without hearing that cello solo.

Psalm 131 “[L]ike a weaned child with its mother.” Helped me through the early years of graduate school and teaching. A psalm about humility and trust.

Psalm 139 Memorized this one as a teenager too. When God seems far away, this psalm is the answer: “You have searched me and you know me.”

Psalm 143 Got me through another period of struggle with depression. As always, the psalmist’s troubled pleas arise from an underlying trust: “I spread out my hands for you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.”

As I consider this inventory, a few things strike me. The long-lasting rewards of memorization, for one. And the way these texts ripen in my spirit over time, coming back to me when I need them in a new stage of life. And gratitude for all those who gave me these gifts, through prayer and study and song, over the decades. Hope I still have a long way to go on this pilgrimage, and I go rejoicing, this prayer book in my hand. ■

Which psalms would you include in your own memoir of psalms? Let us know by emailing info@thebanner.org; use “Psalms” as the subject line.



Debra Rienstra is an associate professor of English at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich.

What's Under Your Tree?



Oxford Roald Dahl Dictionary

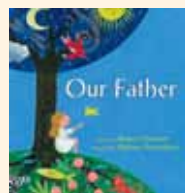
by Susan Rennie
reviewed by Jenny deGroot



Released just in time to celebrate what would have been Roald Dahl's 100th birthday, the *Oxford Roald Dahl Dictionary* is a fitting tribute. A compilation of Dahl's crazy characters, wacky words, and imaginative storytelling, it is a dictionary to be pored over. Every word is cross-referenced to one or more of his novels. It also offers exclusive biffsquiggling and gobblefunking with words, sure to be appreciated by Dahl fans. Each page is brought to life by Quentin Blake, whose illustrations have become synonymous with Dahl. Sure to please young and old alike, ages 9 and up. (Oxford University Press)

Our Father

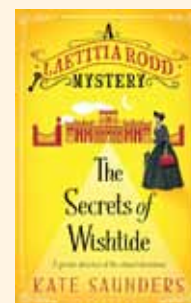
by Rainer Oberthür
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen
Feddema



Children raised in Christian settings usually hear the Lord's Prayer from an early age, internalizing its language and cadence without necessarily understanding its meaning. Author Rainer Oberthür answers questions children often ask about life and God, then he points them to the Lord's Prayer and explains its meaning, line by line. Barbara Nascimbeni's bright illustrations complement this wise and hopeful book of spiritual explanation and counsel. It's an excellent choice for family or bedtime devotions, to be read in its entirety or in shorter segments, depending on the ages of the children who are present. Ages 4 and up. (Eerdmans)

The Secrets of Wishtide

by Kate Saunders
reviewed by Kristy Quist



Mrs. Laetitia Rodd is a 52-year-old widow with a sharp mind and a subtle manner; her barrister brother sometimes hires her as an investigator on his cases. As she investigates the prospective daughter-in-law of one of his clients, the intrepid Mrs. Rodd finds a bigger than expected mystery. Still grieving the loss of her husband, her history as the wife of a clergyman informs her compassion for people and the paths they choose. Mrs. Rodd is entertaining company. This satisfying, good-humored detective story is the first of a planned series. (Bloomsbury)

Love, Henri: Letters on the Spiritual Life

by **Gabrielle Earnshaw**, editor
reviewed by **Kristy Quist**



Henri J.M. Nouwen was a beloved priest, writer, and theologian. He was a prolific writer, producing not only 39 books and a multitude of articles, but also carrying on deep and loving correspondence with friends, colleagues, and people who read his books. This thoughtful collection of Nouwen's letters reveals the encouragement and candor he offered to others, opening a new window into his struggle with loneliness and depression as well as his desire and determination to follow God's call. It might even inspire a new love for the act of writing a letter. (Convergent)

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ABZÛ

reviewed by **Natalie Quist**



The new game from the art director of *Journey* and *Flower* had a lot to live up to, and *ABZÛ* does not disappoint. It is filled to the brim with stunning art, dreamlike environments, and magnificent creatures in a colorful, underwater fantasy world. Dropped into the middle of a vast ocean, players are guided, over the course of a few hours, through a series of habitats teeming with marine life. There is no dialogue; everything is implied. Art fans will find that the game's powerful visuals make it well worth the time. Ages 10 and up; available for PS4 or PC. (Giant Squid)

Handel: Messiah

by **Le Concert d'Astrée**
reviewed by **Randall Engle**



Just when we think we've heard every take on Handel's classic, along comes a new recording by conductor Emmanuelle Haïm. With impeccable soloists (notably soprano Lucy Crowe), chorus, and orchestra, Haïm approaches every movement with subtle (the sparks sizzle and pop underneath "Refiner's Fire") and not-so-subtle (extreme terrace dynamics and vocal trills in "Hallelujah") finesse. In all, a refreshing drink of new wine from an old wine-skin. Hallelujah! *Note:* Order early, this is available from third parties on Amazon or directly from Amazon.fr. (Erato/Warner Classics)

The Plot to Kill Hitler: Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Spy, Unlikely Hero

by **Patricia McCormick**
reviewed by **Eve Clayton**



How does a quiet young German theologian, a pacifist who came of age between the world wars, find himself involved in a plan to assassinate Hitler? This intriguing account of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life—from his boyhood to his anti-Nazi activism as a Lutheran pastor and his death by hanging in a concentration camp—introduces readers to an important 20th-century hero of the Christian faith. The narrative may be difficult for younger readers to follow, but author Patricia McCormick includes photos, sidebars, and timelines for added interest. Ages 10 and up. (Balzer + Bray)

The Last Days of Night

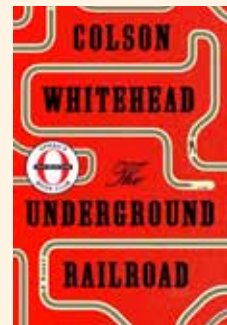
by **Graham Moore**
reviewed by **Sandy Swartzentruber**



Science geeks, business people, attorneys, and historical fiction buffs—red alert! This is the book you won't be able to put down. In this thrilling novel, Moore chronicles the electricity wars of the late nineteenth century and the trio at their center: Edison, Westinghouse, and Tesla. Caught in the middle is Westinghouse's greenhorn attorney, Paul Cravath, who must learn what it takes to navigate the world of ruthless power, unbridled imagination, and mechanical genius. (Random House)

The Underground Railroad

by **Colson Whitehead**
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**



In this powerful novel, Whitehead brilliantly recreates the unique terrors of black life in pre-Civil War America. But his *Underground Railroad* carries the book's characters and readers in fantastical directions. The central metaphor is the Underground Railroad that he imagines, an actual railroad built underground, stretching miles in either direction. The trains traffic in deliverance for those wanting to flee the misery and violence of slavery. Exodus imagery is evident as the trains provide passage for Cora and Caesar, even if it's into an uncertain future. (Doubleday)

**MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE**

Present Over Perfect: Leaving Behind Frantic for a Simpler, More Soulful Way of Living

by Shauna Niequist

reviewed by Lorilee Craker



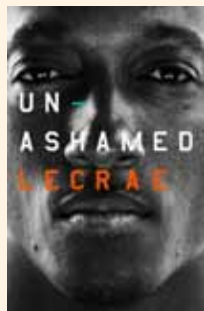
Shauna Niequist was burned out by life, motherhood, and the demands of a writing career. In these open-hearted essays, she examines the faulty construct of her former busy, striving

life—the same life, she noticed, almost everyone around her was also pursuing. Through stories and vignettes, she invites us to press “reset,” stop the mindless flailing, and pay attention to the value of a life that fits together instead of splintering in the push for perfection. Readers will find rest, grace, and deeper links with those they love most in this soul-warming book. (Zondervan)

Unashamed

by Lecrae

reviewed by Paul Delger



Grammy-winning hip hop and rap artist Lecrae offers readers a blunt portrayal of his mistakes and victories in this autobiography. It is the story of his redemption from many societal ills—child abuse,

drugs, alcohol, abortion, and attempted suicide—to the loving acceptance of Jesus. The book charts Lecrae's salvation experience, the legalistic lifestyle he pursued for a time, and the freedom he discovered that changed his music and his life. (B & H)

Saints, Unexpected

by Brent van Staaldunen

reviewed by Adele Gallogly

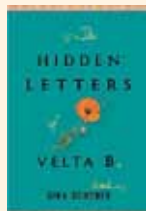
This expertly crafted debut novel follows 15-year-old Mutton and her family over the course of a hot, trying summer in the urban core of Hamilton, Ont. Their storefront is located where many are struggling with homelessness, addiction, and other afflictions. *Saints, Unexpected* is an imaginative urban journey that dares to dig beneath the world's often simplistic definitions of success, worth, and belonging. It is a warm-hearted novel that succeeds both as an empathetic portrait of a fictional family and as a stirring tribute to the real-life city of Hamilton. (Invisible Publishing)



The Hidden Letters of Velta B.

by Gina Ochsner

reviewed by Adele Gallogly



Gina Ochsner's second novel is a captivating, tragicomic story about family and community relationships in a contemporary Latvian town. A dying mother, Inara, recalls her life and family history to her enormous-eared son, whose heightened sense of hearing allows him to hear both the living and the dead. Every chapter of this magical small town tale is animated by Ochsner's poetic feel for reverence and wonder, and it will surely enchant and surprise readers who believe—or long to believe—in storytelling as a communal act of faith, love, preservation, and even resurrection. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

God's Highway

by Sandra McCracken

reviewed by Robert J. Keeley

Last year Sandra McCracken worked through a difficult season in her life. Her excellent new album, *God's Highway*, shows that while McCracken continues to work through these difficulties, she can look back in gratitude and see how far she's come. The album opens with two songs that speak directly of God's faithfulness. Time and again she comes back to the idea of comfort and being under God's protection. As she sings in “Love Will Bring You Home,” “You've come so far, how far you've come/Go the distance/into the arms where you belong.” (Towhee Records)



The Reader: Book One of Sea of Ink and Gold

by Traci Chee

reviewed by Kristy Quist



Young Sefia is in danger. She has a strange object called a “book.” Aunt Nin has protected her since the death of her father, but when her pursuers take Nin too, Sefia vows to find answers, find Nin, and get revenge. Sefia is a strong and thoughtful heroine who gains an ally in Archer, a boy she rescues from brutal captivity. In this first installment of a young adult fantasy trilogy, Chee creates a mythical and dangerous world of pirates, seers, and strange lands where reading is one of many magical powers. Best for ages 14 and up due to a fair amount of violence. (Putnam)

When the Desire for Romantic Love Turns into an Idol

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

THE WAY SOCIETY AND THE CHURCH

lift up stories of love and marriage is beautiful . . . but it is also dangerous. Dangerous, I mean, for the way many young single people have come to perceive love. The truth is that the desire for romantic love is good. But the overemphasis on the “need” to fall in love makes it easy for us to idolize that goal over the desire to follow God.

This is an issue we must discuss as a community. Because although it may seem like a burden that primarily affects young—and not-so-young—single people, it's rooted in the thoughts and actions of an entire culture. While I want to believe that my faith in God is all I really need, the world has trained me that being in a romantic relationship is the only thing that will make me truly happy.

I am 21 years old and I have never been on a date.

What did you feel when you read that sentence? I'm guessing you felt sorry for me. But I am not looking for pity. I only mention this to demonstrate to you your own reaction. You see, whether we admit it or not, our culture has taught us that the single life is pitiful.

What is worse is that I too have adopted this strange intuition that if only I were to fall head over heels in love, then all my days would be splendidly happy. In fact, I believe this so strongly that not only do I have a great desire to date, to fall in love, and be married—but this has become something that consumes my thoughts every single day.

To desire this sort of intimacy is a beautiful expression of the capacity to love in

each of us. But the sin I commit is allowing that desire to take a greater precedence in my life than my relationship with Christ.

It only makes sense that we believe something is wrong when we don't fall in love. Because that is what we have been fed. Disney princesses. Hallmark classics. Nicholas Sparks novels. “The Bachelor.” A church designed primarily to serve families. The question “Have you found a guy yet?” And the well-meaning “You know, he's nice. I should set you up with him!”

The world around us—including the church—has taught us that this is how we should think. To be truly happy, goes the lie, I must first fall in love.

What I really want is for my desire to serve the Lord to consume me first and foremost, and only then my desire to fall in love. But the culture I live in will never encourage me to do so.

So where do we as a community go from here?

What I am asking of the church is this: continue to remind us that the desire for love is good. Continue to pray that single people will find strong Christian spouses. But please, build us up in our faith more than emphasizing the importance of falling in love by your words and actions. I want to love God more than the desire for love. But amidst the world's powerful impressions, I need your support. ■

Mariellen Hofland is a student at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. She is a member of Fairfield Christian Reformed Church, Fairfield, Calif.



I have this strange intuition that if only I were to fall head over heels in love, then all my days would be splendidly happy.

Unoriginal Sin

Sin is an imposter.

I DON'T BELIEVE IN ORIGINAL SIN. In fact, I think sin is just about the most unoriginal thing in the world.

Now, before you start to write your protest letter to the editor, let me explain. I believe that all of us are sinners, and that our sinfulness is deeply engrained in our nature. We sin as soon as we can, and we continue to sin throughout our lives. Sin is, as the Canons of Dort explain, pervasive—it infects every area of human life.

My problem is with the term “original sin.” It gives sin much more substance than it deserves.

First, the Bible is clear that sin is not original to the creation. The original character of creation, including the creation of human beings, is blessedness. It was all very good, and everything was immersed in God’s blessing. We should rather speak of original blessing, original goodness, rather than original sin.

It’s important to remember that sin is a fall, and God’s work of salvation in Jesus Christ is a work of restoration. God is not making something brand new in redeeming humankind, as though true human righteousness is an oxymoron. As the Heidelberg Catechism says, “God created [humankind] good and in his own image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that they might truly know God their creator, love him with all their heart, and

live with God in eternal happiness, to praise and glorify him” (Q&A 6).

Second, sin is unoriginal in its very nature. Sin is a parasite, it can only live off the good. Just as fruit flies need ripe, luscious fruit to exist, sin needs goodness. In his book *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*, Cornelius Plantinga writes, “Good is original, independent, and constructive; evil is derivative, dependent, and destructive. To be successful, evil needs what it hijacks from goodness.”

Lust is a perversion of love. Pride needs some accomplishment, some excellence to turn into self-aggrandizement. Greed refuses to gratefully accept the good things of life but instead demands to have it all. Even the devil is nothing but a fallen angel whose only power derives from what God originally gave.

By calling sin “original” we give away too much. God is the only original being in the universe, and what God made good are the only original things in the universe. Sin’s only power and purpose is to destroy, corrupt, and maliciously infect God’s good creation.

The term “original sin” also carries with it the implication that sin is somehow God’s fault, since only God can be credited with true originality. Sin always has the character of an invasion, and an invasion can only seek to displace or destroy goodness that is already there.

My purpose here is not to minimize the destructive power of sin and the appalling misery it has strewn across its storm-track throughout human history. Nor do I want to diminish the hold that sin has on our lives. Sin, while not original, is frighteningly real, and failing to recognize its subtle and sinister power in our lives will only allow it to thrive.

Rather, I want to magnify the incomparable greatness and goodness of God in creation and in God’s saving grace. The ugly parasite of sin is no match for the Creator God. In his resurrection, Jesus Christ destroyed the devil and all his works, making “a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:15).

Originality belongs to God alone. Sin is a fake, an impostor. The despotic empire of sin has been overthrown by the goodness of God in the self-giving love of Jesus Christ. And its emperor has no clothes. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Leonard Vander Zee is a minister in the Christian Reformed Church. He attends Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids, Mich.

ADS

Deadlines: Dec. issue is 11/8/16; Jan. 2017 issue is 12/6/16. Details online.

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

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

Advertising in *The Banner* does not imply editorial endorsement.

Denominational and Classical

Calls Accepted

REVEREND KEITH MANNES from Highland CRC in Marion, MI has accepted a call to become the Lead Pastor at East Saugatuck CRC in Holland, MI.

Available for Call

REV. ROB GRUESSING Central Avenue CRC heartily recommends Rev, Rob Gruessing for consideration for a call as Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Rev. Gruessing faithfully served at Central Avenue in an interim position during the summer of 2016. He can be reached at (616)748-0493 or at rjg66@calvinseminary.edu.

Eligible for Call

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

We are pleased to announce that **SHERI LEISMAN** has now completed her academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word.

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

Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

Congregational

Church's 50th Anniversary

WEBSTER CRC, NY: 50 YEARS! Celebrate God's faithfulness to us on Sun., Nov. 6 at 10:30 a.m. webstercrc.com. 585- 872-2352; Facebook. To God be the glory!

General

FAREWELL Pastor David R. DeRidder will be giving his Farewell Sermon at Third CRC in Denver, Colorado on Sunday, November 20, 2016 after 45 years of service in the Christian Reformed Church, serving in Toronto, Ontario; Munster, Indiana; Visalia, California; Bellflower, California and Denver, Colorado.

PASTOR DAVE STRUYK is celebrating 30 years as an ordained pastor faithfully serving all 30 years at Community CRC in Wyoming MI. Both Pastor Dave and Sandi are humble servants of God.

AZ SNOWBIRDS Come worship with us at Maranatha Community CRC from Dec. thru mid-Apr. at 10:00 AM at Farnsworth Hall, 6159 University, Mesa, AZ. Pastor: Rev. Harry Weidenaar ??? Call John DeJager 920-344-1675

Birthdays

95th Birthday

GRACE HUIJSING celebrated her 95th Birthday on October 5. The members of Wheaton CRC join with her many friends and former students in wishing her the Lord's blessing - 906 Howard Street, Wheaton, IL 60187-3806.

90th Birthday

IRENE BANDSTRA will celebrate her 90th birthday on Nov. 25. She is the wife of Bill (deceased), mother of Cheryl (Bob) Deckinga and Debbie (Jack) Lanenga, grandmother of 7, great-grandmother of 20. Send greetings to Irene c/o Peace Village, 10310 Village Circle Dr., Palos Park, IL., Apt # 304 Great is God's faithfulness

IKE HILVERS celebrated his 90th birthday on Oct. 19th in Ripon Ca.. Husband of Clara Mae (deceased 2013) for 63 years. 3 children and spouses live nearby (Mike and Gail deceased.) He is also blessed with 10 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. We praise and thank God for the blessing he is to us!

DELBERT MACHIELA of 10473 Mary Ann St., Zeeland MI 49464 will celebrate his 90th birthday on November 12 with his wife Winnie, his sons and spouses, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. An OPEN HOUSE in his honor will be at North St CRC, Zeeland from 1p-4p on Nov 12.

GEORGE E. WIERENGA Celebrated his 90th birthday on October 23. He is a life long member of the Spring Lake Christian Reformed Church and retired from Holtrop Concrete Products.

70th Anniversary

VISSER Peter and Muriel, 1467 7th Ave SE, Sioux Center, IA 51250, celebrate 70 years of marriage on Nov 18, 2016. 5 children, 13 grandchildren, 18 great grandchildren. We praise God for his faithfulness.

65th Anniversary

KNOL Gerald & Hilda celebrated 65 years of marriage on October 17, surrounded with love by their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

60th Anniversary

BEEZHOLD Henry and Adele of Crete, IL are celebrating 60 years of marriage on November 9. Their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are celebrating God's great faithfulness to them and are thankful for this beautiful example of Christian marriage.

VAN DYK Ralph and Mary (Wierda) (8342 Fox Hills Ave., Buena Park, CA 90621) will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on November 30. Their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren praise God for his many blessings and faithfulness to them.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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

1. Publication Title: The Banner; 2. Publication No. 0041-300; 3. Filing Date: Oct. 1, 2016; 4. Issue Frequency: Monthly except August; 5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 11; 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$28.00; 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; Editor: Shiao Chong, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; Managing Editor: Judith Claire Hardy, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407. 10. Owner: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None; 12. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.

13. Publication Name: The Banner; 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2016.

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation		
a. Total No. Copies (Net Press Run)	85,812	84,990
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	58,053	57,449
(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions	0	0
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	26,149	25,690
(4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	21	12
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	84,223	83,151
d. Free Distribution by Mail		
(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	35	35
(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541	0	0
(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	1	0
(4) Free Distribution Outside the Mail	5	5
e. Total Free Distribution	41	40
f. Total Distribution	84,264	83,191
g. Copies Not Distributed	1,548	1,799
h. Total	85,812	84,990
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	99.95%	99.95%

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete.

Jane E. Hilbrand, Operations Manager



**DORDT
COLLEGE**

Dordt College is seeking applications for the following areas beginning August 2017:

Faculty Positions

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Business Administration | Art |
| Construction Management | Engineering |
| Farm Operations & Management | Philosophy |
| Manufacturing Technology | Physics |
| Mathematics/Statistics | Theology |

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

Dr. Eric Forseth, Provost
Dordt College
498 4th Ave NE

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

www.dordt.edu/prospective_employees/faculty/

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Church Position Announcements

DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH Modesto Christian Reformed Church (CA) is seeking a fulltime or part time Director of Outreach who has a passion for discipleship, community, and outreach. For information go to www.modestocr.org, and click on the job openings tab.

PASTOR: Second CRC is seeking an excellent preacher who will inspire, challenge, and guide us in transforming worship and lead us in becoming more missional in our community of Grand Haven, MI. For more information, please access our church profile at crca.org, visit our website at secondcrgandhaven.org, or contact Search Committee Chairman, Jeff Binnendyk at 2ndcrsearch@gmail.com or 616-844-4144

SOLE PASTOR First CRC in Edmonton, Alberta Canada is seeking a full time Pastor. We are seeking a relational and creative leader who can walk with our congregation as we seek to follow Christ. The pastor will be a collaborative leader who encourages and coaches members to develop and express their faith. For more information please contact ssolte@gmail.com

PASTOR: Grace CRC in Welland, Ontario Canada, in the heart of Niagara, is seeking a full time Pastor of Preaching and Congregational Care. To faithfully preach the Word, nourish the spiritual growth of the congregation and reach out into the community to facilitate growth. To request a copy of our profile send an email request to profiles@crca.org. Supplemental information available by contacting George Sportel at sport57geo@gmail.com, 905-714-1100.

PASTOR Unity Reformed Church in Norton Shores, MI seeks to call an ordained Senior Pastor. E-mail Minister Profile to Search Chairman davidritsemaup@gmail.com

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

WORSHIP COORDINATOR Westwood CRC (Kalamazoo, MI) is seeking a half time Worship Coordinator to plan and lead worship utilizing both traditional and contemporary elements. Desirable

skills include the ability to sing, play the piano/guitar, arrange music, and develop musicians/vocalists. Contact Randy De Jong at ranjodejong@att.net.

PASTOR Trinity CRC in Anchorage, Alaska has a unique opportunity for an experienced pastor who has a passion for God's Word and is blessed with a shepherd's heart. Position available beginning July, 2017. See the pastor search page at www.trinitycralaska.com for more information.

WORSHIP DIRECTOR South Olive CRC in Holland, MI is seeking a part-time Worship Director to plan and lead blended worship services which includes a praise team and band. Approx. 10 hrs per week. For more information please email cal_dozeman@hermannmiller.com or call 616-875-7378.

FULL TIME LEAD PASTOR Maranatha CRC in Cambridge, Ontario is a friendly and caring congregation with a strong sense of community and commitment to each other. Cambridge is a growing community situated in the heart of southern Ontario. We are seeking a full time lead pastor who, following Christ's leadership, will guide us into the next chapter of our ministry. Our congregation is in the process of discerning our identity and God's will for our ministry. Our pastor will help us carry out our vision, have leadership qualities and the ability to preach God's word in such a way that brings glory to our Lord and builds up the church. Our pastor will help us reach further into the community so that together we may proclaim and live the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Please send your letter of interest or profile in confidence to pastorsearch.maranatha.crc@gmail.com

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & WORSHIP Modesto Christian Reformed Church (CA) is seeking a full-time Director of Music and Worship. This person will have training and experience in worship planning and have solid music skills. For information go to www.modestocr.org, click on job openings tab.

FULL TIME PASTOR - "Community CRC, Dixon's Corners will be a community that is passionate about loving God and all people." We are a rural church just south of the Nation's Capital, Ottawa, Ontario looking for a full time PASTOR who is passionate about worship, spiritual growth, community care and prayer. Elementary and secondary Christian education available in our area. Please contact our Search Team at crc.vacancies@gmail.com to request our Church Profile and to forward your Ministerial Profile.

50th Anniversary

RUSTICUS Ed & Julie, with thankfulness to God for his faithfulness, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on October 14, 2016. They have been blessed with four children & five grandchildren: Joel & Joy (Jacob, Hannah, Ben), Amy, Robyn & Brandon Potts (Donovan, Adrian) and Ryan.

Obituaries



ALLINGTON George, age 91, of Cedar Springs, MI went home to be with his Lord and Savior on Saturday, July 9, 2016. His wife of 68 years, Eldona, preceded him in death in April 2013. In September 2014, he married Marilyn Baas, they had two happy years together. George is survived

by his loving wife Marilyn, children, Dr. Richard (Dr. Ann McGill Franzen) Allington, Allen (HongXia) Allington, Len (Kimberly) Allington, David (Paula) Allington, Mary (Kim) Coonen, and Dale (Marcey) Allington. George was also blessed with 19 grandchildren, 35 great grandchildren, and 1 great great grandchild.

BILTHOUSE Ida, nee Gerritsma, went to be with her LORD on October 2nd, 2016, 3541 Pomeroy Ct. Downers Grove, IL 60515. Beloved wife of the late Henry; loving mother of Alan (Pat) Bilthouse, Connie (Dirk) Van Til, and the late Carol Cummings; devoted grandmother of Tim (Renee) Cummings, Jon (Susanna) Cummings, Lois (Taka) Takemura, Stephen (Jen), Philip (Melissa), Julia, and Mary Cummings, Dan, Sarah (Colin) Kraay, and Scott (Emily) Bilthouse, and Rachel, Meagan, Lindyn, Jessica Van Til, and the late Katie Van Til; great-grandmother of Maria, Elisabeth, Jude, Anna, John, Magdalena, Lilly, Ian, Elijah, Asher, Mateo, Atsushi, Koske, Will, Makenna, Henry, Charlie, Tessa, and Eric; sister of Kay Sybesma, Anne Hoekstra, and the late Ernest Gerritsma; Aunt of many nieces and nephews. She leaves a legacy of deep faith, steadfast love, commitment to family and church, and hope in Christ her Savior. Memorials may be given in Jean's memory to the Christian Reformed Church of Western Springs or Providence Life Services.

DE BOER Richard, went to be with his LORD on October 4, 2016, 4153 Lake Shore Drive North, Holland, MI 49424. Beloved wife of the late Edith, nee Vander Meulen; loving father of Richard K. (Janice) De Boer and Jack (Jennifer) De Boer; devoted grandfather of Pamela (Jeff) King, Eric (Hillary) De Boer, and Kara and Natalie De Boer; great-grandfather of Jenna and Levi King, and Wyatt and Emelia De Boer; fond brother of Christine (the late Robert) Nicodem and brother-in-law of William Bolt; preceded by siblings George (Ruth), James (Arthea), Edward (Jeanette), and Florence Bolt; uncle of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to Faith Christian Reformed Church, 1070 S. Prospect Ave, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or Timothy Christian Schools, 188 W. Butterfield Rd, Elmhurst, IL 60126.



Director of Chaplaincy and Care

The Christian Reformed Church in North America has a position opening for **Director of Chaplaincy and Care**, based in either the Grand Rapids, Mich., or the Burlington, Ont., office. This person will be responsible for developing and promoting the strategic ministry of Christian Reformed chaplains. This includes enlisting, endorsing, encouraging, and enfolded chaplains of the CRCNA and for providing pastoral support, care, and advocacy for chaplains serving in specialized settings.

Qualified candidates will have a minimum of 5 years' experience as a chaplain and at least one quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education (or equivalent). Seminary graduate, ordination, and administrative experience preferred.

The complete job description can be found at crcna.org/jobs. To apply, send cover letter and resumé to Michelle De Bie, Director of Human Resources, at mdebie@crcna.org by **Dec. 16, 2016**. The process will remain open until a nominee to fill the position is identified.

Director of Race Relations and Social Justice

The Christian Reformed Church in North America has a full-time position opening for **Director of Race Relations and Social Justice**, based in either the Grand Rapids, Mich., or Burlington, Ont., office. This person will be responsible for developing and promoting the strategic ministry of the Race Relations and Social Justice programs of the Christian Reformed Church. This includes leading the denomination in racial reconciliation and advocacy, providing resources for congregations and agencies, and representing the denomination in these areas to external groups.

Qualified candidates will have experience working in an area of multicultural education, racial reconciliation, and social justice and advocacy. A minimum of 5 years' experience in a leadership and/or managerial role is also required.

The complete job description can be found at crcna.org/jobs. To apply, send cover letter and resumé to Michelle De Bie, Director of Human Resources, at mdebie@crcna.org by **Dec. 16, 2016**. The process will remain open until a nominee to fill the position is identified.

Director for New Mission Agency

The Christian Reformed Church in North America is seeking a **Director for the New Mission Agency** being created by the joining of Christian Reformed World Missions and Christian Reformed Home Missions. The New Mission Agency seeks to fulfill a vital role in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

The director will provide leadership to the denomination in its task of bringing the gospel holistically to the people of North America and the world. The director will give leadership in the strategic planning process, execution of policies that support the mission, and clear articulation of the vision and mission for developing worldwide partnerships.

Responsibility also includes regional mission teams with global reach, an integrated mission support team, and a capacity building and innovation team that provides global support to the entire New Mission Agency.

The successful candidate will have demonstrated skills and experience in casting vision, thinking strategically, working as a missional leader, and working interculturally. A complete job description and additional information can be found at crcna.org/nmadirector. To apply, send cover letter and resumé to nmasearch@crcna.org by **Dec. 16, 2016**. The process will remain open until a nominee to fill the position is identified.

H. Henry Meeter Center

Scholarships for High School Seniors

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies is pleased to offer the Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards for High School Seniors. Awards are given annually for research papers on a topic pertaining to John Calvin and Calvinism. Awards are payable to student tuition accounts at the following colleges: Calvin, Dordt, King's (Canada), Redeemer (Canada), Kuyper, and Trinity Christian. The topic for 2017 is "John Calvin and Martin Luther: Comparison and Assessment." There is a first prize of \$3,500 and a second prize of \$2,000. Papers must have a **January 16, 2017**, postmark.

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

H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies
Hekman Library
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4402
1-616-526-7081 / fax: 1-616-526-6470
meeter@calvin.edu

CALVIN
College

HEETDERKS Marilyn D. age 84, went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, September 14, 2016, at Faith Hospice at Trillium Woods in Grand Rapids. She is preceded in death by her parents, Henry and Henriette Drukker. She is survived by Dewey R. Heetderks M. D.; their three children, Lora (Rick) DeJonge, Julia DeVos, and Tom (Gwen) Heetderks; nine grandchildren (Michael DeJonge, Nathan (Erika) DeJonge, Lauren (Kieran), Paul DeVos, Marcus DeVos, Luke DeVos, David Heetderks, Ryan Heetderks, and Erica Heetderks); and four great grandchildren (Zoe, Carter, Rylee, and Conor).

KAMINGA Ken, of Auburndale, FL, age 88, passed away 8/01/2016. Ken is preceded in death by his wife, Margaret and survived by his children Bill and Karan, Mike and Sandy, Barb, Ron and Chris, Don and Terry, and 12 grandchildren and 14 great grands. "What a day that will be, when my Jesus I shall see..."

KUIPER Hilda M. age 95, went home to be with her Lord on August 6, 2016. Beloved wife of the late George Kuiper. Survived by Ada (Peter) Jarmosevich, Mary (Larry) Wenger, Marilyn (James) Kirchmeier, Fred (Diane) Kuiper, Helene (Jack) Landon, 11 grandchildren and 16 great grandchildren.

KUIPERS, Lois Belle of Grand Rapids, MI, went to be with her Lord on September 18, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband Jack, and survived by her children, Benjamin Jack (Laura) Kuipers, Emily Kuipers (James) Akerson, Joel Corneal (Teresa) Kuipers, Alison Jane Kuipers, and Lynne Kuipers (David) Eggert, and by her grandchildren Anna, Rebecca and David Kuipers; Lars Akerson and Nels Akerson; Berendt (Max), Nicholas, and Grace Kuipers; and Jacob, Rachel, and Meghan Eggert.

LOGTERMAN Lyola Ruth (Goeman) of Denver, CO, went to her heavenly rest on Aug 25, 2016. Survived by her beloved husband of 64 years, Earl; children, Kim (Ken) Hengeveld, Susan, and James; grandchildren, Daniel Hengeveld, Elisabeth Hengeveld, Rebecca (Aaron) Olson.

TIERSMA Arlene (Aukje) Hofman age 89, went home to her eternal rest on September 12, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband Mark and son Peter. She is survived by her daughter-in-law Thea, her children Jude (John), Brenda (Carlo), Benjamin (Jeanine), and grandchildren Mark, Luke and Sara.

WIERSMA Ralph, age 83, of Denver, CO went to his heavenly home on August 4, 2016. He is survived by his wife, Emilie and children, Patti & Greg Bode (Ryan & Kristin, Tyler, Reid) Dave & Lia (Joshua, Lauren & Dave Byma, Catherine) Tim & Amy (Jenna & Mark Kunnen, Jillian, Jessica)

ZOMER Beulah (Kok), 92, of Corsica, SD, went home to be with her Lord and Savior Monday, September 12, 2016, joining husband Egbert, 2 infant sons and 2 grandsons. Survived by children Shirley (Bob) Geurkink, Elroy (Marilyn) Zomer, Ruth (Duane) Wolbrink, Calvin (Kim) Zomer; 10 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren. Praise the Lord for her legacy of faith.

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

DIRECTOR OF NURSING Artesia Christian Home, located in sunny southern California, is seeking applications for an experienced Director of Nursing for its 66 bed 5 star skilled nursing facility. It is affiliated with the Reformed and Christian Reformed Churches of Southern California. In order to find more information about the facility you can visit their website at www.achome.org. if interested please send a cover letter and resume to Kevin Thon at www.Agaperecruiting.com

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH & EDUCATION Pease CRC, a large, rural church in central Minnesota, is hiring a full-time director of youth & education to oversee our growing youth programs and facilitate the educational programming for K-12. Preferred applicants should have training and/or experience in youth ministry or education. Call or email Trudy Ash for more information. peasecrc@frontiernet.net. 320-369-4228

LIVE-IN HOME SUPERVISOR The Holland Deacons' Conference is seeking a full-time Home Supervisor for 6 adult women with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Holland, MI. Interested individuals may request an application by phone (616.494.6050), email (info@hdccrc.org), or at hdccrc.org/jobs.

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FT MYERS POOL HOME FOR RENT by the week or month, Oct - May. 905-630-6711.

FOR RENT - CONDO Naples, Florida. Beautiful 2 bedrooms, 2 baths. Available - Jan, Feb and select weeks in March 2017. dkeizer@comcast.net or 708-650-0300.

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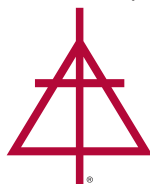
Please consider *The Banner* as you plan giving through your Will.

As a faithful supporter of *The Banner*, you can help ensure that it remains a strong part of the Christian Reformed Church for generations to come.

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To discuss planned giving to *The Banner* or any other CRCNA ministry, you are invited to contact the CRC Foundation at (877) 272-6204 or by emailing foundation@crcna.org.



Christian Reformed Church
Foundation

The Christian Reformed Church in North America uses the services of the Barnabas Foundation in the U.S. and the Christian Stewardship Services in Canada in preparing all planned giving documents to maximize your impact.

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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 client's 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.

JUST PUBLISHED Dysfunctional family, rejection, revenge, guilt, broken dreams, temptation, self-pity - stepping stones for Joseph from the pit to the palace. "When the Going Gets Tough... Turn Your Stumbling Blocks Into Stepping Stones" by Rev. Curry Pikkaart - order @ www.revcpikk.com



MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Lead Pastor

Bethany Christian Reformed Church
Muskegon, MI

Director of Development

GRIP Outreach for Youth
Chicago, IL

Pastor

Second Christian Reformed Church
Pella, IA

Senior Pastor

Christ Community Church
Plainfield, IL

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

Hey Worship Leaders!

Did you know there is a place to connect with other CRC worship planners? A place to share resources, ask questions, and find encouragement? Look no further than **The Network** (crcna.org/network).

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Iceland: The Land of Fire and Ice
May 19 – 31 | Joel Adams

Reformation Heritage Tour of Germany
May 26 – June 3 | Dan Hermen

The Danube: Queen of Europe's Rivers
June 26 – July 6 | Henk & Thressa Witte

Alluring Alaska: A Glacial Discovery Cruise
August 19 – 30 | George Gentes

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Inspire 2017

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Save the Date! Inspire 2017 is a conference to connect people from across our 1,000+ churches for three days of practical workshops, engaging speakers, worship, and energizing conversation.

Let's gather to **refresh**, **refocus**, and **reimagine** how our shared calling finds expression in our local communities and beyond. If you're involved in ministry at any level in your church, this event is for you.

crcna.org/Inspire2017

Punch Lines

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

As I left the grocery store, I noticed two little kids, maybe 6 or 7 years old. They were selling candy bars in front of the store to raise money for their school.

"I'll buy a chocolate bar on one condition," I said to the boys. "You eat it for me."

I bought one and handed the candy back to one of them. He shook his head and said, "I can't."

"Why not?" I asked.

Looking me in the eye, he responded gravely, "I'm not supposed to take candy from strangers."

—Dawn Gebben

Seven days without exercise makes one weak.

—Ralph VanderKoooy

Several years ago, our grandchildren joined me at the planetarium for the film *The Amazing Migration* about butterflies. However, when they showed thousands of red crabs furiously mating on the side of a cliff, I was dismayed to hear Lauren, then 5, ask loudly, "Grandma, what are they doing?"

I was speechless as I tried to think of an appropriate answer.

She repeated more loudly, "What are they *doing*, Grandma?"

Everyone in the planetarium could hear her; it was eerily silent.

Her quick-thinking 9-year-old cousin piped up, "They're getting married."

"Oh," responded Lauren matter-of-factly, her question answered.

—Sharon Bloemendaal

The Sunday school teacher told her class of 5-year-olds the story of the Good Shepherd and his sheep. She ended by saying how wonderful it is that Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we are his beloved sheep. Upon hearing this, one little girl responded: "Yeah, we are all his sheep, but not my little brother. Mom says he is a little piggie."

—Hendrik Kamphuis

When my granddaughter Megan was 4 years old, she was visiting us at our house

and said, "This song is stuck in my head!" I replied, "That's OK, it's a good song."

Then she said, "I want it to move over because I want a different one in my head!"

—Sandy Sall

Albert Einstein said, "Coincidences may be God's way of performing miracles anonymously."

—Sam Bosch

Found in a bunch of old papers from my dad:

A gentleman who had pledged to tithe to his church went to his pastor with a request. "Is there any way I can be released from my promise to tithe to the church?" he said. "It's like this: When I made that promise, I had to give only \$5 a week. Now I'm making \$1,000 a

week, and it's costing me \$100 a week to fulfill my pledge."

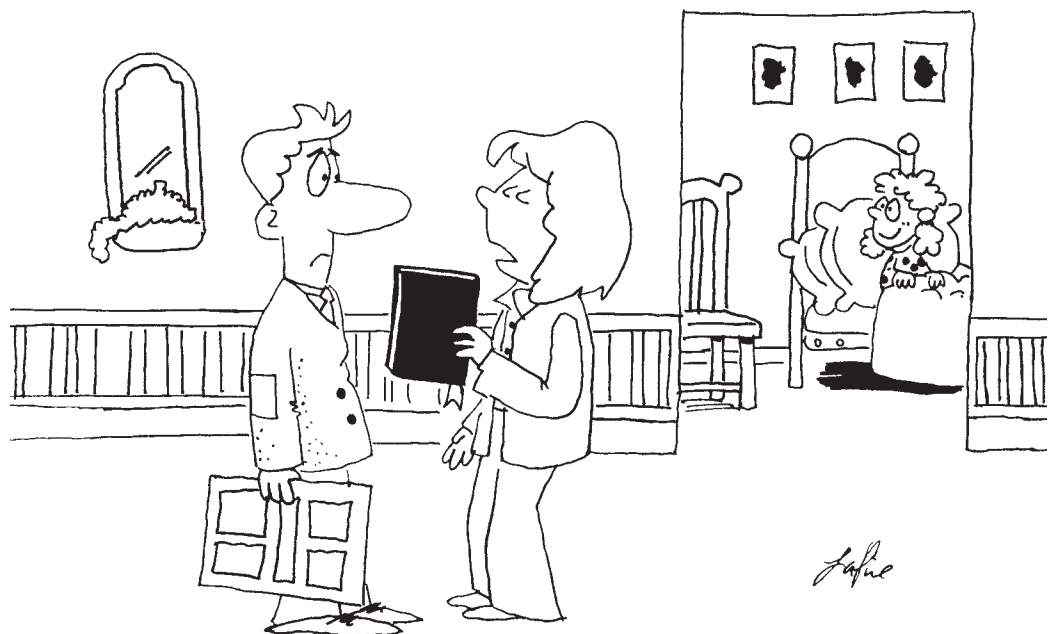
The pastor thought about it for a moment and then said, "I'm afraid we cannot get you released from your promise. But there is something else we can do for you. We can kneel in prayer and ask God to shrink your income so that you can afford to tithe \$5 a week once more."

—Marcia Visker

Two men were having a discussion. One of them said, "You don't have to scream when you are talking to me. I just bought new hearing aids. They're very expensive, the best on the market." "What brand is it?" his friend asked.

"Half past four," he answered.

—Jan Veltkamp



"She wants *you* to read to her. Your daughter doesn't want me to read the Bible to her at night anymore because I don't know Greek and Hebrew."



Living WATER

The blistering springtime sun beats down on the residents of Cuttack Terrine, India. Temperatures regularly soar past 110 degrees here. A heatwave like this isn't only troublesome, it's deadly. Water resources have dried up long ago. Intense fatigue and dehydration have set in. People are dying.

Pastor Prem and Dr. Pushpa Rout cannot shield themselves from the devastation unfolding before their eyes. Casualty numbers are rising. The need for water is desperate. Hope seems lost.

In the midst of trouble, the Routs keep their faith. They have served this region since a partnership began with the Luke Society USA in 2000. They deliver health care, health education and, above all, a hope of Jesus Christ to the rural region. They care about their fellow countrymen, but on a much deeper level, they care about their brothers in Christ.

Generous Luke Society donors realize the opportunity. Providing funding for new wells will quench physical thirst, but will also open a door to minister about the Living Water made available through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Today the people in Cuttack Terrine enjoy the blessing of fresh water and new life. The events that have transpired have led some of the villagers to abandon their idols and instead bow in thanksgiving to the King of Kings.

"The heavenly Father looked on to these poor, neglected tribal villagers and fulfilled their long-desired need in providing clean drinking water at their doorstep," said Pushpa Rout. "Villagers are very happy because for the first time in their lives they saw and felt the love of God's people. They are overwhelmed with happiness and thanksgiving."



The Luke Society is an interdenominational Christian ministry that works internationally with indigenous medical professionals to bring healing and hope through Jesus Christ. We support and empower nationals who serve among their own people, language and culture.

The ministry offers encouragement, prayers, mentoring and financial support to these visionaries who have a passion to improve the physical, social and spiritual health of their villages, communities and countries.

Luke Society
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