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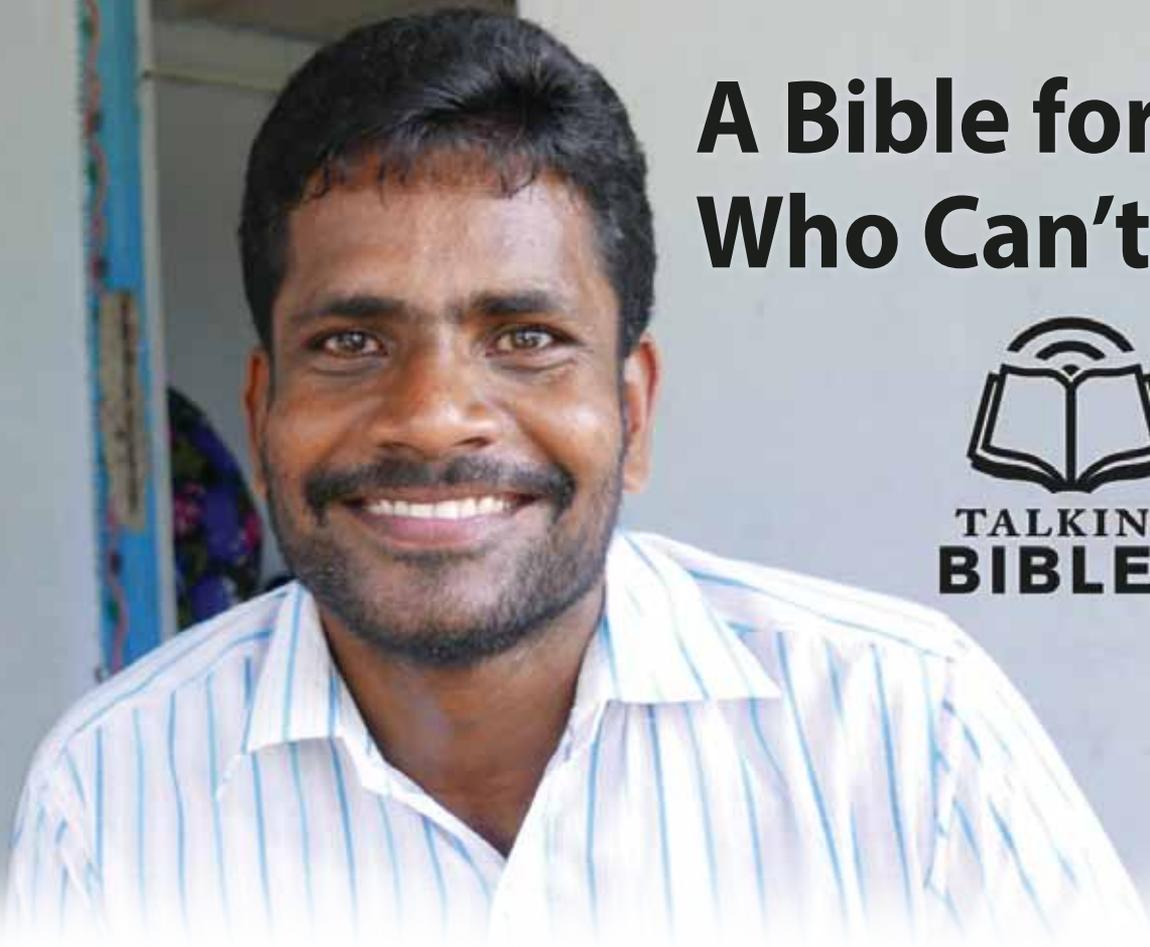
³² What Does It Mean to Love Your Neighbor?
³⁸ Sola Scriptura

²² When Pastors Hurt

¹⁸ The Gift of the Law: How (Not) to Be Free



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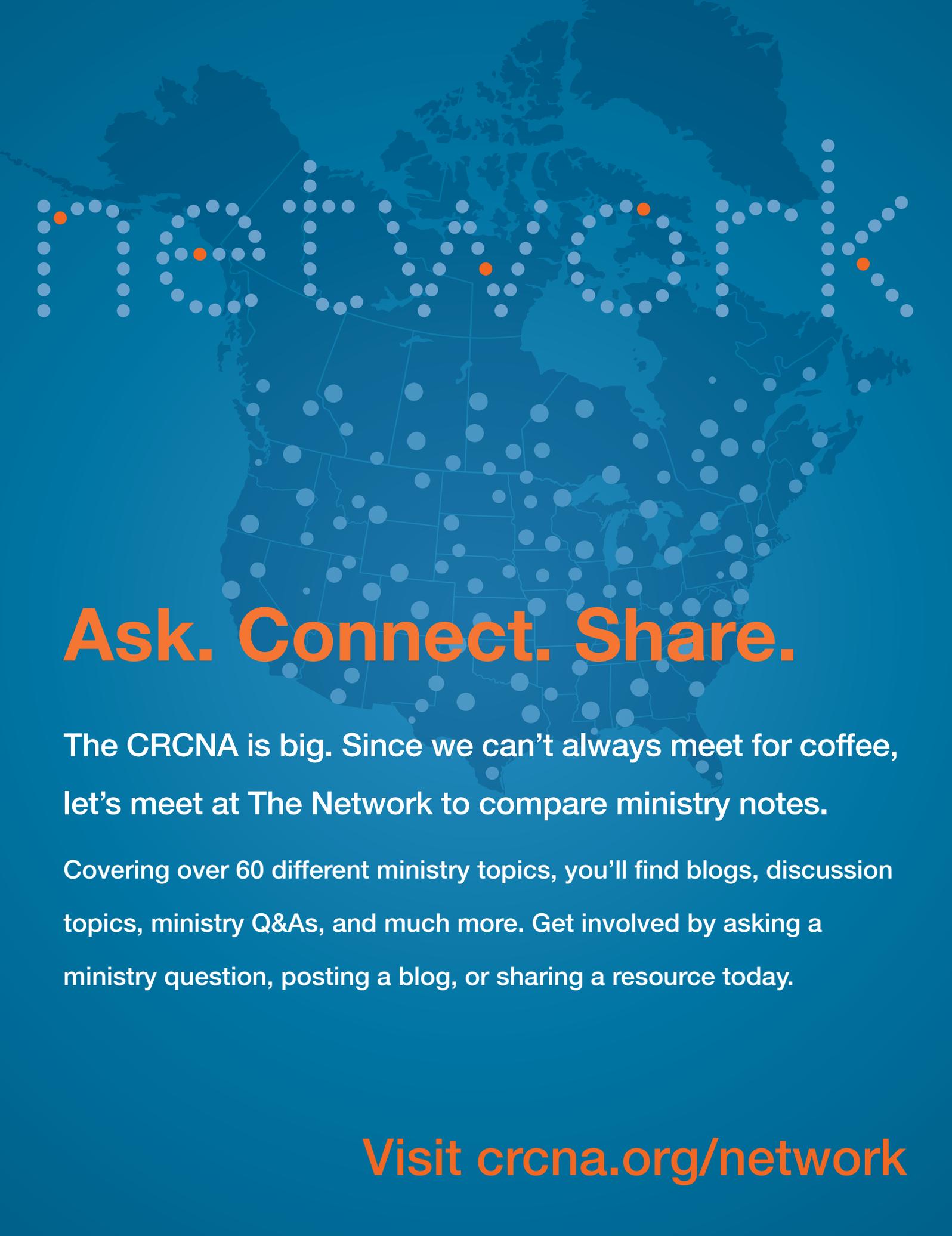
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Beyond Our Fears

AS I WRITE THIS, the hearts of many *Banner* readers are troubled by the political unrest in the United States and the horrific mosque shooting in Canada. Regardless of our political leanings, these events should make us reflect on how to love our neighbors—including refugees, citizens, Christians, Muslims, and the unborn. But the North American church is divided on how best to do this collectively.

Some Christians have felt vilified, misunderstood, and marginalized over the past eight years. And they feel they are being vilified again for their pro-life stance in voting for the new president. Other Christians feel hurt by the victory of a person they regard as a symbol of misogyny and racism. And they are taking their protest to the streets. Still others are unable to make sense of it all. These tensions are dividing Christian Reformed families across the continent.

Can we acknowledge there is hurt and pain all around? Can we, even in disagreement, be gracious to each other? I know there are lives in jeopardy—the unborn, refugees, and others—and that creates a sense of urgency and angst. All lives, in wombs or in war-torn fields, are sacred. This is why it's so hard to speak into this. But I think we need to pause, for the long-term sake of those lives, as much as for our own spiritual lives.

I believe deep fears are underlying our activism, arguments and, yes, politics, on all sides. And our anger may be masking our fears—the “fight” in our fight-or-flight response. I believe we—conservative, liberal, or neither—need to honestly and deeply examine our hearts. Can we name our fears?

“Blessed are the peacemakers,” said Jesus, “for they will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9). But God's peace is not simply a ceasefire. The original Hebrew concept of peace is *shalom*, in which everything flourishes under God's love. Shalom-making needs God's love, God's work, and ours, requiring time and trust. And shalom-making cannot be done out of fear because fear causes us to divide the world into “us” and “them,” into friends and enemies. “When peacemaking is based on fear,” wrote Henri Nouwen, “it is not much different from war making” (*Seeds of Hope*). In our zeal for defending various causes—for refugees, for the unborn, for the poor, for national security, for women, for people of color—have we inadvertently turned our efforts into war making? Have we relied on the weapons of the world in our efforts at furthering God's kingdom?

God's peace does not come from eradicating our enemies but by eradicating enmity. It comes from getting rid of scapegoating rather than our scapegoats. The real enemies are the devil and the demonic powers. And they love to divide and conquer.

Can we strive for reconciliation, even in our political activism, rather than for a “winner takes all” outcome? The victorious Lion of Judah is the lamb who was slain (Rev. 5:5-6). God's path to victory so often passes through self-sacrifice.

In my April editorial I will explore what it means for us to be citizens of God's kingdom while being citizens of an earthly nation. But for now, I think we, regardless of our politics, need to examine ourselves: have we allowed our fears rather than God's love to drive our politics?

Whatever our fears, Jesus has promised this: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). ■

P.S. Watch for our annual appeal in your mailbox or inbox. Please consider a donation so we can keep the conversation going. Thank you!



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

Have we allowed our fears rather than God's love to drive our politics?

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Presence

LIVE IN THE DESERT, in a valley plain surrounded by four distinct mountain ranges. To the south, the elusive Santa Ritas. To the west, the jagged silhouettes of the Tucsons. The sun rises over the ancient, rounded Rincons. But it's the long line of the Catalinas that I love most, marching along the north from one end of the plain to the other, so high you can see them from every part of the city.

The Catalinas are home to most of my favorite hikes, trails that twist their way up each major canyon along the line. If you hike far enough, you'll make it all the way to the heart of the range, the peak of Mount Lemmon. I recently hiked one such canyon by the light of the full moon, headlamps stowed safely away in my friend's pack. And it got me thinking.

There was a time, long ago, when God's presence shook the foundations of Mount Sinai and bathed it in fire. There was a time when God's people begged Moses not to let God speak to them, lest they

die. In that time they stood far off, trembling—afraid to enter that Glory, to climb that mountain.

And yet, here I am. Surrounded not by fire but by gentle grey moonlight, blanketing the ground below in quietness. This trail, steadily making its way toward the mountain, weaving in and around the babbling remnant of our desert's monsoon rains. Saguaro cacti, rising stark and majestic against the sky, edged in silver by the hands of the finest Jeweler the world has ever seen.

Four miles of careful footsteps over stones set on sparkling water, up the canyon's side, the glittering lights of Tucson far below. Finally, the falls—cascade after cascade of ice-cold water spilling between slick walls of granite.

This is Eden. Water from rock. Life in the desert. The end of my wandering.

What a difference our Mediator makes. On this mountain I am met by love, not anger. In God's presence I find rest, not fear. The veil has been torn, and, mercy of mercies, I may meet God face to face.

On that trail at the foot of the mountain, I curled up in the smooth curves of solid rock and rested. Under God's mighty hand I am humbled; sheltered under the same hand, by grace alone, I may see God's glory. ■



A graduate of film studies at the University of Michigan, **Janelle Haegert** now writes and bartends in Tucson, Ariz. She's also an avid cyclist, an amateur guitarist, and a member of Second Mile Church.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

P S A L M 139:8-9



Growing Spiritually When You Don't Like to Read

Each of us has a different threshold for how long we can sit still before we get a little stir crazy.



MANY OF OUR CHURCHES have a reading bias.

What I mean by that is this: we put a high emphasis on cognitive kinds of learning. And we spend a lot of time talking about spirituality in academic terms.

For example, we tend to measure a person's spiritual health by how much "quiet time" they spend reading and reflecting on Scripture. Yet while some people enjoy quiet study and reflection, for others it can be a struggle.

I am, admittedly, a book person. But lately I have been challenged to think about what growing in faith looks like when you're not a reader or don't have a lot of time for reading. Here are some suggestions for engaging God creatively in your everyday life:

Listen to the Word. Maybe it's hard for you to sit down and read, but you can listen to Scripture while commuting, working, or doing chores around the house. There are several audio versions of the Bible to choose from.

In addition, many churches provide CDs or audio links to the pastor's sermons online for people to listen to if they missed church. Revisiting old sermons or listening to another pastor can give you a fresh perspective.

Worship. Sometimes we devalue the emotional experience of connecting with God through singing or listening to or playing music. But for many people, music feeds the soul even more than Scripture and prayer.

Small Groups. Studying Scripture with a group of people can be a great way to process and learn about the text—especially if the idea of journaling makes you cringe. In addition, many devotional books are available for small group study, and many of *those* come with a DVD. This allows people to learn from a book without necessarily reading it.

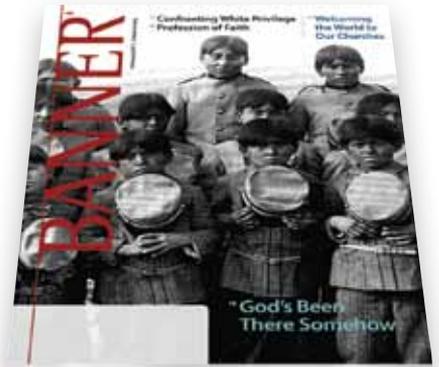
Prayer. Often we think of prayer as something that can only take place in a very quiet, reflective space. Yet each of us has a different threshold for how long we can sit still in solitude before we get a little stir crazy. Thankfully, God hears prayer even if we're moving around. Driving and doing chores are often good times for me to pray about things that are going on in my life.

Modeling. Character formation—"training ourselves for godliness" (1 Tim. 4:8)—is an important part of spiritual growth. Spending time with a friend or coworker who has a strong relationship with God can provide an opportunity for growth as we see the fruit of the Spirit on display in real-life contexts.

This list is by no means exhaustive. But it's my hope that we can give each other permission to interact with God in ways that don't necessarily involve reading. In this way, we encourage all people to grow in Christ—regardless of age, personality, or abilities. ■



Anthony J. Gretz is pastor of community life and witness at Third Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Mich.



Discerning the Body

Re "Discerning the Body" (Jan. 2017): 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:24-28 speak of the body and blood of Christ together, referring to the bread and cup at the Lord's Supper. Likewise, "eating" and "drinking" in verse 29 refer to the bread and cup of communion, which must be discerned from other food. Paul compares the church to a field and building (3:9) but not to a body; that metaphor comes in chapter 12, a new section on spiritual gifts.

In love and respect for Christ, the church should put differences aside at the Lord's table and unite around Christ, who gave his body and blood to pay our debt of sin. Honoring Christ, not the church, should be the highest motive for our church unity. Love for one another must then follow.

*Jacob Van Zyl
Lethbridge, Alta.*

Climate Witness

The Paris Accord ("Climate Witness Project Moves Focus to Congregations," Jan. 2017) will encourage energy-saving devices and practices. That is fine and I agree. But the Accord deals mainly with treating symptoms of the problem and fails to address the real issues.

TTERS

In the past several hundred years, the human population has gone from 1 billion in the early 1800s to almost 8 billion people today. In an effort to feed all these people, there have been significant advances in agriculture, including mechanization, herbicides, fungicides, genetic engineering, and irrigation. But land is still needed. In the past several hundred years we have cut down 65 percent of the world's forests. Millions of people are starving and lack clean drinking water. The surging population and our disappearing forests are probably two of the real reasons behind the recent global warmup.

*Robert W. Lubbers
Spring Lake, Mich.*

Why are we spending precious resources on this divisive issue (“Climate Witness Project Moves Focus to Congregations”)? I agree with Doug Vande Griend that no one should decide for CRC members what conclusions we should come to, and denominational agencies should not waste our money on non-ecclesiastical matters.

*Frank Reitsma
New Sharon, Iowa*

Peter Vander Meulen reported that the delegation to Paris (“Climate Witness Project Moves Focus to Congregations”) was budgeted at over \$50,000. This clearly shows that while the CRC has no money to pay its missionaries, it has funds for controversial trips. I suggest the Office of Social Justice repay the ministry shares and hand them to the missions agency. Then churches who are bothered by this politicizing of the denomination should refrain from sending funds in an undesigned way but instead send their funds directly to the missions agencies.

*Rimmer De Vries
Camano Island, Wash.*

Note: For the CRC's position on creation care and climate change, see crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/creation-care.

Helping a Grieving Person

If you have not read Kari Poortinga's article (“How to Help a Grieving Person,” Dec. 2016), I urge you to do so. Already a widow, two of my adult children have died. When my son took his life, after the initial time of death and the memorial service, I felt very alone. Folks were uncomfortable with this, and so were not there when I needed them. Finally I called my church and boldly told the secretary how I felt, and then got some attention from elders and pastor.

Why is it so difficult for the body of believers to comfort one another? I am grateful to be living in a Christian retirement home where I am surrounded by friends.

*Leona Stukkie
Grand Rapids, Mich.*

Our Lady

My husband and I thoroughly enjoyed Leonard Vander Zee's perspective on Mary in “Our Lady Too” (Dec. 2016). She was a willing vessel despite the certainty that sneers and judgment would be part of her future. Yes, the real miracle was that she believed.

There was one part I disagreed with, but with a chuckle, remembering that a man wrote the article. Rev. Vander Zee writes, “. . . until finally [the baby] pushed its way out into the world.” I respectfully disagree! The dear child is not doing the pushing by any means. Instead, the rigorous pushing is done completely by the sweaty mother.

I imagine I have many female supporters on this point!

*Bonnie Roda
Maple Ridge, B.C.*

Rev. Vander Zee seems to suggest God's plan for salvation could have been frustrated by a young Jewish virgin (“Our Lady Too”). The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to let her know God had highly favored her because she was to become the mother of the Savior. He wasn't asking permission. Abraham, Moses, and other biblical figures were not asked if they were willing to go along with God's plans. The apostle Paul wasn't asked if he was willing to become the great missionary apostle to the Gentiles. Jesus told Peter to follow him. That's God's irresistible grace. I know it firsthand. I didn't decide to follow Jesus; the Holy Spirit gently brought me to saving faith.

I question Vander Zee's view of Mary being “preeminent among the saints.” God is no respecter of persons. God's love for all whom Jesus went to Calvary's cross to save is no less than God's love of Mary.

*Joe A. Serge
Oshawa, Ont.*

Other Seas

Franklin DeHaan called Galileo's excommunication from the Catholic church an “error” (“It's Time to Seek Other Seas,” Dec. 2016) because he said it placed Scripture above science in order to reach ultimate truth. Actually, the church's real error was that it had placed “modern science” (which then promoted an earth-centered universe) above Scripture. Indeed, Isaiah 40:22 says “he sits enthroned above the circle of the earth.”

By its own definition, modern science changes while Scripture is modern in every age, and as the Belgic Confession says, God “makes himself known to us ‘more openly’ by his holy and divine Word” thereby putting it above any human constructs.

*Michael DuMez
Oostburg, Wis.*

[MORE ONLINE](#)

NEWS

Trinity Christian College Student Brings Special Ed to Ethiopia

At an age when many are still going to school, 22-year-old Getenet Timmermans is starting one. The school will exclusively serve students with intellectual disabilities, and it will be half a world away, in Ethiopia, where Timmermans spent the first 15 years of his life.

"God is leading me to this kind of journey," said Timmermans, a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Orphaned at a young age and adopted, along with his



Getenet Timmermans and his good friend Bontegezet from Ethiopia, "who motivates me and encourages me to continue this project."

younger brother Fekadu, by Steven and Barbara Timmermans in 2010, the math major at Trinity Christian College wants to serve God by giving back to his community in Ethiopia.

When it opens its doors this fall, Faith Special Education School will begin by serving 8 to 10 students who would otherwise be home full-time with a caretaker. This will also allow parents who normally stay home with their child to have an opportunity to find employment.

Timmermans hopes not only to improve the lives of students and parents but also to transform the culture, changing how people with disabilities are viewed. In Ethiopia, Timmermans said, people with disabilities are often completely isolated from the rest of the community.

When he first joined the Timmermans family and got to know

his brother Paul, who has Down syndrome, Getenet was struck by the full lives people with intellectual disabilities can live. "Paul can do anything I can do. Paul can talk about his feelings, he goes to work, he can connect with our community," he said. "In Ethiopia, [people with intellectual disabilities] don't get job opportunities or the opportunity to interact with the community."

The impetus to action came after an interim class (a class between semesters) Timmermans took two winters ago. When almost all other classes were already full, he signed up for "Beyond Suffering: A Christian View on Disability Ministry." It turned out to be a pivotal life experience.

One day in particular hit home, when the professor discussed how people with disabilities are viewed around the world. They are sometimes seen as "cursed." Of the places mentioned, Ethiopia was singled out for being the most egregious. "I was shocked," he said. And yet he knew it rang true with his experiences.

He had to do something. Eventually, that something became Faith School.

Where did he get such boldness? His life experiences taught him at a young age that he had to rely on God to provide. And he couldn't do it without support. "The people around me are always encouraging me and praying for me," he said. "It takes many people to accomplish something like this!"

—Susan Vanden Berg

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Herbert Aubrey Van Hoff

1934-2016

Aubrey Van Hoff was a quiet man who never sought accolades for himself. Gifted with a quick wit, he loved to play on words. After suffering several strokes, Van Hoff was hospitalized in June, where he remained until he died on October 27. He was 81.

Van Hoff was born in Sri Lanka. After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary, he returned to Sri Lanka where he served the Dutch Reformed Church and edited *The Herald*. He also served Christian Reformed congregations in Manitoba, British Columbia, and Ontario. He retired in 2000.

Upon hearing of his passing, a pastor in Australia who was a student of Van Hoff's in the seminary in Sri Lanka, offered the following: "I can honestly say that I am who I am as a pastor, preacher, and teacher, largely because of Rev. Aubrey."

Van Hoff will be lovingly remembered by Dianne, his wife of 54 years; and by three daughters and their spouses and eight grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a son-in-law.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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

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Bringing the Taste of Africa to Michigan

Martha Pewee had been in the United States for about 10 years with her husband, John, and their family in Grand Rapids, Mich., when she decided to start a grocery store that would feature food products from Africa and other nations that weren't being offered at traditional supermarkets in the area.

Today, the Pewees, who are immigrants from the West African nation of Liberia, own and operate Martha's International Market on the southeast side of Grand Rapids. With the help of a business mentorship program offered through Madison Square Christian Reformed Church, the Pewees recently purchased the building they had rented for the past seven years.

Martha Pewee had operated a small food shop, or "coke shop," as it was called, in Liberia before her family moved to the U.S. in 1997. She worked as a nurse's aide for a few years before starting the market from her home. She and John would travel to Chicago and other large cities to purchase meat, fish, and vegetables. "When we'd get the stuff, she'd put it in the car and drive around to shops to sell them," John Pewee said. Often the goods were sold to braiding shops, where women of African descent go to have their hair braided.

"We started out with two [freezers in our home], then we ended up with six," Martha said. "The electric bills were high and we couldn't keep it in the basement anymore."



John and Martha Pewee

The Pewees rented their current space, running the business while also maintaining their regular jobs. They were living paycheck to paycheck, wondering how they could do this. "It was almost impossible. But with God's help, here we are today," Martha said.

The Pewees credit the help of the people she met through the mentorship program at Madison Square Church, offered through Partners Worldwide, for helping them navigate the legal challenges of purchasing the building as well as financing for the business.

"I could see through the process that God was blessing us. All these people were helping us free of charge. The lawyer we worked with told me he charged \$600 an hour, and he was giving us one hour free. He did all the paperwork for us," Martha said. "We didn't know him, but he was on our side."

Today, African natives and other immigrants travel up to

several hours to buy food, African print clothing, and fashion accessories from Martha's International Market. But just as important, Martha lends a listening ear to fellow immigrants who may be struggling with similar challenges to what she went through.

"They can relate to someone who understands them and their problems in their own language," John said.

—Greg Chandler

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. James Peter Vosteen

1931-2016

A man of great humility, Peter Vosteen loved to preach and to teach others to preach. He passed away on November 2 at age 85.

Vosteen studied at Philadelphia's Westminster Theological Seminary and Luther Theological Seminary. After ordination, he served in the United Presbyterian Church and went on to serve Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario, Minnesota, British Columbia, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Idaho, and Washington. He was also professor of homiletics and pastoral theology at Northwest Theological Seminary and wrote "Pastoral Preaching," a chapter in *The Preacher and Preaching* (1986).

Many will remember Vosteen riding his BMW motorcycle to church meetings and preaching assignments, showing up dressed in black leather. He enjoyed hunting and was an excellent tennis player and an award-winning photographer. He will also be remembered for the way he loved and served individuals who were in difficult circumstances.

Vosteen leaves behind his wife, Mary Sue; six stepsons and their spouses and children; as well as four children with his first wife, Winifred, who died in 1998; and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

NEWS

Rape Culture and Christian Colleges

Teaching women how to avoid being assaulted rather than focusing on perpetrators; policing the way women dress; women who report assaults not being believed; a student receiving over 40 unwanted emails a day from a guy who sits behind her in one of her classes; a student hiding out in her dorm room and skipping classes for nearly two weeks to avoid an ex-boyfriend who won't take no for an answer when she breaks up with him.

There is no single agreed-upon definition of "rape culture," but those are some of the examples of how it plays out on college campuses, including Christian colleges.

Karen Cornies, who was dean of students at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont., until December, said she's had mixed feelings about the term "rape culture" and avoids it to some extent. "At its heart, I think, is naming the ways in which we as a culture normalize sexual assault and then end up blaming the victim of the assault for the assault. Naming that is important," she said.

Her colleague Jim Vanderwoerd is a social work professor and chair of the sociology/social work department at Redeemer and has studied and written extensively on sexual violence, especially in the context of Christian colleges and universities. "There is no consensus on what rape culture is, and therefore, no accurate or reliable way to measure it on campuses."

He said rape culture is a phrase to describe a culture where violence against women—especially sexual violence—is implicitly tolerated or condoned. "The key word here is 'implicitly,'" he said, "for almost no one explicitly endorses sexual violence. The phrase is intended to reveal how the responses (or lack thereof)—particularly by those in authority—minimize, deny, downplay, rationalize, justify, or explain away the realities of sexual violence."

Some, like Howard Wilson, vice president and chief administrative officer at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, don't relate to that term at all. "We don't believe [rape culture] exists on our campus," he said. "It's just not who we are."



Howard Wilson, vice president and chief administrative officer, Dordt College

With or without an agreed-upon definition, the damage is real. Both men and women are subject to sexual violence, but the vast majority of victims are women.

Vanderwoerd says rape culture also captures the inadequate ways in which college authorities respond when women disclose their unwanted sexual experiences. Too often, women who disclose are not taken seriously, are pressured to keep quiet or are implicitly or explicitly blamed, and are subjected to intrusive and repeated investigation—while the men who carried out the sexually exploitative behavior escape scrutiny or accountability.

Alcohol and Pornography

Rev. Mary Hulst is the chaplain at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. She said the unique challenges present on a college campus are that young men and women live in close proximity to each other, have much less oversight than they have ever had before, are seeking out relationships, and often have easy access to alcohol.

Alcohol is certainly one cause for the kinds of behaviors described. Vanderwoerd noted that the literature shows that alcohol consumption, by both perpetrators and victims, as well



Rev. Mary Hulst, chaplain, Calvin College

as the overall alcohol culture on college campuses, is highly related to sexual victimization. Wilson expressed a similar opinion. "What we've learned [from training] is that the vast majority of sexual assaults on campuses are connected to alcohol abuse. We don't have nearly the incidence of alcohol abuse as many other public and private institutions."

Another strong contributor is pornography. "Pornography feeds this," Hulst said. "Over 80 percent of the images in porn involve men dominating women. Statistics show that Christian young men and women are watching porn at close to the same rates as students across the world. If 85 percent of our men and 40 percent of our women are watching porn, they are being exposed to evil presentations of sexual intimacy usually involving abuse."

Cornies concurred. "I'm hearing reports like half of boys in grade nine have seen nude photos of their female classmates."

Vanderwoerd noted that on college campuses there are a wide variety of opportunities for social gatherings involving sexualized activities—usually involving drinking and increasingly fueled by porn—such as "panty raids," hazing rituals, "Pimp and Ho," or similar



Jim Vanderwoerd, chair of the Sociology/Social Work department, Redeemer University College

theme parties where women wear sexually provocative clothing and compete to make themselves available to men. What makes it rape culture, he said, is that these kinds of sexualized activities are seen as normal and desirable—so much so that individuals who don't participate are stigmatized.

"Any time we excuse sexually aggressive behavior because this is supposedly what is expected of boys and men, then our boys and men will continue to think that it's really not that bad," Hulst said.

Moral Communities

The good news for students and supporters of Protestant Christian colleges is that the hook-up behavior so prevalent in today's society is less prevalent on Protestant Christian college campuses.

"The biggest difference is that most of the students on a Christian college campus have been exposed to the idea that sex is reserved for marriage. Many of them long to practice good sexual ethics and give the gift of sexual intimacy to their spouses. So students are more aware of the biblical ideal and long to obey it. This is great!" Hulst said.

Vanderwoerd cited research that shows there is a difference between Christian and public campuses in the prevalence of hook-up culture. There may be some merit to Christian campuses having less of that, which may decrease the impact.

"Sociologist Amy Burdette and her colleagues investigated hook-up culture on different types of campuses," Vanderwoerd said. "In their 2009 paper published in the prestigious *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, they reported that students at Protestant religious colleges were less likely to hook up compared to students at Catholic institutions or institutions with no religious affiliation. The authors suggest that with respect to casual sexual activity, conservative Protestant colleges and universities may be more effective in establishing 'moral communities.'" The paper goes on to note that a common set of lifestyle practices and policies at Protestant evangelical colleges operate to create and sustain moral communities that "contribute to a climate of sexual restraint."

Education and awareness are key to reducing rape culture behaviors.

Vanderwoerd noted that evangelical Protestant campuses provide contexts in which a faith-informed ethic of "sex within guidelines" reduces the incidence of casual sex and hook-up culture, and thus protects women from the risks of sexual violence compared to secular campuses.

Wilson added that Dordt has community standards and students live within that culture. "Our students are self-selecting into a certain way of living."

Education and Awareness

All agree that education and awareness are key to reducing rape culture behaviors.

Wilson said that when Dordt conducted sexual harassment prevention training, they saw close to 100 percent compliance from full-time staff and 93 percent of students

received training in sexual harassment prevention. "We don't want to be Pollyanna here. We realize we're dealing with young adults who are exploring their sexuality as part of their life, and we have programs to help them think about that and work through it. We have strong community life standards, which state that the only appropriate form of intimate contact is between man and a woman in the context of marriage. Our culture is largely set by what happens in chapel and in the classroom." Wilson said that chapel includes messages addressing sex and relationships and Dordt's dean of chapel, Aaron Baart, speaks at high schools all over the U.S. on sexuality and pornography.

Vanderwoerd noted that [social scientists] have found that certain religious indicators (such as weekly attendance, frequency of prayer, and Bible reading) are inversely related to sexual violence: that is, the more frequently you attend services, pray, or read the Bible, the lower the rates of sexual violence.

Hulst said that education needs to start long before college. "We need to start talking

about porn with our late elementary school/middle school children. First exposure is often around the age of 11. By the time they reach college, they are addicts. Every Christian high school should start support groups for students who are addicted to porn. They are deeply ashamed and don't know what to do. We can help them heal, and in so doing reframe for them what sexual intimacy is really like."

Hulst said we also need to call out those who lift up dating and marriage as the end goal for women.

Cornies has had experience of that. "I can't tell you how many times in my 21 years of student life work I've sat across from an amazing young woman—bright, talented, kind—and she has said to me that she feels like she isn't really worth anything »

NEWS

» because she doesn't have a boyfriend. It is heartbreaking."

She said that teaching the value of listening, respect, empathy, explaining to boys the value of the girls and women around them are all part of the solution. And, she added, "Let's start by not inflicting violence on boys and men and see where that takes us."

Vanderwoerd thinks that many more Christian colleges are becoming more aware, and are developing more comprehensive programs to prevent and respond to campus sexual violence (often drawing on and adapting best practices that have been developed on secular campuses over the past few decades). There is no excuse for Christian colleges to be ignorant about the reality of sexual violence, he

said. "Tragically, it does happen here too, as my research reveals. Christian colleges should have explicit policies and procedures for addressing sexual violence, including procedures and training on how to respond, and programs focused on prevention and raising awareness."

He said that the vast majority of men are not perpetrators of direct sexual violence against women. But men can be complicit in perpetuating rape culture by not informing themselves about the realities of gender-based sexual violence and thus by not speaking out against it.

Staying Counter-Cultural

He also said that Christian colleges should not be apologetic about their commitment to the

teachings and practices of traditional Christianity regarding the appropriate parameters for sexual intimacy. While such teachings and practices are dismissed and even reviled by many in mainstream society as archaic and even oppressive, he said, we should be bold in promoting a sexual ethic that leads to the genuine flourishing that God intended for people.

Vanderwoerd added, "We must resist the pressure to cave in on these commitments in the name of diversity or inclusivity or openness. There is emerging evidence, as suggested in my research, that a commitment to traditional Christian sexual practices actually provides greater protection for women from sexual violence."

—Gayla R. Postma, Banner news editor

More Online

If you haven't checked *thebanner.org* lately, you've missed these stories!



Michigan Church's Recycling Ministry Begins 10th Year

At First Christian Reformed Church in Grand Haven, Mich., one person's trash is another person's opportunity to serve. The church's recycling ministry has grown with the addition of paper recycling to reclaiming scrap metal and electronics. To date, the church has recycled over 1.7 million pounds (about 771,000 kilograms) of metal and electronics and 53,000 pounds (24,000 kilograms) of paper.



Edmonton Man Cycles in Antarctica

Hank Van Weelden, age 50, fulfilled a dream when he cycled in Antarctica in December. Even though he didn't finish the planned route, he said it does not mean it was a failed mission. "My goal was to push myself beyond my limits, to have an adventure, and to see Antarctica." Mission accomplished.



Building Community While Building Forest Trails

Members of Heartland Christian Reformed Church in Chilliwack, B.C., helped turn the forested foothills near the church into The Chilliwack Community Forest trail, opened in May 2016.

Sharing Life Through Stories and Pictures

The men and women labeled as "forgotten" who walk Aurora Avenue in Seattle, Wash., facing homelessness or drug addiction, were given an opportunity to share their stories of both grief and celebration. Approximately 50 people attended an "Evening of Stories" held at Aurora Commons, a neighborhood space for hospitality supported by Awake (Christian Reformed) Church in Seattle. Some expressed their story through photographs that were on display. Leanne Bre Ramsey has served as "artist in residence" at the Commons. "During the storytelling we had more in common than not," she said.



Church members from Brookfield CRC with the van purchased for the Alissa family.

Wisconsin Family Opens Home to Syrian Refugees

As Anza D'Antonio read about people in Syria being subjected to daily bombings, ISIS brutality, and chlorine gas attacks, she wanted to do something to help. So she and her husband, Jason, and their three children opened their Brookfield, Wisc., home to Mohamad and Nesrin Alissa and their four children, a refugee family who had fled war-torn Syria.

"For us, focusing on making a difference with one family made the most sense; we have a home

seven children are in bed, we sit and study English flashcards for hours."

After living with the D'Antonio family for three months, the Alissa family secured a three-bedroom apartment four miles from the D'Antonio's home. Adjusting to life in a new country presents daily challenges. "The obstacles refugees face are many; and employment, language, and transportation felt like a Gordian Knot," said D'Antonio.

Members of Brookfield Christian Reformed Church, which the D'Antonios attend, taught the family English on a rotating basis and drove Mohamad to local ESL classes. They also helped the Alissa family purchase a van and provided numerous household items after they moved into their new apartment.

Even with the hurdles they face, Mohamad is grateful for the new life for his family in the U.S. "He is thankful for his new country. He doesn't take life in our leafy suburb for granted and has expressed repeated gratitude for the charity shown by my family, friends, and fellow parishioners," said D'Antonio.

—Amy Toornstra



The four Alissa boys visiting Chuck E Cheese for the first time.

large enough to accommodate two families on a temporary basis and the infrastructure in place that co-living required," D'Antonio said. "With 11 people under one roof, life is suddenly very different," said D'Antonio. "After the collective

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Adrian Van Giessen
1959-2016

Adrian Van Giessen was a gifted and natural leader who sought out and cultivated the potential in others. He dreamed big and invited others into his vision. A good deal of his ministry involved sending the best leaders in his congregations away to new challenges such as seminary or church planting. Van Giessen passed away on November 12 after a six-month journey with leukemia. He was 57.

After graduation from Calvin Theological Seminary, Van Giessen served congregations in British Columbia and Ontario. Until the time of his death, he was regional leader Eastern Canada for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

In a eulogy, Van Giessen's son, Eric, said it was his father's fervent insistence that God's grace is radical and transformative and infectious that invited faith into his lifeblood and into the heartbeat of their family.

Van Giessen enjoyed joking, fishing on a quiet lake before the world woke up, golfing, and relaxing in his recliner with a bag of chips and a cold beer.

Van Giessen will be lovingly remembered by his wife, Barb, and by three children and one grandson.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Henry (Hank) Zwaanstra
1936-2016

A caring, loving, compassionate, sensitive, and committed husband, father, grandfather, and teacher, Hank Zwaanstra was passionate about the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed and Calvinist faith. A thoughtful, knowledgeable, precise, and passionate professor, he delighted in the achievements of his students who served the Lord around the globe. Zwaanstra died on November 26 after a brief illness. He was 80 years old.

Zwaanstra taught church history and historical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary from 1963-2001. During that time, he was also an advocate for the Calvin Prison Initiative and served on the Celebration Fellowship Prison Congregation steering team for a number of years. He retired in 2001.

Zwaanstra loved the outdoors. He hunted deer in northern Michigan, fished in the lakes and rivers of Idaho and Colorado, and enjoyed downhill skiing in the beautiful Colorado Rockies. He also loved to watch the birds in his backyard feeders.

Zwaanstra is survived by his wife, Claire; by three children and their spouses; and by five grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

NEWS



March for Life in Washington, D.C.



Not Following Us on Facebook?

Here's some of what you are missing!

A story from *Religion News Service* about the Washington, D.C., **March for Life**.

A lovely story from *Burnabynow* about the Shebat family who fled Syria and was eventually settled in Burnaby, B.C., by the **New Westminster Christian Reformed Church**.

A humorous video of an **indoor snowball fight** involving delegates from Classis Hamilton (a regional group of Christian Reformed Churches).

A picture of **Dave De Boer**, pictured as a toddler in 1947 in *The Banner*.

Dave De Boer in a 1947 issue of *The Banner*.



Classis Hamilton delegates.



IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Jack Westerhof
1938-2016

Jack Westerhof was a patient listener gifted with empathy, compassion, humility, and open-mindedness. He was also an optimist who believed that faith could move mountains. Among many things, he will be remembered for his thoughtful exegesis of Scripture, his pastoral work, and his dedication to the congregations he served. Westerhof died of cancer on December 27. He was 78 years old.

After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary and the Free University in Amsterdam, Westerhof served Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario and Alberta and served in campus ministry. He retired in 2003.

In retirement Westerhof continued to work as a trained interim pastor, serving many churches in Ontario and one on Prince Edward Island. Westerhof also served on several synodical committees, wrote curriculum, and is the co-author of *Theirs Is the Kingdom*, a children's story Bible.

He read an eclectic assortment of magazines and loved literary fiction. An accomplished gardener, he also enjoyed fishing, boating, and camping. His adventures provided his family with many good stories to tell.

Westerhof is survived by Pat, his wife of 56 years; by four children and their spouses; and by eight grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Edwin Walhout
1926-2017

Edwin Walhout lived his entire life in service to his Lord. He spent the last day of his earthly life doing many of the things he loved. His final act was preaching a New Year's Eve sermon based on Psalm 90 at his home church, Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. He died on January 1 of a ruptured aortic aneurysm. He was 90 years old.

Walhout spent nine years teaching Bible in Christian schools and served CRC congregations in Minnesota, New York, and Massachusetts. He earned a Doctor of Ministry degree and served as the adult education editor for the Christian Reformed Church, retiring in 1989. He researched and wrote more than two dozen theology books.

Walhout was a member of the Western Michigan Theological Society. Apart from his theological pursuits, Walhout enjoyed bicycling or walking with his extended family on Saturday mornings followed by breakfast.

He is survived by his loving wife of almost 70 years, Alma; by five children; and by 12 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

FAQs

Missional Living

Q How do I discern what it means to “fight the good fight” against injustice?

A There are injustices, both local and global, that need the hands, feet, voices, and courage of people who are willing to align themselves with Jesus’ vision: “The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God’s salvation” (Luke 3:5-6).

First, be willing to move toward the hard places of pain and suffering. Jesus didn’t recoil from a man with an oppressive evil spirit in the synagogue; he moved toward him (Mark 1:21-26). He challenged a young man to go beyond good ethics to “sell all” for the sake of the kingdom (Luke 18:18-29). Jesus modeled pursuing justice for those whose voices were muted by the powerful. He made others’ pain his own. Discipleship and justice are two sides of the same coin. Following Jesus means following him into places of injustice.

Second, seek wise counsel. A friend told me about a grandmother and granddaughter who voted differently in the American presidential election. The grandmother felt a tremendous responsibility for her vote, but she also wanted to learn from her granddaughter. She decided to learn about immigration through taking classes at a local church and talking with her granddaughter. Learning from ministries such as the Office of Social Justice or your local church is a good place to start.

Finally, just do it. Combating injustice might be a third-grade student writing a note of encouragement to a refugee. A single mother working against the scourge of sex trafficking in Jesus’ name strikes a mighty blow against the evil one’s plans.

Fighting the good fight begins when you and I make the decision to no longer stand outside the ring.

Reginald Smith is a program affiliate with the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship and co-interim director of Race Relations for the Christian Reformed Church. He attends Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Be willing to move toward the hard places of pain and suffering.

Faith Formation

Q Our congregation is considering a “youth Sunday.” Is getting teens involved in worship a good idea?

A Getting young people involved in worship leadership is an excellent idea. It is one of the things that will encourage teens to continue in their faith as they get older. If your youth are not involved in Sunday worship on a weekly basis, a youth service or youth Sunday can be a great way to start. In addition, planning a worship service is a great way to help teens learn more about worship.

The objection raised to youth Sundays may be highlighting a problem—that youth are not involved in worship on any of the other Sundays. It is important for *all* members of the congregation to have the opportunity for leadership in worship, regardless of age.

There are a number of ways that people in the congregation, including children and teens, can be part of worship planning and worship leadership every Sunday. Young people can be mentored into music ministry leadership by doubling parts that a more experienced person is playing or singing. Responsive readings, prayers, Scripture readings, greeting, taking the offering, lighting candles, and ushering are example of other places for members to be involved.

Children and teens should be included in the regular rotation of people who are leading worship. This sends a powerful message that they are part of the church family. Involvement every Sunday is much more effective than simply having one Sunday out of the year when teens are involved in worship.

Laura Keeley is a regional catalyzer for Faith Formation Ministries and director of children’s ministries at 14th St. CRC in Holland, Mich. Robert Keeley is professor of education at Calvin College and director of distance education at Calvin Seminary.

Worship

Q I am tone deaf, so singing in worship doesn’t do anything for me. How can I still worship?

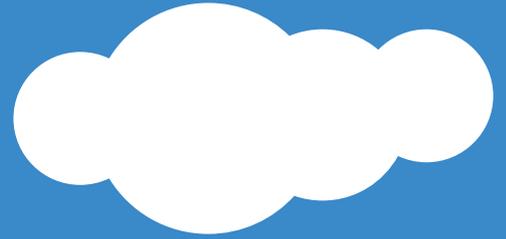
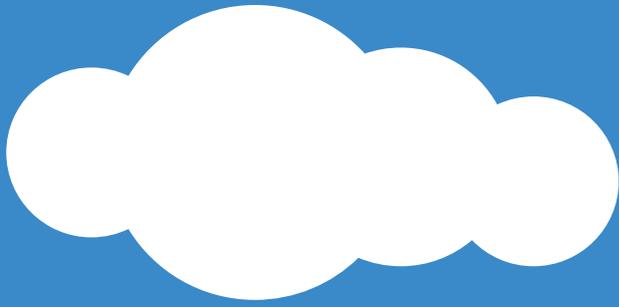
A Before writing yourself off entirely, consider getting some help. A music teacher, for example, may be able to help you discover your singing voice. Singing has a multitude of benefits, including bringing a community closer together. If a few singing lessons would allow you to take part in congregational singing, it would be a source of great joy for the rest of your life.

What if you are truly tone deaf? At the risk of sounding glib, you can “sing and make music in your heart” (Eph. 5:19). There will always be worship actions that will be less fulfilling—perhaps even impossible—for some individuals of the congregation. In those times, we can take part in worship by reveling in the sound of the congregation’s heartfelt praise, speaking a song’s words, or praying for someone nearby. Perhaps you could find an entirely different role for this part of the service, running the sound system, serving as an usher, or helping a young reader follow along.

Finally, we can remind the church’s leaders that on any given Sunday some people just won’t be “feeling it.” A half hour of impassioned singing may be just right for some, but others might not be able to engage at all. Those planning worship should attempt to connect with people of all abilities and dispositions with singing and speaking, standing and sitting, reading and rote, thinking and feeling. This allows us to be one Body; different gifts, but united in Christ.

Greg Scheer (musicblog/gregscheer.com) is a composer, author, speaker, and music associate at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. His latest book is Essential Worship (Baker, 2016). ■

BY JAMES K.A. SMITH



The Gift of the Law: How (NOT) to Be Free



ON THE LAST SUNDAY of Pentecost, the Feast of Christ the King, we come face to face with a paradox: we are liberated by a King—and our freedom is found in submission. This dynamic is captured in an Anglican prayer for that feast day:

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Can you hear the paradox? We are freed by rule. We are liberated by a Lord. How can that be? In our experience, “law” is usually associated with “law and order,” and we associate that with legalism, maybe even oppression. Doesn’t Jesus free us from the burden and judgmentalism of the law?

That is why we might be puzzled when Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:17 that he didn’t come to abolish the law. We sometimes fall into assuming that Jesus is our liberator precisely because he liberates us *from* the law. Or that the gospel is good news because it is anti-law. We can’t imagine law apart from legalism, and we can’t imagine freedom that is unconstrained.

Our confusion and puzzlement stem, I think, from a mistaken understanding of law *and* a distorted understanding of freedom.

Freedom From or Freedom For?

“Freedom” sounds like something we understand. It’s a powerful motif in our culture. Stories of liberation are powerful tropes for Hollywood and novelists alike (think blue-faced Braveheart screaming “Freedom!”). We rally around stories of liberators because liberators save us from those who would deny us our independence, our “authenticity.”

But it’s crucial for us to realize that we have absorbed an understanding of “freedom” that often runs counter to the

biblical witness. We imagine “freedom” in a certain way because cultural stories have unconsciously trained us to do so.

As a result, most of us just assume that freedom means the absence of constraint. To be free is to be autonomous, unfettered, independent. Our freedom is compromised by anything or anyone—whether that be parents or society or rules or religion or institutions or high school principals (what John Hughes movie isn’t a paean to “freedom?”)—that would impose on our free expression, our “authenticity.” Pick pretty much any coming-of-age story from *The Breakfast Club* to *Footloose*, and you’ll usually see a narrative arc in which external forces are negative constrictions on independence, compromising freedom. In these stories, “authority” always wears a black hat.

In the biblical story, “law” is not an oppressive constraint. Good law is a gift that channels us toward flourishing.

A liberator, then, would be someone who liberates us *from* such oppressive constraints and rules and laws and authorities. In these stories, freedom is always freedom *from*, especially freedom from authority. It’s negative freedom.

Because this is the notion of freedom that is in the cultural air we breathe and the cultural stories we drink in, we then read this notion of freedom back onto the Bible. So when we hear that Jesus is a Savior, a deliverer, a liberator, we feel like we know what that means: Jesus has come to free us from all those external constraints that compromise our independence and authenticity and self-expression. Jesus comes to secure our autonomy. Jesus is the one who saves us *from* authority. *Vive la revolution!*

There are just a couple of problems with this.

Be Careful What You Wish For

First, unconstrained independence and autonomy might sound like a good thing—that is, until you get it. For those who are suffering under oppression and

tyranny, unfettered freedom might sound like salvation. But unfettered freedom can become its own sort of prison. Is it really liberating to have the door of your cell opened, only to be led out into a freedom with no direction at all? Is it really liberation if your chains are unshackled but no one helps you understand what you should do next? Do you really want to be left to your own devices? I know myself just well enough to know that I am the *last* person who should be telling *me* what to do! (That’s why I got married!)

We might be approaching a cultural moment where the quest for unfettered freedom is beginning to feel like its own sort of prison—a moment in which utter independence seems less like something to celebrate and more like something to fear. As *New York Times* columnist Ross

Douthat puts it: If you want to see how ugly “freedom” is, try to watch Lena Dunham’s *Girls*. A life without constraints isn’t “free”; it is its own kind of enslavement and burden and paralysis.

We were not made to live without constraints; we were created to live with good constraints. So authority in itself is not the problem; law in itself is not the issue. Jesus doesn’t come to save us from the law; he fulfills the law so that we might live with the grain of the universe. Indeed, you might say that *good* law sets you free.

A Jig for Flourishing

A few months ago, thanks to the prefab help of IKEA, I assembled some closet shelving for my daughter’s room. When I dumped out the contents of the box, there was a mix of pristine white shelves and shiny silver bolts and one odd-looking little piece of black plastic that didn’t seem to fit. Only when I got to the final stage of construction did I realize what it was for.

The odd little piece of black plastic was a jig—not the Irish dance but rather »

the carpenter's friend. In carpentry, a jig is a device that saves time and error because it enables the builder to do the same thing over and over again—make a cut, drill a hole, attach a piece—without having to stop and measure each time. Not only does a jig save time, it also guards against error. If I have to measure each cut, there is more opportunity for my distracted mind to make mistakes. The jig gives me a guide that I can trust. And this marvelously odd piece of black plastic from IKEA was just that sort of gift. Not only did it hold tiny finishing nails perfectly straight, it also positioned them to be perfectly centered every time. The jig enabled me to be a better carpenter.

You might think of the law as that kind of jig—a nudge, a God-given conduit or guardrail that channels you toward flourishing because it prevents you from going over the cliff. This is how the psalmist describes the law: it nourishes, it fuels, it strengthens, it bears fruit (Ps. 1:3). Think of God's law as a conduit that guides you into the life God wants for you, a set of God-given guardrails not to prevent you from roaming but to channel you into your own good.

The Gift of the Law from One Who Loves You

Now, this is not a blank check for “law” in itself. It all depends on who's giving the law. At the heart of this vision is trust in authority. In the celebrated vision of “autonomy” that characterizes our cultural moment, I only trust myself. But I've learned the hard way that that is a bad idea.

The law is a gift *if* it comes from someone who loves you. And what Jesus tells us in Matthew 5 is not only that the God who loves you has given the law, but the God who loves you has fulfilled it. Christ does not abolish the law, but he also fills it—and we are *in* Christ. So we're not trying to earn credit or score points or show off to God. By obeying the law, we're living into the life we're made for.

I said there were two problems with reading “negative” freedom back into the

biblical story. First, unfettered freedom—freedom *from*—turns out not to be good for us. This points us to a second reason we need to think more carefully about freedom: the biblical narrative tells a very different story about freedom. In the biblical narrative, freedom is not freedom *from*; it is freedom *for*. In the biblical story, “law” is not an oppressive constraint that fetters us from self-expression; good law is a gift that channels us toward flourishing, toward *shalom*, teaching us how to be human.

In the biblical story, we are not liberated *from* God's law; we are liberated *for* grateful obedience. This is precisely why the Ten Commandments show up in the third section of the Heidelberg Catechism, the one called “Gratitude.” This is what the Reformed tradition calls “the third use of the law”: it's not just something that convicts us but a gift that channels us to flourishing. It's how we learn to love our neighbors.

I thought about this a lot recently when our congregation's time of confession focused on the seventh commandment: *You shall not commit adultery*. Is this some imposition on my freedom, a limit on my libido, a constraint on my desire? Or is it rather a gift that channels me to find wholeness and healing in monogamy, and benefits my children with a father who never leaves? The reason it struck me so starkly is that this is the commandment my father and stepfather both broke, and I've been living with the brokenness ever since. In that sense, obeying the nudge of the law would have been a way to love someone other than themselves.

Or consider the ninth and tenth commandments: *You shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness*. Can you think of any more direct way to describe what's wrong with predatory mortgages and the injustice of payday lending that preys on the vulnerable? A society that obeyed the law in this respect would not be legalistic—it would be just, and the poor would be freed.

True freedom—*positive* freedom—is being enabled by the power of the Holy

Spirit to live into the way of life that God desires for us (Rom. 8). We're not just liberated *from*; we are liberated *for*. The good news is not only that the God who loves us gives the law, but he has also given us the Spirit to live into it.

You're Expected for Dinner

So the question isn't whether we live under authority, but, instead, *which* authority we live under. True liberation is being invited to live under the authority of One who loves us, and whose law is love. True liberation isn't being unlocked from prison just to be left to your own devices; it is being set free to be adopted as a child of the King who loves you enough to give you direction, to channel your gifts, to direct your path, to give you guardrails that foster your flourishing.

The Lord's Table is a wonderful illustration of this. Think of the family table as that IKEA jig we talked about earlier. In our family, there was an expectation that everyone be home for dinner—an expectation to check in and to be part of the household. This wasn't a legalistic expression of parental authority; it was a hope for familial bonding. When the kids went out the door and we shouted after them, “We expect you to be home for dinner!” what we really meant was, “We love you!”

The Lord of life who has fulfilled the Law for us now expects us to show up for dinner, to sup with him at his Table, to commune with him in this Supper. That expectation is not a burden; his yoke is light. Here are the gifts of God for the people of God. Here is good for a free people, he says. Come and have supper with the King. ■



James K.A. Smith is professor of philosophy at Calvin College and the author of the award-winning new book, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Brazos, 2016). He and his family are members of Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Ashes at the Airport

THE INTERFAITH CHAPEL at Chicago's O'Hare Airport doesn't look much like a place of worship. Tucked just downstairs from the Delta ticket counter, it resembles a classroom with rows of chairs and frosted windows that shadow a constant stream of hurrying figures.

I was spending a too-long layover with *Real Simple* magazine when the announcement blared over the loudspeaker: "Ash Wednesday services start in 10 minutes in the chapel. All are welcome." *Something to do*, I thought. I had forgotten it was Ash Wednesday.

We make a motley crew in that unlikely sanctuary. A young couple with a toddler and a baby stumble in carting a stroller, a car seat, a bag of toys. The mother hisses something in Spanish to the father, who drops the diaper bag on the nearest row of chairs.

In front of me, two teenage boys fidget, their voices a lilting Irish as they discuss their upcoming vacation. An older woman beside me talks on her phone, her vowels suggesting origins on the Eastern seaboard. Others straggle in, alone or in small groups, accompanied by the scrape and squeal of their wheeled cases.

"We prepare for the season of Lent by using these 40 days to ask God to do a little spiritual housecleaning," the priest says. "As we receive these ashes on our foreheads, we show that we are open to God's presence in our lives. In these ashes, we recognize our faults and our weaknesses. We get rid of the clutter and junk in our hearts and enter the Easter season in new birth."

We are invited forward to receive the ashes, and this company of strangers shuffles toward the altar as one. Everyone is hushed. The mother accepts the ashes from the priest and then reaches her palm out to her toddler, swiping back his bangs. The older woman, phone bulging from her back pocket, grabs the priests' wrists



We make a motley crew in that unlikely sanctuary.

as if in supplication as he administers the ashes. One of the teens stands before the priest, and I see that the left side of his face is marked by extensive skin grafts. The angry scars are coated with ash.

It's my turn. I step forward and the priest intones, "Remember you are dust, and to dust you will return." With his thumb he gently makes the sign of the cross on my forehead. The gritty ashes mix with the oil already on my face, the result of too many hours traveling, too many fast-food fumes.

As I turn to return to my seat, I view this tiny congregation from a new perspective. For a little while, we are called from all over the globe. We leave our burdens of luggage and guilt, diaper bags and fear, carry-ons and worry, at our seats. We're reminded, as we take on the biblical symbol of mourning, that in the grand scheme of things, we are minute. In our scarred and greasy incarnations, we present our-

selves to a God who looks upon our hearts. For these brief moments, we set aside our concerns about missing our connections, our anxiety about what lies at the end of this trip, the burden of upcoming travel.

Observing Ash Wednesday at an airport may be the best way to do it. After all, an airport may just mirror our spiritual lives. We put our baggage down for a minute. But then we clutch those burdens again, too distrustful to let them go, too afraid of a stingy grace that would relieve us of the weight, too impatient to let someone else handle them.

I hurry on to Gate B-44. My flight will be boarding soon. And this time I've decided to check my bag. ■



Valerie Van Kooten lives in Pella, Iowa, where she is a member of Trinity Reformed Church.

When Pastors Hurt

by Chris Meehan

A full-blown panic attack hit Rev. Rick Nanninga as he was preaching at Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alta., on New Year's Day in 1987.

Waves of vertigo washed over him, sweat broke out, and he felt like he was going to throw up. Somehow Nanninga managed to get through the sermon. He finished the service and was even able to shake everyone's hand and wish them a happy New Year.

After that, he said, he raced to his office, where he dropped to the floor and, shaking with fear, curled up in a ball. His wife, Elizabeth, found him a few minutes later and took him home.

"After that, I was totally locked up in my house for three weeks. The panic was so big that I thought I was going to die," said Nanninga, who is now pastor of Barrhaven Fellowship in Ottawa, Ont.

Looking back, Nanninga believes the stress of being a youth minister and then an interim pastor triggered the attack.

At home, Nanninga didn't answer the phone. He kept the curtains closed and ran into his bedroom when church members came over with flowers.

"I couldn't handle people. I couldn't handle noise. I thought my role in ministry was done," said Nanninga. "I felt overwhelmed and burned out."

Late last year, Nanninga told his story at a meeting of Classis Eastern Canada as part of a presentation for the new Guide for a Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons, a toolkit produced by the joint Disability Concerns office of the CRC and the Reformed Church in America.

"I believe this guide is a really big deal, and we did a trial run to see how it was accepted," he said. "The reaction in the room to my story was emotional. People



Nanninga sees his mental health struggles as a time where God remade him and deliverance came. He strives to be there for others who are experiencing similar pains and need assistance.

“ Nearly one in four pastors acknowledges having struggled with mental illness. ”

could relate to the stress of being a pastor, to pushing too hard, and what that can do.”

Nanninga was part of the Mental Health Task Force established by Disability Concerns. The task force assists congregations in ministry with people with mental health issues, and the Guide for Clergy Leave was their latest project.

To create the guide, the task force put together a team that included pastors, chaplains, therapists, members of CRC Pastor Church Resources, mental health service providers, and individuals who have experienced mental illness themselves.

Their goal was to develop a free resource that would give guidance to churches and pastors facing difficult situations such as clergy burnout and mental health issues. They provided recommendations on how to coordinate between the church, the pastor, and the pastor’s health care providers, and how to make arrangements for a leave.

In addition to the guide, the team also produced PowerPoint presentations, case studies, and a leader’s guide so that someone with a willing heart could facilitate a group conversation about clergy mental health at a classis or congregational meeting.

“This is not a policy. Churches can do what they want; but we thought these resources would be helpful for churches and pastors who face a difficult situation,” said Mark Stephenson, director of CRC Disability Concerns.

Research shows that nearly one in four pastors acknowledges having struggled with mental illness. A significant number also experience burnout, an inability to keep going in their job for a variety of reasons. Often pastors endure these struggles on their own, fearing the stigma attached to personal problems and dreading what the church might think.

Nanninga played an important role in the development of the new resources, especially because of the challenges he has faced and been able to work through, said Stephenson.

“We are very thankful for Rick being part of the team,” he said. “We appreciated his transparency and his wisdom that comes from a number of years of experience in parish ministry.”

There was no formal leave of absence policy in place at the time Nanninga had the panic attack and then locked himself away at home, but the church gave him time to sort things out.

Early on, he visited a psychiatrist, who listened to his story and diagnosed him with agoraphobia, which is “a fear of being in a situation where a person can’t escape or find help if they experience a panic attack or other feelings of anxiety,” according to the Canadian Mental Health Association.

“This is a fear of crowds. In the spectrum of anxiety disorders, this is a bad one,” said Nanninga. “Before that incident on the pulpit, I had been feeling increasingly worse. I had gone to the doctor, but he never found anything.”

Thinking back, he realized that he had battled anxiety for much of his life, in school and seminary, but it really took hold when he answered the call to his first church in Edmonton.

The psychiatrist recommended facing his fears by visiting the places that scared him the most. The doctor encouraged



Thirty years ago, Pastor Rick Nanninga (shown with his wife, Elizabeth) suffered a panic attack after giving a sermon in his church. His experience in dealing with his mental health challenges provided valuable insight into new resources for churches and pastors.

him to stay there as the panic rose and remain until it eased.

Among the first places he went was a large mall with his daughter. “I believed I would have to stay because I was taking care of her,” he said.

As they walked through the mall, the anxiety, and with it a flood of adrenaline, kicked in. It was terrifying, but he stuck with it, praying and trying to float above the panic. Eventually the fear subsided.

He visited other places as well—a barber shop, a hockey game—and took walks around his neighborhood. »

» Within several weeks, he was standing behind the pulpit as a visiting pastor in a small church in Edmonton.

This was the real test, he said. Churches were at the top of his list of places causing fear.

As he gulped back the anxiety, he glanced in the back of the church and saw several women who had come to the service to support him and to hear him preach.

“These women were struggling with the same thing that I was. They were there because they were nervous for me. It was great; it helped,” said Nanninga.

He made it through that sermon. “I was reconnecting with the world and reclaiming these places in my life,” he said.

The road back wasn’t straight or easy, but he kept at it, finding help in surprising places as he took other positions in ministry. He recalls being called one night, when he was serving Clarkson CRC in Mississauga, Ont., to meet a man who was feeling suicidal.

They met in the laundry room of the highrise apartment where the man lived. The man told him he had become a Christian, but his panic was getting bad, keeping him from his factory job and making him feel anxious when riding the bus or going anywhere. He was at the end of his rope.

“It was an amazing thing,” said Nanninga. “I told the man, ‘I am you and you are me, and God is using this to help us both and let us know that God is in control and will see us through.’”

Over time, Nanninga went through counseling and had to deal with such things as the anxiety that arose when he had to fly in planes for church-related interviews and meetings. He especially recalls the time he and Elizabeth drove a busy freeway into Toronto to attend a March for Jesus. The anxiety caused him to turn back several times.

When they got to the church where the march began, he was unable to go through the doors. Elizabeth Nanninga



At the forefront of church life, it can be difficult for pastors to talk about the mental health issues they face.

went in, and he walked around the city most of the day, calling out to God for help with the pain and panic he still felt.

He returned to the church in the early evening for the concluding service and sat in the balcony as a minister spoke about how pastors were sometimes wounded by their churches and how you could see demonic forces at work in this.

When it came time to pray, Nanninga began to cry and fell on his knees. As people gathered around to pray for him, he felt as if “something very dark left me,” he said.

After that, his preaching improved, his anxiety calmed, and he took more pleasure in his pastoral work, reaching out to church members as well as others who also struggled in different ways.

One of those people was Rev. John Van Sloten, pastor of New Hope Hillside Church in Calgary, Alta. Working as a real estate developer at the time, Van Sloten was feeling lost. He recalls how meeting Nanninga changed his life and inspired him to go into ministry. That was 25 years ago.

“Rick was very much like God to me in his ceaseless capacity to listen,” said Van Sloten. “He always made time to talk. He had a huge discipling vision to come

alongside us in an incarnational way. . . . It is uncanny how many people such as myself are today in ministry because of him.”

Nanninga said that he knows how fortunate he is that God stayed close to him in his times of need and realizes that not every pastor who struggles with mental illness is able to find help and become successful in ministry.

“I am sensitive to other people’s challenges and to the need for healing in their lives,” said Nanninga. “I see my time in the wilderness as a time where God remade me and deliverance came. But I know that doesn’t happen for everyone. My hope has been that I can be there for others when they need it.”

For those who don’t have personal contact with someone like Nanninga, the Guide for Clergy Leave is another resource.

“At the CRC synod in 2014, a pastor asked me to have the Disability Concerns office address the issue of clergy mental health because he had faced the issue himself and it had not gone well,” Stephenson said. “He certainly is not the only one. I’m pleased with the way that we have been able to respond to this pastor’s request and pray that the guide and the supporting materials can help pastors and congregations not just survive a mental health crisis, but make the journey in a healthy way, with a deep understanding of God’s grace and an increasing ministry to everyone affected by mental illness.”

The guide and supporting resources can be found at crcna.org/clergyleaveguide. ■



Chris Meehan is news and media relations manager for CRC Communications and is a member of Coit Community Church.



At a walk-in center in Fort McMurray, Alta., World Renew Disaster Response Services volunteers listened to the stories of fire survivors. Those with unmet needs have been connected with appropriate services.

Hope of Christ Shines Through the Ashes in Fort McMurray

by Kellie Scholma

A young mother stopped in at a World Renew walk-in center in Fort McMurray, Alta., to meet with World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) volunteers. Her family lost their home and all of their possessions in a wildfire last May,” said Barb Bracko, a World Renew DRS volunteer.

“They are struggling to rebuild their lives, find a new home, and deal with the emotional trauma they have experienced. They are also turning to God for strength and direction in their lives.”

Bracko and other World Renew DRS volunteers met with the young mother and many other Fort McMurray residents in October and November 2016. In May 2016, wildfires destroyed roughly 2,400 structures, including homes, and 1.5 million acres of land in Alberta.

“I met one couple who described the fire that destroyed their home and all of their belongings as a blessing because it has drawn them closer to the Lord and strengthened their trust in him. They said that God has provided everything they need since

the fire. They have faith that he will provide what they need in the future. The couple’s friends offered them their basement suite, rent-free, while they recover, and their church will be donating bedroom furniture, a sofa, and a table and chairs when they find their own place,” said Bracko. “They lost all their earthly possessions, but they have gained the ‘peace that passes all understanding’” (Phil. 4:7).

World Renew DRS volunteers meet with disaster survivors to help communities like Fort McMurray make sure that those who need help recovering are not forgotten. Determining who needs help with rebuilding is a key step in the reconstruction process and provides a foundation for World Renew and other organizations to make plans for home reconstruction, which is now underway. It is also a way that the hope of Christ shines through the ashes of people’s lives after a disaster. ■

Walking Alongside Hungry Families

by Jonathan Self

For Nangombe, a mother of five, 2016 was a very difficult year. She lives in the Mwandu District of southwestern Zambia—an area that has suffered two successive years of crop failure due to drought.

Several years ago Nangombe’s husband died, and she has been the sole provider for her children ever since. Like many people in her community, she depends on farming to survive, but this has been extremely challenging given the lack of rain.

World Renew is committed to walking alongside communities such as those in Mwandu. With funding from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, World Renew has responded by providing monthly food assistance to ensure that families have enough to eat. Since July 2015, World Renew has provided food to over 31,500 community members in Mwandu, including Nangombe.

Over the past few months rain has started to return to the Mwandu District, and World Renew has provided families with seeds to plant. With enough rain, farmers like Nangombe will be able to harvest enough food to support their families once again.

Nangombe and her five children received monthly food assistance from World Renew to help them survive after two years of crop failure.



What Will I Give up for Lent?

When Lent begins on March 1, I will join other Christians in giving something up.

When we abstain from certain activities or deny ourselves certain pleasures during Lent, we join with believers across the centuries who have given up things as a form of penance. For some, penance is a sacramental rite. For others, it's a confession—a confession that involves repenting of our sins before the Lord. For still others, it's a way to spiritually fast in order to focus our attention on Christ's sacrifice for us.

Some people may look at what we seek to give up and smile. Giving up chocolate for Lent? How sweet! Giving up Facebook? Hope you have some friends left! But if missing chocolate or shutting down Facebook connects us more meaningfully to God during this season, none of us need criticize.

I've given up many things during Lent in previous years. This year's fast, however, is a bit different. To explain it, I need to back up a number of years.

As a college student, I encountered H. Richard Niebuhr's book *Christ and Culture*. In it Niebuhr explains how believers take different paths to understand faithful living in response to the culture or society in which we find ourselves.

Some believers, he said, adopt the posture of *Christ against culture*. Others embrace *Christ of culture*. Still others see *Christ above culture* or *Christ and culture in paradox*.

As a young Calvinist aware of Abraham Kuyper's assertion that every square inch belongs to God, I found *Christ transforming culture* to be a perfect fit. This approach looks for God's actions between the Kingdom "now and yet coming," in order that we may join in God's transforming work through Christ and the power of the Spirit.



While still staunchly Reformed and Kuyperian, I feel called this Lent to give up my certainty about my role in "Christ transforming culture." It's my way of saying, "I'm sorry, God, for all those times when I assumed I knew your plan and was busily at work in it but ignored others who understood your plan differently.

"I'm sorry for all the times when I voted for people or policies that I assumed would put me on your transforming side but didn't consider transformation that could happen in other ways; all the times when I put my faith in educational systems that I assumed would bring about a new generation of transformationalists who thought and acted like me."

Giving up this assumption that my own way of seeing things is right leaves me feeling a bit naked, vulnerable. It means a loss of certainty; a loss of confidence in myself. It

acknowledges an error for which I need to repent.

For these 40 days of Lent, I'm going to simply seek to be in the church, within the body of Christ. Not acting on a belief that God has called me to be part of his transformationalist troops, but to be one of many parts of Christ's body yearning to become more Christ-like.

I trust that in the coming days many of us will remain focused with phrases like *restoring God's world* or *transforming for shalom*. Some will maintain that candidate A or B, or legislation X or Y, will best accomplish God's transforming purposes. Some will be called to work toward those ends. Yet I suspect that many times there will not be unity of strategy, even among the transformationalists.

As I give up my certainty for Lent, I'll turn instead toward the Beatitudes. And maybe, just maybe, by the end of Lent I'll be able to refine my understanding of Christ and culture and be used mightily by him.

The Beatitudes end, after all, where we find ourselves on resurrection morning: *Rejoice and be glad!* ■

“This year's fast is a bit different.”



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

You add.
God multiplies.

Think Christian: All Ages Welcome

Some say *Think Christian* is a blog for young people, but Mary Remein disagrees.

“There is value for older, 60-something folks like me,” said Remein, a member of Silver Spring CRC in Maryland who retired from a job in human resources in 2014.

“*Think Christian* has made me more aware of God’s presence in places where I don’t typically look for him.”



Mary Remein joined the conversation on *Think Christian*.

Think Christian, an online magazine produced by ReFrame Media, the English language outreach of Back to God Ministries International, provides a community where Christians discuss how to bridge the gap between faith and culture.

“It connects me to thoughtful Christians

who seek to be faithful and Christ-like in a wide variety of settings,” said Remein.

Think Christian offers a starting point for conversations about current topics.

Remein recalls one opportunity when her doctor asked her about a television show. Although she doesn’t watch the show, she had read about it on *Think Christian* and was able to respond with insight.

“This led to an interesting discussion about the brokenness of the world and my source of hope—Christ,” she recalled.

“[My doctor] shared that he’s a nominal Jew, married to a Seventh Day Adventist. He had questions about some of the ‘rules’ of Christianity.”

Faith and culture affect believers no matter their ages. *Think Christian* aims to bridge the gap between the two.

“*Think Christian* is necessary and effective because we’re influenced by what we see and hear through media. It’s a challenge for Christians to sort through the mass of information and form a Christian perspective,” said Remein. ■

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

New Tools Available from Faith Formation Ministries

Churches interested in finding new and creative ways to engage people of all ages and to inspire the practice of professing our faith have some new resources to turn to.

The new Intergenerational Church toolkit focuses on helping congregations cultivate a culture “in which faith is nurtured and relationships are fostered as all ages learn, serve, and worship together.”

This toolkit offers churches dozens of ideas for integrating intergenerational practices into the ministries, activities, and programs in which a church is already involved.

The new Professing Our Faith toolkit arises out of the CRC’s decision to open the Lord’s Supper to children, which means that the traditional process of making a public profession of faith before taking communion is no longer required.

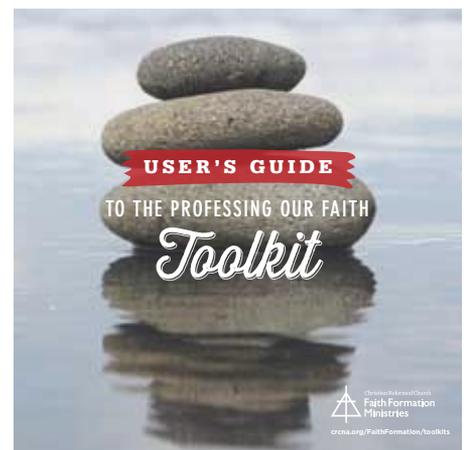
Nonetheless, making a profession of faith, and doing it in fresh and creative ways under the supervision of a congregation’s elders is still important.

“We want to help create a culture in which we feel comfortable professing our faith to one another,” said Sandy Swartzentruber, resource coordinator for Faith Formation Ministries (FFM).

FFM toolkits that were introduced earlier focused on Faith Storytelling, the Building Blocks of Faith, and Welcoming Children to the Lord’s Supper. All of these toolkits are available free at the FFM website (crcna.org/faithformation/toolkits).

“We are making these toolkits practical rather than conceptual. We want you to be able to pick these up and start to use them,” said Swartzentruber.

—by Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



A Sign of Hope in a Hard Place

Pastor Veronica Taveras’s heart broke as she witnessed the children in her community of Batey Bienvenido skip class so they could earn money for their family.

Many of them worked as shoe shiners or even prostitutes. If they didn’t earn enough that day, their parents would punish them.

Wanting to help, Taveras began an after-school program of sorts: preparing hot meals for the children and teaching them Bible stories along with basic reading and writing. But she still wanted to do more.

Proactive leaders like Taveras are the heart and soul of Christian Reformed World Missions’ partner ministry in the Dominican Republic—the Center for Transforming Mission (CTM).

CTM director Mario Matos helps leaders like her take the next step in improving their ministry.



Veronica (center) has a heart for ministering to children in her community.

“We invite these leaders to consider all aspects of why people in their community are poor and why they suffer,” he said.

Training events with Mario helped Taveras realize additional ways to help the children. “Veronica wanted to feed the children but quickly learned there was much more going on in their home life,” said Matos.

As she learned more about the abuse that was happening in the children’s homes, Taveras began inviting parents to classes and helped them understand the harm they were doing to their children.

“Family violence has been greatly reduced in the area since these classes started,” added Mario.

Taveras also began connecting with other leaders in the CTM network and learned more about other children’s ministries in her area. Through those connections, she was able to provide children with medical appointments, school supplies, and even scholarships.

“Veronica’s program has greatly impacted the community of Bienvenido,” said Matos. “Her love and dedication is truly a sign of hope in a hard place.” ■

—Brian Clark,

Christian Reformed World Missions

Finding News Ways to Be Church

An “immersion experience” at Bridge Street House of Prayer sparked visions for Eric Kas’s bivocational ministry in Grand Rapids, Mich.

During his pastoral internship, Kas accompanied the youth group from Caledonia CRC on the week-long experience that included prayer rhythms, urban neighborhood engagement, and being part of a missional community.

When he left Bridge Street, he wondered, “What would something like this look like in our neighborhood of south-east Grand Rapids?”

After graduating from Calvin Seminary in 2015, Kas went on a backpacking trip with three other men from Oakdale Park CRC. While hiking in the mountains, they began to dream about what it would be like to live as a community that emphasizes discipleship and intentional living. Kas and one of



Eric Kas (kneeling) receives prayer during his ordination service.

the men began meeting for daily morning prayer to sort through where the Lord was leading.

A major question they discerned was whether God was leading them to start a church or a community that came alongside the church—a parachurch organization.

By March 2016, they couldn’t shake the feeling that they ought to start a church.

Kas now partners with Home Missions and Oakdale Park CRC to lead what they are calling Good News Gatherings.

As a student, Kas worked on the maintenance team at the seminary. After graduation, he accepted a permanent part-time position working with facilities at Calvin Seminary.

Kas says he intentionally centered on bivocational ministry, and he is passionate about rethinking the idea of church while empowering Christians to live out God’s calling on their lives.

Having a part-time pastor enables members to be the church together as they gather in homes. “[It leads to] a shift in expectations on the ordained clergy,” said Kas. “It re-emphasizes the priesthood of all believers, and helps to sustain this new expression of church.” ■

—Emily Sajdak,

Calvin Theological Seminary

You add.
God multiplies.



F Street inspires art and community.

Creating Together

In a historic church building in downtown Lincoln, Neb., F Street Neighborhood Church is a young congregation cultivating new community and life.

Pastored by Jeff Heerspink, F Street began in 2014 with a vision for a new church in a building and neighborhood that have experienced decline and poverty but are also at the heart of the city of Lincoln.

Beyond the Sunday service, F Street is involved in the community through a farmer's market, block parties, and other events.

The church is refurbishing its small chapel to be an art studio and gallery as a way of drawing neighbors into community.

F Street has received a community engagement grant through Home Missions to help with the initial costs of purchasing art supplies; the studio will rely on volunteers from the church and community.

Jean Stryker, a classically-trained artist at F Street, will volunteer as the primary staff person. Instructors will not only be skilled artistically but will also be followers of Christ with a heart for the community.

Stryker says the studio will “bring the gifts of creativity and beauty to our challenged neighborhood.”

It will be a safe space for people to take low-cost art classes and to come for open studio work hours.

At times, the studio will also be used as a gallery for public events, giving people a chance to showcase their creations.

As Stryker pointed out, “Beauty, while not necessary to survive, is essential for the human spirit to thrive.” F Street Studio will be a place for people to thrive, to grow artistically, and to find community.

F Street was started by Northern Lighthouse Ministries, itself a church with a practice of investing in the community. ■

—by Erica Eizenga,
Christian Reformed Home Missions

SHORT TAKES

Co-directors Named for Pastor Church Resources

Lis Van Harten and Cecil Van Niejenhuis have been named to serve as co-directors of Pastor Church Resources, the Christian Reformed Church office that provides resources to pastors, church staff, councils, classes, and congregations.

Meanwhile, Norm Thomasma, the current director of Pastor Church Resources (PCR), is stepping aside to serve as a senior consultant to the office as he looks toward retirement in 15 months.

“This process is designed to enhance the ministries of PCR and capitalize more strategically on the gifts, experiences, and aptitudes of the directly affected staff by moving toward a co-director approach to ministry leadership,” said Colin Watson Sr., director of ministries and administration for the CRC. ■



CRC Church Celebrates Martin Luther King Jr.



Emmanuel Philips leads worship at Millbrook CRC.

Millbrook Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., was packed on Jan. 16 with people who came to celebrate the U.S. holiday marking the life and legacy of slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Attendees had a chance to listen to stirring music presented by well-known performer Ken Medema and to take part in prayers of lament and repentance offered by representatives of the CRC's Office of Race Relations.

“We need to lament those things that cause our hearts to weep, things on this earth that are not always how we want them to be,” said Pastor Shannon Jammal-Holleman from the Office of Race Relations. ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

Thinking Outside the Box

You've probably seen huge piles of flattened boxes behind a mall or grocery store. Almost everything you buy comes in boxes that are sent to your town from a factory, warehouse,

or farm. The food you eat, the clothes you wear, the books you read—almost all of it was shipped in boxes.

Because boxes are made from paper, and paper is made from trees,

we need to figure out how to reuse and recycle all that cardboard. It's an important part of taking care of God's world.



How a Box Is Born

Most cardboard boxes start out as tall pine trees. After the tree is cut down, the bark is removed. Then the trunk gets chopped up into small pieces. Water and chemicals are added to break the pieces up into mush or "pulp." The pulp is pressed to get the water out. When the pressed pulp is dry, it's cardboard!

Find an empty cardboard shipping box and pull apart one of the flaps. You'll see that the flap is made of three layers. One wavy layer of cardboard (called a "flute") is glued between two flat layers (called "liners"). The wavy layer is what makes the box so strong.

If you want to see how cardboard is turned into boxes in a factory, check out a video at tinyurl.com/BannerBoxes.

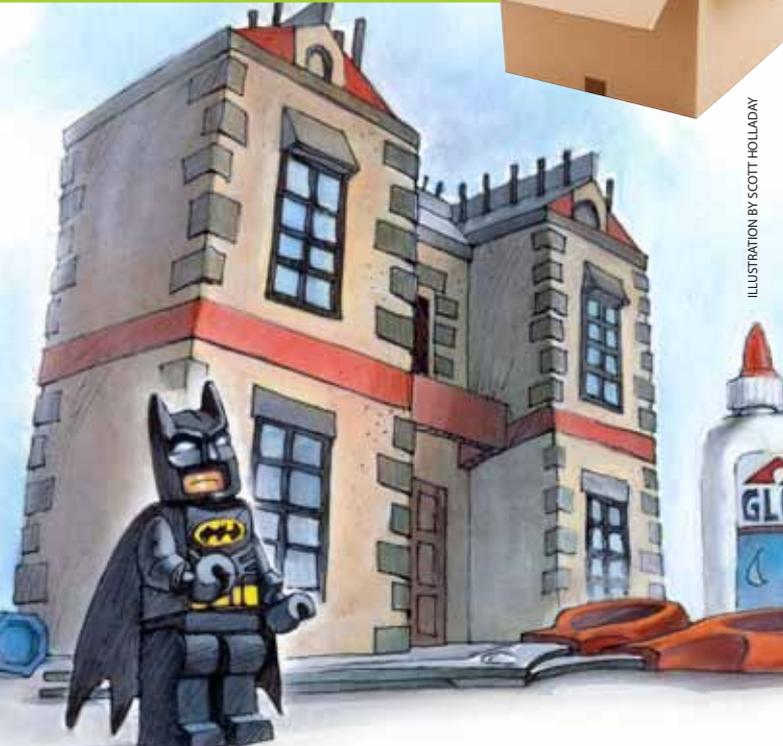
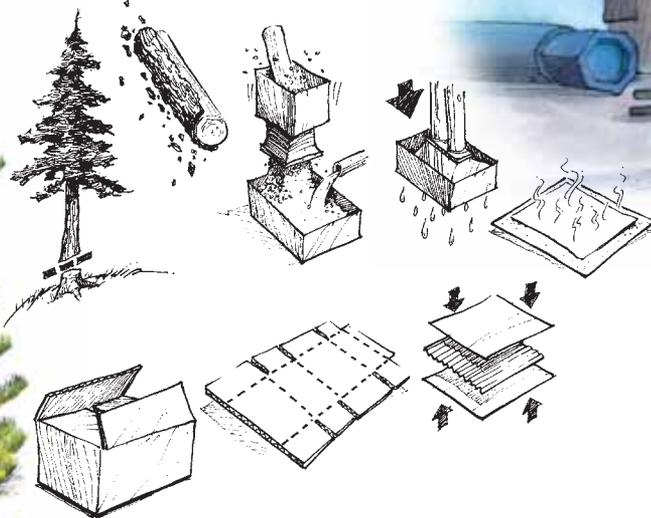


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

Milk Carton Recycling

In Canada, milk cartons are recyclable almost everywhere. But in the United States, some cities have milk carton recycling and some don't. Visit recycle-cartons.com to find out if it's available in your state. If it is, talk with your teacher or principal about recycling all those milk cartons at school!

Box Recycling Tips

Cardboard boxes are very easy to recycle. Just follow these simple steps.

- Take out anything that's inside the box, including plastic or Styrofoam.
- Flatten the box.
- Keep the cardboard in a dry place until it's time to recycle it. Wet cardboard can clog up sorting machines at recycling centers.
- Don't recycle cardboard that has food or grease on it (like pizza boxes). That contaminates the recycling process.



FUN Facts

Amazon ships more than **1,000 packages per minute**. That's more than a million boxes a day!

Recycling one ton of cardboard saves about **17 trees**.

It takes about **two months** for a cardboard box to decompose (rot) in a landfill.

Making recycled cardboard takes **25 percent less energy** than making new cardboard.

In 2016, a Dutch company named Smurfit Kappa set a new world record for the **biggest cardboard box**. It was 40 meters (131 feet) long, 20 meters (65.5 feet) wide, and 4 meters (13 feet) tall.

Cardboard Houses

Last night you probably slept in a bed inside your house. But lots of people in our world slept outside because they don't have a home. If it was cold, they struggled to stay warm. If it rained, they got wet.

In 2007, a woman named Tina Hovsepian decided that was not OK. She used folded cardboard to design a shelter that keeps people warm and dry in an emergency. She calls the shelters "cardborigami."

Now people in more than 90 countries can use Tina's shelters if they're homeless or if their homes are destroyed by bad weather. The people who make the shelters put a special coating on the outside to make them waterproof. To learn more about these cardboard houses, visit Cardborigami.org.

Did you know cardboard is strong enough to make furniture too? Check out these simple chairs!

Can you think of other ways somebody could use cardboard to help people?



Milk Carton Houses

You can turn a small milk carton like the kind you get at school into a perfect house for toy animals or LEGO® people. If you get milk at school, take a carton home and try it. Here's how.

What you need

- Empty milk carton
- Patterned scrapbook paper or construction paper
- White glue
- Scissors
- Markers

What to do

Wash the milk carton and dry it well with paper towel. Then glue the flap closed (you can use a paperclip or clothespin to hold the edges of the top together after you put the glue on.) Use a scissors to cut a hole for a door. Then glue on scrapbook paper or other colored paper to decorate the milk carton. Use markers to add details like windows, signs, and other fun things. You could also make a whole town out of milk cartons, or glue a bunch of milk cartons together to make a castle.



Box Books



The Cardboard Box Book

For more ideas for things you can make out of cardboard boxes, check out *The Cardboard Box Book*. You'll find instructions for making a theater, a mailbox, giant dice, and more!

Box! Castles, Kitchens, and Other Cardboard Creations for Kids by Noel Macneal

This book has loads of crafts to make from cereal boxes, packing boxes, toilet paper rolls, and egg cartons.



What to Do with a Box by Jane Yolen

This is a fun book to read to a younger brother or sister.



Sandy Swartzentruber

is the resource coordinator for Faith Formation Ministries and a

member of Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. She gets really excited when a box arrives on her doorstep.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO **LOVE** YOUR NEIGHBOR?



LAST YEAR a request came from the deacons in our church to sponsor Syrian refugees. That was the beginning of my journey into meeting complete strangers.

Thinking back on their arrival almost a year ago led me to a profound realization. We in the church preach about Jesus' call to welcome the stranger into our midst. But that is a more complex task than we might imagine.

Sponsorship means accepting the idea of welcoming people you do not know, people with whom you have absolutely no connection. It means committing yourself to show the love of Christ, to give yourself unconditionally to complete strangers. You have no concept of their lives or where they come from. You don't know their language or their faith life. You don't even know what they look like.

It's weird, really, to think of willingly stepping into a relationship with people you have never met. Accepting a stranger who stands outside of your gates is a risk. You risk your comfortable lifestyle and your reputation. You risk being hurt. But our church decided to take that risk together, believing God was directing us. Trusting God—who risked all for us—made it possible for us to do so.

Together we agreed to sponsor a family from Syria.

We had no information about the people we would sponsor. We were simply responding to a worldwide outcry for the plight of Syrian refugees. And so, with the blessing of our church, our sponsoring group prayed. We trusted that God would send us the family he wanted us to sponsor, and we agreed to support a family with our prayers, our time, and our finances.

How does one come to love a family from far away, people who have fled a terrible war and are living in a refugee camp?

IT'S WEIRD, REALLY, TO THINK OF WILLINGLY STEPPING INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE YOU HAVE NEVER MET.

How was it possible for us to welcome complete strangers and agree to love them, find a home for them, and support them for a whole year?

It is a miracle of the human heart that in Christ we can do all things. No matter what obstacles are set before us, Christ prepares the way for us. He allows us to grow and learn and to be stretched far beyond our own limits and knowledge. Energized by the Lord for the task at hand, we stepped out in faith.

We agreed to raise enough money to cover the expenses for a family of four or five for a year. These funds were pledged in one day. We then notified World Renew, a relief agency supported by the Christian Reformed Church, that we had the funds available to financially support a family for a year.

In January, World Renew gave us the name of one family—a family of four. And with that tiny bit of information, we said yes. Now we had the names and ages of four people. Still strangers, yes, but upon learning their names, this family became a reality.

Then began a series of miracles. God provided a basement apartment close to the church. The cost of renting this place was below the market value. So we went ahead and rented the apartment even before knowing the arrival date of our family, trusting that this too would work out.

The second miracle was the renters living upstairs. Former missionaries in Pakistan, these people became a part of our journey.

A third miracle was that through this couple who lived upstairs, I met a Christian immigration worker even before we knew the family was coming. This person became an important resource for us after the family arrived.

We counted a fourth miracle when people in our church found *halal* food stores in our neighborhood. We asked the store owners for information on food and what to expect before the Syrians' arrival. Becoming friends with Iraqi and Afghani store owners was another joy in our journey even before our family arrived.

Then came the call notifying us of the date of their arrival in Canada—in just four days. The big push was on to complete the makeover of a rather drab basement apartment into a home. Many people in our church family and from outside the church donated time and goods to set up a warm and welcoming space for them—a task that was completed the day they arrived. For this too, we thanked God.

Finally, we called the pastor and a number of people to come and pray for this new home and to bless this family. That evening the six of us headed to the airport and met our interpreter there. We held a handmade sign in Arabic to welcome the family. We went over a number of things we wanted the inter-

preter to ask the family, then headed on to wait at the luggage carousel area.

When the family arrived with a liaison from the airport, they saw the sign and came straight to us, extending hands to greet us in a sign of friendship. In so doing, they were accepting us as complete strangers!

Through the interpreter, the family told us they were hungry; they'd spent the whole day traveling from Montreal to Toronto to Vancouver without being offered any food. So we called the people who lived upstairs in their home to heat up the soup they had made. With complete trust, the family climbed into our van for the journey to their new home.

There we gathered: the family, the sponsors, the interpreter, and the people upstairs.

This family had been told they would be going to a hotel. What a surprise for them to find out via the interpreter that this was their new home! This was a new beginning for them—and for us. This was their miracle.

Eight months into this journey together, we can say the risk we took at the beginning was double-edged. On one side was our risk, and on the other side was the risk the family took in trusting us. In this equation, the equalizer is God. God has taken the “edge” out of it. We have come to love this family, and they in turn have come to trust and love us. We have gained, and they have gained.

We were “the stranger” to them and they were “the stranger” to us.

Did I know over a year ago that I would have a new family that would call me “mom”?

Did I know that I would sit in a women's Arabic circle and learn about what happened to Christians in Iraq?

Did I know that slowly I would learn some Arabic as I was teaching our sponsored family words in English?

We have learned right alongside each other. And in the process, we have gained wonderful friends and family and so much more.

Before we were born, God loved us and sent his Son into the world to die for us so that we might have eternal life. He redeemed us with his blood.

So why should we fear the stranger who stands within our gates? Rather, we should fear God, and live. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Marianne Van Delft attends New Westminster Christian Reformed Church in Richmond, B.C. She is the coordinator for her church's sponsoring group.

Ruined

by Ruth Everhart

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



RUTH HUIZENGA, BORN INTO A CHRISTIAN REFORMED FAMILY, had always seen herself as a good girl—dutiful, diligent, doing what was expected of her.

In *Ruined*, Ruth shares the traumatic story of what happened to her during the fall of 1978 when she was a senior at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., living off-campus in a house with several other young women. On the evening of November 5, two armed assailants broke into the women's house while they were sleeping. They were robbed and raped at gunpoint.

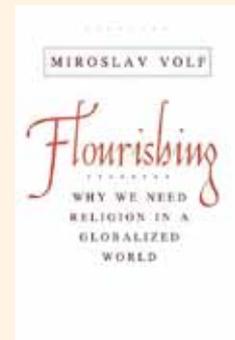
The four-hour-long attack changed Ruth's life forever. The theological worldview she had inherited from her family and church and her "good girl" perspec-

On the evening of November 5, two armed assailants broke into the women's house while they were sleeping.

tive on herself seemed inadequate to house the explosive questions that became her daily bread: "God, what did I do that you would let this happen to me?" And later, when the courts meted out justice, "What about God? What about justice? Was God responsible for that justice? Be careful. Because if He was, then wasn't He also responsible for the injustice—the crime that brought us to court?"

In the chaos, Ruth began to hear God's call to study theology and to enter the ministry. She eventually became a Presbyterian pastor and has served that denomination for more than 20 years. Throughout her memoir, she writes about how she would have counseled her younger self to understand the debilitating feelings of shame and her perception of herself as damaged goods, though in God's eyes there is no such designation.

In this emotionally compelling, achingly vulnerable, and spiritually astute memoir, Ruth Everhart invites readers not only into her pain and healing, but into a theological conversation about the intersection of the divine will and human will. (Tyndale) ■



Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World

by Miroslav Volf
reviewed by Kathy Vandergrift

Miroslav Volf, a leading ethicist, takes on the argument that religion creates more problems than it solves globally and should be privatized. Beyond freedom of religion for all, he provides evidence for a positive and wide-ranging role in shaping globalization. Nihilism, says Volf, is the genuine threat in the context of market-driven globalization, not other religions. Drawing on history, personal experience, and deep Christian convictions, Volf outlines a pluralistic path for religions to contribute to the flourishing of creation and reconciliation instead of violence. His is a hopeful, practical, and realistic voice in a time of growing questions about the role of religion in society. (Yale University Press)

Note: Kathy shared this with us by using our "Submit a Review" link at thebanner.org. Have you read, watched, or listened to something we should know about? You too can send in a review!

The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross: The True Story of Why Jesus Died and Rose Again

by Carl Laferton

reviewed by Jenny deGroot



This picture book delivers on the title and more—in a few pages it tells the

grand narrative of redemption. Focusing on humanity's separation from God through sin, the story uses the temple curtain to explain how God was separated from, yet present with, his people. Jesus' death caused the curtain to tear apart, and we were invited back into God's presence. The text is simple but imaginative, and Catalina Echeverri's strong illustrations support the story. At a time when there are many cute and not-so-accurate tellings of Bible stories with a not-to-be-missed moral punch, carefully written texts like this are most welcome. Ages 5 and up. (Good Book Company)



The Thing Itself

by Adam Roberts

reviewed by Phil Christman

Scientists in Antarctica accidentally discover a creature that exists outside of human perceptual categories such as space, time, and causation. The knowledge turns one of them into an amoral superman and the other, the only man on earth who can stop him, into a

basket case. This novel confronts some of the knottiest problems in philosophy and science without sacrificing pace or accessibility. For fans of C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy, or of John Carpenter's *The Thing*, or of brilliant books, period. (Gollancz)



Lamentations: Simple Songs of Lament and Hope, Vol. 1

by Bifrost Arts Music

reviewed by Robert N. Hosack

Bifrost Arts Music is a group, ecumenical in focus, that mines the history of sacred music in search of lost treasures and seeks to introduce new hymnodies. In that role they produce music for church worship and make related recordings. Using co-founder Isaac Wardell's home equipment, all of the songs on *Lamentations* were recorded in varied makeshift locations. It comes across as a group of intimate friends who have gathered together to help the church learn to lament like Jesus. Available at bifrostartsmusic.bandcamp.com, this digital album shows the beauty of independent, theologically informed, Christian worship music in a popular evangelical culture awash in contemporary Christian music. (Bifrost Arts Music)

The Queen of Katwe

reviewed by Kristy Quist

Phiona is an intelligent Ugandan girl with a natural sense for strategy, making her perfect for chess. The fact that she lives in a slum works against her, but her coach sees her potential and pushes her, along with her teammates, to compete and win against young people with many more advantages. Chess is a way out of the plight of being a single woman in the slums, a reality that is not ignored in the film but is dealt with in a sensitive rather than sensational way. Here is a family movie that is inspiring and heartwarming without being cloying. It's full of strong, loving relationships even in the hardest of times. On disc now. (Disney)



THE LOWDOWN



Art Smarts: Pastors, worship leaders, artists, and others will find lots of wisdom for using the visual arts to deepen worship and faith in Lisa J. DeBoer's book *Visual Arts in the Worshipping Church*. (Eerdmans)



Book Battle: Reality television about books? That's right, March 27-30 will bring the 16th *Canada Reads*, a battle of the books competition on CBC. Only in Canada, eh?



It's Back: *The Shack*, William P. Young's best-selling novel about a father grieving the loss of his daughter,

comes to the big screen this month. (Lionsgate)



Family Ties: On March 26, *Brontë* fans can learn more about their favorite trio of writers from the biopic *To Walk Invisible*, written and directed by *Happy Valley* writer/director Sally Wainwright. (PBS)

MORE REVIEWS
ONLINE

What Youth Ministry Leaders and Parents Wish Each Other Knew

Dear Parents:

You have a hard job. You are the people chosen by God to be the primary nurturers of faith in the lives of your children. When your child is baptized, you promise to instruct your children in the Christian faith and to set an example of Christian discipleship.

Youth workers, along with the rest of the church, also make a promise when a child is baptized. They promise to love, encourage, and support parents and their children as they raise them in the Christian faith. It is with the spirit of love, encouragement, and support that I offer the following answers to the question “What do youth leaders wish parents knew?”

It’s important to make church a priority and talk about your faith with your children if you want them to follow Jesus. Children whose parents make it a priority to participate in the life of the church are far more likely to attend church as adults (*Sticky Faith*, Dean and Clark). The opposite is also true. If parents don’t consider church important, their children probably won’t consider it important either.

It’s essential for parents to talk about their own faith journey with their children. This helps them see the ways God is at work in this world. It also helps children learn to find the words they need to express their own faith.

You really need to know what your kids are looking at online. The world of social media and 24/7 Internet access is new and overwhelming territory for many parents. The digital realm can improve our lives, but it can also cause great harm. It’s important to set clear boundaries when it comes to the digital world. Every family is unique, and you know your situation best, but I encourage parents not to let their kids use their devices dur-



ing meal times, homework time, or after bedtime when they should be sleeping.

Know that much of the social life of today’s teenagers has migrated to the digital world. They are using those devices to connect with their friends. Consider this an opportunity to talk to them about how to honor God with the things they say to their friends online.

Young people need to hear more encouragement and less criticism. If you let your children know you are frustrated when they forget to do their chores, do you also let them know you are thankful when they remember to do chores without being asked? The things we say to our children shape the way they think about themselves. As Ephesians 6:4 says,

“Parents, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Allow your children to make mistakes. In her *New York Times* best selling book *The Gift of Failure*, Jessica Lahey describes what she calls “overparenting.” This happens when we try to protect our children from anything that might frustrate them. They forget their homework, so you drive across town and bring it to them. It can go against every instinct in your body, but you need to let your children fail so that they can learn from their mistakes.

Parents and youth workers are on the same team. We might not see eye to eye on everything, but it’s important to remember that both of us want your kid to know and follow Jesus Christ. If you are facing a difficult parenting situation, I can be your biggest ally. I can also connect you with resources that will help you navigate a challenging situation.

Being a parent is a difficult job, but God is with you every step of the way as you seek to raise your child in the Christian faith.

—Rich Visser

Dear Youth Ministry Leader:

My wife and I have thought about youth ministry a lot. Back when we had all the answers—before we had kids—we were energetic youth group leaders. You name it, we did it: all-nighters, ski trips, cold-call evangelism, go-cart races, week-long bicycle trips, and any number of games that required balloons, string, and shaving cream.

Then we had kids of our own and things got serious. We found we knew much less about raising kids than we thought. Somehow our three survived the early years—to my wife’s credit—and now that they’re college age, with one

Talk about your own faith journey.

foot out of the door, we seem to be yelling less—but praying more.

We wonder often about their faith. We know we have the most influence on their faith development. What should we have done differently? Why did we encourage them to be so independent? Were we fussy enough about their friends? Should we have let them do this—or *not* do that? And what about church?

I’m starting to think that the expectations of each of our roles in the growth of a child’s faith are too often too simple. Child development—every square inch of it—is a complicated business. And the parts are too interwoven to be easily segregated. It will take a village.

Youth leader, know who the students are and what they’re up to at church. A 19-year-old changes her work schedule so she can be a leader at a midweek girls’ club at church, on top of a busy schedule of college classes and two jobs. How did that happen? One of the girls’ club leaders, a young mom, took a chance and didn’t hold a much younger woman’s age or inexperience against her.

Get to know the parents. An elder makes it a habit to take his young son with him on elder visits. Are the topics discussed sometimes over the son’s head? Yes. Is it always appropriate? No. Is this practice given as a suggestion in our handbook for elders? Definitely not. Did this young son see his dad being the church? Absolutely. And his dad didn’t have to be young and hip to have influence.

Hand out reminder notes. A council member has a large note taped to the inside cover of his notepad, “How can a young person get involved with _____?” as a constant reminder when teams are being put together.

Be involved enough with the rest of the church to be able to suggest other advocates for youth. One member of the worship planning team is assigned to coordinate the regular and significant participation of young people in worship.

Know when to push young people to accept responsibilities they don’t think they can handle. A pastor comes across some nice photos on a high-schooler’s Instagram account and asks if she’s available to take pictures at a community picnic coming up.

The church isn’t always for our benefit alone—sometimes you are called to give back. And it can actually be quite fun, this working together. Giving up a catechism class period, the 11th-graders are asked to help corral the elementary-age kids to their positions in the Christmas program.

Dear underpaid and perhaps sleep-deprived youth leader, we know this ministry is beyond you. Do your part, but do it with joy knowing it’s not all up to you. We’ll try to do the same.

—Dean Heetderks ■



Rev. Rich Visser serves as Family Based Ministries Director at Ridgewood Christian Reformed Church in Jenison, Mich.



Dean Heetderks is codirector of Ministry Support Services of the Christian Reformed Church. He attends Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Sola Scriptura

The Reformers recognized subordinate religious authorities.

PHOTO BY COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA

2017 MARKS THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY of the Protestant Reformation. Starting with this Reformed Matters column, we'll commemorate the anniversary by highlighting its five rallying themes: Scripture Alone (Sola Scriptura), Faith Alone (Sola Fide), Christ Alone (Solo Christo), Grace Alone (Sola Gratia), and Glory to God Alone (Soli Deo Gloria).

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION'S slogan about religious authority, *sola scriptura* ("Scripture alone"), doesn't mean what some people think it means. In fact, the way a lot of people have taken it is something all the Reformers repudiated. *Sola scriptura* is not honored by someone sitting in an easy chair with a Bible in his lap, deciding for himself what is true—or by televangelists (or others) declaring they have "discovered something new in Scripture."

At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther boldly responded to the German emperor that he could not recant what he had taught since it was based on Scripture rightly interpreted. But Luther was shaken when the Archbishop of Trier then accused him of subjectivism—of thinking that he alone, in all the history of the church, had understood Scripture rightly.

Such an allegation would hardly bother many Christians in our day. Shaped by our individualistic North American culture, a Christian might well shrug off that challenge with a "So what? I

know I'm right!" Luther recognized, though, that subjectivistic individualism was a path into darkness, not toward light. So he wrestled with the question. The answer he came to, in short, was that Reformation slogan we have all heard but many misunderstand: *sola scriptura*.

For the Reformers, "Scripture alone" did not mean "Scripture all by itself." Rather, Scripture was "alone" as the only *unquestionable* religious authority, not the only religious authority. As Luther struggled with the archbishop's challenge in the months after the Diet of Worms, he came to recognize that his understanding of Scripture was not unique: he found it in many church fathers (the common term for the respected pastors and theologians of the ancient church). He heard it proclaimed in the creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian). He saw it set forth by the ecumenical councils (Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon), which defended the apostolic proclamation of who Christ was and what he had accomplished, and of how that all related to God as Father and as Holy Spirit. These ancient worthies served as religious authorities for Luther and the other Reformers. Luther discerned that the stuff he had come to oppose was the clutter that had obscured that faithful ancient teaching over the course of centuries, down to his day.

For Luther and the other Reformers, Scripture was the ultimate religious authority. It was the norm by which other claimants to religious authority must be measured. If they

stood the test, they could be respected as lesser religious authorities—below Scripture but superior to anybody's private ideas. The Reformers recognized subordinate religious authorities—the faithful teaching of the church fathers, the creeds, and the doctrinal deliverances of the ancient ecumenical councils—since these were faithful to Scripture.

This shouldn't be surprising to us. We affirm *sola scriptura* but we also embrace what are called secondary standards: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. These three "forms of unity" are superior to any of our private opinions; they are meant to guide us into faithful understanding of Scripture. We also accept the contemporary testimony "Our World Belongs to God" and the Belhar Confession as guidance for life in the present day—superior to private judgment, normed by Scripture.

Living, thinking, and believing like this honors what the Reformers intended in their bold affirmation about religious authority, *sola scriptura*. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



James R. Payton, Jr., is the author of *Getting the Reformation Wrong: Correcting Some Misunderstandings* (InterVarsity Press, 2010). He

is professor emeritus of history, Redeemer University College, and attends Ancaster Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ont.

ADS

Deadlines: April issue is 3/7/2017; May issue is 4/4/17. Details online.

Prices: Most ads are \$0.39^{US} per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.32^{US} per character and \$50 per photo applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements.

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

Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that **Matthew Kaemingk** 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

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS ZEELAND will meet on Thursday, May 18, 2017, 4PM, in the Bethel CRC of Zeeland.

Financial Aid

STUDENTS FROM CLASSIS ILLIANA who intend to engage in full-time ministry in the Christian Reformed Church after theological studies are now invited to apply to the student fund committee for educational assistance for the 2017-18 school year. Applications forms for conditional grants and further information can be obtained by contacting Pastor Dan Roels, pastor.dan.roels@gmail.com or 708-474-7717.

Retirement

PASTOR GARY BOMHOF is retiring June 2017 after 40 years of faithful service in Ont., Man., and AB. His retirement will be marked with a special worship service at 10:00 AM June 4, 2017 at First CRC, Red Deer, followed by presentations and lunch. Please send pictures &/or stories to Crcbomhof1976.2017@gmail.com or First CRC, 16 McVicar St., Red Deer, AB T4N 0M1.

Congregational

Church's 75th Anniversary

FIRST CRC IN MOUNT VERNON, WA is planning its 75th anniversary celebration May 12-14, 2017. For information call 360-336-2405 or email secretary@firstcrcmv.com

General

WITH GRATITUDE TO GOD, Immanuel CRC of Wyoming, MI invites all present and former members to a final Celebration Service on May 7 @ 9:30 to praise God for the 68 years of ministry in the Wyoming area.

Miscellaneous

MOLINE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL Moline, MI - Celebrating 100 Years of Faithful Growing - Picnic June 3, 2017, 3-7 PM. www.molinechrsch.org. 616-877-4688; Facebook

Birthdays

95th Birthday

GERTRUDE VAN HAITSMAN of 230 S. State #99 Zeeland MI 49464 will celebrate her 95th birthday on March 9. We praise God for His blessings and faithfulness for these many years.

90th Birthday

PETER TERPESMA celebrated his 90th Birthday on Feb. 14. His wife, Mary and sons David, Peter & Sally, Dan & Jessica & 8 grandchildren & 5 great grandchildren wish him a Happy 90th. Greetings may be sent to 9719 Avalon Dr. Parrish, FL 34219

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

GEERS, Harold and Elaine of 725 Badwin, Jenison, MI will celebrate their 70th anniversary on Feb. 28. Their family praises God for His faithfulness!

60th Anniversary

KERKSTRA Ray and Betty (Bolt) of 16138 Hackney Dr. Orland Park, IL 60467, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on March 8, 2017. Their 5 daughters and spouses, 14 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren are grateful for their love, encouragement and witness of Christ's love in marriage and in life.

Obituaries

BRUINIUS, DOROTHY M. "Dot" Bruinius, nee Hartog, age 79, of Frankfort, IL passed away on January 4, 2017. Beloved wife for 61 years to Bernard "Butch" Bruinius. Loving mother of Bernard Jr. (Karen), Terri (Craig) Boonstra, Glenn (Valerie), Dawn (Scott) Gibson and the late Jackie and John. Cherished grandmother of 16 and great-grandmother of 7. "Mother" of My Dung Cong (Tuan Tran) and their family. Dear sister of Jacqueline (George) Van Ryn, Henry (Bonnie) Hartog, Karen (late Terry) Blummer and Diane (John) Decker. Fond aunt of many nieces and nephews.

BRUXVOORT, CORNELIA (Kay), age 94 of Newton, IA, went home to be with her Lord on January 13, 2017. She was preceded in death by her husband, Herman, and is survived by her son, Don (Theresa) Bruxvoort; her 3 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren.

DEBOER, PETER POUSSMA, age 87, from Grand Rapids, MI, went to be with his Lord and Savior on Tuesday, January 10, 2017. Peter is

survived by his wife, Joy; his children: Bonnie Nyenhuis, Walter and Jesslyn DeBoer, Peter and Nancy DeBoer, and Susan and Bill Steketee; his 11 grandchildren; and his 5 great grandchildren. Soli Deo Gloria!

FAUBLE, DARLENE, age 70, of Wyoming, Michigan went home to be with the Lord on December 14, 2016. She was preceded in death by her father, Lloyd, and brother, Ray; and is survived by her mother, Barbara, siblings: Gloria Fauble, Kathy McIntyre Fauble, Douglas and Claire Fauble, and Penny and Philip Thomas; and many nephews and nieces.

KLOMPIEN, JENNIE, age 88 of Manhattan, MT went home to her Lord on 12/25/16. She was preceded in death by her husband, Clarence, and sons Edwin and Ron. She is survived by her sons Larry (Lorraine), Wayne (Linda), Ken (Cindy); daughter, Cheryl; daughter-in-law, Marlys, 17 grandchildren, 39 great grandchildren, and 1 great great grandchild. Memorials to Manhattan Christian School, 8000 Churchill Road, Manhattan, MT 59741 are appreciated.



LEENSVART, MAXINE W. RYSKAMP, age 96, passed away in Denver, CO January 15, 2017. She was a member of Third CRC where a Memorial Service was held January 19, 2017. She was originally of Grand Rapids, MI and taught for 35 years at Sylvan Christian School. She was preceded

in death by her husband of 21 years, Jacob, sister Elaine Hofman (Len), son-in-law Dick (Shirley). Survived by sister Joyce Pettings, brothers-in-law, Paul Pettings and Leonard Hofman. Also, survived by step-children, Linda Geels (John), Nancy Bierling (Bob), Marcia Mains (Jeff), Jean Fielding (Bob), Joan Pettings (John), 16 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Memorial gifts may be sent to: Christ's Body Ministries, P. O. Box 18834, Denver, CO 80218-0834. Mickey will be greatly missed by her family. "Blessed are those who die in the Lord."

Think you can change
the world from a classroom?

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SHARDA, KATHLEEN, of Grand Rapids, MI was called home by her Lord on Saturday, January 14, 2017. She is survived by her husband, Martin Sharda, MD; her children: Joan Sharda, Christine Sharda, Claire

and T. J. Sapunarich, Anne and Scott Rush, and Tom and Jennie Sharda; and her grandchildren Hannah, Andrew, Rachel, Grace, Rebecca, Caleb, Jessica and Sarah Grace.

SJAARDEMA, DON, 94, of Bradenton, Florida died Jan. 21, 2017 in Bradenton, Fla. He is survived by wife, Ruth, of 71 years, 3 children, 10 grandchildren and 19 greats. Services were held at Bradenton CRC, with burial in Arlington.

VANDER POL, IRENE (Vander Veen) age 92, of Ontario, CA went to be with her Lord and Savior on Dec. 25, 2016. Preceded in death by her husband, Marines. Survived by a daughter Joanne (Fred) Rosenbloom, grandchildren, Brian (Laura) Hogerhuis, Steve (Dawn) Rosenbloom, Robin Rosenbloom, and 3 great-grandchildren.

VELTKAMP, MARVIN J., age 86, of Grand Rapids, MI was called to his heavenly home on Wednesday, January 18, 2017. Marve is predeceased by his wife, Irene (Keegstra) and is survived by son, Randy (Debra) Veltkamp of Holland, MI; daughter, Karen Poortenga of Grand Rapids, MI; son, Marvin (Joy) Veltkamp of Kalamazoo, MI; 9 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

VELZEN, JANE (RYSKAMP), age 95; February 3, 2017; She was preceded in death by her loving husband of 67 years, Bernard Henry Velzen. Jane leaves behind her children: Pat and Gary Nederveld of Grand Rapids, Mary Jane and Jim Voogt of Colorado, Ginny and John Bylsma of California, and Jack and Sally Velzen of Minnesota; grandchildren: Allen and Emily Nederveld, Anne Nederveld and Bob Frazho, Steve and Cindy Nederveld, Eric Voogt and Alison George, Rachel Voogt-Clayborn and Trevor Clayborn, Jason and Tara Voogt, Dustin and Cindy Bylsma, Joel Bylsma and Jeanette Feddes, Andre Bylsma, Ben Velzen, and Chris Velzen; 24 great grandchildren.

VEN HOUSEN, ANNE, nee Van Byssum, age 95, went to be with her Lord on January 9, 2017. 522 Birchwood Dr, Yorkville, IL 60560. Beloved wife of the late William; loving mother of Yvonne (Edward) Buikema and Lu Ann (William) Stefek; devoted grandmother of Todd (Carolee) Buikema, Amy Buikema, Christopher Stefek (John Caine), and Kevin (Kristin) Stefek; great-grandmother of Isabella, Kaitlin, Nicholas, and Lauren Stefek, Peter, Matthew, Joseph, and Andrew Buikema; fond sister of the late Edith Tazelaar; fond aunt of Myrna Dryfhout. Memorials to Providence Life Services are appreciated.

ZYLSTRA, JEAN (Teune) age 94 of Western Springs, Illinois passed away November 4, 2016. She is survived by her husband Ed, children Patricia (Byron) Hoekstra, Paul (Nancy) Zylstra, Cynthia (Carl) D'Acosta, 8 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.

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

CHAPLIN Unique Chaplain Position; Christian Health Care Center in Wyckoff NJ, a faith-based facility founded by RCA and CRC church leaders over 100 years ago and that specializes in both mental health and elder care, is looking for candidates to join an active and vibrant pastoral care team that includes four other chaplains. The opportunity exists for a full-time, long-term care chaplain to serve as the primary chaplain in the skilled nursing care program. Applicants should be ecclesiastically endorsed, ordained and be able to work with a diverse population from a reformed perspective. Board certification is preferred as is experience in working within an elder care context. Job descriptions are available upon request. Interested candidates please contact Rev. Jim Knol, Director Pastoral Care at 201-848-5801. www.christianhealthcare.org

HEALTH AND WELLNESS COUNSELOR (20 hrs/week) Support a comprehensive developmental counseling program for all students to improve the educational outcomes for those experiencing barriers to learning. Duties: working with parents to facilitate and conduct evaluations and referring students as needed for additional support. Qualifications: Master's Degree in counseling or social work with appropriate licensure and clinical experience. Please contact Lance Engbers, Headmaster, at lengbers@whitinsvillechristian.org or 508-372-3246.

Church Position Announcements

PASTOR, NEERLANDIA CRC: Have the opportunity to experience Alberta's clear blue skies and Northern Lights all within driving distance of the majestic Rocky Mountains. Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church, located in the rural community of Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada, is seeking a full time ordained pastor. We are an active, multi-generational congregation of 150 families with a strong foundation of over 100 years of ministry. Our style of liturgy is a blend of contemporary and traditional with a strong emphasis on music and praise. We are looking for an experienced pastor with commendable preaching and teaching skills who looks forward to forming a cohesive multi-pastoral team. To explore this opportunity with us, please contact Simone Tuininga, mstuininga@xplornet.com.

CO-PASTOR: Trinity CRC, Edmonton, Alberta is growing and seeking a co-pastor to complement our current pastor and youth director in Biblical preaching, visionary leadership, and pastoral care in our increasingly diverse and vibrant congregation. Direct inquiries to TrinityCRCpastorsearch@gmail.com

PASTOR Faith CRC of Tinley Park, IL, is prayerfully seeking a full-time Senior Pastor. To explore this opportunity, please contact Doug Terpstra, preferably by email at doug@alanhorticultural.com or by cell at 630-514-0993

PASTOR Searchlight Ministries in Jamestown, Michigan is a community-minded church, which strives to be authentic, accepting, come as you are (both inside and out). Searchlight is focused on building relationships, committed to an open and vulnerable communal prayer time, and serving others. If interested, contact Herb Kraker at herb@dialogos-studies.com or Lynn Kraker at 616-821-8440.

SEARCHING FOR FULL-TIME PASTOR We are Calvin CRC in Holland, MI. We have thriving ministries, vibrant worship, friendly people, and lots of energy. What we are missing, though, is a pastor to work with us to reach the lost and challenge us with motivating messages. Our mission is to Seek God's heart and Share God's love. If you can hear God calling you in our direction, please send us your resume: searchteam@calvinministries.org or Search Team, Calvin Church, 387 W. Lakewood Blvd., Holland, MI 49424.

2 PASTORS NEEDED 2 Pastors – Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church, Calgary, AB –seeking 2 pastors to serve our congregation in Calgary, Alberta. We are a large multigenerational community-focused church which utilizes a contemporary liturgical worship style. Calgary is a city that offers everything - from sports to arts, prairies to mountains. Job descriptions will be creatively crafted to compliment God given gifts to serve our church community in the areas of preaching, education, worship, pastoral care and community engagement. To receive a church profile or to learn more about our current pastoral vacancies; please contact Hessel Kielstra: email hessel@vyefield.ca or phone 403-669-0714.

YOUTH MINISTRIES DIRECTOR North Street CRC, (Zeeland, MI) a church that strives to be "deeply rooted, ever growing, and bearing fruit," seeks a full time youth director to help us in leading and directing our youth programs. Please visit our website www.northstreet-crc.org or email Brian at northstreetsearch@gmail.com for more information

PASTOR: Heritage CRC, consisting of 675 members in Byron Center, MI is seeking a full time Pastor of Preaching and Worship. Is God calling you to serve in this growing West Michigan community? Please indicate your interest in this position to searchteam@heritagecrc.net.

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 crrc.vacancies@gmail.com to request our Church Profile and to forward your Ministerial Profile.

LEAD PASTOR Edina (Minneapolis), MN: Calvary CRC seeks to replace our retiring lead pastor. To explore this opportunity, contact pastorsearch@calvarycrrc.net

PASTOR: First Christian Reformed Church in Brandon, Manitoba is looking for a full-time pastor. At this time we are vacant and our door is open to welcome a new pastor to our church and community. Visit our website at www.firstcrrcbrandon.com and/or contact us at firstcrrc@mymts.net

PASTOR Westend CRC in NW Grand Rapids is looking to hire a new pastor. We're a multi-generational church with over 350 active members and have welcomed many new young families in recent years. We're looking for someone to love us, challenge us, and join us in reaching out to our community. If you're interested, please visit www.westendcrrc.org or email June Atsma at JuneAtsmaSearchWestend@gmail.com. There are some great things happening at Westend, and we would love to have you be a part of what God is doing here!

FULL TIME PASTOR Bridge of Hope Ministries, a CRC church in Sioux Center, IA, is seeking a pastor to lead our congregation. "Come as you are, Grow in grace, Go and serve others." Please visit the employment tab on our website for more details. www.bridgecrrc.org.

FULL-TIME WORSHIP DIRECTOR: Shalom Christian Reformed Church (Sioux Falls, SD), a growing and vibrant congregation, is seeking a dynamic full-time worship director. This person must display a strong personal relationship and love for Jesus Christ. The worship director will have a passion for leading worship that supports Shalom's vision statement: Growing in Christ, Showing God's Glory. The qualified applicant will need to be capable of expressing our Reformed faith within the worship setting utilizing a broad range of musical skills. Three years or more of experience is preferred. If interested, please visit our website for a full job description: http://shalomcrrc.org/about/career

PASTOR: Gateway Community CRC in beautiful Abbotsford, BC, Canada is seeking a full time Pastor of Preaching and Congregational Care for our congregation of 664 members. We are seeking an individual who is people-oriented and has a strong desire to faithfully preach the Word, nourish the spiritual growth of the congregation through pastoral care and teaching and to join a growing, energetic team. Visit gatewaycrrc.org for church profile and full ministry role description. Please indicate your interest by contacting Marcel deRegt, Executive Pastor, at marcel@gatewaycrrc.org or call 604-859-5908

WORSHIP COORDINATOR First CRC in St. Thomas, Ontario is seeking to fill a 16-20 hour per week position for a Worship Coordinator. This position requires music proficiency and an ability to plan a variety of worship styles in a multi-generational setting within the Christian Reformed perspective of Blended Worship. Visit our website at www.firstcrrcstthomas.com for more details. Email a cover letter and resume to firstcrrcstthomas@gmail.com or by mail to 320 Elm Street, St. Thomas, ON N5R 1J7

WORSHIP DIRECTOR Talbot Street Church in London, Ontario is seeking a full-time worship director. Modern missional bent with guitar musical skills required. Inquires at office@talbotstreetchurch.com

DIRECTOR OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION (20 hrs/week) Provide oversight of all Spiritual Formation activities to ensure program excellence, spiritual influence, and a cohesive experience for faculty, staff, and students. Duties: chapel planning/leadership and service on the Spiritual Life Committee. Qualifications: experience in chaplaincy or youth ministry. Please contact Lance Engbers, Headmaster, at lengbers@whitinsvillechristian.org or 508-372-3246.



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

Dr. Eric Forseth, Provost
Dordt College
498 4th Ave NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697
provost@dordt.edu

www.dordt.edu/prospective_employees/faculty/

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HOPE HAVEN CEO Hope Haven Ministries is a \$40 million non-profit organization based in Rock Valley, Iowa. Affiliated with the Reformed Church, it began in 1964 as a way to meet the needs of children in the area with hearing impairments. Today, it serves special needs individuals and their families living in 30 Midwest communities through residential, employment, mental health, recovery, religious and international outreach services. Hope Haven is looking for a leader with a strong faith and financial background. The next CEO should be someone who is comfortable working with a board structure and in a highly regulatory, and ever changing, social services industry. Tommy Thomas and Laura Coverstone of JobfitMatters are assisting Hope Haven in this important search. To view an Introductory Video about the search, the full Opportunity Profile and Process of Candidacy, see the posting at www.jobfitmatters.com/hope.

IN HOME-CARE COMPANY, small, locally owned, non-medical, is hiring part-time. We are looking for people who enjoy working with seniors, have reliable transportation, and a flexible schedule, including some weekends. Send enquiries to: truebluecaregivers@gmail.com

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LAKE FRONT LOG COTTAGE 2-3 bdr, sleeps 8, 30 min N of GR. Sandy swimming, incl. boat, swim raft, kayaks. All sport lake \$750/wk Call/Text Shawn for photo's 616-240-3915

FOR RENT-SUMMER COTTAGE across from Grand Haven, Michigan City Beach. Call 616-842-7366 for available dates. Rents from Saturday to Saturday. Walking distance to Boardwalk and downtown activities.

COTTAGE FOR RENT South Haven, MI, one block from South Beach, 2 bedroom, 2 bath, Sleeps 6. Contact: billboersma@hotmail.com or 616-240-3452

COTTAGE 4 RENT Duplex cottage. Sleeps 15. Near Howard City MI On Winfield Lake, all sports lake 616-875-7302

LAKE MICHIGAN COTTAGE Located in Edgewood Beach. 4 miles north of Holland State Park. Cute 2 BDR/1BA with screened porch and deck. Accommodates 4 adults or 2 adults/3 children. Private beach 2 minutes walk away. Available select weeks in 2017 @ \$850/week. 434-2930612 or Betsy.bloom1@gmail.com

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LAKEFRONT COTTAGE 4 RENT in Sand Lake, MI. 20 min. N. of GR. Sleeps 7. Available July 15-22 and July 22-29. \$1000.per week. Dock and rowboat. Call 616-396-1549

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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 clients unique needs. Learn more about us at truebluecaregivers.com or call 616-406-6819. Owned, by Calvin alums who serve the greater Grand Rapids area. True Blue Caregivers, the small company with a big heart.

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There's a lot to celebrate about Canada. As a nation of many peoples, we have plenty to work on together, like equity for Indigenous peoples and refugees. The Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue's new Action Centre helps connect you with your elected officials for advocacy on issues that matter to the CRC in Canada.

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Crossroad Bible Institute is now Crossroads Prison Ministries



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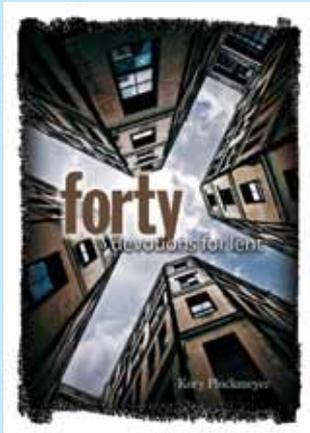
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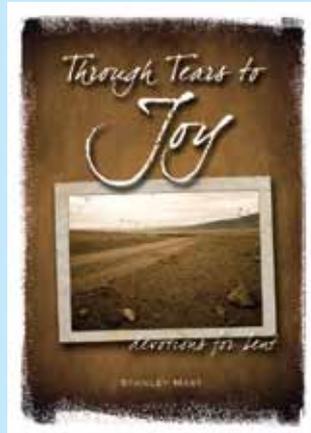
Free Resources for Lent in the Digital Library

The new CRC Digital Library gives churches and members free, online access to hundreds of Faith Alive titles, including these resources for Lent and Easter. Visit crcna.org/Library

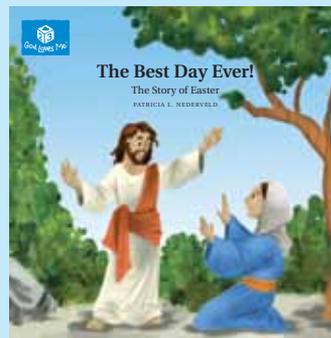
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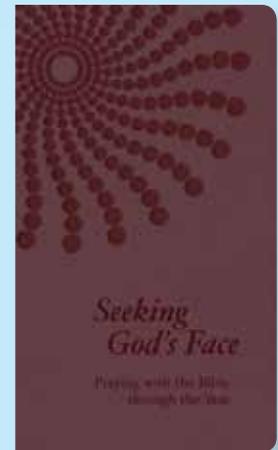
This Lenten devotional guide explores the biblical motif of “forty” through the stories of Noah, Moses, the exodus, Elijah, and Jonah. All of these narratives foreshadow the gospel—they are reminders of Easter morning in light of the “forties” that have come before.



This collection of daily Lenten devotions reflects on the meaning of Jesus’ suffering and the meaning of suffering in the world. Follow Jesus on his journey, and see how he transforms sorrow into joy.



This *God Loves Me* storybook tells the story of Easter (found in John 20:11-18) in simple words a young child can understand, along with a prayer and suggestions for learning-through-play activities.



The Lent section of *Seeking God's Face* offers a user-friendly approach to the “daily office” form of prayer and devotions. Each day of prayer includes an invitation into God’s presence, readings from a psalm and other Scriptures, prayer suggestions, and a closing blessing.

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 letters@thebanner.org. Thanks!

Following a discussion about miracles, the teacher took the class to the zoo. As they walked along, they saw a lion and lamb in the same cage. The zookeeper overheard one of the amazed students say, "That's a miracle!"

"Not really," he replied. "Every day I put another lamb in the cage."

—George Lieuwen

According to my medical records, my blood is Type C. But I think it's a Type O.

—Dave De Wit

Patient: How much will it cost to have this tooth pulled?

Dentist: Fifty dollars.

Patient: You charge fifty dollars for thirty seconds of work?

Dentist: Well, if you prefer, I can work more slowly.

—Dick Bylsma

A four-year-old prayed: "And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."

—Carla Van Den Hout

A patient was wheeled into an emergency room. The nurse on duty asked the patient, "On a scale of one to ten, with zero representing no pain and ten repre-

senting excruciating pain, what would you say your level is now?"

The patient shook her head. "Oh, I don't know. I never was very good with math."

—Jan Veltkamp

The person who invented the door knocker got a No-bell prize.

—R. Smit

My husband was having breakfast at a local diner with our 2-year-old granddaughter. Because she was talking rather loudly, he asked her to talk a little bit softer. She replied, "Why? We're not in church!" He told her that she might be bothering some of the other people. Before he knew it, she blurted out loudly, "Sorry, people!"

—Diana Leyendekker

Joseph of Arimathea arrived home one Friday night and

told his wife that he had given their tomb to someone else to use.

A bit upset, she demanded, "How could you do that? After all the time and money you spent building it! It was just finished and has never been used. What are we going to use now for ourselves?"

Joseph answered, "Don't worry. It's only for the weekend."

—Sue Lauritzen

What can you do with a sick chemist?

If you can't helium or curium, then you have to barium.

—L. Knoops

A father was skating on an outdoor rink with his two children, ages 8 and 4.

A TV reporter spotted them and asked if they had made New Year's resolutions.

"Yes," replied the dad. "I am going to the gym more often and am going to watch my diet."

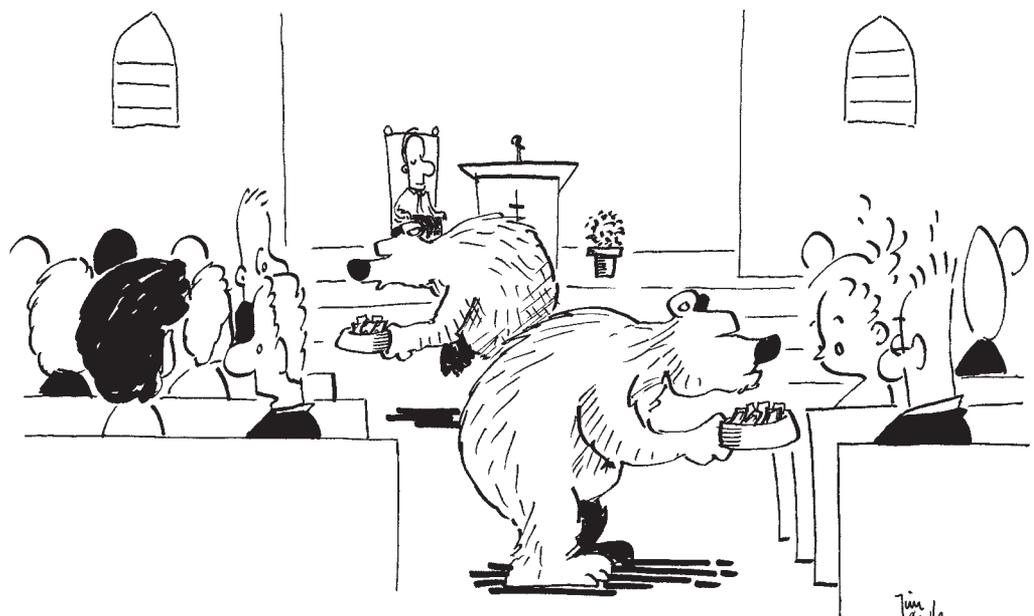
The 8-year-old, nodding all the while, said, "I am going to eat only healthy food, no junk food."

The young lad waited his turn, and then said, "I am going to eat pizza every day."

—Betsy McClure

When our granddaughter was 4 years old and her brother was 9 months old, their mom warned little Kyle several times not to climb onto a certain end table, as he was likely to hurt himself. After he ignored her and kept trying to do so, his big sister Megan said to their mother, "He's being real naughty. I thought that's why we had him baptized!"

—Sandy Sall



"And they have a tendency to collect more, too . . ."

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