

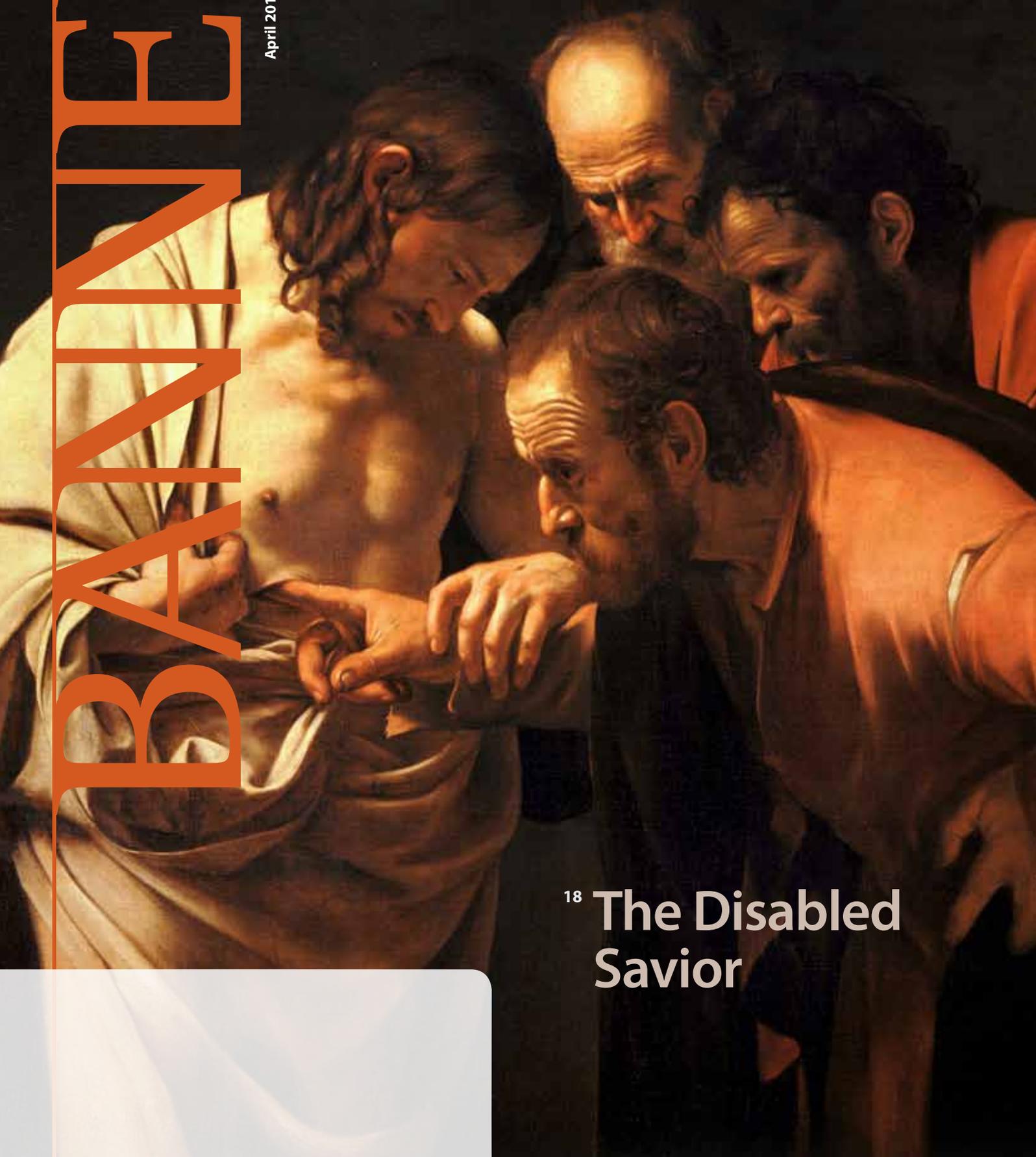


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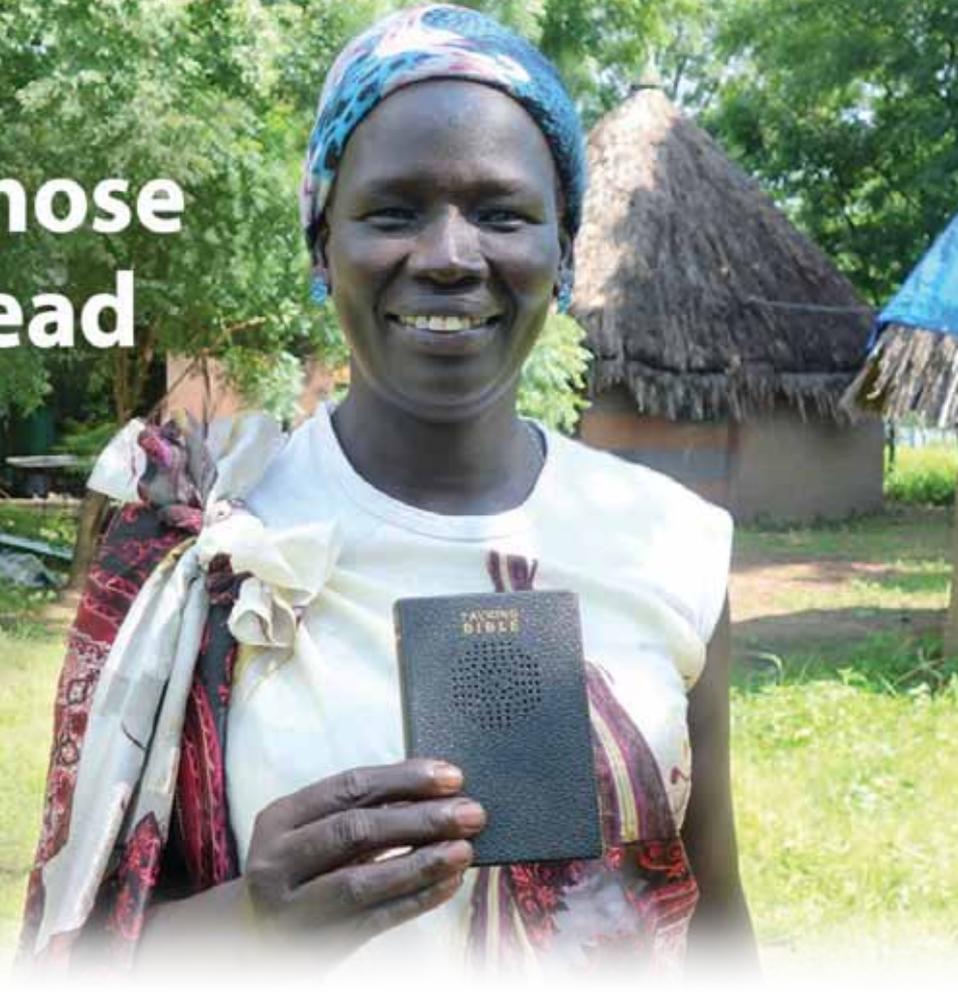
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Anticipating Christ's Inauguration

AT EASTER WE CELEBRATE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

Jesus' redemptive work on the cross secured our salvation and deliverance from "the tyranny of the devil" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 34).

But the cross also marks God's triumph over the powers of evil: "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col. 2:15). In New Testament times, people believed that behind every political structure in the world—behind every human ruler, tribe, and nation—was either a demonic or angelic power, a spiritual being directing them for ill or good. The "powers and authorities," therefore, included both the visible human powers and the invisible spiritual powers influencing them. They were intrinsically connected. The cross was a victory with not only spiritual but also social and even political repercussions.

I like to think of Jesus' death and resurrection as his victory over "the powers of this dark world" (Eph. 6:12), which includes liberating us from the grip of sin and Satan, and his second coming as Christ's inauguration of God's kingdom, when he claims his rightful throne in the new heaven and earth. (See also N.T. Wright's *The Day the Revolution Began*.) As citizens of God's kingdom, I believe we need to join in God's mission of reconciling all things (Col. 1:20), through the way of the cross—the way of sacrificial, even suffering, love and forgiveness.

We Reformed Christians believe Christ is reconciling "every square inch" of our world, including the political realm, to God. This reconciliation cannot be carried out through aggression or coercion, but through the self-giving love and forgiveness of the cross.

Our national citizenship is subordinate to our heavenly citizenship. I believe we owe our allegiance to Christ above all other allegiances. Following Christ means we should not reduce God's kingdom to any human political platform—liberal or conservative. Submitting to Christ's lordship means we are freed from the need for partisanship, freed from taking political sides. In an increasingly polarized world, the most radical stance might very well be "neither."

We must beware of reducing Christian political action to achieving a set of goals, no matter how noble. Because Jesus has already triumphed over evil on the cross, following Christ in the political world is not about winning or achieving our political goals at all cost. If our noble goals, whether they be ending racism or ending abortion, become that "to which everything else is subordinated and by which everything else is judged" (Paul Marshall, *Thine Is the Kingdom*, p. 149), we might have inadvertently turned them into idols. (I am cautioning myself here, as both those goals are dear to me.)

Instead of obsessing over achieving goals, let's focus on the way we engage politics for Christ. Let's call on "all governments to do public justice" (see *Our World Belongs to God*, Art. 52-54). Because if we depart from a Christ-like way, even if we win and achieve our goals, we may be in danger of following the path of fallen powers when Christ has already freed us from their grip.

In Christ, we have already won. We are freed from sin's power and from the world's competition for domination. Anticipating Christ's inauguration, let us focus on faithfully implementing God's mission of reconciliation, forgiveness, and sacrificial love, relying on his resurrection power. ■

Have you received our annual appeal letter? Please consider a gift. Or give online at TheBanner.org/Donate. Thank you!



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

We must beware of reducing Christian political action to achieving a set of goals, no matter how noble.

Shiao Chong *Editor*

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Gayla R. Postma *News Editor*

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Taking the Plunge

W

ENEARED the diving cliff and surveyed the dark blue water of the Mexican cenote lying about 20 feet below.

At the edge, two young women, maybe 21 or 22, were giggling and shifting from one foot to the other, stirring up some flirtatious drama for their boyfriends as they dared each other to take the plunge. While they stalled, our 5-year-old Natalie walked up next to them, strapped into her brightly colored life jacket. Without further ado, Natalie hurled herself into the air and plunged into the water.

Seeing that, the two young women became sheepish. They took their turns jumping with minimal fanfare as their boyfriends teased them mercilessly.

Natalie wasn't being extraordinarily brave. She wasn't trying to impress any-

one—she had taken no notice of the giggling display. She just wanted to see what it would be like to jump into that water, and she trusted that we were taking care of her. She knew we wouldn't bring her somewhere she shouldn't be. She knew that we had prepared her, and she didn't give it a second thought as she jumped into the depths.

As we get older, we spend more time worrying about the outcomes and the consequences of our actions. We also seek recognition for the actions we take. If we're not careful, our pride can take precedence over the task at hand, or our fears and concerns can keep us from making any forward motion at all.

But we are not called to make a big splash. We don't need to be icons of bravery and fearlessness; instead, we are called to be bold and faithful, and to do

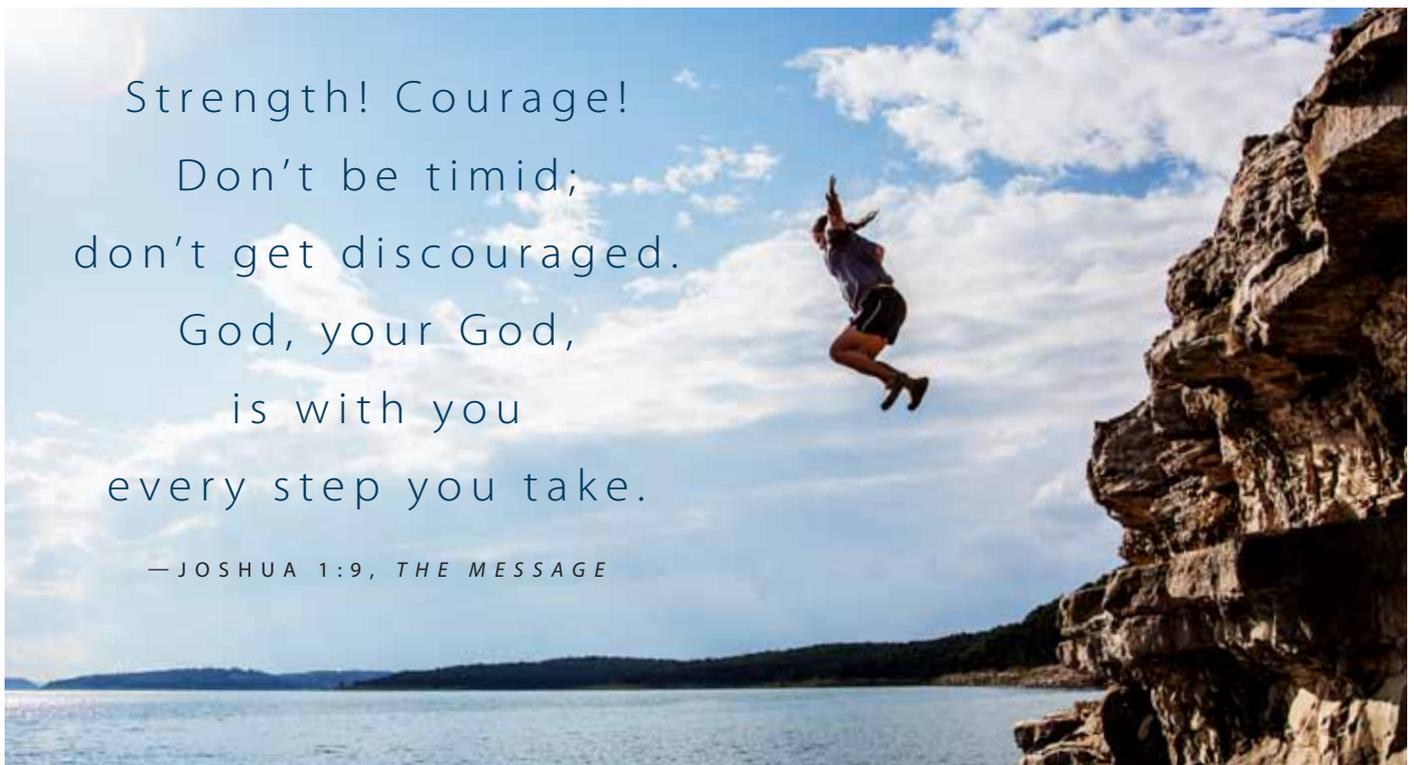
that with humility, recognizing that God's protection is boundless. Even the biggest, most uncertain leap will not leave us floundering outside of his reach. And when we humbly follow God's leading, we might just encourage others to do the same. ■



Kristy Quist is the Tuned In editor of *The Banner* and is a member of Neland Avenue CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Strength! Courage!
Don't be timid;
don't get discouraged.
God, your God,
is with you
every step you take.

— JOSHUA 1:9, *THE MESSAGE*



Pornography Unmasked

Even preteens often find themselves caught in the strangling strands of pornography.



GILLES LAMBERTY/UNSPLASH

WHEN IN 1953 Hugh Hefner launched his *Playboy* magazine, he knew that the nudes and sexually oriented articles he planned to feature would attract a large readership. Described on the cover as “An American Man’s Lifestyle and Entertainment Magazine,” the magazine did lure many to its pages. After that, it did not take long for other similar magazines to follow in *Playboy*’s successful footsteps. With the explosion of the Internet, this kind of “sexploitation” quickly segued into the pornography now available everywhere.

Pornography is not of the Lord. “Flee from sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18), we’re told. “All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.” Producers of pornographic videos do not care about this. Without restriction, it is now possible for anyone, of any age or gender, to freewheel through the Internet; it takes but the click of a mouse to stray into the full range of sexual deviations that have metastasized throughout the entire realm of human sexuality.

It is estimated that more than 70 percent of North American teens own smartphones. They, and even preteens and adults now often find themselves caught

in the strangling strands of pornography or snared by one of its dangerous offshoots, like sexting. They know that what they are doing is wrong; witness how quickly they switch to something innocuous on their smartphone or laptop when they hear someone approaching.

However, knowing something is wrong is just not good enough. Parents must always explain to their children *why* something is wrong. In the case of pornography, it is wrong because it is reductionistic. By taking sex out of a committed relationship, by separating it from the whole and giving it a disproportionate emphasis, it reduces that wonderful gift of God to meaninglessness. As parents, it is crucial for us to unmask this evil practice to our children and point out to them how sinful producers of pornography attack humans and besmirch Jesus, our Lord.

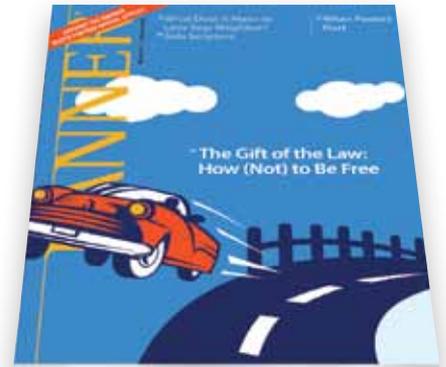
Someday we will more fully understand the dark forces that lurk behind this and other manifestations of Satan’s power. As Jesus foretold, “There is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open” (Luke 8:17).

Until that time may the Lord grant us all the wisdom and the smarts to unmask the lie of pornography. ■



Frank DeVries attends Gateway Christian Reformed Church in Abbotsford, B.C.

LE



Thanks!

I was following your thoughtful articles in *The Banner* for years, and am thoroughly delighted that you became editor. Your editorials are winsome, engaging, and insightful. Keep up the good and godly work. I am in my 80s, and you embody my hope for the continued vitality of the church. May God with his gracious Spirit continue to bless and keep you, your family, and the *Banner* staff.

Mary E. Jellema
Holland, Mich.

Thank you for the retrospective of Joanne De Jonge’s contributions over these many years (“Joanne De Jonge Retires from Writing for *The Banner*,” Dec. 2016). I read her columns (and many of her books) as a child and have continued to enjoy her writing as an adult. I learn something every time I read her work. And what fun it was to learn that she started her career as an orchestra teacher, my own occupation. She will be missed!

Elizabeth Knighton
Shoreline, Wash.

Race Issues

Thanks for publishing several articles on race issues in the February 2017 *Banner*. The content is timely. I spent time in Rehoboth in 1951 and was impressed,

LETTERS

without thinking of the trauma the children suffered by being removed from their families. Years later, I developed a close friendship with a woman who had spent much of her childhood in the Rehoboth boarding school. When asked about it, she did not want to talk about her experience.

Only recently have we begun to face what we did to Native Americans and to African Americans. Possibly we are now mature enough to face those issues and come to grips with them. Our society and church will be better if we do.

*Jake Terpstra
Grand Rapids, Mich.*

I have just read the article about Rehoboth (“God’s Been There Somehow,” Feb. 2017), and I would like to tell you about my experience at Rehoboth. I lived there during part of the 30s and 40s. Even after I left to go to high school, I still had ties to Rehoboth.

The writer asks “What about Rehoboth. Was it long ago a hall of horrors?” My experience has been absolutely not. I have nothing but praise for the early missionaries. They served with love in their hearts.

*Anne Willbanks
Long Beach, Calif.*

In his inimitable way, James Schaap forces us to witness the painful moment when a Zuni child realizes the implications of CRC doctrine (“God’s Been There Somehow”). That same February issue announced the passing of Rev. Neal Punt, [who] reminded us that it is the will of the Father that everyone should be saved. Our message is one of hope and never of fear or despair. To the best of our knowledge, God loves the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight.

*John Vandonk
Norco, Calif.*

As you show in your editorial (“Stand Together,” Feb. 2017), the evil consequences of [slavery] are still with us. My world experience of the evil of racial divisions was in the Army 40 years ago. There were constant skirmishes, even riots, between different groups.

It’s easier to find hope in a bad situation when you don’t have to be afraid that something you cannot change, like your ancestry, will hamper your efforts.

I hope that our church and society will reap the full benefits of your present position as editor of *The Banner*.

*Raymond P. Opeka
Grand Rapids, Mich.*

Thanks for your editorial on white privilege (“Stand Together”). I work with college-age students and try to help them understand what this is and how it affects them and the world. Your analogy of the car/bike issue should help as I attempt to teach this. I also appreciated the “Confronting White Privilege” (Feb. 2017) article. I will use this with my students. Because most of them are white, they struggle along with many of us to understand that this is real and does affect people. Thank you for addressing it.

*Ed Starkenburg, Dordt College
Education Department
Sioux Center, Iowa*

Broad assertions about the harm done by unacknowledged “white privilege” are as racist as they claim to be anti-racist (“Confronting White Privilege,” Feb. 2017). A black woman calling into a radio program said she was tired of liberal condescension from those who say that only whites can fix the problem of racism by confessing. To her that attitude was insulting and patronizing.

In the *Banner* article, the authors encourage godly sorrow and corporate confession, yet it is more often stories of

personal confession that change the world. Heartfelt personal confession might actually cause others to do some soul-searching. But please stop making broad prejudicial generalizations about entire groups of people based on your own stereotypes and prejudice.

*Susan A. Boer
Kent, Wash.*

As an 82-year-old still riding a Schwinn given him in New Jersey by an aunt, I loved your use of bikes and cars to explain white privilege in the editorial “Stand Together.” I am happy you can reach a more diverse audience. I thank God for my Chinese-Indonesian friends, my black fellow student in the Netherlands, and a session I had with a Muslim vacuum cleaner salesman from Pakistan. But I confess that I still have a lot to learn. God keep you as you continue to help us learn.

*John Koole
Strathroy, Ont.*

I want to add my voice to those who have expressed their appreciation of your editorial leadership and voice. I have been blessed by your editorials and the content of each issue. The February issue (“Stand Together”) is the most recent example of this. We as 21st-century Christians must be aware and reminded of how the gospel teaches us to live out our faith in an increasingly complex and diverse world. Our son lives in China, and I can assure you there is “yellow privilege” there.

*Dave Cady
Denver, Col.*

[MORE ONLINE](#)

NEWS

Curriculum Solutions Approved, Little Funding Available

The Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees was excited by its Faith Formation Ministries' proposal for new and refreshed church school curriculum even as it faced the reality that little funding is available to implement it.

The plan would add a component called "Dwell at Home" to the existing *Dwell* curriculum to connect church and home more closely and intentionally (estimated cost: \$88,000-\$103,000).

A subsequent evaluation of the entire *Dwell* curriculum would consider which activities and

stories need to be updated, using many of the best ideas from the popular *Walk With Me* curriculum (estimated cost: \$18,600).

The plan includes creating a church school toolkit that would be a "curated online collection of resources for churches" and would give guidelines for evaluating curriculum from other publishers in light of a Reformed perspective (estimated cost: \$6,000).

Faith Formation Ministries also proposed hiring a half- or full-time children's ministry catalyzer to build relationships with children's ministry staff in CRC congregations (estimated cost: \$25,000-\$50,000).

Trustees loved the proposal. Ken Baker said, "It is a beautifully strategic move . . . helping to resource families for at-home faith nurture."

Faith Formation staffer Karen DeBoer contrasted for trustees in



a subcommittee the way the most popular children's curriculum (*Orange*) handles the fall narrative in Genesis 3 with the way the *Dwell* curriculum handles it. She noted that the contrast between a moralistic approach and a God-centered approach could not have been more clear. She concluded

by saying, "Theology matters to our 5-year-olds too." One trustee commented, "I wish every CRC pastor could have heard this."

Darrell Bierman said that if children's ministry personnel in churches could see that comparison, "there would be a resurgence of interest in developing

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CRC Chaplaincy and Care Ministry Director to Retire



Rev. Ron Klimp

Rev. Ron Klimp, director of the Christian Reformed Church's Chaplaincy and Care ministry, is retiring in April. During his tenure, the ministry changed significantly, with more interest from a wider variety of applicants, increased standardization of national credentials, and a broader scope of opportunities.

"Chaplaincy is spreading to all different arenas that we wouldn't have expected," said Klimp. "With over 150 ordained chaplains, it could be viewed in terms of simply raw numbers of ordained individuals as the largest outreach we have in the CRC, yet with the smallest budget."

Christian Reformed chaplains serve in hospices and hospitals and in government positions. There are chaplains for professional baseball teams and chaplains training new chaplains. The ministry has an estimated value of over \$10 million, but over 95 percent of the costs are paid by non-church employers.

"From prisons to the Pentagon, our chaplains are serving in positions of influence," explained Klimp. Klimp said he has loved being a chaplain, seeing God's guidance as the ministry grew and noting how respected Christian Reformed chaplains are in their roles and by fellow colleagues—amazing growth and influence that should be recognized and be celebrated by the CRC.

(More at <http://tinyurl.com/banner-klimp>)

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Louis Edward Kok
1929-2017

As pastor and chaplain, as a husband and father, Lou Kok has been described by many as a good man. Gentle and easy to talk to, he was genuinely interested in others and the details of their lives. People were transformed by the way he extended the mercy and kindness of God to them. Kok died on January 27 at age 87 after a brief illness.

Kok served one Christian Reformed congregation in Washington before entering the chaplaincy of the U.S. Air Force. During his career he was stationed at Air Force bases in seven different states and overseas in Vietnam, Turkey, and The Netherlands. He retired in 1988.

Kok was a member of Lynden's (Wash.) Breakfast Kiwanis for many years. He was a voracious reader, loved baseball, and was an enthusiastic Mariners fan.

He is survived by Frances, his wife of 64 years; by their children, Mavis, Joel, and Janette, and their spouses, and daughter-in-law, Kathleen; and by eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Kok was preceded in death by his son Daniel.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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

the current level. (Ministry shares is the term for funds every congregation pays into the denominational budget.)

"Given last year's synod . . . I think we have to look reality in the face," said executive director Steve Timmermans. Despite a good proposal with well-laid out strategy, he said, "We're trying to find a million dollars to fill a budget gap. Even a well laid out strategy

dwell®

doesn't mean we know where the dollars are."

The situation feels paradoxical to Faith Formation team leader Syd Hielema. "Ten years ago, synod would approve a one-time ministry shares increase to help fund the \$3 million needed to develop a brand-new curriculum. Now we're not sure we can find \$200,000 to refresh the rich curricula we have in order to keep them current, while many congregations are lamenting the challenges involved in children, teen, and young adult ministry," he said. "What's wrong with this picture?"

—Gayla R. Postma



Reformed curriculum." He worried that if the board doesn't act now, "Dwell will be outdated and too cost-prohibitive to upgrade."

The board confirmed the importance of providing strong Reformed material and adopted the proposal with "implementation of this action as the budget is enabled to support it."

And there's the rub. Colin Watson, director of ministries and administration, noted that staff is still looking for places to cut the budget, while this proposal

anticipates an additional cost of upwards of \$150,000. "We might look at a partial implementation of this at best," he said.

Synod 2016 (the CRC's annual general assembly) noted the lack of new Reformed curriculum being produced, resulting from the 2013 closing of Faith Alive, the CRC's publishing ministry. In response the board asked Faith Formation staff for a proposal. Last year's synod also declined to approve a ministry shares increase, voting instead to maintain it at

NEWS

Rev. Zachary King



PHOTOS BY: JAMIE BUISMAN

Director Appointed for New Mission Agency, Synod Ratification Required

Rev. Zachary King, 40, has been appointed by the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church to head its new mission agency. That appointment must be ratified by Synod 2017 after delegates to the CRC's general assembly also interview him. The new mission agency (as yet unnamed) was created by combining Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed World Missions.

King has spent the last 11 years as a missionary in Haiti, a position he shares with his wife, Rev. Sharon Segaar-King. The Segaar-Kings have four children.

He knows working in an organization made up of two previous agencies—each with their own culture and history—will bring challenges. King told trustees that the key will be focusing on domestic and international ministries learning from each other. “I’ve been involved in international missions for most of my career. But I’ve always nurtured a passion for church planting. I have a big conviction that we need to be on

the forefront of mission on the domestic side. We will grow [as a denomination] insofar as we reach people through campus ministry and through church plants.”

King also addressed the issue of missionaries now having to raise 90 percent of their own financial support. “One of the things that gives me pause about this position is that immediately upon acceptance, I get to own this discussion, rather than being on the mission field Monday-morning quarterbacking,” he said. “[The] time has come for our missionaries, the best face for fundraising, to lay it on people’s heart to give. We knew it would give less time to focus on field ministry to spend more time writing blogs and getting out those emails. Change has been necessary.”

He said God has blessed that, but that missions continue to struggle financially. “I’m in the middle of doing our budget in our Haiti field. It’s the biggest cut we’ve ever had, times two. It’s hard to see ministry not happening because we don’t have resources,”

he said. “Those ministry shares funds that pay for core expenses on our field are necessary and [are] being used effectively. Our constituents need to hear those funds are valuable and important. We have to defend that and put it before our churches.”

At the same time, he said, as impoverished as Haiti is, it is growing spiritually. “[Haitians] aren’t waiting for money. God is working in places where there are not what we would consider adequate resources. In the North American context, we have church planting contexts with great material shortages. God is good, he does provide resources at the time church planters need them.”

King earned his M.Div. at Calvin Theological Seminary and a doctorate from Free University of Amsterdam. He worked in two congregations in Michigan and worked overseas as a church planter in Puerto Rico as well as teaching at a seminary in Donga, Nigeria. In Haiti, in addition to his work for World Missions, he was heavily involved in developing

Christian day school education there.

“We’ve laid out good mission and vision statements and outcomes we want to see,” King said about the new mission agency. “I hope in five years that we’re on track for our goal of missional congregations. One of the best ways to grow a church is by planting new missional congregations. I’m looking forward to that.”

If approved by Synod 2017, King will succeed Rev. Gary Bekker, director of World Missions, and Rev. Moses Chung, director of Home Missions.

—Gayla R. Postma

Roelofs Appointed as New Director of CRC Chaplaincy and Care

Rev. Sarah Hae Kyung Roelofs was appointed by the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees to direct its Chaplaincy and Care ministry. She will start in April 2017.

At age 32, Roelofs is well traveled. She has a breadth and depth of experience that impressed trustees, even though she initially resisted God's call to ministry.

Born in South Korea and raised in the CRC in Pella, Iowa, Roelofs graduated from Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, preparing to be a teacher. She went to Calvin Theological Seminary, intending to be a better teacher. "Through seminary I continued to wrestle with that calling [to ministry]," she said. Once she embraced the calling, she discovered what chaplaincy was about, and it all fit. "I wanted to sit with people and hear their story, help them cope. Before I started my last year at seminary, I was feeling like God and I were kind of on the same page."

But then life got hard, she said. She told the trustees that she became pregnant, and she was not married at the time. "It felt like my world was crashing, that one bad mistake would maybe prohibit me from ever serving the church." So she met with professors she trusted and felt the calling not to disappear but to repent and ask forgiveness. "This is part of my story, but it's not where it ends."

She married Justin Roelofs and moved to Minnesota right after her graduation so she could start her chaplaincy training. "It was the hardest year of my life," she said. "My husband joined the army and he was deployed to Iraq; [our] daughter was 14 months old, and then I found out I was pregnant with our second child," she said. "Through all that, God's call to chaplaincy was so strong that I could not deny that this was where he was calling me to be."

In addition to working in hospital chaplaincy in Indiana and Colorado, Roelofs is a captain in the U.S. Air Force Reserves, a position she will give up to take on this new job. She is also Board Certified with the Association of Professional Chaplains.

Roelofs told trustees that her strengths for this role are her passion for ministry and her



Rev. Sarah Roelofs

chaplaincy skills. She admitted that the one thing she is nervous about is knowing how to work bi-nationally. "There are unique things

about the Canadian church. It's a large country with really different challenges on the west coast, here, in the north, and in the east. How I want to address them is listening," she said. She added, "I'm great at saying 'I don't know this.'"

She is excited to be in leadership in the Christian Reformed Church. "I loved the *Journey 2020* videos," she said. "I cried. That's what I want our churches to be and I want to be a catalyst to actualize that."

Roelofs succeeds Rev. Ron Klimp, who has served as the Director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministries since January 2010 (see p. 10).

Chaplains are pastors who usually serve in specialized settings such as prisons, hospitals, counseling centers, and on military installations, bringing the gospel as the minister to people's physical and emotional needs.

—Gayla R. Postma

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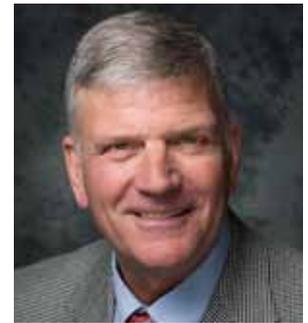


Leaders of CRC ministries in the Vancouver, B.C., area were among the Christian leaders in that city who expressed concern about Franklin Graham leading a crusade in that city. According to the letter they signed, the leaders were concerned "that the contentious and confrontational political and social rhetoric that Mr. Graham has used has the potential to overshadow the message of Jesus and incite hostility in our highly charged social climate."

A lovely story from Sioux Center, Iowa, where **Rev. Duane Tinklenberg** baptized three of his and his wife, Marilyn's, great-grandchildren: Madilyn Marie, Jaycee Joelle, and Silas John.

And a post about **Jeff Neven**, member of New Hope CRC in Hamilton, Ontario. He received the Hamilton 40 under Forty award.

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Franklin Graham



Rev. Duane Tinklenberg (left) baptizing three of his great-grandchildren.

News from the Board of Trustees

The Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees conducts the business of synod when it (the CRC's annual general assembly) is not in session.

At its February meeting, the board received from staff an overview of all the denominationally-run ministries and will forward the document to Synod 2017, fulfilling one instruction from Synod 2016. It will also ask delegates to Synod 2017 to assess the value of the CRC's various ministry efforts for their particular congregations and classes.

The CRC's Loan Fund forgave an outstanding note receivable owed by the denomination in the amount of \$2 million. The Loan Fund has not been receiving many requests for loans.

Director of ministries and administration Colin Watson reported that the congregational services team (which includes Safe Church, Chaplaincy and Care, Pastor Church Resources, and more) is working effectively within the budget constraints established last year. "We continue to look for ways to further reduce expenses even as upward cost pressures continue. The budget preparation for fiscal 2017-2018 is well underway, and further steep cuts and modifications in ministry processes will be required."

The board will ask Synod 2017 to designate an Annual Day of Justice for the CRC, preferably on the third Sunday of August. The event would be promoted and coordinated by the Office of Race Relations, the Office of Social Justice, and World Renew.

The board interviewed Rev. Sarah Roelofs (see p. 13); Rev. Reginald Smith (see p. 14); and Rev. Zachary King (see p. 12). Trustees approved refreshing and adding to existing church school curriculum, but not until the budget can support this (see p. 10). —Gayla R. Postma

Reginald Smith Appointed Director of Race Relations and Social Justice

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church appointed Rev. Reginald Smith as the new director of two ministries: the CRC's Office of Race Relations and the Office of Social Justice. He has been interim co-director of Race Relations with Rev. Shannon Jammal-Hollemans since last September.

He told trustees that working in social and racial justice requires taking the long view. "We've seen from the past election that we are not living in a post-racial context. How do we move toward the vision that Dr. King had and also Revelation 7 and 9?" he asked. "Truthtelling. History has to tell whole history, not just the narratives we have become accustomed to. . . . It's not something you fix in a year or a decade. We have to move toward hearing, listening, acting, and looking at our lives institutionally. The [offices] of race and justice stand at the nexus of where the Lord wants to take us, telling us to step outside our own comfort zones."

Smith grew up on the west side of Chicago and was raised in the Baptist church. He connected with Lawndale CRC when a white preacher came through the neighborhood looking for kids to play on the church's basketball team. "Basketball? We was in!" Lawndale was the first multiracial congregation he'd ever seen. He noted that the church was involved in the community, showing him a model of how community development happens.

Smith had wanted to be a lawyer. "God didn't allow that to happen, and I was mad about that." His pastor urged him to attend seminary, to at least give it a try. "My plan was to go there, say I hated it, and come home. But there I found my wife; we went to Madison Square Church. And those were the two things that kept me in seminary."

Armed with an M.Div. from Calvin Theological Seminary, Smith headed to New Jersey where he served in Paterson, mentored by Rev. Stanley Vanderklay. He then spent 20 years pastoring Roosevelt Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. Roosevelt Park was a combination of two churches on the southwest side, one of Dutch immigrants and the other Hispanic. "I couldn't speak Spanish or Dutch," he said. "But the Lord used it as an opportunity to build bridges and build community. We became involved in the neighborhood association. We were able to build our own library, arts academy, improve the lot of the people in the community, and find money to build a brand-new elementary school."

"Bridge-builder" is the term pastor Denise Posie used to describe Smith when she introduced him on behalf of the search committee. That includes dealing with conflict. "Conflict is normal. It is natural," he said. "Conflict can lead to new solutions. It's not a bad thing unless it drains our energy to draw people toward justice and racial reconciliation."

He acknowledged his need to continue to learn from and listen to the churches. "I want to listen well. How I listen has everything to do with building trust and building energy to go into some of these hard places. It takes time, and it takes people getting to know you."

In addition to his M.Div., Smith has a D.Min. from Western Theological Seminary; he has been an instructor there and at Calvin Theological Seminary. He has written extensively, including award-winning articles for *The Banner* ("Accepting the Gift" and "Burglary in Progress").

Smith and his wife, Sharon, who graduated from seminary last year, have three daughters.

Smith takes on the role succeeding Esteban Lugo, who resigned from the Office Race Relations last year, and Peter Vandermeulen, who will retire from the Office of Social Justice later this year.



Rev. Reginald Smith

Noteworthy



Jesseca Brown is presented with a plaque honoring her new record.



Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher with His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada.

Redeemer University College student **Jesseca Brown** became the Ontario Colleges Athletic Association's all-time leader in career points in women's basketball when she scored her 1,207th point in January. Brown is from Blacks Harbour, N.B. She has previously been named MVP and Rookie of the Year in the league.

First Christian Reformed Church and New Life CRC in Guelph, Ont., were honored by the Muslim Society of Guelph for their efforts in building understanding between faith groups in the Guelph region. Members of both churches belong to the Bridging Group, which includes members of various faith groups including Christian, Jewish, and Muslim.

Madeleine Bonsma-Fisher, a member of Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines, Ont., received the Gilles Brassard Doctoral Prize for Interdisciplinary Research from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC). The council presents the prize yearly "to an outstanding recipient of an NSERC Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship who best exemplifies interdisciplinary research."

For more, please visit thebanner.org.

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Edson (Bill) Taft Lewis, Jr.
1927-2017

Bill Lewis had a lifelong passion for wanting to help his country overcome hatred, prejudice, and injustice. His awareness of injustice began as a child growing up in New Mexico. He was there for Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. He participated in the Selma-Montgomery march in 1965. Lewis died on January 25, five months after a diagnosis of acute myeloid leukemia. He was 89.

After serving in the U.S. Navy, Lewis graduated from Calvin College and Seminary. He completed a master's degree in urban ministry from New York Theological College and obtained a Doctor of Ministry from Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus.

He served Christian Reformed congregations in New York and New Jersey and subsequently established campus ministry at Ohio State University. He retired in 1993.

Lewis loved building and flying model airplanes and repairing and building all kinds of things. Photography was one of his hobbies; he received awards for some of his work.

Lewis is survived by his wife, Joanne; by their five children, Joan, Mark, Todd, Jill, Rachel, and their spouses; and by 15 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Thomasma Retires from Pastor Church Resources Directorship



Rev. Norm Thomasma

For the past eight years, Rev. Norm Thomasma, director of the Christian Reformed Church's Pastor Church Resources ministry, has provided opportunities for pastors to grow in their ministerial work and assistance to congregations seeking to address challenges in their ministry.

Thomasma recently stepped aside from the director position in preparation for retirement. He will spend the next year as a senior consultant, creating written materials that PCR can use to help pastors and congregations.

In Thomasma's early years with PCR, the bulk of his work focused on resolving issues between church councils and pastors. However, his role expanded with greater awareness of the need for spiritual development for pastors as well as congregations seeking to find ministry opportunities.

"I hope that PCR will continue to play a valuable role within the denomination, and I hope to continue to contribute as God calls me to," Thomasma said.

Lis Van Harten and Cecil Van Niejenhuis are now co-directors of Pastor Church Resources. (See *Banner*, March 2017, p. 29.)

(More at <http://tinyurl.com/banner-thomasma>.)

—Greg Chandler

CRC Pastor Presented with Deceased Brother's War Medals

Private First Class Donald Hofman had been labeled Missing in Action since the day he was believed to be killed during World War II. More than 72 years after his death, his brother Rev. Leonard Hofman, retired General Secretary of the Christian Reformed Church, received a Purple Heart and other awards in honor of his late brother. Hofman is a member of Shawnee Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Donald served the U.S. Army in the 45th Infantry Division, 157th Infantry Regiment, the same regiment that liberated the Dachau concentration camp three months after his death. He was killed in battle at the age of 19 in Reipertswiller, France, on January 21, 1945.

The family was notified at the time of his death but heard no

news of the details surrounding it. "In 1951 there was a letter addressed to my parents that [the U.S. Army] had conducted investigations, but no trace of his remains was found," Leonard said.

In 1995, a couple from Leonard's church came to him with some surprising news. They had just led a tour through Europe, and Leonard's cousin was part of the tour group. They stopped at Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial, a U.S. military cemetery near Dinozé, France, where they found a memorial wall inscribed with about 400 names, one of which was Donald Hofman. "It threw me for a loop," Leonard said. "I couldn't believe it because we never knew that it existed."

Leonard and his wife, Elaine, took a trip to Europe the following



Rev. Leonard Hofman (left) receives his brother's medals from Major David Sykes.

year and saw his brother's name inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing. "I squatted there with his picture and cried," Leonard recalled. "It was amazing to be there at that spot; just to know that the guy that I grew up with didn't just die and be MIA and forgotten about."

Correspondence with the U.S. Army started up again, spearheaded by Leonard's niece, Donna Woltjer. As a result, on February 8, Major David Sykes drove from the Detroit area to Leonard's home in Grand Rapids to present him with the Purple Heart for wounds Donald received in action resulting in death; the Bronze Star for

meritorious achievement in active ground combat on September 1, 1944; the American Campaign medal; European—African—Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; World War II Victory medal; and a Combat Infantryman Badge.

Leonard is the last living member of his family of origin, but was joined by two of his daughters, Laurie and Kathy, to receive the awards. "It brings closure to me. He served well and he's been honored for it and we thank the Lord for that," Leonard said. "I'm proud of my brother for serving and for receiving these awards."

—Lori Dykstra

More Online

Why I Walked in the March for Life

In our *As I Was Saying* column: An essay about walking in the Washington, D.C. March for Life, by Jon DeLange, director of development and advancement at Lakeshore Pregnancy Center in Holland, Mich. (<http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-marchforlife>)

Ontario Church Youth Group Visits Local Mosque

The high school youth group of Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines, Ont., attended a celebration of World Hijab Day at that city's local mosque, Masjid Al Noor. The women were able to choose a hijab (head scarf), have it fitted properly by one of the women from the mosque, and take it home as a gift. (<http://tinyurl.com/banner-mosquevisit>)



Why I Went to the Women's March

In our *As I Was Saying* column: Essays about participating in the Women's March in Washington, D.C., by Jeanine Kopaska Broek, codirector of The Table Urban Farm and Community Church, in Denver, Col.; and Abigail Schutte, a senior at Calvin College studying political science, sociology, and urban studies. (<http://tinyurl.com/www-thebanner-org-womensmarch>)

CRC Executive Director Signs Petition Regarding Refugees

Steven Timmermans, executive director of the CRC, signed a letter to U.S. President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence expressing concern about the moratorium placed on refugee resettlement in the U.S. He said, "I'm expressing the intent of Synod 2010's decision when it said to 'speak out

against and seek to reform laws and practices concerning the treatment of immigrants that appear to be unduly harsh or unjust." (<http://tinyurl.com/banner-refugeepetition>)

Theft at CRC Ministry in Regina Brings Community Care



After the local paper in Regina, Sask., reported that the van belonging to the Christian Reformed Church's Indian and Metis Christian Fellowship had been stolen, a man telephoned the ministry to offer both his services and his Nissan Cube van to help out. (<http://tinyurl.com/banner-vantheft>)

FAQs

Church/Doctrine

Q What advice would you offer seminary graduates for them to be successful pastors—at a time when more and more ministers are being separated from their congregations?

A Thanks for asking. The last time I was privileged to address seminary seniors, I told them that they should walk with God, love their people, and get a life.

As for walking with God, I shared with them how most of my prayers have been with my eyes wide open. Like the time I was driving to find a member of another church in our neck of the woods. I had to inform him that his young toddler son had been killed in a terrible accident. Ministers get invited into people's lives at critical moments and thus need to literally and steadily feel the presence of God in their own.

Along the way I've met some wonderful people. Folks I loved to be on our life's journey with. But I've also had some I just couldn't stand. People who complained about everything and never spoke a positive word. Those who were fiercely critical, even to a young, tender soul just starting in ministry. Words can hurt. Yet I am called to love even those I don't like—to love my own secret enemy. It's been that way in every charge since my first.

Now the most important thing. By "getting a life" I mean that successful ministers typically have a delightful sense of humor. They do not take themselves overly seriously. They're able to relativize things, to see the situation from many different perspectives, not just their own. A good sense of humor is not a matter of being able to tell a good joke in every sermon. Rather, it's to see the ironies and the surprises and laugh, yes, even at ourselves.

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

Successful ministers do not take themselves overly seriously.

Ethics

Q Is it true that the Bible endorses free enterprise capitalism? I read that this is because it assumes private property and rewards a good work ethic.

A I would hesitate to suggest that the Bible "endorses" any economic system. It is true that the eighth commandment, "You shall not steal," for instance, as well as Old Testament laws regarding property (such as Ex. 22:1-15) assume private ownership. However, God also stated, "The land must not be sold permanently because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants" (Lev. 25:23). The land was the most important resource in an ancient agricultural economy.

Private ownership of land in ancient Israel, therefore, may be closer to lease-holding from God, for "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Ps. 24:1). In fact, every 50th year, the year of Jubilee, all lands sold were to be restored to their original families, and every Israelite slave freed (Lev. 25:8-55). Jubilee was essentially an economic reset button. It ensured that families who were poor never stayed poor forever by allowing them to regain their homesteads. It also prevented wealthy landowners from accumulating ever more property.

God's command to keep the year of Jubilee alone should give us real pause from any wholesale endorsement of capitalism. We must be careful not to cherry-pick biblical teachings to endorse either capitalism or socialism. Instead, we need to study the Bible's teachings as a whole and gain a biblical worldview with which to humbly approach economic issues, knowing we may never arrive at a perfect economic system.

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

Relationships

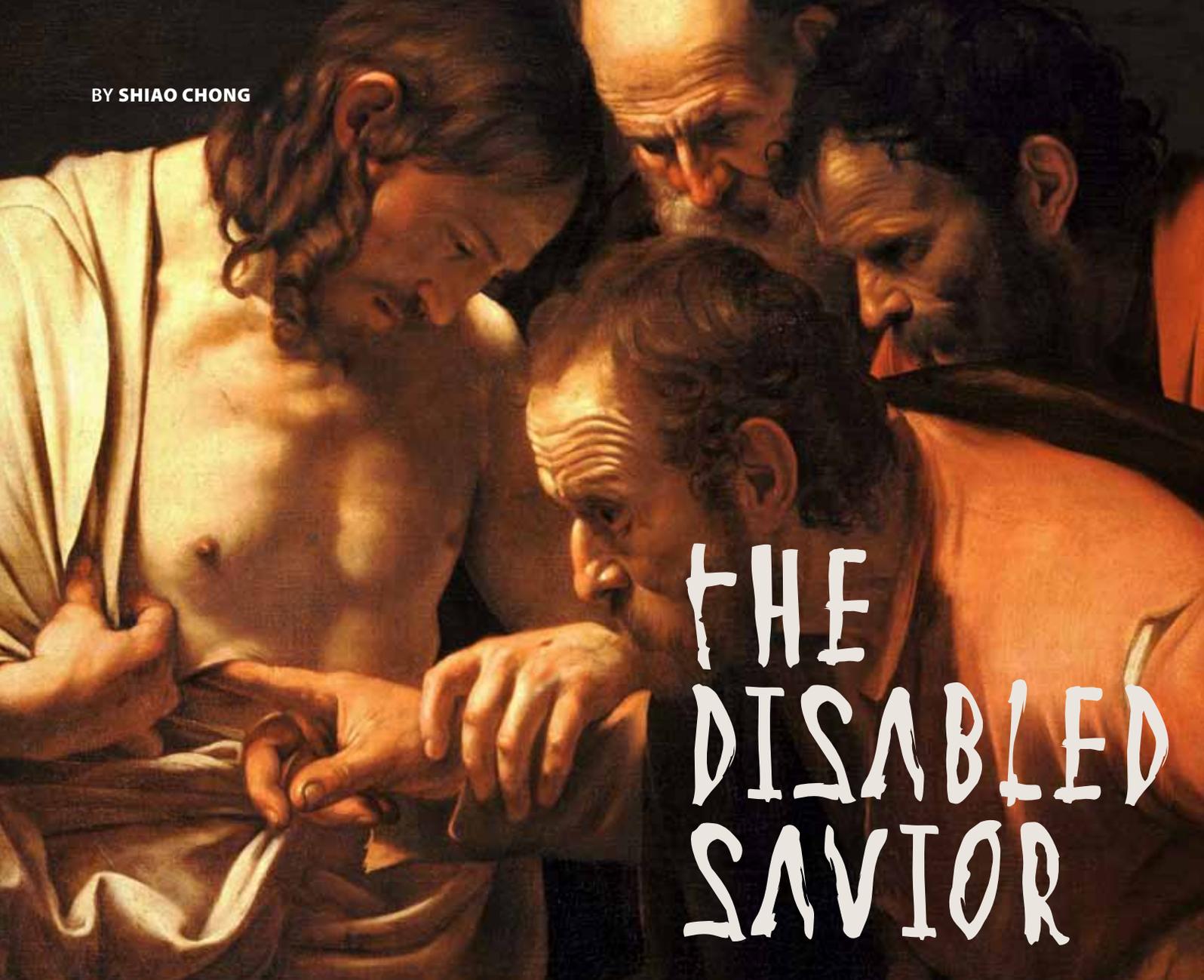
Q What can I do to minimize or prevent family discord in the wake of the divisive U.S. election? Some members of my close family are Republican; others are Democrat.

A There are some values shared by Christians that transcend the conflicting political worldviews held by citizens of various countries. There are also God-mandated ways Christians are to show love to brothers and sisters—by blood or shared faith—as well as to our enemies.

Christians are called to unity and to peace. We're called to walk in "the truth," which promises to set us free from hate, condemnation, hopelessness, and fear. And Christians are mandated to treat all people with kindness, gentleness, self-control, patience, and forgiveness. At the very least, when entering a political discussion, that means we must be civil. Being civil, even when we are passionate, precludes name-calling or demonizing or bullying or intimidating or threatening.

In the end, as far as it depends on you (as Scripture exhorts), live in peace. Resolve to bring a kingdom perspective to family gatherings and so experience the power that transcends any political or national interest. Jesus ushered in a kingdom of peace—the lion and the lamb—and healing for the nations (the tree of life in Rev. 22). Choose to walk away from a political discussion that has veered into incivility, even if you also have strong opinions that are worth expressing.

Judy Cook is a family therapist and a member of Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ont. ■



THE DISABLED SAVIOR

I **REMEMBER** when my youngest daughter was a newborn. Holding her in my arms, I was flooded with a host of emotions, from joy to anguish. Joy at the beautiful life in my arms; anguish that she would live her life at a distinct disadvantage. She was born with Down syndrome, a genetic disorder that causes developmental and cognitive disabilities. My wife and I went through a roller coaster of emotions. Even though we were warned of the possibility, and had read up on the disability, we were still uncertain and fearful. What will become of her? we asked ourselves. Will she have a happy

life? Will she suffer? Can she go to school? How will she cope? How will her sisters cope? How will we cope?

Prior to her birth, we had decided to name her “Mathea,” a name derived from Hebrew for “gift of God.” I wanted to remind myself that her disability does not define her. She is, first and foremost, God’s gift to us. Her disability is part of that gift, even when it doesn’t feel that way to us. Partly thanks to her, I now look at Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection in a new way.

Resurrected Scars

I used to imagine Christ’s resurrected body, and hence our own resurrected bodies, to

be perfect and glorious, without any flaws. Yet Scripture clearly records that Jesus’ resurrected body carried the scars where the nails were driven and where the spear pierced (John 20:24-28; Luke 24:40). What does it mean for his resurrected body to still have those scars? True, those scars helped Jesus’ disciples to verify his identity. But could they not have recognized him through other means?

If Jesus’ glorious and imperishable resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:42-44) is a symbol of perfection, then what is God telling us in preserving what seems like marks of imperfection in the resurrected Christ? I don’t pretend to know fully, but here are some possible implications.

Redefining Perfect

First, perhaps God's idea of perfection differs from ours. God may not place the same value as we do on athletic, slim, muscular, toned bodies. Our culture's models of the perfect body, displayed in movies and popular media, are unrealistic and oppressive. People with disabilities are often made to feel that their impaired bodies are "not perfect," if not downright cursed.

The resurrected Christ's impaired hands and feet, therefore, suggest that disabled bodies are still vehicles of God's glory and resurrection life. In God's eyes, people with disabilities are as perfect as everyone else. If the resurrected Jesus is the ultimate image of God (Col. 1:15), and he bears the marks of impairment, then people with disabilities are also fully imagebearers. As theologian Nancy Eiesland points out in *The Disabled God*, the resurrected Jesus' marks of impairment reveal "the reality that full personhood is fully compatible with the experience of disability" (p. 100).

So why do we continue to have typically-abled people as the spiritual norm in our minds and imaginations? When we plan or design worship, for instance, who do we have in mind? Should we still think that being non-disabled is inherently a blessing, implying that the reverse is inherently a curse?

Solidarity with Our Disability

Second, Jesus displayed solidarity with people with disabilities when he was resurrected with scars. In fact, this solidarity occurred even before the resurrection.

If we define disabilities as impairments that prevent us from doing what our peers can do, then Jesus' incarnation as a human being can be seen as a disability. When Jesus, the Son of Almighty God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, became a helpless baby, he was confined to a singular space and time. Unlike God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, Jesus could no longer be everywhere and anywhere (omnipresent) during his life on earth. His human body prevented him from doing that. During his earthly life, Jesus could not do what his divine peers—God the Father

and the Holy Spirit—could do. Jesus was, temporarily, the "disabled" God.

Similarly, in his crucifixion, the Son of God suffered death, whereas the other two immortal persons of the Holy Trinity stayed immune to death. On the cross, Jesus suffered torture, flesh torn by whips, nailed hands and feet rendering him immobile, his side pierced. On the cross, Jesus was God-with-us even in our disabilities and disfigurements. And when we would most expect all marks of suffering, pain, torture, injustice, and death to disappear, the resurrected body of Christ retained the scars.

WE CAN BE FILLED
WITH HOPE IN THE
GOD WHO IS WITH US
IN OUR WEAKNESSES
AND DISABILITIES.

If God chose to be in solidarity with our vulnerability and our disabilities, why do we overly value independence, self-assertion, and power? Why do we so often view ministry and mission as coming from positions of power, authority, and strength? Could we instead see ourselves ministering from a posture of vulnerability, identifying with the sufferings of others?

Resurrection Hope

Third, even though the scars remain, they do not seem to impede the resurrected Jesus' movements and functioning. The resurrected Christ still used his hands to break bread and his feet to walk miles (Luke 24:13-32), when those injuries would have impaired any other human being. (Archaeological evidence suggests the ancient Romans would have driven nails through the heels during crucifixion. And scholars debate whether the nails went through the anatomical wrists rather than the hand's palms.) Somehow, through the miracle of God's resurrection

power, those impairments were transformed in some way. Even though they remained visible, as the apostle Thomas verified, they no longer prevented Jesus from living life to the fullest.

Who knows? Perhaps our current disabilities will be similarly transformed when we inherit our resurrected bodies. Even if marks of our disabilities remain, with transformed resurrected bodies and within a redeemed community in a redeemed new creation, they would no longer prevent us from living life to the full (John 10:10). This gives us hope.

I have wondered what my daughter Mathea will be like in her resurrected body in the new heaven and earth. Will she still have Down syndrome? If not, will she still be the daughter I know and love? Because of Jesus' resurrected scars, I have hope that even if there are still imprints of her disability, she will still be identifiably Mathea and living life to her fullest!

That is also the resurrection hope for all of us. As the Heidelberg Catechism teaches, "Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection" (Q&A 45). As we meditate on our "disabled" Savior's life, death, and resurrection, we can be filled with hope in the God who is with us in our weaknesses and disabilities, who dignifies our disabilities with God's glory, and who delivers us from the sinful world's barriers and discriminations. ■

More Resources

- [Disability Concerns resources website \(crcna.org/disability/resources\)](http://crcna.org/disability/resources)
- Erik W. Carter, *Including People with Disabilities in Faith Communities* (Paul H. Brookes, 2007)
- Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Brazos, 2008)
- Nancy Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Abingdon Press, 1994)



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

Taking Out the Trash

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

MY HUSBAND DRIVES A BEAT-UP white Tahoe that's showing its age. It's a second-generation hand-me-down—a cheap blessing. It pulls its weight on the pavement, but it's starting to let him down in the dirt.

When driven off-road, “Tiny” behaves like a toddler trying to keep up with the big kids at the park. My husband has forced a big job on this little engine out of necessity; it's only a matter of time before it takes a tumble.

We would have purchased a vehicle better suited for this abuse last year if it weren't for our community group. “The Advisory Board” is the name my husband's coworkers have coined for it. They scoff at the idea that our decisions are influenced by a group of friends we meet with weekly. Amused, my husband recalls their laughter.

“They said we should ditch our friends and go get a new truck.”

We both laugh, and then fall silent. I wonder if the same scenes are replaying in both of our minds.

Our growing family brought about a change in health insurance after I left my full-time job. Hours of research on the health care options available to us resulted in high premiums, a high deductible, and feelings of anger.

“Well, we can look for a better plan before we have more kids,” I said.

Then my son surprised us, arriving just 13 months after I had first become a mother. That, coupled with my husband's trampoline accident, left us in disbelief and disarray. Here we were with two young children, one busted knee, one belligerent Tahoe, and one income.

Before the second child arrived, before the medical bills started rolling in, the eight members of our weekly group were sitting in our cozy living room that somehow

housed enough chairs for that many adults. The clock loomed over us like an hourglass; the conversation was as still as the air in the room. Our daughter was fast asleep in the next room, barely two months old and immune to our troubles.

“I really need a truck.”

My husband's voice was growing desperate, trying to justify this big decision. Calm voices responded to our pleas.

“Can you buy one with cash?” *Not a new one.*

“One that's used?” *It won't last.*

What we wanted desperately to hear was, “Go ahead. Take out a loan. Get the truck you need.”

Instead we heard *no*, spoken with finality and tenderness.

Later we followed our friends into the front yard with softening hearts. The darkness made it easier to say goodbye without revealing the hurt on our faces. We were hurt because we knew they were right. Our greed and discontentment had followed us out the front door, and it felt like garbage tainting our perfect, manicured lawn.

Our friends had shed light on what the darkness was cloaking, and there was nothing left for us to do but to leave our trash on the curb for the whole neighborhood to see.

Two months later we got our “truck”—in the form of a pregnancy test that showed two pink lines on a stick.

I wouldn't trade this small group of friends for the finest truck in the world. Their wisdom saved us from taking on major debt in the face of the unknown: a pregnancy sooner than expected, knee surgery, and a stack of bills.

Our beat-up old Tahoe may be on display for all to see, but our hearts and homes are full of the encouragement that living in community brings. These are our people; they know the good and the bad, and they love us enough to help us take out our trash. ■

Sarah Elizabeth Finch is a mom, speech therapist, and blogger. She is a member of Watermark Community Church in Dallas, Texas.



Here we were
with two young
children, one
busted knee, one
belligerent Tahoe,
and one income.

Take a Stand

“BUT YOU’RE NOT BLACK!” said my neighbor’s child to me while I was discussing politics with his mother. I did not cringe when he said this; I have had many years to practice my “strong face.” My mother, whom I have so much respect for, is white. My dad, the thought-provoker, is black.

Mixed. Biracial. I choose the “other” box when encouraged to provide race information. Growing up in a class surrounded by white children, I stood out.

In my younger days, friends would compare their skin tone to mine after their Florida vacation, but my skin was still darker. I remember in middle school the nagging suggestions to “straighten your hair, straighten your hair” and comments like, “I wonder what your hair would be like if it were straight.” But it is not straight. It is as curly as curly gets. I remember a bus ride during fifth grade when the driver turned on a rap station, briefly, and my friends asked me if I knew the song, because that was my music.

Being black in a sea full of white can be exhausting.

I have a sweet baby boy, who is innocent and full of life. This little boy has stolen my entire heart. He makes me proud. He makes me humble. He makes me patient. I have so much love for my son, who is brown and beautiful too.

He is so much like your children or the children you know. Warm. Compassionate. He does not like to miss out on popcorn and a movie. He loves book after book at bedtime. He loves with no limits. He is kind and full of hope. He is so much the same! And yet, he is different.

I pray that my son, with his brown skin, stays safe.

My son, who loves his hooded sweat-shirts, will not have the same luxuries as his fellow classmates. This little boy will face a different reality when getting pulled



Love people and their differences the way you would want to be loved.

over by the police. When he becomes a teenager, I hope that he does not do foolish teenage things, as his punishment will be much harsher. If he decides to grow his hair out and wear an Afro, please do not call him a thug, or think it. When he’s walking at night in a nice neighborhood, I pray he does not scare you.

I need a safe space for this young man to grow up. I need him to come to church on Sunday and be able to weep with his fellow church family for the black lives lost at the hand of police officers. I need him to be able to come to God’s house and talk about his frustrations about being a black man. I need him to be loved. I need you to embrace him. I need you to look at him and not be afraid. I need that for him. I don’t want him to grow up in a church where we cannot discuss racism and injustice.

So don’t be silent. Don’t sit in your pew and squirm when someone prays

for justice for black people. Be empowered. Stand firm. Love people and their differences the way you would want to be loved.

I have such a strong hope that by the time my son is old enough to endure the burden of being black that we will have changed the world.

How strong would we be if we all came together?

Take a stand. A stand to not be silent. A stand to speak out.

If you think you do not know anyone affected by racism, then think of my son. Think of how important he is to me. How important he is to God. ■



Marissa Spearman is a member of Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. She works as a referral coordinator in a pediatric office. She enjoys spending time outside with her son and dog.

New City, New Faith

by Scott Meekhof and Brian Clark



“We shouldn’t be here,” said Ryan Pelton, church planter and lead pastor, about New City Church in Kansas City, Mo. “We’re not in ‘Reformed country. . . .’ This is an urban neighborhood. Traditional churches aren’t supposed to do well here.”

Despite these odds, New City Church is thriving, gathering a wide variety of people representing different generations, backgrounds, and ethnicities into its services. Pelton has a simple explanation for the church’s success—they are answering God’s call.

“We’re loving our neighbors and fighting injustice and doing the things God has called us to do,” Pelton said.

This photo shows New City Church’s growing congregation in 2013. Now it has doubled in size, and they worship with more than 175 adults and children.

Pelton’s call to ministry

Pelton didn’t know much about Kansas City before moving there—“I didn’t even know where I could find it on a map,” he admits.

Pelton grew up in southern California in what he calls a “non-Christian, anti-Christian” environment. His questions about life eventually brought him to accepting Christ in late high school. His attraction to a specific girl brought him to a Christian Reformed church in Artesia, Calif.

“The girl I was interested in invited me, and her dad happened to be the pastor,” Pelton said, referring to his wife, Christy, and her father, Andy Vanden Akker. “That was terrifying and exciting!” he said.

As a new Christian, Pelton said, he was excited to share the gospel with others. “The first thing I wanted when I became a Christian was for everyone I knew to know Jesus too,” he said.

At times when he didn’t have an evangelistic outlet, Pelton said, he found himself frustrated and wrestling with God’s call in his life. As Pelton grew in his faith, others began to encourage him to explore his calling further. He enrolled in seminary. After learning, growing, and

“ Church planting can be lonely, but here I’ve never been lonely. ”

serving at churches in Holland, Mich., and Colorado Springs, Colo., Pelton knew God was calling him to plant a church.

Meanwhile, in metro Kansas City . . .

As God was preparing Pelton for Kansas City, he was also preparing Kansas City for another church. This took place partly through Kevin Schutte, who is now Home Missions’ leader for starting and strengthening churches.

To say Schutte loves Kansas City would be an understatement; he’s crazy about it. He loves the Royals and the Chiefs, the city’s renowned barbecue, and most of all, the people who make up the city.

Schutte planted Pathway Community Church in 2005, in the Olathe part of the Kansas City metro area. His church depended on guidance, encouragement,

and financial support from Home Missions. Schutte knows firsthand that deep roots in a city aren’t enough—a new church needs partnership and support.

“Before I knew it, ministry was just me being the wizard behind the curtain,” says Schutte. “I longed for somebody to pull that curtain back and say, ‘Hey, you don’t have to do it all.’”

With his own experiences in mind, Schutte began sharing his passion for ministry in Kansas City with Pelton, discussing his vision to see more churches planted there and helping Pelton learn and grow in his church planting knowledge.

Networks of support

In the summer of 2009, Ryan and Christy Pelton packed up their home and headed to Kansas City to plant New City Church with the help of Home Missions and Pathway Community Church.

They began hosting backyard barbecues, parties, informational meetings, Bible studies, and prayer meetings. They talked with anyone who would listen to gather a core of people for a new church in the city.

As the church plant was underway, Pelton felt the love of churches hundreds of miles away throughout Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri.

“Church planting can be lonely, but here I’ve never been lonely,” said Pelton. “Kevin Schutte, Pathway Community Church, Classis Heartland—they were all there when we needed help.”

Pelton also received advice and support as well as money, Bibles, children’s

ministry materials, and volunteer time from church partners in the Acts 29 Network, a coalition of church-planting churches. He said that all of this support was crucial to him in the early days of this new ministry.

He also felt that it was a two-way street. As established churches provided him with advice and financial support, New City Church was able to help established churches think through their own missions and explore their own calls to evangelism. »

How You Can Pray

We asked pastor Ryan Pelton how you can pray for him and New City Church. Please remember this church plant and the more than 40 others Home Missions partners with throughout North America.

- Pray that New City Church and church plants like it continue to work hard to tell the good news of the gospel in word and deed.
- Praise God for the celebrations along the way—for people like Rob who dive into their faith, for blessings of space to worship, for encouragement and support during tough times.
- Pray for humility, prayerfulness, and faithfulness for the people who are members of new churches. Pray that they will be blessed as they disciple new believers.
- Pray for the Christian Reformed Church’s current and future church planters to be attentive to God’s call in their lives and in their neighborhoods.



Ryan Pelton didn’t know much about Kansas City before moving there with his wife, Christy, to plant a church in 2009.

» **Rob's story**

After gathering people for about a year, New City launched their first public worship service in September 2010. Because they had started with loving their neighbors, New City church was able to attract many people from a variety of backgrounds and help them feel like they belonged.

One of these neighbors was a man named Rob (name changed). Rob was feeling discouraged and lost. He had a good job, but a lifetime of “chasing the American dream on hyperdrive” left him alone, an addict with tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Rob's family life suffered, and his struggle with loneliness and addiction landed him in a deep depression.

Then Rob met a member of New City church who invited him to come to a service.

Though he was not a believer, Rob was curious. He was intrigued by this community of people who professed to be a family, who served each other, and who preached with words and deeds. As he got connected to New City and other area churches, Rob gave his life to Christ.

New City Church encourages people to meet in small groups called “City Groups.” These small groups allow people to connect with each other and with God in a more personal way than simply attending Sunday services. More than 85 percent of the congregation is involved in City Groups.

Through his City Group involvement, Rob has come to understand that he is part of something bigger than himself. He says that he knows his faith is bigger than just getting “saved.” It was the impetus he needed to get his life back on track.

Today, Rob is a devoted husband and father, raising his kids in the Lord. To his



People walk up for the Lord's Supper at New City's first public service, September 25, 2010.

church family, he's a servant, the first one to sign up or lend a hand.

“He's good at everything, and now he's using his talents for the Lord,” said Pelton.

From individuals to entire communities
Church planting is about transforming individual lives such as Rob's, but it is also about transforming entire communities.

“Churches are good for society,” explained Pelton. “The reality is [that] when you're gathering a group of people [in a church], they begin to love their neighbors.”

That's just what happened with New City. God blessed New City Church with attendees who believe that “every square

inch” of their city belongs to God and can be part of their mission work.

“[A lot of Christians] are always focused on how many people got saved this year, but I don't think that's the right question,” said Pelton. Instead, he suggested that churches should be asking what kind of impact they are having in their communities. The investment in New City Church is one he believes will last for generations. ■



Scott Meekhof, Christian Reformed Home Missions.



Brian Clark, Christian Reformed World Missions.

A Team Approach to Cancer Care

by Lynn Rosendale

Every day, an average of 4,600 new cases of cancer are diagnosed in the United States and 555 in Canada. According to the American Cancer Society and Canadian Cancer Society, two out of five people in North America are expected to develop cancer at some time during their lifetime. And while the five-year survival rate has risen to more than 60 percent, more than 1,500 Americans and 216 Canadians still die of cancer every day.

The numbers are staggering. In a recent class at Calvin College, biology professor Amy Wilstermann asked her students if they personally knew of someone who had been diagnosed with cancer. Every hand in the class went up.

That pervasiveness is one of the reasons Wilstermann decided to offer the course “Cancer: A Multidisciplinary Exploration of a Complex Disease.”

“My goal is for students to think about the impacts of a cancer diagnosis,” she said. “Who, besides the patient and family members, springs into action? There’s the health care team, social workers, insurance professionals, pastors, research scientists perhaps. What does excellent cancer care look like, and how can people with a variety of skills and perspectives work together to provide quality care?”

Wilstermann is working with students to provide an answer to that question. The honors interim class, which was recently recognized by the National Collegiate Honors Council for an “Innovations in Best Practices in Honors” award, is open to students in any discipline.

Daily speakers who share their stories make the narrative of cancer real to the students. Childhood cancers, late effects



Speakers who share their stories make the narrative of cancer real to students.

of cancer, cancer treatments, genetics of cancer, clinical trials, and end-of-life care are all topics addressed by experts, including cancer survivors.

Amy Colthorp and her children, Will and Katie, shared their account of living with Li-Fraumeni Syndrome, a genetic condition that predisposes them to a wide spectrum of early onset cancers. Amy has battled cancer four times, while Will is a survivor at age 8.

On another day, the students listened to Dr. James Fahner, who was West Michigan’s first children’s cancer specialist when he arrived 28 years ago.

Other speakers included research nurses, social work and art professors, a pastor, a hospital teacher/school liaison, a pediatric cancer survivor, and a medical director for heart failure and heart transplant.

Wilstermann hopes that equipping students with an understanding of the

need for collaboration and the knowledge of cancer’s “many layers” will help them in their future professions.

“But I also hope this helps them as sons, daughters, parents, and friends,” she said. “I hope this gives them additional tools to deal with cancer in their lifetimes.”

Wilstermann’s goal is to highlight the value of collaboration and open up the conversation to improve cancer care.

“Cancer is such a complex disease. Caring for patients well takes people with skills in many areas. At Calvin, bringing insights from different disciplines together is something that is valued. This class is an example of a place where we can do that.” ■



Lynn Rosendale is senior writer and managing editor of *Spark*.

The Importance of Being Ecumenical

I was probably around 10 years old when I first heard about South Africa. I was sitting on the floor of my grandparents' living room listening to my great-uncle and -aunt, Rev. Leonard and Hattie Verduin, talk about their trip to South Africa.

Apartheid had been policy for more than a decade by then, and my aunt spoke with tears in her eyes about the disadvantages faced by black South Africans, expressing her concern for their babies in particular. My uncle, never one to mince words, must have been quite vocal while he was there, for he ended by saying, "They'll never let me come back."

What I heard on that Sunday afternoon was formative. From childhood into adolescence and beyond, I listened acutely to news from South Africa. When the *Reformed Journal* printed one article after another from Christian Reformed Church leaders protesting apartheid, I read each one carefully. I even noticed when CRCNA synods focused on South African matters.

The many visits I read about that took place during those years were headed primarily by CRC leaders engaged in ecumenical matters. Discussions were pointed, and there were strong differences of opinion.

Fast-forward to 1997, three years after the end of apartheid, when I was grateful to accept an invitation to be a visiting lecturer for a short term at Potchefstroom University (now North West University), the university of the Reformed Churches in South Africa. Post-apartheid transformation was evident everywhere I looked, from college classrooms to shopping malls. Tensions were high.

Earlier this year I had the opportunity to travel to South Africa for the fourth time. It had been nearly 20 years since my first visit, and even greater change has occurred. South African society is delightfully diverse, representing great progress toward the ideals of its Constitution and Bill of Rights, but for many black South Africans challenges remain in employment, housing, and inclusion.

During this visit, I had the opportunity to do my own ecumenical visiting. I met with leaders from four of the main Reformed denominational groups in South Africa. Some of the discussions were about substantial matters such as the Belhar Confession and same-sex marriage. [Check out the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee report in the *Agenda for Synod 2017* for more about these issues and our Reformed brothers and sisters in South Africa.]

Yet all was not weighty. Imagine singing *a capella* familiar

hymns in English and the Venda language—with incredible African harmonies. Consider the delight of retired CRC pastor Carl Kammeraad after being reunited with a young South African man whom he had baptized 23 years earlier. Picture taking communion in the church that was home to Archbishop Desmond Tutu before his retirement.

Apartheid is past, but the brokenness of human relationships in South African society and in the church remains. I believe that a new chapter of ecumenical efforts with our Reformed brothers and sisters in South Africa, as well as

with other ecumenical partners around the world, is before us. One South African church leader said to me, "Please help us Reformed denominations learn to work together to impact society in ways that you do in North America."

Our ecumenical past has often involved addressing theological issues and their implications. Our ecumenical future is shifting, however. We as Christians must learn to speak more and more with one voice, to act in unity as the church faces decline in one hemisphere and explosive growth in another, and as issues of displaced people and disruptive relations based on socioeconomic, race, and ethnicity lead to immense needs and great societal divides.

In our ecumenical relations, as well as in our homes and congregations, may we be on our knees, praying the words of Jesus from John 17: "May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." ■



Steve and Barbara Timmermans (right) and Carl and Jeannie Kammeraad (left) with Dr. Tshililo Liphadzi, head of Heidelberg Seminary, and his wife, Gloria.

“We as Christians must learn to speak more and more with one voice.”



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

You add.
God multiplies.

Restored and Building Community

James Kachhap lives in Jharkhand, India. He became a Christian after listening to Back to God Ministries International Hindi radio programs.

Until recently, he battled the mental weight of inexplicable fear and anxiety.

Restless and sleep-deprived, he asked his new family in Christ, the staff of the BTGMI Hindi outreach, to pray for his well-being.

Kachhap also organized a prayer service at his home and invited his neighbors and the Hindi ministry staff to attend. Immediately following that service, Kachhap began feeling restored; the weight had been lifted. “They prayed for me with deep concern, and in answer to their prayers, God healed me,” Kachhap testified.



James and Joy (pictured center) lead a listening community in Jharkhand, India.

“This incident not only strengthened Mr. Kachhap’s faith in Christ but also served as an opportunity for witnessing to his neighbors,” reported Rev. A.K. Lama, BTGMI ministry leader in India.

As a result of Kachhap’s prayer service, the gospel is now being shared throughout his village. “The meeting at Kachhap’s home led to the formation of a new listeners’ group,” explained Lama.

James Kachhap and his brother, Joy, have committed to hosting a weekly prayer meeting followed by listening to the Hindi program.

“Praise the Lord!” said Kachhap. “Please continue to pray for my family and my neighbors who listen to the Hindi radio programs regularly.” ■

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

Gas Money = Leaders

Our project serves to practically support those who are training to serve and lead in Classis Red Mesa’s congregations” was the stated purpose of Maranatha Fellowship CRC’s Sustaining Congregational Excellence Health & Renewal project.

The plan was to show encouragement and hospitality to 14 students who were committed to engaging in Leadership Development Network (LDN) training. Nine months of instruction were to be followed by classical exams in the spring of 2016.

The challenge for many of the students was how to get to class. “We despaired when we heard of students pawning heirloom jewelry for gas money,” said Rev. Lora Copley, project coordinator. “Just



Members of Maranatha CRC in Classis Red Mesa.

the simple provision of gas assistance has encouraged students. One student, when receiving the \$15 gas card, said, ‘Be sure to pass on my thanks. I don’t know how I’d get to class without this.’” Part of the grant funds were used to purchase gas cards.

“This project impacts almost every congregation in

our classis. Every July, our classis puts on a Bible Conference. This year, almost half of the speakers, preachers, and Bible study leaders are LDN-trained church leaders,” Copley said.

“It is easy to feel on the reservation that the denomination doesn’t really know our situation in Classis Red Mesa. This grant is one small way

the denomination says, ‘We know and we care.’ What a gift to belong to an ecclesiastical family who enables us to demonstrate fitting hospitality and justice to our church’s leaders in training!” ■

—by *Lis Van Harten*,
director of the Sustaining Congregational Excellence program

Sheila Dykstra (center) works alongside teachers like Flensted Omiunu (left) to improve Christian education in Nigeria.



Trusting God, Answering His Call

“I learned a long time ago from my friends that teaching was one of my gifts,” said Flensted Omiunu, who lives in Abuja, Nigeria. “But I have two kids and a wife, and it just didn’t make sense to give up my salary as an architect.”

Omiunu’s concerns about teachers’ salaries in Nigeria are not unwarranted. A teacher might only earn the equivalent of \$25 to \$250^{USD} monthly. This lack of valuing educators in Nigeria creates a big barrier that missionaries see when they work to transform Christian education.

“Flensted’s story is one I hear regularly,” said Sheila Dykstra, who serves with Christian Reformed World Missions as an education specialist in Nigeria.

Omiunu met Dykstra when she began serving there about 15 years ago, and she quickly recognized her friend’s gifts for teaching. She invited him to some of the teacher-training events she led.

“The trainings were very interesting to me,” said Omiunu. “Being around all those teachers and hearing their experiences just ignited the fire even more and made me realize, this is where I should be.”

In the beginning of 2016, Omiunu took a step of faith, enrolling in a post-graduate degree education program. He cut most of his hours working as an architect so he could volunteer at a local Christian high school. Although he still worried about money, Omiunu immediately knew this was the right decision.

“I started looking forward to the next day. I started sleeping better. I was happier,” he said.

Having completed his certification, Omiunu now has his own classroom and fourth grade students. When it came to the interview, the school owner was nervous, as she knew she couldn’t offer him what he was “worth” in terms of salary.

“If I was here for the money, I would have stayed in my former profession,” Omiunu responded.

After gaining some hands-on experience in the classroom, Omiunu hopes to train more teachers and share his passion for education with them. ■

—Brian Clark,
Christian Reformed World Missions

Successful Farming Offers a Fresh Start

For Saboern, a bad situation was only getting worse. Her family continued to struggle to make ends meet, and it was becoming more difficult to care for her sick mother.

Trying to get by, Saboern and her husband took out a large loan, but they couldn’t afford to pay it back. Fed up with the way their life was turning, Saboern and her family moved from their remote

earned \$120 USD each month.

Soon after, her husband found a job carrying cement throughout the city. But their new income still wasn’t enough to cover their daily expenses.



Saboern works in her field.

Cambodian village to the city of Phnom Penh.

Saboern hoped that moving to the city would bring more opportunities for her and her husband. With higher pay, she could provide a better future for her two children and pay back their loan.

Saboern found a job as a garment worker and

After a couple of years, Saboern and her family moved back to their village. After getting settled, Saboern was introduced to a new development program that World Renew and its partner, Organization to Develop Our Villages (ODOV), had launched in their community.

Saboern was excited to participate and learn new skills. Through training and financial support, Saboern was able to dig a fish pond and build a small house. She worked diligently on her small plot of land to test the new agriculture techniques she learned during her trainings.

Everything Saboern has learned has helped her family get a fresh start.

“I can . . . make a living from growing vegetables and raising poultry and fish,” she said.

Besides growing for themselves, she sells produce to earn extra income. Now, she said, “my children are healthier because they can eat enough nutritious food from my farm.” ■

—Taylor Smith,
World Renew

You add.
God multiplies.

Jeff Weima teaching students in Berea



Following Paul Through Bad Weather

A snowy biblical tour” was not the subject line professor Jeff Weima expected to use when he updated his seminary colleagues on the biblical study course he was teaching in Turkey and Greece during J-term 2017. And it certainly wasn’t the expectation of the 15 seminarians and nine other travelers in Weima’s class.

As professor of New Testament at Calvin Seminary, Weima has led countless study trips to the sites of the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation and to the cities of Paul’s missionary trips.

The rare snowfall and cold temperatures caused not only schools and roads to be closed, but even some of the ancient sites on the itinerary.

Nonetheless, that didn’t stop the students from immersing themselves in the relevant biblical texts, ancient

history, geography, and Weima’s annotated study guide—where Bible stories came to life with the vividness of 3-D.

One student noted that he had read four different commentaries in trying to understand the story of Acts 19 that recounts how the idol industry of the goddess Artemis was being threatened by Paul’s preaching.

But walking the well-preserved streets and structures of Ephesus, including the theater where the angry crowd assembled almost 2,000 years ago, gave him “a totally different level of understanding the Scripture.”

The challenges and struggles of the Ephesian church were further amplified when Weima preached a sermon from the Revelation letter to the church in Ephesus.

The last days of the 12-day study course ended in sunshine at the ancient site of Corinth. Once again the

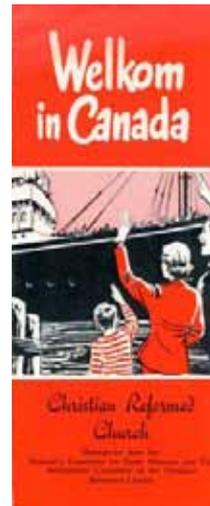
physical remains of the ancient port city gave geographical and historical evidence to what Corinth was like when Paul brought the gospel to this wealthy, cosmopolitan city.

Benefitting from a recently funded program of generous travel scholarships for M.Div. students, these seminarians could afford the trip that many pastors don’t experience until retirement.

As they complete their pastoral and theological studies, they are equipped with firsthand archeological observations, reflections, and photographs from the 12 days they walked (or slipped) where Paul the evangelist walked. ■

—by *Jinny De Jong*,
Calvin Theological Seminary

SHORT TAKES



CRCs in Canada Asked to Join in 150th Celebration

New Year’s Day kicked off the celebration across Canada with fireworks and speeches, along with special community gatherings and events. Many more are planned throughout 2017.

Meanwhile, the CRC’s Canada 150 committee says this can be more than a national celebration.

CRC congregations across Canada are being asked to join in the celebration.

Peter Noteboom, a member of the committee, said that one of the main things they are encouraging people to do with their congregations is to participate in their local community events. ■

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

Wonderfully Made

Spring is here! Plants are sprouting and birds are busy building nests. Soon these birds will be laying eggs and keeping them warm as they wait for the baby birds to hatch.

Maybe you have been lucky enough to see a nest full of eggs or found an empty

piece of eggshell on the ground. Isn't it amazing that there was a bird inside of that tiny little egg?

Eggs are very special. They are designed to be perfect for their purpose.



Shell

The **eggshell** protects the baby bird as it grows. It keeps germs out but also lets the baby bird breathe. It is strong enough to support the parent sitting on it but delicate enough for the baby bird to break out when it's time to hatch. The eggshell is just right in every way.

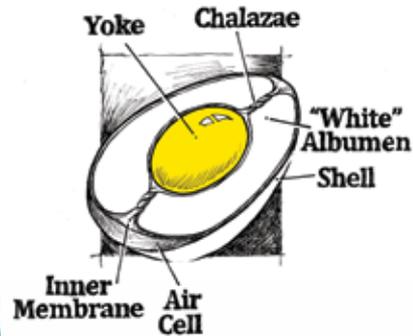
Eggs come in different shapes and sizes. The eggs you eat for breakfast are an oval shape, but some eggs are sort of pointy and pear-shaped. Others are almost round. And some look a bit like a football!

Eggs come in lots of different colors too. Besides white and brown, there are blue eggs and greenish ones, rusty ones, and cream-colored eggs too. Some are plain; others have squiggles or blotches or speckles. The patterns on eggs have names like *scrawl*, *black cap*, *blots* and *pepper pot*.

Yolk

The **egg yolk** is the yellow ball in the middle of the egg. It is held in place by stringy things called **chalazae**. They let the yolk rotate when the egg is turned. This keeps the growing baby bird always on the top of the yolk where it is closest to the warmth of its parent. It can also get the air it needs more easily. The yolk is full of nutrients the baby bird needs to grow.

In different types of birds, the yolk makes up more or less of the egg. Some birds are helpless when they hatch. Their eyes are closed, and they don't have feathers. They need their parents for everything. These birds have eggs with smaller yolks. Other birds hatch with their eyes open and with feathers. The eggs they hatch from have bigger yolks.



Egg White

The **egg white** is also called **albumen**. It is actually clear—it only turns white if it is cooked. It is like a cushion surrounding the yolk and the growing baby bird. It has lots of other important jobs. It provides water and proteins for the baby bird and keeps it safe from germs. If anything gets through the shell, it has to cross the albumen to get to the bird. And it is not a friendly place. The albumen doesn't have any food germs can use. It is also full of germ-destroying proteins, which scientists think work best when the egg is warm. The egg is just the right temperature to fight germs when a parent bird sits on it!



Eggshell Planters

Next time you have eggs for breakfast, ask an adult to carefully break the eggs in half and save the shells. Rinse them out and set them aside. You'll also need a little bit of soil and some tiny plants, such as

- hens and chicks
- thyme
- sedum
- Irish moss or Scotch moss
- True moss (If you can't find something in the garden, look for moss growing wild under trees or on rocks or fallen logs.)

Carefully put some soil into each eggshell half, and gently tuck in whatever plants you've found. You can set your eggshell planters in a saucer on a bed of moss and use them to decorate your table for Easter. Don't forget to water them.



Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Eggs are amazing! Now that you know how much care God has put in creating a little bird's egg, look up Psalm 139:14-15. Write your favorite phrases from these verses in a notebook or on a notecard. If you like to draw, decorate the words with colored pencils or markers. Then praise God for how wonderfully God has made you!



FUN Facts

When an egg **hatches**, the shell is thinner than it was when it was laid because the chick has used some of the calcium for its skeleton.

Eggs must be **kept warm** for the baby bird to grow and hatch. Most birds keep their eggs warm with their body heat. They transfer the heat to their eggs through a bare patch of skin on their belly, or through their legs, or even their feet!

A few birds don't use body heat to warm their eggs. They **bury** their eggs in warm volcanic soil or piles of rotting plants that produce heat as they break down.

The **incubation period** is the number of days an egg must be kept warm so that it will hatch. It takes only 11 to 14 days for the American robin to hatch. The royal albatross, a big seabird, takes 80 days to hatch!

A **hummingbird egg** is only 13 x 8 millimeters (0.5 x 0.3 inches). That's smaller than a mini marshmallow!

Bird Cam!

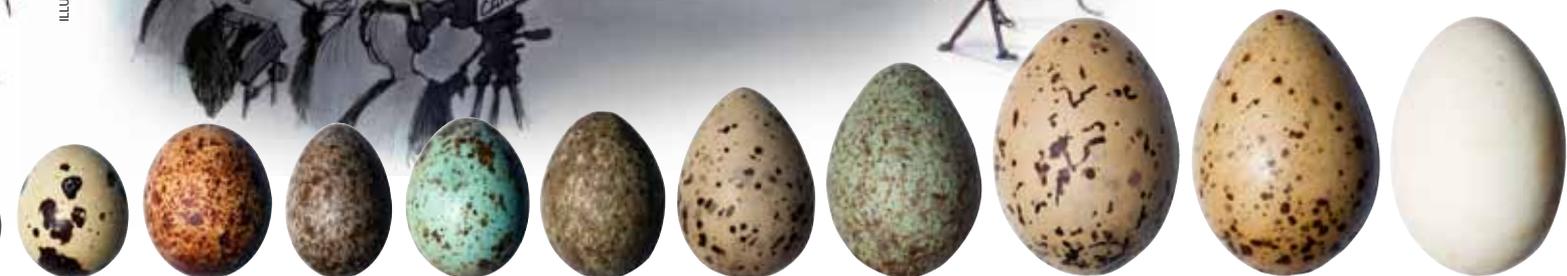
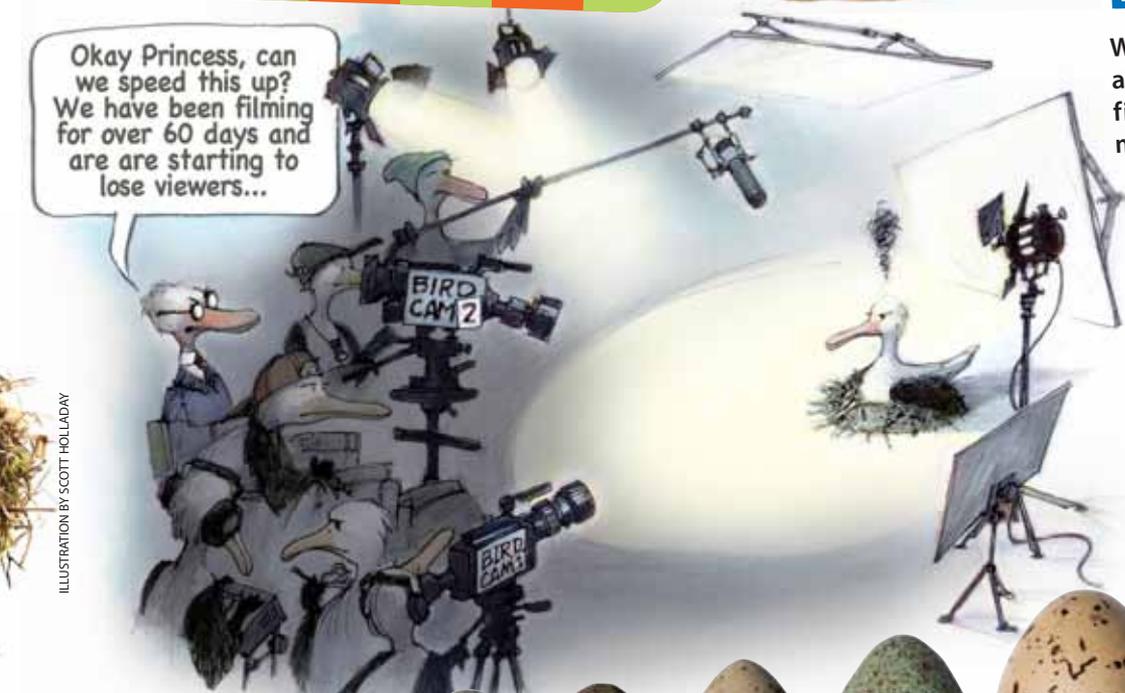
With a parent's permission, visit cams.allaboutbirds.org/all-cams/. You'll find lots of live nest cameras and maybe even get to watch a bird hatch!



Rachel Lancashire is a nursery worker (plants not kids) and freelance writer with an educational background in wildlife. She attends Gilmour Memorial Baptist Church in Selwyn, Ont.

Okay Princess, can we speed this up? We have been filming for over 60 days and are starting to lose viewers...

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY





Divorce Care

IMBEDDED IN JESUS' TEACHING on marriage and divorce in Matthew 19 is this command: "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (v. 6). This biblical given is echoed in the official position of our denomination (see crcna.org). Both the Pharisees, who did not believe, and the disciples, who did, struggled to understand how the law of Moses was to be applied now that "the new" had come and "the old" had passed away (2 Cor. 5:17). And that struggle continues today.

Divorce is heartbreaking. When two people's experience of their marriage has moved from love for each other to indifference or even hostility; when a chasm has developed between spouses that proves impossible to bridge; when anger and resentment are fueled by hurtful marital events and personal failings—in short, when the pain of a marriage in trouble becomes too difficult to live with, separation and eventual divorce appear to be the best solution in an unresolvable situation.

Couples who experience the death of their marriage—sometimes years before they legally seek closure through divorce—

stand to lose much. Their standard of living may be negatively affected when two homes need to be maintained instead of one. Celebrations of significant family events and milestones such as birthdays, anniversaries, or graduations and holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas can become logistical nightmares. As well, their children's distress and fears that they may be the cause of their parents' difficulties can create intolerable tensions, recriminations, and guilt. Divorcing couples who ask their children to take sides against each other will often be rewarded with their children's misbehavior and/or emotional fragility. Loss of friends, loneliness, and a loss of stature within one's extended family and church family are all collateral damage of a marriage breakup.

Self-blame and guilt are paralyzing. At a time when a divorcing couple are most in need of friends and their church family's support, their own misgivings, fears, anger, and sadness are all too often multiplied by their church community. G. spoke of feeling "like a branch that has been broken off the vine . . . I no longer fit in." S. was told she had "disappointed"

We are called on to bless each other and not to condemn; to love extravagantly, and to build up rather than tear down.

and “needed to work harder.” A. said her church family avoided talking to her, but talked about her to extended family, which felt very isolating.

Congregations do well when they’re willing to learn how to be helpful rather than hurtful to fellow church members when a marriage is headed toward divorce, whatever the reason. Being helpful means not taking sides, nor presuming to know what a couple should do.

It also involves differentiating between individual and couple issues. When chronic infidelity, addiction, violence, mental illness, or a combination of these stalk a marriage, breaking the relationship is often necessary for a couple to gain a measure of individual health and well-being, as well as for the safety of any children. Problems of infidelity, addiction, or violence are individual patterns of avoidance that mask profound hurts and need to be understood and treated individually, with the help of trained professionals. In cases where violence or untreated mental illness are a factor, staying in a marriage can be dangerous for the whole family.

On the other hand, relational difficulties that are caused by unhelpful patterns of communication, intimacy issues, and/or poor conflict resolution skills, must be addressed by the couple together, usually with the help of a licensed therapist. If a couple fights competitively, for instance, someone always loses and nothing ever gets resolved; over time, this is very destructive to a marriage. So is trying to meet personal needs for distance or closeness by ascribing blame or guilt.

But the motivation and desire for change, and the vision and hope that change can be achieved, often eludes couples who struggle in their relationship. Sometimes their best efforts—along with time, patience, resolve, much prayer, professional help, and supportive friends and family—are not enough. Sometimes divorce beckons as a more reasonable and attainable alternative.

Church communities need to be clear about one thing: in the same way everyone in the community experiences the ravages of disease and eventual physical death, so everyone is affected by sin—both as perpetrators of sin and as recipients of other people’s sin. All of us are in need of continued cleansing and renewal. Just as homeowners and renters have to vacuum and wash floors regularly, so too we need regular

forgiveness of sin and the lifting of sorrows and guilt if we are to be a spiritually healthy people of “the way.”

Divorce is not a part of everyone’s experience, but relational sins are known to us all. As church families we are regularly called on to forgive each other, to resolve conflicts in a Christ-like manner, and to make room for each other’s differences, responding to one another with love, patience, and sometimes long-suffering.

Divorced people do not need special consideration or pastoral care that would not also apply to the rest of the congregation. What they do need is acceptance of their status as full-fledged members of the church family, with all the responsibilities and rights conferred on any member in good standing. They need their fellow church members to refrain from judging and to accept the reality that they cannot fix someone else’s problem. They need brothers and sisters who are willing to befriend them, as they would befriend any member of the congregation who is struggling.

A couple in the middle of a breakup might require help from fellow church members, but it is the same kind of help anyone in a crisis needs: a listening ear, an empathetic hug, shared tears, the promise to pray, meals, child care, dog walking, friendship—and, yes, advice when requested.

The heartache of a broken marriage should not prevent individuals from being able to move forward into a new beginning with a slate cleansed by God and affirmed by their brothers and sisters. Divorce, after all, is not the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit.

Going through a crisis is an opportunity for change, but only those in the crisis are in a position to define what that change needs to be and how it can happen. Every marriage is complex, and mistakes will be made—sometimes with drastic consequences. But couples have the right and responsibility to make decisions about their marriage from their own perspectives, based on their own beliefs and values, their upbringing and experiences, and their faith in God.

As the body of Christ, we are called to bless each other and not to condemn; to love extravagantly, and to build up rather than tear down. Prone to sin, we bless, love, and build up imperfectly, creating pain in each other we don’t intend—also with respect to our divorced brothers and sisters. Let’s remember that the ability to forgive is the central command that lets us experience a life of peace, even in the midst of our sins and sorrows. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)

For Further Understanding

In addition to seeking professional counseling, couples going through divorce and the communities that support them may find *A Christian Divorce* by Christopher Lake a helpful read. Lake is a Christian divorce attorney who grew up with divorced parents.



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

Taming the Digital Tongue



OUR PLATFORMS FOR COMMUNICATION ARE ENDLESS. For the past few years we have enjoyed a variety of soapboxes—Twitter, Facebook messaging, Instagram, texting, calling, and, of course, snail mail. People are communicating more than ever. Long distances that once separated loved ones are lessened with Skype. Young adults in college can text Mom “I’ll be home for Easter.” Siblings can SnapChat a picture of their lunch.

There are over 100 Bible verses pertaining to the power of words. Even in a time of shifting technology, these verses are still relevant. Proverbs 12:18 says, “The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” Similarly, Proverbs 29:20 reads, “Do you see someone who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for them.”

Words that are “reckless” or “in haste” can hurt like “swords” or make a “fool” out of us. With the evolution of smartphones, we can send out a message in only a few seconds. We can even avoid words altogether and use emojis! How-

ever, sarcasm doesn’t always translate well when read from a phone. That post about the fun you are having with your friends may be hard for someone who is feeling lonely. We should be careful not to use our wonderful technology thoughtlessly.

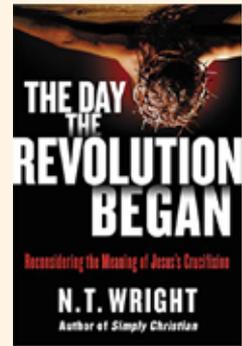
Many of us do take time with our messages. Not everyone has thumbs glued to their phones. However, words are slippery things. They come out of our mouths or keyboards faster than we can pull them back. So often we don’t know what we are saying until it is said and someone is hurt.

It is important to watch what we say, or to use that edit button. We might be connoisseurs of technology, but our words require extra care, no matter the medium. Our words, so very close to our thoughts, communicate who we are in Christ. Our family, friends, and those around us desire us to walk the walk. Sometimes that also means talking the talk. ■

Words are slippery things.



Kristin Schmitt is a graduate of Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich., and a member of Immanuel CRC in Hudsonville, Mich.



The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus’s Crucifixion

by N.T. Wright
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

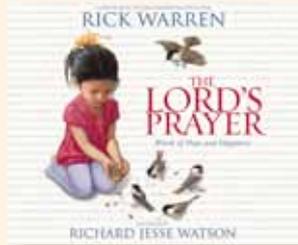
In this lengthy, complex exploration of Israel’s history leading up to the death and resurrection of Jesus, N.T. Wright argues that the early Christians believed that a revolution was launched on Good Friday that would forever change life on earth, the first sign of which was Jesus’ resurrection. Western Christians have often reduced the events of Good Friday and Easter to a personal, individualistic narrative. Instead, Wright argues, early Christians “were talking about something bigger, something more dangerous, something altogether more explosive. The personal meaning is not left behind. But it is contained within the larger story. And it means more, not less, as a result.” Particularly interesting and practical are Wright’s two concluding chapters, which attempt to answer the question “Where do we fit into this story?” (HarperOne)



Heavyweight

reviewed by **Adele Gallogly**

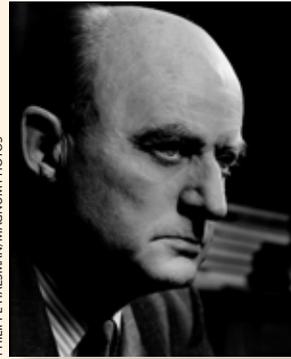
Jonathan Goldstein's podcast, *Heavyweight*, is a smart, introspective show about revisiting the moments we wonder about and regret. It's for anyone who has ever held a grudge or imagined how things could have been done differently. In most episodes, Goldstein catches up with people who shaped his past. Other times, his guests reckon with the past as he facilitates their meditations and confrontations. Even the more lighthearted episodes speak to the complexities of human relationships and life's heavy quandaries. Goldstein carries them with a poignant blend of wry humor and vulnerability, and he resists tidy resolutions. Take a listen—you won't regret it. (Gimlet Media)



The Lord's Prayer: Words of Hope and Happiness

by **Rick Warren**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Though children may hear the Lord's Prayer often, they might not always understand what Jesus' words mean. In this artistic rendering of the Lord's Prayer, making use of the King James version, illustrator Richard Jesse Watson and author Rick Warren team up to help children better understand Jesus' words. Watson's superb illustrations capture not only the variety of children in God's good creation but also the intensity and complexity of their emotions. Warren's commentary provides a brief explanation of each section of the prayer, as well as an additional prayer of thanksgiving to accompany it. Preschool and up. (Zonderkidz)



PHILIPPE HALSMAN/MAGNUM PHOTOS

An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story

reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

Reinhold Niebuhr was one of the most influential theologians and ethicists of the 20th century. This brief documentary gives an overview of his life and the way that his sometimes controversial convictions were shaped by the events of that era, including two world wars and the Civil Rights Movement. If you already know Niebuhr, this is an interesting biography. If you don't, the film might pique your interest in learning more. Showing on PBS throughout April and May; check your local listings for times. (Journey Films)

THE LOWDOWN



Chew on This: A favorite CRC-published children's

devotional is getting new life; Susan Damon's *Popcorn Clouds* and *Bubblegum Trees* is being reprinted for a new generation. (Credo)

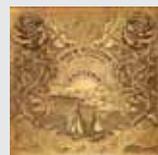


True Story: Journalist Lee Strobel sought to disprove Christianity and came up with his book *The Case for Christ*; a dramatized film of his experience debuts on movie screens this month. (Pure Flix)



Tapping History: *American Roots*, James D. Bratt's entry in the Calvin Shorts book series, takes a compact

look at the complex early history of the United States and the way five separate regional histories have had lasting influence on the country. (Calvin College Press)



Remember: Fans of folk rock may find another memorable album in

Souvenir, the latest from Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors. (Magnolia)



Never Alone

by **Seth & Nirva**
reviewed by **Paul Delger**

Never Alone, the first album from husband-and-wife duo Seth & Nirva, speaks to our need for God and his presence with us. The album finds beauty in diversity, moving between rhythm and blues, ballads, worship, dance, and rap. The song "Brother" is about finding common ground with people from different backgrounds; another standout is a beautiful rendition of "Great Are You Lord." If *Never Alone* is any indication, the duo will become an important part of the Christian music scene. (Integrity)

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

From Just War to Just Peace

“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS,”

said Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, “for they will be called children of God.”

But our world is wracked by war. Russia invades Ukraine. Rebels capture children and burn villages in Nigeria and Congo. Syria is a battleground among many factions, and the self-proclaimed Islamic State strikes out wherever it can. How can we be peacemakers today?

Some say the answer is “peace through strength”: when violence breaks out, fight fire with fire. Send in the Marines, destroy the enemies’ weapons, and bring them to their knees. That, they say, is the road to peace.

That strategy hasn’t worked very well. When American forces overwhelmed Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein’s army, they scored a quick victory. But years later, internal conflicts simmer, Christians have been driven into exile, and spreading circles of chaos help Islamic extremists dominate the region.

In Libya, America and its allies struck from the air to defeat another dictator. But the civil war that ensued has spread to Libya’s neighbors on each side and exported rebel forces to Mali. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, decades of military action and billions in military aid have left most people in desperate poverty and fueled the flames of terrorism.

Others take a different view: they say being a peacemaker means rejecting violence. Didn’t Christ call us to love our enemies? We do that when we seek reconciliation and resolve conflicts. Fighting violence with violence only breeds yet more violence.

Each of these positions has been defended by leading Christian thinkers. Tertullian, a key architect of early Christian theology, pronounced that “in disarming Peter, our Lord disarmed every



soldier,” and no Christian should bear arms or wage war. Two centuries later, Augustine took a different view: “It is the wrongdoing of the opposing party which compels the wise man to wage just wars”—if a legitimate ruler orders it, and if the goal is not conquest but the restoration of peace.

Most of the Reformers in early modern Europe agreed with Augustine that under some conditions, Christians are permitted to seek peace by waging war. But some Reformed, Lutheran, and Catholic Christians continue to insist, along with pacifists of the Anabaptist tradition, that the way of the cross is the way of nonviolence.

Almost 11 years ago, the annual synod of the Christian Reformed Church took up a study committee report on the question of how to be peacemakers. The report

reaffirmed the duty of all Christians to act out of love for neighbor, avoiding needless violence while seeking to protect the vulnerable. Citing a 1977 synodical report, it reiterated traditional rules for resorting to military action. First, there must be just cause for war: a grave injustice that demands redress when all peaceful means of resolution have failed. Second, the war must be waged justly, using the minimum necessary force, sparing noncombatants from direct harm, and seeking peace rather than victory. The 2006 report also reiterated synod’s 1982 declaration that nuclear weapons cannot be a legitimate weapon in war and should be destroyed as soon as possible.

Three changes in the nature of conflict were highlighted in the report’s introduction: increasing interdependence of states

Can we envision a coalition of Christians from many traditions who would speak with one voice of the transformative power of active nonviolence as a remedy for injustice?

and their people; the emergence of “failed states” with no effective government; and the rise of nonstate actors that can facilitate or frustrate the quest for peace.

Of special concern to the committee (of which I was a member) was the claim by the U.S. government that, in cases such as Iraq, a preventive war could be a just war. The 2006 report challenged this claim. A preemptive strike at an enemy about to invade one’s territory may be just; but a war to block possible future threats is nothing less than military aggression.

In the last decade, what has changed? Has the CRC become “one of the peace churches,” as the report urged? Not really. In the pews and in our colleges and agencies, the importance of military strength and the legitimacy of some wars is taken for granted. Pacifists who dissent from this position are often dismissed as naïve and idealistic.

Yet war has changed dramatically in 10 years. Armies mass on the battlefield only in history films. Today rebel bands conduct lightning raids and then go into hiding. Islamic extremists target shopping malls and airports and city streets around the globe. Western powers fight an undefined “war on terror” with cruise missiles dropped on targets from above—a war waged by commanders and technicians thousands of miles away.

Recently the world’s major nuclear powers have reduced their arsenals as required by international treaties while at the same time hastening to modernize the ones they retain. As a condition of approving already negotiated reductions, for example, the U.S. Senate demanded accelerated development of more sophisticated warheads and delivery systems. And so a president who came to office with hopes of achieving a nuclear-free world has stepped down after budgeting

\$350 billion to build new and better nuclear arms.

When Martin Luther and John Calvin pronounced their blessing on certain wars, provided key conditions had been met, they were following faithfully the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church—in sharp contrast to their radical dissent on issues such as the authority of the church and the nature of salvation. They in turn passed down to the Protestant churches a loosely defined “just war doctrine” that adheres closely to Catholic teaching today. Most Protestants would endorse the statement of the Second Vatican Council in 1965 that “governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defense once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted.”

Perhaps it’s time for Protestant Christians to listen closely to Catholic voices once again. One year ago, in April 2016, a report was issued by a conference on “Nonviolence and Just Peace” convened by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the international Catholic peace group Pax Christi.

The conference highlighted the suffering caused by wars large and small, including the costs of militarization and pervasive economic injustice. Participants questioned the validity of just war thinking and affirmed the healing and reconciliation that lie at the very heart of the gospel message.

“In this context of normalized and systemic violence,” the report urged, “those of us who stand in the Christian tradition are called to recognize the centrality of active nonviolence to the vision and message of Jesus and to our long-

term vocation of healing and reconciling both people and the planet.”

For two thousand years, Catholic teaching has upheld the notion of just wars. That was then, and this is now, the report insisted. It is time to “consider shifting to a Just Peace approach based on gospel nonviolence,” whose aim is “to build peace as well as to prevent, defuse, and to heal the damage of violent conflict.” The report stated bluntly, “We believe there is no just war.”

Whether the church’s stringent requirements for just war have ever stopped an advancing army is debatable. Perhaps these rules have induced some politicians and generals to proceed with restraint. But war is more dangerous than ever, while nonviolence has proven more potent than anyone ever imagined. Consider the remarkable success of nonviolent action against repressive regimes in the Philippines, Burma, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Liberia.

Can we envision a coalition of Christians from many traditions—the traditionally pacifist Anabaptist movement, the Catholic tradition, and the Reformed family too—who would speak with one voice of the transformative power of active nonviolence as a remedy for injustice? This would be a very different church—and in time, by God’s grace, a very different world ■



David A. Hoekema is professor of philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. He attends Second Christian Reformed Church in Grand Haven, Mich.

Sola Fide



FAITH

Faith must be nurtured and nourished in a community of faithful proclamation and sacramental participation.

2017 MARKS THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY of the Protestant Reformation. We're commemorating 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).

"YA GOTTA BELIEVE." These are the immortal words of Frank Edwin "Tug" McGraw, relief pitcher for the 1973 New York Mets. In last place on the last day in August, the Mets went on an improbable run to the pennant, past the heavily favored Cincinnati Reds and into the World Series.

It's a quintessentially American motto, praising the ability of the individual to "bootstrap" him- or herself into or out of any situation. It stands behind not only more secular entrepreneurial ventures, but also forms of Christianity that reinvent faith as a means to (or a sign of) financial success.

"Confidence in confidence alone" (to quote Rodgers and Hammerstein) presumes too much—and too little.

It presumes too much on the ability of the "rugged" individual who is able, through naked will, to succeed. All the belief in the world wouldn't have helped "the miracle Mets" had they not been able to put the bat on the ball. It also presumes too little on the importance

of background conditions. Some people face invisible barriers to participation in the grand cultural dream: barriers of race, gender, or class. Others are born into security and prosperity, the proverbial silver spoon. Some teams are just plain lucky; their rivals are having a bad season.

The dictum "faith alone" (*sola fide* in church-speak) is not "faith in faith." Faith is never truly alone. Faith must be nurtured and nourished in a community of faithful proclamation and sacramental participation.

But even more than this: faith depends on its object. If the object of faith is the ability of the sovereign individual, faith will certainly fail. Faith will become merely another "work." If the object of faith is the sovereign God, faith will unite an understanding of personal inability to God's ability. Faith will look not to itself, but to the covenant faithfulness of God made flesh and blood in Jesus. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in my body, I live by faith, indeed, by the faithfulness of God's Son, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal 2:20, CEB)

This was the underlying concern of the Protestant reformers. Opposing any insinuation that individual ability or social station could make one acceptable to God, they insisted that becoming right with God was dependent on an act of prior divine grace, to which faith was a response. In other words, grace was a

divine invasion into despair at failure to establish oneself, a sense that the very coherence of the world was at stake unless God acted, and had acted, in Jesus Christ.

This reliance on grace liberated the Reformers to remake their societies. They didn't always see the challenge to political power implied in *sola fide*, and their tenets would soon degenerate into the dialectic of bookish Protestant scholasticism ("the faith" as a system of beliefs) versus non-dogmatic, inward pietism (the seed of "faith in faith") the following century.

But that's to cast a shadow on the commemorations. For the genuine insight of the Reformers was that radical trust in a God on whose faithfulness the world depended was the center from which all personal and social transformation proceeded. And the faithful church, that is, the church that lives from the faithfulness of God, is always reforming, never settled. Reformation is not mere "innovation," for it has a Model. At its best, such a church constantly reforms not only itself, but its members, and indeed its world in faithful conformity with its Lord. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Dr. Stephen Martin is associate professor of theology at The King's University College, Edmonton, Alta.

ADS

Deadlines: May issue is 4/4/17; June issue is 5/9/17. 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.

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Denominational and Classical

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER (U.S.) In May 1988 the President of the United States signed into law a bill establishing the first Thursday of May as a National Day of Prayer. This year the National Day of Prayer falls on Thursday, May 4. The synod of the CRC has urged churches in the United States "to observe faithfully any national day of prayer which the United States President publicizes to the nation" (Acts of Synod 1969). "Our churches must be open to our congregations and our fellow countrymen on such occasions, when God in his providence leads those in civil authority to call our citizenry to pray. We must pray for and with our country" (Acts of Synod 1958). Steven R. Timmermans Executive Director

Available for Call

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

Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **KENDALL EVERETT** 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

We are pleased to announce that **BEN MCKNIGHT** 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

We are pleased to announce that **BRIAN (HEE JUNG) NA** 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

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.

RETIREMENT: PASTOR BILL VEENSTRA is retiring August 31, 2017 after almost 40 years of faithful service in Ontario and British Columbia serving churches, as well as serving on the Board of Trustees (1997-2000, 2010-2016) and as Canadian Ministers Director (2001-2004). His retirement will be marked with a Celebration Evening at 7:00pm on Friday, June 23, 2017 as well as a special worship service at 10:00am on Sunday, June 25, 2017 at Cornerstone Christian Reformed Church in Chilliwack, BC. Please send pictures, stories &/or words of encouragement to: retirement@cornerstonecrc.ca or 9800 McNaught Road, Chilliwack, BC, Canada V2P 6G2.

Congregational

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.

ZUNI CHRISTIAN REFORMED MISSION in Zuni Pueblo, NM gives thanks to God for the completion of a new gym/ministry center and for the faithful prayers and gifts of God's people that have made it possible. Please join us for a weekend of celebration and

dedication May 5-7, 2017. For more information, please visit our website at www.zunichristianmission.org.

Birthdays

100th Birthday

MATHILDA JACOBS of 727 Apple Ave. Rm H12 Holland MI 49423 celebrated her 100th birthday on March 4. Both her family and church family at Drenthe CRC praise God for His many years of faithfulness to her.

90th Birthday

HENRIETTA (VANDE KIEFT) ROOY will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 24. Celebrating with her are her children Jan and Jerry Fondse, Ken and Michele Rooy, and Denny and Judy Rooy; six grandchildren and their spouses; and seven great-grandchildren, all thankful to God for her kindness and love. You can congratulate her by sending your greetings to 1932 Concord Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506

MARVIN TEBOS celebrated his 90th birthday on March 30, 2017. Those blessed to call him Husband, Dad, Grandpa & Great-Grandpa are his wife, Ruth, children Beverly and Brian Wispelwey, Marlene and Dean Helms, Karla Heuker, Ken and Carol TeBos plus the 19 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. Great is God's faithfulness!

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

TERPSTRA, Henry and Marie, 4715 Trillium Springs Blvd, Apt 107, Fremont, MI 49412, will celebrate 70 years of marriage on May 2, 2017. Their 5 children and spouses; 15 grandchildren; and 21 great-grandchildren praise God, from whom all blessings flow!

VANDER TUIG Sylvester (Shorty) and Arlene. 16346 Ave. 192 Tulare, Ca. 93274 celebrated 70 years of marriage April 23. Children: Richard & Kathy, Joanne & Craig Travis, Jay & Bev, Bev & Earl Lanting. 14 grandchildren and spouses, 45 great grandchildren and 1 spouse. Thank God for a long and loving marriage.

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.

Free A Family from poverty for less than \$1 per day.



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worldrenew.net/freefamily   

 **World Renew** | **FREE A FAMILY**
LIVING JUSTICE • LOVING MERCY • SERVING CHRIST

50th Anniversary



BOSVELD, Martin and Lynn of Chatham, ON, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on March 18, along with their children and grandchildren. 119 Balmoral Ave, Chatham, ON, N7L 4N4, mbosveld@ciaccess.com. "The Lord is my light and my salvation. . ."

Obituaries

ELIZABETH AUKEMAN (DeJong), age 92, of Hudsonville, MI passed away on February 9, 2017. She is survived by her husband Mark; children Carol (Rich) Rienstra, Shirley (Rick) Bultema, Gloria and Nancy; eight grandsons and their wives, 15 great grandchildren, one brother.

LUCY DEHEER (SCHAAPMAN), 78 went to be with the Lord peacefully on Monday, January 9, 2017 with members of her family present. She is survived by her husband, Lee, 4 children, 11 grandchildren and one great grandchild. She is missed.

EDWARD DEJONG, 86, of Arizona City, AZ, died Feb. 19, 2017, at home. Survived by Sadie, his wife of 62 years; 6 children: Calvin, Jessie, Sandra, Dan, David, and Mary; 26 grandchildren, 33 great grandchildren; brother Harry, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Church Position Announcements

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

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

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.

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.firstcrctstthomas.com for more details. Email a cover letter and resume to firstcrctstthomas@gmail.com or by mail to 320 Elm Street, St. Thomas, ON N5R 1J7

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.northstreetcrrc.org or email Brian at northstreetsearch@gmail.com for more information

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

PASTOR: Gateway Community CRC in beautiful Abbotsford, BC, Canada is seeking a full time Pastor of Preaching and Congregational

HENRY DYK (Bud), 96 of Manhattan, MT died peacefully on Monday, Feb.6, 2017. He was a charter member of Bethel CRC. He is survived by his loving wife Louise (Feb 11, marked 70 yrs. of marriage), three children, one grandson, one granddaughter and six great-grandchildren

JAMES ETTERBEEK, 90, of Wyckoff, NJ, went to be with his Lord on January 22, 2017. Jim was a graduate of Calvin College where he met his wife of 66 years, Anne, who predeceased him in 2012. He was a member of Cedar Hill Christian Reformed Church in Wyckoff. He is survived by his four children: David, Susan Soderlind, Karen VanderHorn, Debra Dyer; 9 grandchildren: Kristen, David, Rebecca, Rachel, Peter, Margaret, James, Andrew, Eric; 4 great grandchildren: Jack, Carson, Connor, and Alejandro.

CAROL J. HAAN (nee Bandstra), age 81 of Lansing, IL, formerly of Roseland, went home to her Lord and Savior on Wednesday, February 8, 2017. Carol is survived by her beloved husband of 60 ½ years; Donald Haan; children: Gerald (Judi) Haan and Beverly (David) Vanderbilt; 5 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

LAURA JOLING nee Brouwer, age 92, of Kalamazoo, MI, passed away to be with her Lord on Feb. 24, 2017. She is survived by Edward Joling, husband of 72 years, their three children Marilyn (Neal) Bierling, David (Judith) Joling, and Judith (John) Popp, 8 grandchildren, 11 great grandchildren, 3 sisters-in-law, and many nieces and nephews.

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

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.

SENIOR PASTOR COVENANT HOPE CHURCH is seeking a full time pastor that is devoted to Biblically sound preaching while striving to build quality relationships with members of all ages and needs. Our church strives to glorify God as we gather to grow in faith and go and make disciples. We are looking for someone with strong outreach and leadership skills to help grow the only RCA/CRC Reformed church in the Battle Creek area. Please visit our website at www.covenanthope.org and submit any resumes, pastor profiles, and letters of inquiry to kannegieter@sbcglobal.net.

LEAD PASTOR Edina (Minneapolis), MN: Calvary CRC seeks to replace our retiring Lead Pastor. We are looking for a compelling preacher of Biblical truth that connects God's Word to our lives today, leading us and challenging us toward a more outward focus. To explore this opportunity with us, contact pastorsearch@calvarycrrc.net.

FIRST CRC OF GRAND HAVEN, MI - Located on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan, First CRC is prayerfully seeking a full time Pastor to join our church family. We are looking for someone who, through biblically based motivating messages, will challenge us in our daily lives to engage with our community and our world; someone who is focused on building relationships within our church and our community and who believes that prayer is the cornerstone of faith. Our ideal candidate is also a collaborative leader who can work alongside and guide our director of discipleship and youth leader. Is God calling you to join our family? To learn more check out our website and profile at www.firstchurchgrandhaven.com or email the search team at firstcrrghsearch@gmail.com

PASTOR Fellowship CRC in Grandville, MI is seeking a full time pastor. To explore this opportunity please contact fellowshipcrrc.searchcommittee@gmail.com

LOUIS E. KOK, age 87, died January 27, 2017. Lou was a CRC pastor who served as an Air Force Chaplain for 27 years. Preceded in death by his son Daniel Kok. Survived by his beloved wife of 64 years, Frances; children Mavis (Randy) Moon; Joel (Tricia) Kok; Janette Kok; daughter-in-law Kathleen Kok; eight grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren.

WILMA (SIEKMAN) KONING, of Grand Rapids, MI, went to be with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Wednesday, February 22, 2017. She was preceded in death by her husband, Henry Koning, and is survived by her children: Jim and Carol Koning, Ken and Cheri Koning, Gary and Gina Koning, David and Julie Koning, and Lisa and Paul Murphy; 15 grandchildren; and 8 great-grandchildren.

CHRISTINE NICODEM nee DeBoer, age 84, went to be with our Lord on February 11, 2017. 706 Barnsdale Rd. LaGrange Park, IL 60526. Wife of the late Robert C. Nicodem; mother of Robert (Elynn) Nicodem, Barb (Larry) Heslinga, Earl (Bev) Nicodem, and Beth (Bil) Wappler; grandmother of Kara and Justin (Michelle) Heslinga, Lisa (Jared) Richmond, Erin (Bob) Tegge, Megan Nicodem, Michael (Amanda) Wappler, and Whitney (Tim) Miller; great-grandmother of Jackson, Logan, Hannah, Sienna, and Rosalie; preceded in death by 4 brothers and 1 sister, sister-in-law of Bill Bolt; aunt of many nieces and nephews; dear friend of Christine Klaer. Memorials to World Renew, 1700 28th St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508 are appreciated.

YOUTH DIRECTOR: Located 40 minutes from Boston, we are a church for people who've given up on church but not on God. Over the past two decades, God has used New England Chapel to help many New Englanders from all kinds of backgrounds find faith. We're looking for a motivated, enthusiastic individual to join our team as our next youth director - someone who can adapt to NEC's unique style and vision - who doesn't take themselves too seriously, yet seriously loves the Lord and serving God's people. For more information, please email necyouthpastor@gmail.com

PASTOR: The Christian Reformed Church of San Jose, California, in the heart of Silicon Valley, is currently seeking a full-time lead pastor. To explore this opportunity, please email Steve Bouman at sbouman@pacbell.net.

YOUTH & FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP Does your ambition and training match with our vision for our youth? We envision our children and young people growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ, seeking to serve as his disciples and learning to share their faith with their peers. We are offering full time employment with benefits for a Youth & Family Discipleship Coordinator. A bachelor's degree and some experience is preferred. Midland Park has a pleasant, small town atmosphere, only 25 miles from New York City. To learn more about this exciting opportunity at Midland Park CRC, go to www.mpccr.org, or email searchcommittee@mpccr.org.

PASTOR Interested in joining Trinity CRC in a life transforming journey under God's design? Located in Maryland Hts MO, we are an ethnically diverse church family with a deep passion for the St. Louis area. Reach us at pastor@trinity-stl.org, or contact Don Shippy at 314-374-7651. Go Cardinals

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY: The First Christian Reformed Church of Sioux Falls, SD, is seeking a full-time Director of Youth Ministry. First CRC is a dynamic and growing congregation of 1300 members committed to local, regional and global Christ-centered ministry. A Position Description is available upon request. Interested applicants must be committed to a confessionally Reformed Biblical world-view, be willing to serve in a multi-ethnic setting, and have a teachable spirit. Men, women, and those who may be entering youth ministry for the first time are encouraged to apply. Applications can be sent to the First Christian Reformed Church, 2811 East 26th Street, Sioux Falls, SD, 57103, or to office@firstchristianreformed.org.

JEANETTE ORANJE, of Grand Rapids, MI, was called to her heavenly home on Tuesday, February 28, 2017. She is survived by her niece, Penny Oranje; great-nephew, JJ Robbins; great-great nephews Aiden Robbins and Ethan Robbins; and many cousins and friends.

MILDRED "MILLY" SCHUURMANN Buma, aged 83 from Grand Rapids, MI, went to be with her Savior on Saturday, February 25, 2017. Milly is survived by her husband of 60 years, Peter Buma; children, Craig and Shari Buma, Doug and Kathi Buma, Mark and Jane Haverkamp, 12 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.

JEAN TERPSTRA, from Grand Rapids, MI, passed away on Monday, February 27, 2017. Jean is preceded in death by her husband, Chuck; and is survived by her children, Bud and Judi Terpstra, Ruth Posthumus and Marlin Feyen; John and Bev Terpstra; Mary and Peter Cagle; Ken Terpstra; Sara and Don Buchholz; Bob and Marj Terpstra; 19 grandchildren and 30 great grandchildren.

PHYLLIS MARIE VANDER WEELE, age 79, of Grand Rapids, MI, was called to her Heavenly home, on Sunday, February 19, 2017. She is survived by her husband, Ray Vander Weele; her children, Patty and Doug Haan of Holland, Michigan (Colby, Andrew, Allison and Scott Haan), and Jeff and Dawn (DuBois) Vander Weele, of Ada, Michigan (Marissa, Colin, Dylan and Karsyn Vander Weele).

Employment

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TRINITY CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
Vermeer Fireside Room, August 11th 7:00 PM

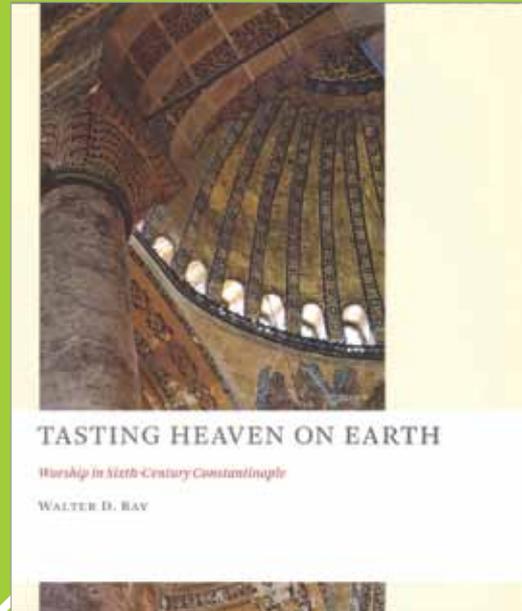
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Punch Lines

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!

One evening I stopped in the preschool room at church and listened in as the teacher introduced the next "fruit of the Spirit." She said, "Remember, we have love, joy, and now we have peace." One little boy piped up and said, "But I don't like peas!"

—Bonny Mulder-Behnia

My 6-year-old grandson called his mother from his friend Charlie's house and confessed he had broken a lamp when he threw a football in their living room.

"But Mom," he said, brightening, "you don't have to worry about buying another one. Charlie's mother said it was irreplaceable."

—Dawn Gebben

When my children were young, we used lovely velvet bags for the collection rather than flat plates. My daughter Samantha, who was about 4 at the time, was watching these bags very closely as they wound their way through the congregation. After a few moments of studying them, she turned to me and asked, "Mommy, can I please hold the jackpot?"

—Carolyn Tolkamp

I think Santa has riverfront property in Brazil. All our presents came from Amazon this year.

—R. Smit

One summer day my daughter and her children, ages 3, 5, and 7, planned a special day to go to Ottawa Beach in Holland, Mich. The children had never been there. With lots of excitement they put on their new swim outfits and were ready to go. As they ran toward the beach, one look at Lake Michigan stopped them. Little Mark finally said, "That's way too much water. Mama, pull the plug."

—G. Brummel

The preacher was wired for sound with a lapel mike. As he preached, he moved briskly about the platform, jerking the

mike cord as he went. Then he moved to one side, getting wound up and nearly tripping on it before jerking it again.

After several more circles and jerks, a little girl who was sitting in the third pew leaned toward her mother and whispered, "If he gets loose, will he hurt us?"

—Cyndi Boss

Three-year-old Abigail went to the doctor to get her hearing checked. "My eyes need to be checked too," she said. "They feel frustrated because I keep blinking."

—G.P.

Judge: Is this the first time that you have been up before me?
Defendant: I don't know, your honor. What time do you get up?

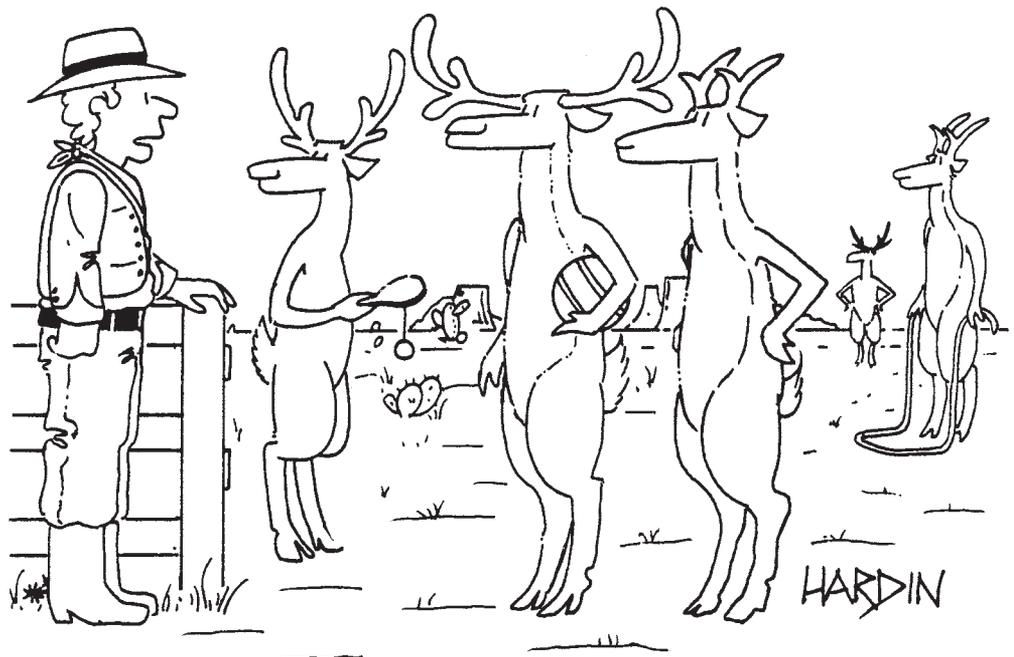
—Dick Bylsma

A woman was sipping on a glass of wine while sitting on the patio with her husband. She said, "I love you so much . . . I don't know how I could ever live without you."

Her husband asked, "Is that you or the wine talking?"

She replied, "It's me . . . talking to the wine!"

—Jan Veltkamp



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