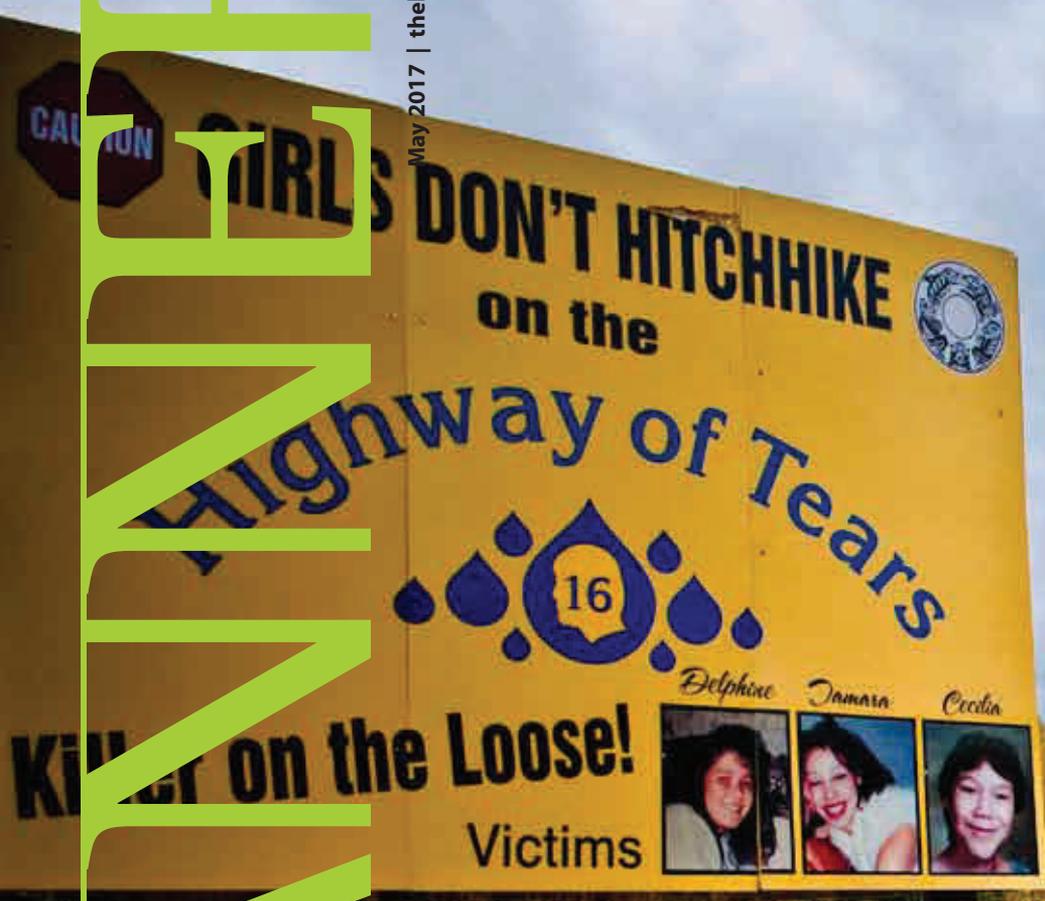


# BANNER

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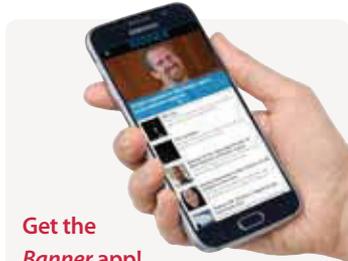
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# Taking Inventory

**I OFTEN ADVISE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO APPLY PHILIPPIANS 4:8:** “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” The original Greek word translated as “think” in this passage means “take inventory.” Rather than a fleeting thought, it suggests an intentional taking stock and focus. Some English versions translate it as “dwell on these things.”

As Christians at a secular university encounter ideas and theories that may challenge their faith, I suggest that they focus on what is true, just, pure, and excellent in what they are learning—even from secular ideas and theories—and build on those. Not to ignore the difficulties, but to help them build up faith and joy through their studies. I believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in God’s world; through God’s common grace, truth, goodness, and justice are to be found everywhere.

The apostle Paul asked this of the Philippians in the context of suffering, likely from persecution (Phil. 1:29-30), attacks from circumcision legalists (Phil. 3:2-3), and internal disunity and dissension (Phil. 4:2). Despite all that, Paul’s letter is full of references to rejoicing: “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil. 4:4). Without ignoring the problems, Paul called the Philippians to focus instead on having the mind of Christ and on these excellent virtues. As if to practice what

I believe that  
the Holy  
Spirit is at  
work in  
God’s world.

he preached, Paul’s list of virtues was almost identical to similar lists common to ancient Greek moralists. Paul found and used what was true and good even among pagans.

I confess I need to heed Paul’s advice more often. It is too easy for me to take inventory, not of what is excellent but of what is wrong, mistaken, or faulty in sermons, books, or articles. I have a critical mind, which can be very helpful but is not spiritually healthy if it grows a critical spirit in me. It kills my joy.

Does the Christian Reformed Church also need to take heed of this? My observation is that our culture, as a whole, tends to default toward being critical. (I know it’s ironic that I am being critical!) We are very good at critiquing ideas, plans, and actions. Critical thinking is important; we do not want to be naively optimistic. But have we crossed that line into fault-finding and a critical spirit? Are we quick to point out disagreements and slow to find common ground?

We are all sinners. As the Heidelberg Catechism reminds us, “Even the very best we do in this life is imperfect and stained with sin” (Q&A 62). Therefore it is easy to find fault, and it is important to correct each other in the Lord. But if we focus *only* on those things, we are not extending grace to one another. We aren’t building each other up but tearing each other down. And that doesn’t lead to much joy or peace in our hearts.

I pray that we may adopt this more positive attitude, taking inventory first of what’s true, noble, right, and pure—even in ideas that we disagree with. And looking ahead to Synod 2017 next month, I pray that our delegates will have the same mind as they consider various proposals. I don’t think it would hurt us, in the midst of our tensions, to follow Paul’s advice, trusting in the Holy Spirit’s work and providence. ■



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

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# All Creatures

*Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds. —Psalm 148:7-10*

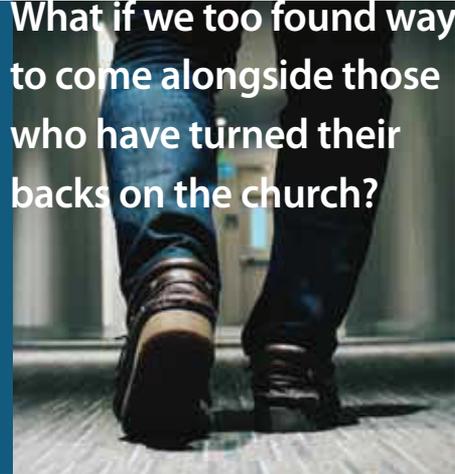
Praise the Lord,  
you playful dolphins,  
as you leap and splash into the ocean foam;  
Praise him,  
you multitudes of darting minnows!  
Eight-armed octopus and five-pointed starfish,  
wave your praise to the Lord!  
Applaud with loud thunder,  
you storm clouds!  
Lightning, flash forth his glory  
in fiery brilliance!  
Fierce and gentle winds,  
blow his praises to the ends of the earth!  
White cumulus clouds and shimmering glaciers,  
reflect his purity and might!  
Praise the Lord,  
you brightly colored, hovering butterfly!  
Magnify his name,  
you slow, fuzzy caterpillar!  
Give him glory,  
you timid, scampering mouse! ■



**Trudy VanderVeen** is a retired secretary and a great-grandmother who likes to write and make greeting cards. She has been a member of Denver's Third Christian Reformed Church for over 60 years.

## What If?

**What if we too found way to come alongside those who have turned their backs on the church?**



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**IF CURRENT TRENDS HOLD**, church attendance may continue to decline. Which raises the question of how we see those who are not with us in church. Are they *them*, or are they *us*?

Perhaps more important, how does *Jesus* see them? What is Jesus' attitude toward those who have turned their backs on the church?

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem," says Jesus, "you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing" (Matt. 23:37).

In other words, "You keep turning your backs on God. But I still love you, and I want you to know that. What do I have to do to help you see that?"

All of humanity had turned their backs on God. Then Jesus came down from his glorious position in the presence of God and became human, identifying with human wants and needs, participating in the struggles of human existence.

Sure enough, when people sensed that Jesus genuinely cared for them, that he did not come to judge them but to help them see God in a different light than what they had heard from their religious leaders, crowds began to gather.

And when Jesus was seen in the company of prostitutes and tax collectors, eating and drinking with those who had failed to meet the approval of the religious leaders and hanging out with those who did not usually attend services at the synagogue, Jesus further tarnished his reputation among the religious establishment.

On at least one such occasion, the crowd was so enthralled with Jesus that they lost track of time. When suppertime came, they were nowhere near any source of food. The disciples urged Jesus to send the people away to buy food in a nearby town.

But Jesus said to his disciples: "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." (Matt. 14:16).

What if we too found ways to come alongside those who have turned their backs on the church? To be present with them. Not judge them. Eat with them. And show them love and compassion. Recognize that they are us, and we are them. And serve them. Not send them away, but give them something to eat. What might that look like in 2017 and beyond?

What if, when Jesus said, "I will be with you always," he meant "I, Jesus, embodied in my followers, will be with you, you crowds of aimless wanderers. Whether you follow me or turn your back on me, I will be with you always."

Could it be? ■



**John Van Donk** is a former Christian Reformed pastor who, after multiple careers in construction, as a truck driver, software salesperson, and dairy farm manager, now happily makes his living repairing pool and spa equipment.



### Beyond Our Fears

Church and state must be separate, but separating religion and politics is impossible ("Beyond Our Fears," March 2017). Jesus is Lord of life, and politics is part of life. The pulpit must not tell the pew how to fill in the ballot; yet must equip [people in the pew] to walk in the ways of the Lord politically. Biblical teachings and allegiance to Jesus must shape our citizenship. Those biblical teachings are a confessional, therefore a church, matter.

Among Christians on both sides of the border, there is a growing divide on political matters. Unity does not lie with partisan agendas but in our common confession that Jesus is Lord. At this moment in our history, the Bible's teachings on political discipleship must be the focus of denomination-wide educational efforts, including the content of *The Banner*. Thank you for not shirking that difficult task.

*Nick Loenen  
Richmond, B.C.*

### Rape Culture

I'm so pleased that *The Banner* is addressing this issue ("Rape Culture and Christian Colleges," March 2017). As the coordinator of Safe Church for Classis Grand Rapids East, I cannot emphasize enough the need for education on this issue. This must start in a child's early years. We need

# LETTERS

to teach children what is appropriate touching and teens what are healthy dating habits so by the time they enter high school and college they are well informed on appropriate sexual behavior. Every church needs to have a safe church policy that people are familiar with. We cannot put our heads in the sand and say these problems do not exist within our communities. I pray that all who have experienced sexual, physical, or emotional abuse will be encircled with God's love.

*Judy Jongsma  
Grand Rapids, Mich.*

## Outside the Box

I want to give a shout-out to Sandy Swartztruber for her great Just for Kids column ("Thinking Outside the Box," March 2017). It's a great reminder for all adults as well. As is often the case, it's the little things that count.

*Lynn Setsma  
Grand Rapids, Mich.*

## Sola Scriptura

Is Scripture truly the only unquestionable religious authority in the Christian church? ("Sola Scriptura," March 2017). It was the sacred tradition of the early church fathers that led to the selection of the books of the Bible. Then the Reformers eliminated seven of those sacred texts after they had existed for 1,000 years. Which came first, sacred Scripture or sacred tradition? The chicken or the egg? Scripture is truly an unquestionable religious authority, as is the sacred tradition of the Christian church. God speaks to us through Scripture and through the traditions of the church.

*Kurtis Hoffman  
Grand Rapids, Mich.*

*Editor's Note:* The CRCNA's official position on biblical authority can be found online here: [tinyurl.com/k3tuvak](http://tinyurl.com/k3tuvak)

## God's Been There

Thank you, James Schaap, for "God's Been There Somehow" (Feb. 2017). As a missionary kid, I was sent off to boarding school at the tender age of 5. "Orphans for Jesus," we called ourselves. Even now, many decades later, my sister gets misty-eyed when we mention boarding school. And we got to speak our own language, sing our own songs, and listen to our own stories. I could still find God in all the rules and rigidity, but, sadly, some of my friends could not. History is rich with many lessons to teach us.

*Bonnie Roda  
Maple Ridge, B.C.*

## White Privilege

I want to thank the authors of the article "Confronting White Privilege" (Feb. 2017) for reminding us how necessary, challenging, and hopeful it is to (1) listen humbly to those who have been discriminated against on the basis of ethno-racial, religious, gendered, class, or some other socially defined category of difference; (2) publicly acknowledge that all forms of social privilege are supported by unjust social arrangements that humans create and/or perpetuate; and (3) recognize that we are called to love and live justly with all our (disadvantaged) neighbors, which requires naming/dismantling discriminatory beliefs, attitudes, and practices and also working together to cultivate new relations and social arrangements that welcome and privilege all of God's children.

*David Long  
Edmonton, Alta.*

I am a white middle-aged man, and I find the article "Confronting White Privilege" offensive on a personal level. The term is equivalent to "lazy Indians" and many more examples of how groups of people are painted with a broad brush without taking individual experiences into account.

Your article does not take into account the fact that I grew up extremely poor and had to work for everything I got. We immigrated to Canada with no support from anybody. It brushes over the fact that I have been denied work at companies where my ethnicity would "impede productive group interactions," according to the interviewer.

I had expected a much better-balanced article in *The Banner*.

*Faan Kuypers  
Acton, Ont.*

Having lived through the civil rights movement of the 60s and been part of it in Chicago and through the South, I am deeply grieved that this article ("Confronting White Privilege") has found its way into the dialogue of our denomination. Teaching white privilege is not only divisive, it is not consistent with building up the body of Christ for the glory of God. The church ought not parrot the slogans and philosophy that prevails in the world around us but rather be challenged to bring the gospel of peace, hope, and joy to that world through the living God and his right hand, Jesus Christ.

*Paul Hansen  
Artesia, Calif.*

[MORE ONLINE](#)

## Correction

Rimmer De Vries' letter (March 2017) incorrectly assumed that denominational ministry shares funded the delegation to Paris at over \$50,000. The over \$50,000 budget amount was the entire Climate Witness Project budget (except for personnel costs) for the fiscal year. The cost of the delegation to Paris was less than \$12,000, which was covered by the \$23,000 raised from outside ministry shares. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

# NEWS

## Seeking the Face of God through Art

**T**he long white walls in the gallery bear images of loss, despair, and pain, but also of hope. The art exhibit “Seek My Face” by Peter Reitsma opened on March 3 at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont. The series of oil paintings explores the ways God can be seen in others, particularly those who are disenfranchised.

“Most of the works somehow display how the hand of God is in the middle of where we live, even the dark places of bad choices,

dislocation, and injustice,” explained artist Peter Reitsma. A member of Meadowvale Christian Reformed Church in Mississauga, Ont., Reitsma lives and works in Milton, where he owns and operates a graphic design and illustration company. He plans to retire soon and spend more time painting.

The gallery labels are simple, revealing just the title of the piece, as Reitsma hopes the paintings speak for themselves. Some of the paintings create discomfort and others a sense of wonder, but the



“Be Still” was inspired by Psalm 46:10.

For more news about the churches and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, visit [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org). Or get the app by searching for “CRCNA Banner” in your app store.



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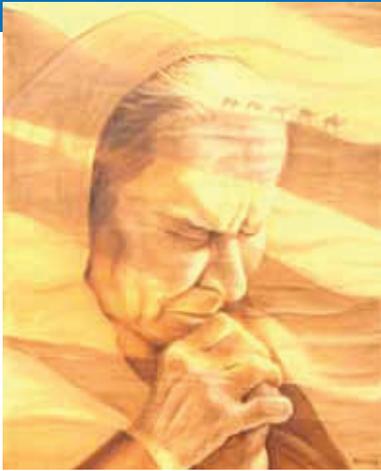
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many layers in each of the art works ignite discussion.

The exhibit’s intro to the show, “Be Still,” imagines silence when confronted by the mercy of a wild, loving God who inhabits our tears. The jagged rocks, from the crevice where Moses was hidden when the glory of God passed by, also contain the flames of the burning bush. The monochromatic piece “Desert Mother” captures the fervent wrinkles of a woman deep in prayer, paying homage to the ministry of the Desert Fathers and Mothers of the early church. Another piece, the “Army of the

“Climbing Hope”



Empty Handed,” depicts empty hands clasping together to create a chain-link fence, raising questions of distribution of resources, ownership, and community. Other pieces depict revolution, terrorism, and exploitation.

“Peter’s paintings challenge preconceptions and indifference. They challenge the way we were taught in the Western world,” said long-time friend Leanne Cooper, who introduced Reitsma’s exhibit at the opening. “There is movement in the paintings, a search for peace-making. The art offers a plea to engage, to shake off complacency and to see Jesus in the other.”

—Krista Dam-Vandekuyt

**Peter Reitsma: “Desert Mother.”**

#### IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Gerard (Jerry) Bouma**  
1922-2017

A compassionate man with a desire to serve others, Gerard Bouma initially planned to be a physician. However, God called him to ministry and he graduated instead from Kampen Theological School in the Netherlands in 1950. Bouma, who had a deep love for the Christian Reformed Church, died on February 11 at the age of 94.

Bouma first served the church in Cappelle aan den IJssel near Rotterdam before becoming the first minister called from the Netherlands to a CRC in Canada. He welcomed many Dutch ministers who followed.

Bouma served two churches in Ontario and one in Michigan. He was involved in starting Christian schools and Holland Christian Homes in Brampton, Ont.

In retirement, Bouma worked for Freedom Flight, supporting Vietnamese refugees in the Grand Rapids area, and came full circle back to how he started out in Canada—helping immigrants. He discovered a love of gardening and enjoyed photography, reading, and telling stories about World War II or the history of the CRC.

Bouma is survived by his wife, Margaret, his four children and their spouses, and by 10 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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

## Solar Panels Highlight Campus Chapel’s Creation Care

The Ann Arbor (Mich.) Campus Chapel had been talking about installing solar panels since the early 2000s; the chapel’s 75th anniversary seemed an appropriate milestone for finally realizing such a project. According to Matt Ackerman, pastor of worship and community and member of “The Next 75 Years Campaign” committee, the result has been the installation of a solar panel system onto the chapel roof.

One major motivation for the project has been the chapel community’s longtime concern for creation care and for their neighbors, noted Ackerman. Installation of solar panels promotes the community’s goal of working toward better energy efficiency and reducing its carbon footprint. The expectation is that these panels will generate about the same amount of electricity the chapel will use over the course of a year. So far the 44 panels, which are tied into the electric grid, have brought significant reductions in electric bills and are thus enabling better use of financial resources as well.

The very visible solar project is also a way for the chapel com-



**The newly installed solar panels on Ann Arbor (Mich.) Campus Chapel.**

munity to reflect its Reformed perspective. Ackerman points out that the Campus Chapel was the first campus ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. It was founded in 1940 as a faith home for University of Michigan students from a Reformed background. But it has continually reached out to a much wider array of people and to the university itself. The gospel and the Reformed tradition are first encountered by many through the chapel; according to Ackerman, this project bears “witness to our Reformed understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.” It points to the Chris-

tian calling to care about this created world as well as the world to come.

Educational displays highlighting the Christian values that motivated the solar project are being planned to show that environmental stewardship is more than a secular value of the university, Ackerman explained. Many university students have already expressed surprise and gratitude for this solar project, he said.

—Anita Ensing Beem

# NEWS

## The Day the Chickens Came to Sunrise Church

A unique collaboration between Sunrise Community Church in Austin, Tex., Stephenville Christian Reformed Church in Stephenville, Tex., and a Dordt College Putting Love In Action (PLIA) team has resulted in chickens and a chicken coop to help people without homes in Austin.

"We had a Dordt College group that came down to Austin for spring break," Pastor Mark Hilbelink of Sunrise Community Church said. "It was our first time working with PLIA, and one of the girls from the team happened to be from Stephenville. We've worked with Stephenville CRC before, but they're three hours from us and part of a different classis. So even though we're nearby, it's kind of a distant-close."

Anya Kalsbeek, the Dordt student from Stephenville, was



Chickens donated by Stephenville CRC presented at Sunrise Community Church worship service.

thrilled by how well the partnership worked out. "In hindsight, I can see how powerfully and thoroughly the Holy Spirit worked throughout the planning and execution of this service trip.

When my co-leader and I began coordinating the exact service work that we would be doing, we had no idea how well all the pieces would fall into place. My home church has interacted with Mark's

church in the past, but not to this extent."

Stephenville CRC was originally only asked to provide a meal for the team while they worked in Austin, but they ended up also donating travel-sized toiletries for people in need, building a chicken coop, donating four chickens, and providing a truckload of soil and fertilizer for Sunrise's urban garden.

"We'll use the chickens and the produce for the homeless ministry and to help the kids—most of our kids come from food deserts where they're not used to vegetables and how to cook them. It was actually a really good combination of their resources and ours—their assets and our assets," Hilbelink said.

Pastor Brian Tarpy of Stephenville CRC felt strongly that this kind of collaboration can only make

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

#### Divine Patience in Confused Times

In our *As I Was Saying* column, Richard Mouw writes about living today in "the time of God's patience." (<http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-divinepatience>).

#### A Resounding 'Yes' and a Small 'But'

Also in our *As I Was Saying* column, Cathy Smith writes about her enjoyment of James K. A. Smith's *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, but how she also missed a counterweight to his optimism, a pastoral comfort when those habits don't always catch with the next generation. (<http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-resoundingyes>).



#### Ripon Church Hosts Friendship Ministries Carnival

In our news section, Amy Toornstra wrote a delightful story of a night of games, snacks, and laughter when Friendship ministry of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Ripon, Calif., hosted its first-ever carnival for adults with intellectual disabilities and their friends. (<http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-friendshipcarnival>).

#### Redeemer Announces Academic Restructuring

Also in the news section, Krista Dam-VandeKuyt wrote about restructuring at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont., with some new program options but other programs cut. Programs in art and design, political science, and honors-level religion will no longer be offered. Faculty positions will also be cut. New programs will be offered in media and communications, international studies and politics, and ministry and the arts. (<http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-redeemeracademics>)





**Back row: Betty Slothouber (Kamminga), Mary Parent (Splinter), Susan Van der Laan (Kuiken), Mary Van der Marel (Duiker), Ann Adema (Van der Laan) Front row: Sonya Lenos (Brouwer), Nellie Jonkman (Harbers), Janet Sinkgraven (Vos)**

both churches stronger. "Getting involved in another ministry that's doing different things than you are has rewards, lasting rewards. Seeing how ministry is done in their context can help us to see how maybe we could organize a meal or organize different outreach activities. Their creativity sparks our creativity. This particular collaboration will only grow in general," he said.

Members from Stephenville CRC traveled to Austin to make and serve a meal for the Dordt team and participate in a worship service, during which the donated chickens were brought onto the stage when the offering was taken.

"I can't emphasize enough how much God worked in us and through us throughout the Austin experience," Kalsbeek said. "Only by God's grace could a random group of college students be pulled together, get to Austin from Iowa, and team with two different churches and [people without homes] to work on a chicken coop and other service projects for a week without completely falling apart. It wasn't through my efforts that this service trip turned out so well, but rather it was God using people to pour his love into a marginalized population that desperately needs love."

—Krista dela Rosa

## Girls' Club Ministry Gives Ontario Women 48 Years of Friendship

In 1968, when counselor Nellie Harbers (now Jonkman) began working with a group of girls at Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Acton, Ont., she had no idea that the outworking of their faith would translate into nearly five decades of friendship and support. Back then the girls' club ministry was called Calvinettes; the name was changed to GEMS in 1995.

For six years she was counselor to the same group of girls until they graduated from the club at age 16. In September 2016, seven of these former Calvinettes and Jonkman gathered for a weekend reunion at a cottage in Sauble Beach, Ont., to reminisce about their time together and to celebrate the gifts God has given them in their lasting relationships.

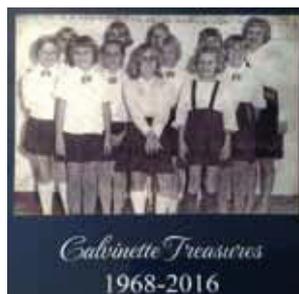
Sonya Lenos, a member of the original group who now attends Ebenezer CRC in Jarvis, Ont., said "GEMS and Calvinettes was such an integral part of growing up in the CRC; you don't really understand the impact that a counselor can have on young people. We only had one counselor our whole Calvinette experience. It was just Nellie. And that's what helped to build that relationship."

Lenos said that over the years, the bond they formed as young people allowed these women a safe space to share as they met on several occasions for reunions and get-togethers in a more genuine way than is typical on social media. "We could be honest with each other... we could be authentic with one another and not feel we were 'less than,'" Lenos said.

"Spending a whole weekend together last September was the ultimate reunion," Jonkman said. "We all agreed it was due to God's faithfulness to each one of us that we were able to experience this unique bond. I could have never dreamed at the time I was their counselor that we would still be connected now. I was blessed to have a special group of girls and treasure the relationship we now have." Jonkman is now a member of Georgetown (Ont.) CRC.

GEMS leadership agrees that this group has something special. Lenos said after sharing the group's reunion photo, the organization decided to use it on a postcard distributed to girls as an invitation to join a local club.

—Alissa Vernon



**Nellie (far right, back) with her Calvinettes in the late 1960s.**

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. John Zantingh

1933-2017

John Zantingh was a caring pastor who loved visiting people who were lonely or sick. He was a good listener and an optimist whose lifelong testimony was a verse from Psalm 46: "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Just before he died on February 21, Zantingh's last words were, "God is with us." He was 83 years old.

Zantingh served Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario and British Columbia. He helped found Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont., and served on its board for many years. Zantingh served as interim pastor in several churches until 2006.

A great storyteller who also loved to write poetry for special occasions, Zantingh will be remembered as a devoted husband and father who was actively involved with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He loved gardening, camping, traveling, golfing, and doing crossword puzzles and other brain teasers.

Zantingh is survived by his wife, Alida, by five children and their spouses, and by 14 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Zantingh was predeceased by his son, David, and son-in-law, Case, who died together in a car accident in 1990.

—by Janet A. Greidanus

# NEWS

## Finding Financial Shalom for Pastors



**L**iving paycheck to paycheck. Not having enough money to make payments on student loan debt. Not knowing enough about financial management. The toll of financial worries on a marriage and family. Those are just some of the stresses facing pastors starting out in ministry.

The Christian Reformed Church, with the help of a \$1 million Lilly Grant, seeks to alleviate some of those stresses and improve the financial security of its ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors through its three-year Financial Shalom Project.

Last year the denomination surveyed pastors and found that many struggle with anxiety about their finances. "It became clear that many Christian Reformed pastors are in need of financial shalom," said John Bolt, director of finance and operations for the CRCNA. The Financial Shalom Project offers both immediate assistance and long-term training. "I like to think of this as both giving pastors a meal today and teaching them to fish," he said.

Anxiety about finances was not news to Rev. Chelsey Harmon,

pastor of Christ Community CRC in Nanaimo, B.C. When she became a pastor six years ago, she had a student debt of \$45,000 USD, but her income was in Canadian dollars, at times worth 25 percent less than the U.S. dollar. "I remember living paycheck to paycheck and how difficult it was to save money on my starting salary as an associate. Once I was bumped up to solo/senior pastor payscale, I had a lot more financial stability. And by God's providence, the currency exchange was on par until I got that raise. If the timing had been different, it may not have been feasible for me to stay serving in Canada."

Rev. Chris Schoon, pastor of First CRC in Hamilton, Ont., has been in ministry for 13 years. He started out with \$60,000 USD of debt and said that early on, the challenge of making ends meet put major stress on his marriage and family life. "We took initiative to learn what we could about financial planning. We followed Dave Ramsey's principles as best we could," he said. "But there was only so much planning we could do when our income did not cover our shoestring budget."

To help pastors in situations similar to those of Harmon and Schoon, half of the Lilly grant will be used to directly aid pastors in need of immediate relief to pay student loans, pay Christian day school tuition, or cover unexpected expenses. The amounts are moderate and will be matched by the denomination. For instance, a pastor whose student loan debt exceeds \$50,000 can apply for a one-time payment of \$2,000. Likewise, pastors who send their children to Christian day school can apply for a one-time grant of up to \$2,000 to help pay for it if their local church does not provide assistance as requested by Synod 2003.

That is the "give them a meal" aspect of the project. "Teaching them to fish" aims to help pastors achieve long-term financial literacy with resources and referrals for training programs, along with small grants to help them pay for it.

That knowledge is crucial, according to Rev. Drew Sweetman, pastor of First CRC in Fremont, Mich. He isn't in the same boat as Harmon and Schoon, having come out of school with a debt of \$8,000. But he sees the need for

the Financial Shalom Project. "From time to time, I receive calls from pastors (or their spouses) asking about a variety of things related to clergy finances," he said. "The reality is that so few people are knowledgeable in that area."

And it isn't just pastors who need help. The Financial Shalom Project is also designed to help churches find financial fluency. For some congregations, "giving them a meal" includes some short-term grants to help pay a pastor's salary. But "teaching them to fish" includes stewardship training provided by Barnabas Foundation in the U.S. and Christian Stewardship Services in Canada to enable members of the church to better use their resources of time, talent, and money. "Too often our ministers end up in financial difficulty because they become the balancing item in the church budget," Bolt said.

Sweetman agrees that [church] treasurers and elders need to be informed and must be accountable for adequately supporting their pastor financially. If that pastor's income won't cover reasonable expenses in their household budget, he said, "remember that the CRC letters of call state that the pastor should have no earthly need. Hold the church accountable to that where possible."

Sweetman said he is excited about the Financial Shalom project, mostly because of the opportunity to educate both clergy and lay leaders. "My hope and prayer is that Financial Shalom equips both pastors and church leaders with the tools and knowledge they need to better navigate the financial side of ministry."

—Gayla R. Postma

## Highlights of 2017 Winter Classis Meetings

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

Several people were **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church**, including seminary graduates Jesse Walhof, Rick Roeda, Willem de Vries, Rhonda Workman, Matthew Kaemingk, Nathan Klingenberg, Joshua Jung, John Chen, Ariana Tolsma, and Eric Kas.

Ministers **transferring from other denominations** were Revs. Jung Woo Kim, Frank Lanting, and Todd Statham.

Revs. Abraham Woo-Song Chung, Jay Song, Won Deok Song, and Don Ridder were **loaned to other denominations**.

**Ministers released from a congregation:** Rev. Randy Blacketer, Rev. Trevor Payton, Rev. Gerald Vander Hart.

The following were **released from ministry in the CRC:** Stephan Van Eck, Jacci Busch, Rick Kim, David Chong, Samuel Perry, and JongBam "Tiger" Oh.

### New Ministries and Ministry Changes

An emerging church does not have its own council and is under the care of the council of a neighboring Christian Reformed church. An organized church has its own council.

The following churches were **organized:** New City (Kansas City, Mo.); Ye-Eun Presbyterian (Los Angeles, Calif.); Global Missions (Los Angeles, Calif.); and Kibbie (South Haven, Mich.).

F Street Neighborhood (Lincoln, Neb.), New Joy (La Palma, Calif.), Oxnard (Calif.) Korean, and Mercy Presbyterian (Gardena, Calif.) CRCs were declared **emerging**.

Ottewell (Edmonton, Alta.) and Holland (Mich.) Korean CRCs **closed**.

Jewel CRC (Denver, Colo.) **closed**.

### Leadership

Classis Illiana **defeated a motion that would allow women to be seated** as delegates at classis. Alto (Wisconsin) CRC asks to be allowed to transfer to Classis Minnkota because Classis Wisconsin **permits women to be seated** as delegates. Classis Northcentral Iowa voted to **allow women to be seated** as delegates.

Classis Minnkota asks Classis Grand Rapids East to explain by way of letter to Classis Minnkota (interacting with Scripture, the Church Order and synodical decisions mentioned in the appeal) why they have continued to **allow All One Body meetings in churches** of their classis without these churches clearly stating that they do not endorse the teachings of All One Body, which they believe are contrary to the Word of God and the Covenant for Officebearers.

### Synod 2017

Classis Minnkota asks Synod 2017 to **establish oversight of the blog Do Justice** to ensure that posted articles are in line with Scripture and our confessions.

Classis Pacific Northwest asks that the Reformed confessions and core denominational documents be translated into **Korean, Spanish, Chinese or Mandarin, Navajo, Laotian, Hmong, Vietnamese**. Classis Eastern Canada requests translations into **French**.

Classis Southeast U.S. requests that Synod 2017 instruct the executive director, the Board of Trustees, and each agency to act with urgency to gain a full understanding of the **denomination's membership decline**, develop a comprehensive strategy to reverse the trend of decline, and bring a positive trend line for membership growth through both church renewal and church planting.

Classis Minnkota communicates to Synod 2017 that when delegates from Minnkota to synod **protest the seating of women officebearers** as delegates, they do so not out of prejudice against sisters in Christ, but because of their convictions based on Scripture and confessions.

Classis Eastern Canada requests that Synod 2017 adopt a rule that synodical reports longer than 10 pages include a **mandatory executive summary**.

### The Belhar Confession

Synod 2017 will discuss whether the Belhar Confession will be designated as a contemporary testimony like *Our World Belongs to God* or if it will remain an ecumenical faith declaration.

Classes British Columbia North-West and Red Mesa ask Synod 2017 **adopt the Belhar Confession as a contemporary testimony**.

Classes Columbia, Holland, Hudson, and Alberta South/Saskatchewan request that Synod 2017 **retain the Belhar Confession in the category of "ecumenical faith declaration"**.

—Banner Staff

## Noteworthy

**Back to God Ministries International** (BGTMI) is selling its facilities in Palos Heights, Ill., and moving to the Grand Rapids, Mich., offices of the Christian Reformed Church. BGTMI is the media outreach ministry of the CRC. The ministry has been located on the campus of Trinity Christian College for more than 40 years.



Cameron Gelderman

**Cameron Gelderman** set the Alberta Colleges Association Conference for Most Career Digs while on the men's volleyball team of **King's University** in Edmonton, Alta. Gelderman achieved a total of 1,125 digs in his volleyball career.



Rayvon Higdon

The Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association named **Rayvon Higdon** as Ontario Player of the Year. Higdon is a fourth-year student at **Redeemer University College** in Ancaster, Ont.,

For more, please visit [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).

# NEWS

## CHURCH WORLDWIDE

### Church Worldwide: Sanctuary for the Undocumented Comes with Legal Consequences

The Trump administration's hard-line stance on undocumented immigrants is polarizing: People have responded with either "throw the bums out" or "have a heart."

But the question of whether faith communities can legally offer the undocumented physical sanctuary—sheltering them in churches, synagogues, and mosques to keep them from immigration authorities—is not so cut and dried. Leaders of faith communities involved in what is called "the sanctuary movement" say there are moral and faith issues that sometimes trump the legal and political issues.

"We do not want to be bad citizens. We do not want to violate the law," said the Rev. Justo Gonzalez II, pastor of Pilgrim-St.Luke's United Church of Christ, one of two Buffalo, N.Y., churches that joined the

sanctuary movement in February. "But we will stand on the side of justice, and we will stand on our faith and God's law and our understanding that we are to welcome our brothers and sisters. That is part of who we are and who we have been. We are on the right side of justice and the right side of history."

But if the morality of the sanctuary movement is arguable, the law is not.

"The law says no one may knowingly harbor or shield an illegal alien from detection or from enforcement of

immigration laws," said Jessica Vaughan, director of public policy at the Center for Immigration Studies, an independent research organization. "The responsible people could be prosecuted, resulting in incarceration or fines. And sheltering the illegal alien is ultimately pointless, because the federal government can enter the facility to make an arrest if needed, or they will simply wait it out, and the illegal alien will be deported anyway."

Participation in the sanctuary movement surged after the election of President Trump. Before his election, about 400 U.S. congregations were involved, according to Church World Service, which offers immigrants legal assistance and helps organize the sanctuary movement. Today, CWS estimates more than 800 congregations are involved.

Many other congregations support the communities that offer physical sanctuary, providing funds, food, clothing, legal assistance, and more. The movement includes Christians, Jews, Muslims, Baha'is, Buddhists, and more.

But it is the congregations that shelter undocumented immigrants that take the legal risks. And that has some religious leaders preaching caution rather than participation to their members.

"When we use the word 'sanctuary,' we have to be very careful that we're not holding out false hope," Catholic Cardinal Donald Wuerl said in comments to the editorial board of *The Washington Post* in early March. "We wouldn't want to say, 'Stay here, we'll protect you.' . . . With separation of church and state, the church really does not have the right to say, 'You come in this building and the law doesn't apply to you.' But we do want to say we'll be a voice for you."

Bryan Pham, a Jesuit priest and professor at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, outlined legal points churches should consider before becoming a sanctuary congregation. Among them:

- There is no legal definition or standing for a "sanctuary," so housing an undocumented immigrant in a house of worship is a violation of federal law.
- Congregations can't claim that harboring an undocumented immigrant is an expression of their First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of religion.
- Claiming a house of worship as a "sanctuary" and housing people inside it could be a violation of local ordinances, which may give law enforcement officials probable cause to obtain a warrant for a search and possible arrests.

—Religion News Service

## IN MEMORIAM



**Dr. Manuel (Manny) Ortiz**  
1938-2017

A respected pastor, urban missionary, professor, author, and world-renowned speaker, Manny Ortiz had a tremendous ability to love people and to challenge them to become more than they thought they could be. Considered one of the premier leaders for church planting in the Christian Reformed Church, Ortiz died on February 8, at age 78, of complications of influenza.

Ortiz served three years as a Marine and was working for a loan company when he accepted the Lord as his Savior at age 30.

Ortiz earned degrees from Philadelphia's College of the Bible, Wheaton College, and Western Theological Seminary. In Chicago, he helped found five urban congregations, two elementary schools, and an extension school for theological education. He returned to Philadelphia and became professor of ministry and urban missions. He was the founding and senior pastor of Spirit and Truth Fellowship (CRC), a position he held at the time of his sudden passing. While there, he helped plant nine churches, an elementary school, and numerous other ministries.

Ortiz is survived by Blanca, his wife of 54 years, and by four children, 10 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

—by Janet A. Greidanus

# FAQs

## Worship

**Q** How can my church include the pastor, worship committee, and congregation in our worship planning?

**A** Begin worship planning with a blueprint. Some churches will call this blueprint a liturgy, others a template. It keeps you from having to create an entire service from scratch. Each person who helps plan worship should know which sections of the service repeat throughout the month or season and which songs and service elements need to be planned for that particular week. Creative people thrive when they know their constraints.

Who is responsible for planning which parts of the service? This is more than task assignment; it's an opportunity for everyone to fully use their talents. It can be frustrating for a musician to be handed a service that was planned by another person, for example, or inefficient for a group to try to write a prayer of illumination. Of course, each planner is responsible to the others; a spirit of trust is important.

Worship planning often includes one person (perhaps the music director) submitting his or her work to another (often a pastor). Avoid unintentional rejection. "Haven't we sung that one a lot lately?" may seem like an innocent remark, but it might sting the person who chose it. Consider presenting options—three songs with different strengths—instead of yes/no decisions.

Finally, find ways of including the whole congregation in the process. Solicit song ideas from the youth group. Ask the retiree Bible study to write prayers. Try out new songs at evening hymn sings. This creates a flow between pastors, planners, and people in the pews. We should aim to use all the gifts God has given our congregations, from planning to leading to participating.

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

These kinds of questions and activities don't just keep kids quiet.

## Missional Living

**Q** I've tried to get my fellow church members to get excited about evangelizing without much luck. Can you help?

**A** According to Rev. Keith Doornbos, director of the Church Renewal Lab, most Christian Reformed churches believe their lives are centered within the church walls. This makes it difficult to imagine reaching people beyond the social networks of church, home, and Christian school. Doornbos says, "Churches are perfectly structured to get the results they are getting. So unless they are perfectly happy with how they are making more and better disciples who transform lives and communities for Christ, things need to change." In other words, more of the same doesn't work. Perhaps the following suggestions will help.

First, try gathering a small group of members to take a walk and talk with people about their needs. What problems, hopes, and dreams for their community are people expressing? Record the answers and make them a matter of prayer and reflection. Then make these needs the focus of the church. Second, deal with the current reality of your church and community head on; engage leaders and members to reimagine the church with people different than yourself. Third, the Church Renewal Lab housed at Calvin Theological Seminary has a two-year process of helping churches to break the cycle of insularity toward missional engagement. Sometimes we need others to help reimagine a better way to be the church. Might the Lord be nudging your church to take this step?

*Reginald Smith is director of race relations and social justice for the Christian Reformed Church. He attends Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.*

## Faith Formation

**Q** Are children's bulletins worth making? As a part-time children's ministry director, I already have plenty of things to get ready for Sunday. But if the bulletins are valuable, I'm happy to do it.

**A** Your question is a good one. Children's bulletins sometimes seem like just a clever way to keep kids quiet during worship. That really isn't the goal, though. The goal is faith formation. So, can children's bulletins help with that? Yes, they can.

Bulletins for adults generally do two things: they inform the congregation about upcoming events or prayer requests, and they serve as a guide through the church's liturgy. Children's bulletins can serve in similar ways: as a framework for children to understand what is going on in the worship service and to be able to more fully participate. This can be accomplished with a simplified order of worship or by questions or activities that specifically relate to the worship service. With our third- and fourth-graders we include suggestions like these: "List three people the pastor prayed for today"; "Draw two pictures that show what you heard in the sermon"; or "When the pastor asks us to 'pass the peace,' what words did people use when they shook your hand or someone else's hand?"

These kinds of questions and activities don't just keep kids quiet. They actually help them begin to understand that the things we do in worship are intentional. A good children's bulletin helps kids tune in to what is going on in a worship service.

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

# Wandering Lessons

**H**IS FRIENDS call him “Reverend,” but he introduced himself to us as a seeker. Some would say we met Greg by accident, though I’m not entirely sure I believe in accidents anymore. In one year, Greg taught us more about evangelism than we’d ever expected.

Just after we moved into our new apartment in Tempe, Arizona, my daughter dropped a toy from the balcony of our apartment onto the enclosed patio of the apartment below. The gate was open, but since we were new to the neighborhood, we knocked on the door first. No one was home. We waited a few days, seeing no signs of life coming or going from the

downstairs apartment. Elanor had moved on to other things by the time my husband, Sam, ran into Greg, returning from the laundry and opening the door to his apartment.

Sam and Greg found common ground almost immediately. Greg’s typical uniform was a T-shirt and faded jeans. He wore his wavy light brown hair in two

braids that hung down the middle of his back just to his shoulder blades. Sam had been asked to cut his hair for his new teaching position and was still mourning his loss. As Greg led Sam through the apartment to the patio to retrieve the lost toy, they found plenty to talk about.

Greg burned incense and sage, and the aroma met you at the door like a lonely puppy—a smoky, exotic smell of herbs, sweetgrass, and tobacco. Greg’s apartment smelled like a Whole Foods Market in the middle of the Rez. Even with the blinds open (they rarely were), the light through the apartment made it look like a sepia tone photograph of itself. On a narrow built-in shelf in the living room was a small shrine to ’50s kitsch—gaudy antique postcards, plastic

Greg was a man who seemed more at home with questions than with answers.

Sam came back upstairs from his quest carrying Elanor’s lost toy, and, since he had been gone a whole hour, I had a feeling he’d found a friend even before he started telling me the story. Greg and his wife and son, River Minnow, had moved to Arizona earlier that year, but after they went to Texas to visit his wife’s family, his wife decided to stay in Texas with their son. Unable to convince her to come back home with him, Greg returned to Arizona alone. He suspected divorce papers would be coming soon. He wasn’t sure when he’d see his son again, if ever. River was just about Elanor’s age.

Sam and Greg continued their conversation over the next few days, and we

supplement (or at least regulate) his income by getting certified to drive trucks cross-country. It sounded like it would be a good fit. He seemed the sort of guy that would do well with life on the road. We fed Greg’s cat, picked up his mail, and checked on the apartment while he was away, sometimes for weeks at a time. I’d go downstairs while the kids were napping, carrying the baby monitor with me. Miss Kitty, Greg’s charcoal-dust grey cat, would greet me at the door some days. Most of the time, though, she’d saunter across the living room and hide under the couch while I replenished her water and food bowl.

I’d pass River’s growth chart on the hallway wall as I went to dump the litter box. Greg’s wife had had her things and

*Greg was a man who seemed more at home with questions than with answers.*

knickknacks, miniature tiki sculptures, a brightly colored floral bandana, and a small portrait of Elvis. There might have been a candle or two.

In the opposite corner of the room, lying on a dingy woven Mexican blanket, was Greg’s buffalo skull altar where he prayed. Greg told us he’d turned to Native American religion to quit a drug habit—it worked—and was following a Native mentor, hoping to become a medicine man himself. His pipe hung in a beaded leather bag by the buffalo skull. He’d crafted and beaded the bag himself.

Greg was an artist who worked in beads and leather in the style of Native American art, although he was not of Native ancestry. Sam and Greg spent about an hour talking, going through Greg’s apartment and discussing art and historical re-enactment (another of Greg’s hobbies) and their mutual fascination with Native history and religion.

“I’m a seeker,” Greg said. I’d never actually heard anyone admit that openly.

invited him up for supper a couple days later. He sat on the couch with Sam and Elanor, reading a book together as my younger daughter toddled around the living room and I got the meal together.

In a way, we were all lost souls there in the middle of the desert, wandering in our own respective wildernesses. We’d moved to Arizona for a job—Sam’s teaching position in the town where his family lived and where we thought we’d settled was cut to part-time, and he was essentially laid off. When the job offer in Arizona came along in May, it was the only offer on the table. We knew no one in Arizona, having lived the past six years within walking distance of family.

After that, we offered Greg a standing invitation to come up for dinner with us. He took us up on it occasionally. “Be careful—I’m going to end up hanging around like a bad couch you can’t get rid of,” he said with a chuckle.

A few months after we’d met, Greg enrolled in trucking school, hoping to

most of River’s shipped to Texas, but there was still a ghost-like presence left in the apartment: her back issues of *Cook’s Illustrated* and expensive kitchen tools that didn’t seem like they’d belong to a neo-hippie. River’s sandbox was still out on the patio, its turtle-shell lid lying at a sad tilt in the corner.

I wondered what Miss Kitty thought of the situation—all her people gone, with only my daily visit to reassure her that she hadn’t been entirely abandoned by the human race. She was left with the run of the place, only the cockroaches sharing her domain.

The roaches that had taken up residence in Greg’s place had likely relocated from ours. Shortly after we moved in, I’d reluctantly resorted to chemical warfare after I counted over a dozen roaches walking around my kitchen in broad daylight like they owned the place. Greg had a more peaceful, if reluctant, coexistence with them. “They’ll just come back if I spray,” he said, so he just did what »

he could to squash them when he was home, which lately, wasn't much. I suspected leaving Miss Kitty's food out probably wasn't helping the situation, but there wasn't much to do about it, short of getting rid of the food or the cat.

The ants were a different story. I contended with an ant invasion in the bathroom of Greg's place one afternoon a couple days before he returned. They were snaking a trail from the bathtub over the floor, as ants do. I fetched the dish soap and swept them away as best I could. They were back when Greg returned. When he came back and asked if we'd had ant problems in our apartment, I'd mentioned that I'd gotten rid of a swarm of them in his place and he seemed to shudder a bit. Ants were a bad sign. Bad medicine. Greg didn't explain why—but I took note of it and figured I'd ask more later.

Around this time, he went on a road trip with his Native mentor, driving and visiting through South Dakota and various places along the way—in quest of a vision. He came home frustrated, unable to do the ceremony he had wanted to do.

"I'm not in a good place," was about all he could say some days. His trucking adventure ended eventually when he found that spending most of the day behind the wheel of a semi was more stifling than he'd expected.

"There was no way to eat healthy on the road. I wound up eating truck stop food with my instructor all the time. No way to get to a grocery store—I was kind of at his mercy when it came to where to eat. I'm pretty sure I've gained 10 pounds," he said, motioning to a slight paunch in his mid-section, "and I feel like crap."

Some time after he'd returned from his failed quest, and around the time he started his trucking job, Greg asked Sam to pray with him. By then, we'd talked about religion from both of our perspectives. Greg knew how we worshiped; he knew a little about our perspective on

God and faith and what it meant to us to walk with God. We knew some of Greg's perspective on spirituality—what it meant to him to follow the way of the pipe. Greg knew that we prayed only to the Creator.

Our relationship was not one of trying to convert each other to our own way. Instead we listened to each other and tried to understand each other's perspective. For Greg to ask Sam to pray with him meant we'd somehow reached a point of understanding that could bridge our differences in belief—but still we were aware of the need to tread carefully in recognition of those differences. After they had agreed to meet together in Greg's apartment, Sam ran upstairs and quickly explained what was going on. I set our church prayer chain going as I put the kids to bed, making a couple quick phone calls to some friends who knew about our friendship with Greg and would understand the immensity of the situation. Our entire friendship could hinge on what happened that night, for better or for worse.

Greg and Sam prayed together. Afterward, Sam came home saying it was probably the most intense prayer time he'd ever had. They prayed together one more time after that. But after talking with his mentor, Greg explained that he'd had a dream that really affected him spiritually, but he wasn't comfortable sharing it with us. We respected his choice to keep it to himself, but we also understood that a change had happened somewhere along the line. After that point, it seemed that whatever spiritual connection we had was closed off. We still ate dinner together occasionally, still spent time together, still talked, but an invisible wall went up any time the topic of spirituality came up.

By spring, it had become increasingly clear that Sam's job was not a good fit. He started looking into other work around the area in preparation for when the school year was over. I took an early-morning

paper route in the hope of piling up a little savings in case it took some time for the next job to come along. I picked up Greg's mail while he was on one of his trips and placed an official-looking letter from a county in Texas in with the other mail on his kitchen counter.

Sam and I started feeling our life slowly shifting again, and we questioned God and ourselves: Why all this wandering in the desert? We could come up with only two good things that had happened that year: finding our church family and our relationship with Greg. "You know, if you think about it," I'd said after Sam had had a really bad day at school, but we'd had a really good conversation over dinner with Greg, "maybe this thing with Greg is the whole reason we're here. If that's the case, maybe all this was worth it."

Later that summer, Greg moved away. We helped him pack and load the truck and said goodbye. It felt like permission to move on. We moved back to Wisconsin about a month later, where unemployment was lower, the crime rate was lower, and we had family. On our drive back to Wisconsin, we stayed a night with my parents in Iowa. They offered to watch the kids while Sam and I went out for coffee.

Sam and I talked about our long-term hopes of doing cross-cultural ministry, but both of us acknowledged that the plan we had when we moved to Arizona didn't seem to be the right fit for us anymore. Greg had radically changed our definition of ministry in the space of that year of wandering in the desert. Greg taught us that in order to love your neighbor, sometimes the most important step is to simply show up. ■



**Shelbi Gesch is a mother of three and a student at Dordt College. She and her family are members of Luverne Christian Reformed Church in Minnesota.**

## The Aftermath of Bullying

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](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). (And, no, you don't have to be ordained!)

**IN SEVENTH GRADE,** John\* told me he liked me. My first reaction was not excitement or a sense of flattery. I was relieved. I saw this apparent crush as a way out of two years of consistent, vicious bullying from John and his friend, Caleb. So I told John that I liked him too. Within a week he told me he didn't think it would work out. I wasn't too broken up about it until the ruthless taunting continued. Only later did I find out that I was low-hanging fruit. Caleb had bet John ten bucks that he couldn't get a girl to say she liked him.

Of all the things I experienced at the hands of these two young men, this stands out most vividly because of the intentionality. For four years, I was told that these boys didn't mean to hurt my feelings—they were just being boys. Most adults in my life told me that if I ever really wanted the cruel words to stop, I needed to stop reacting. Every time I knew those boys and I would be spending time together, I got nervous. I was always on the defensive—trying to think of ways I could defend myself. Breaking me was part of their game.

By the time I was in high school, I didn't believe I had any real friends. I didn't struggle with body image, but I found my personality repugnant. I worried that I was annoying to other kids at school, and I thought that the girls who befriended me at church were being told to be nice to me by their parents or by our youth group leader. I saw myself as overly emotional, immature, and unable to control myself. Not until my junior year in college did I meet people who told me otherwise.

The destructive bullying I experienced in middle school and early high school was not at the hands of kids at the school I attended or any extracurricular programs in which I was involved. These kids went to my church. One of them was in my family's small group. I firmly believe that the best thing that happened to my relationship with Christ was when their families left our church when I was in high school.

After they left, I still felt I had to prove myself to the people at church who had allowed the bullying to continue for so long. The adults who'd told me that I needed to stop reacting were my Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, and church council members.

I still find myself rehearsing my reactions to questions from people at church in the hope that I will show my emotional stability to adults who once told me that I was overreacting. I frequently deny any feelings of burnout, stress, or frustration I may experience because I worry I will be told that my anxiety is unfounded. When something I do at church doesn't go over well, I panic because I think that someone will see my failure as immaturity.

Since entering the adult world of church membership, I have found that my experience of being bullied at church is not isolated. In the last five years, I have heard stories of teens choosing not to go to youth group because of bullying, of young adults who desperately want to be included being ignored because they are single, and of families leaving church because of ostracism.

In order for our churches to be places of healing, we must find a way to keep them from being places of hurt. ■

*\*Names in this article have been changed.*

Name Withheld



PEXELS.COM

Caleb had bet John ten bucks that he couldn't get a girl to say she liked him.

## Praying for Missing or Murdered



FLICKR: HIGHWAY OF TEARS | ZITHOMBE

### Traveling the Highway of Tears

by Chris Meehan

**B**art Plugboer was flying home to British Columbia from a Diaconal Ministries Canada (DMC) meeting when he realized he needed to do something about the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

As the focus of documentaries, numerous news stories, and a largely unsuccessful police investigation, the matter of missing and murdered Aboriginal women had been on Plugboer's mind for a long while.

In his role as a DMC developer, Plugboer regularly drives back and forth over Highway 16 to visit a handful of CRC congregations in a remote part of B.C.

This highway spans 720 kilometers from Prince George to Prince Rupert, B.C.; it runs through several small towns and 23 First Nations communities.

Because of the region's poverty and the lack of adequate public transportation, hitchhiking along this highway is common. This has put many women at risk. As a result of the large number of women who have gone missing while traveling along Highway 16, it has become known as the "Highway of Tears."

"I had a lot of time as I was driving to think about this and about the women who had been murdered or had gone missing, some of them even near where our churches are," said Plugboer, a member of Houston CRC in Houston, B.C. His church is one of five Christian Reformed congregations located along the Highway of Tears.

He added that his time at that DMC conference reminded him of his ability to do something about this crisis.

"I love my job as a developer and a deacon, and I knew that God wanted me to get involved," he said.

That was about three years ago. After thinking about the situation for a period, Plugboer came up with an idea, which he took to the local office of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

"I talked to an officer there and asked if they would be interested in working to open a safe room here in our town for women who might be hitchhiking or walking along Highway 16 at night.

"The RCMP agreed and said they would use it for hitchhikers along the Highway of Tears, but they also would use it for domestic violence cases when they needed a room for a mother and her children," said Plugboer. "That was okay with me, and that was the start of it all."

# Aboriginal Women and Girls

Some 20 Aboriginal women have disappeared or been killed since the 1980s along the rugged, mountainous areas on or near the Highway of Tears.

Together they selected a motel, and Houston CRC deacons provided financial backing to keep a room always available for those who need it. "I put a note in the motel room saying, 'This room was provided by the Houston CRC; please respect it because we paid for your stay to be safe,'" said Plugboer.

In the past year or so, seven people have stayed in the room.

The RCMP reported that some 20 Aboriginal women have disappeared or been killed since the 1980s along the rugged, mountainous areas on or near the Highway of Tears. The most recent of these disappearances was in 2011. It also said that more than 1,200 Aboriginal women have gone missing or been murdered across Canada over the past few decades.

In investigating the deaths along Highway 16, police provided a list of women who had been killed or were missing. Cir-



**The Highway of Tears runs from Prince George to Prince Rupert, B.C. Five Christian Reformed churches are located along the route.**

cumstances in each case vary, but in many cases the women were young and poor. Only one of those cases was ever solved.

Learning about these reports over the years made Plugboer and his church feel helpless. They wondered what they could do to make a difference.

So they prayed about it. Eventually Plugboer realized the Lord was at work, leading him to play a role.

"I was happy when the RCMP backed the church to open the safe house. It made us feel like we were doing something," he said.

Plugboer said he is also pleased about other recent developments, for which his church and other Christian Reformed congregations and many Aboriginal groups have prayed and lobbied.

For instance, in January a government-funded bus route opened, shuttling people along Highway 16 from Smithers to Moricetown.

"Right now, the bus doesn't come here. It stops at Smithers," he said. "But when

the bus comes further east, it will go through Houston and will be extended to Burns Lake (about 80 km from Houston) and beyond."

Another thing the congregation has been supporting is a proposal for Via Rail, a train that travels the route of the Highway of Tears, to provide \$5 rides to passengers with little resources. This idea is being discussed.

In addition, people in the area are throwing their support behind what is called the Moose Hide Campaign, a group working in various ways to decrease the level of violence against Aboriginal people and others.

While he didn't personally know any of the women or girls who were hurt or killed or have gone missing along the Highway of Tears, Plugboer said, "I do know they were children of the same God that we worship and are wonderfully made in his image. That's all we have to know in order to help them as our sisters and mothers in Christ." ■

—Chris Meehan,  
CRC Communications



**Bart Plugboer and Dorothy Heidbuurt at a Diaconal Ministries Canada meeting.**

### Aboriginal Prayer

**A**nnie Yassie was 13 years old when she disappeared on June 22, 1974. She had just returned to Churchill, Man., from a residential boarding school in Dauphin about 925 kilometers away.

The initial Royal Canadian Mounted Police investigation revealed that Annie took a cab with a male companion, and they got out almost three kilometers away from the town.

That was the last time Annie was seen—and she remains missing.

“She came from my First Nations community, Sayisi Dene in northern Manitoba, a community that had undergone a great deal of change and displacement from its traditional lands,” said Shannon Perez, a justice and reconciliation mobilizer for the CRC’s Canadian Ministries.

“Living in an unfamiliar place, without means to make a living, and without the use of English, made growing up in Churchill tragic,” Perez said. “That helps put into context the conditions under which young women such as Annie Yassie were living. Alcohol at a young age became for many a coping mechanism.”

With stories like Yassie’s in mind, Perez helped to compile a prayer resource to draw attention to the long-standing issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls.

“We came up with the resource to help make people aware that this issue is real—that this has happened to young women and girls such as Annie,” said Perez. “And it is still happening. This isn’t other people’s problem. It can happen to us in our communities.”

Originally made available last year through the CRC’s Canadian Aboriginal Ministries Committee (CAMC), the prayer resource consists of a month-long devotional series that includes Scripture readings, the Seven Sacred Teachings of

many Indigenous communities, and related artwork.

The resource will be offered again through CAMC’s Facebook page this year during September, the month leading up to the annual Sisters in Spirit Vigils in October, but it is available for church use all year round.

Held every October 4 in communities across Canada, the Sisters in Spirit Vigils commemorate the missing and murdered women and girls and seek to put pressure on police forces to solve the more than 1,000 cases that remain outstanding.

Looking ahead to this year’s vigil, Perez said people will be able to “like” CAMC’s Facebook page to receive daily prayers.

“Prayer is one of the most important ways people can be part of contributing a positive action to this issue of missing and murdered women and girls. Prayer can be as personal as people want it to be,” she said.

“But you have to pray for everyone involved—the women and girls, the families, the police.”

Over the past year, Perez and others involved with CAMC have heard personal stories from people who know families whose loved one is missing or was killed.

Often the stories emerge during the sharing time after a Blanket Exercise, which is an exercise in which people have the chance to learn through a hands-on experience how Indigenous peoples were forcibly removed from their lands across North America.

“We will be sitting in a circle and talking about this when someone breaks down,” said Perez.

Yvonne Schenk, director of The Gathering Place, a social services center in Thunder Bay, Ont., recalls a person who approached her after a Blanket Exercise to speak about a missing loved one. She was able to give this person the prayer resource developed by CAMC.

“This resource is very important,” she said. “I believe prayer is the foundation of everything. The way I see it, prayer is the beginning where the heart can be opened and changed.”

Harold Roscher, director of the Native Healing Centre in Edmonton, Alta., said the unresolved matter of missing and murdered women and girls has torn apart numerous families across Canada.

He recalls how a neighborhood family whose mother went missing asked if Harold would hold a prayer vigil for them. They were obviously distraught and seeking some kind of solace, he said.

“She was a mother in her early 40s and had several children. The mother was loved by the family, and they came to me after six months. They had had no answers coming forth from the police,” said Roscher.

Once they arrived at the Centre, the family gathered in a circle and people offered memories, sharing stories as well as their grief.

“It was almost like a funeral,” said Roscher. “We asked the Creator for strength, insight, peace. We lit a candle on behalf of the individual, and then we had a bit of a meal.”

Roscher hasn’t heard from the family since the vigil, which took place about two years ago. But he said the CAMC’s prayer resources serve an important purpose.

“I think they help us to keep our eyes on the issue and encourage us to make sure we make the system more accountable and responsive to what has happened. This resource can be an important witness.” ■



**Chris Meehan**, news and media relations manager for CRC Communications.

## Meeting People's Needs Wherever They Are

by Nancy VanderMeer and Kristen Fergus Van Stee

**V**irenda lives in a village in northern India where education is minimal and the gospel message is neither widely known nor accepted. He first learned about Jesus through the Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) Hindi radio program.

"Your radio program is my only source of learning from the Scriptures. I cannot read or write. Listening to your program is food for my spiritual growth," testified Virenda.

After hearing God's Word, Virenda gave his life to Christ. His family opposed his decision and drove him and his wife out of their home. Virenda no longer has a permanent address but is able to stay connected to the gospel and grow in his faith because of the radio.

Geography, poor educational systems, political mandates, and religious persecution can make hearing the gospel a challenge. Media, technology, and the understanding of cultures across the globe are catalysts in overcoming that challenge.

In Indonesia, for example, the distribution of radios and goats is helping to provide spiritual and physical nourishment. Hetty Djohan Suryana, Indonesian interim ministry coordinator for BTGMI, shared how Christ's love is spreading throughout the poverty-stricken island of Sumba, where Marapu, a local animistic indigenous religion, is prominent.

Having only meager incomes, people living in this region cannot afford radios. The BTGMI Indonesian ministry team supplied the Sumba listener community with radios so its members could listen to gospel messages. They also provided several goats to help supplement financial needs in the community.

Now, while tending the herd, the members listen to BTGMI Indonesian programs on their

radios. When the listener group meets together, they share stories of how God is growing their faith.

All of this has captured the attention of people in their village, most of whom practice Marapu. "After observing the believers, some Marapu followers became interested in learning more about following Christ," Suryana reported.

God has worked in the hearts of these seekers. On December 30, 2016, three Marapu followers who gave their lives to Christ were baptized at the Sumba Christian Church. Some of their Marapu friends attended the service.

"We are praying that these friends will also accept Christ as their Savior," said Suryana.

While radios and livestock are helpful in reaching people with the gospel overseas, North American couples like Carletta and Lyndon are also grateful for online media tools that are meeting needs on this continent.

Carletta and Lyndon's marriage was in trouble. Carletta searched the Internet for resources to help, and "Ten Rules for Fair Fighting" popped up on BTGMI's *Family Fire* website.

"I'm always looking for something that could enrich our marriage, but I hadn't found anything that met our needs," said Carletta. "We fought, but not fairly. Then I found *Family Fire*."

In an era when divorce is common, *Family Fire* is a media ministry designed to help strengthen—and sometimes help save—marriages. Meeting the needs of families where they are, *Family Fire* comes alongside with encouraging faith-based articles on the Internet, social media, and email.

"So many couples are struggling," Carletta noted. "We need the Holy Spirit's fire in our marriages. *Family Fire* provides that." ■



Indonesian Marapu followers being baptized after hearing God's Word on a Hindi radio broadcast.

### Together Reaching the World with God's Word Through Media

BTGMI Spanish radio and TV programs are reaching people in **24 countries.**



The BTGMI English team, ReFrame Media, has produced and distributed

**9 ebooks** incorporating faith on topics such as: forgiveness, spiritual disciplines, the seven deadly sins, and pop culture.

Last year, the BTGMI Chinese mobile apps made a positive impact on people through **132,149,415 interactions.**



**285 listener communities** facilitated through BTGMI are ministering to 14,200 people in Indonesia.

39,000 Russian youth attended discipleship rallies hosted by the BTGMI Russian team in Ukraine, where



**12,000 people** responded to the gospel call.

## Raise a Cheer for This Summer's Gathering

**T**wo, four, six, eight—who do we appreciate? After decades at the back of my brain, that cheer came to mind the other day. I was thinking about Inspire 2017 and our hope that two, four, six, or even eight members from every Christian Reformed congregation will attend.

Inspire 2017, set for August 3-5, is a new kind of event geared toward equipping, encouraging, and inspiring the people of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. There are dozens of reasons to attend: to learn about leadership in the church, to gain new skills for making disciples, to gather ideas about how to lead worship that includes everyone, and more.

But it's not just about learning. Inspire 2017 is also about experiencing—and being inspired.

It would be interesting to poll everyone in the CRC and discover what percentage of members from each generation attended a church-related conference as a young person. Over the years, the names of events have changed. About a hundred years ago, there was the Federation of Reformed Young Men's Societies, and then along came a parallel Federation of Young Women's Societies.

For my generation, the big event was the Young Calvinist Federation Convention. I have great memories of attending a convention in Bellingham, Wash., and coming back with new friends from across Canada and the U.S. Today Youth Unlimited builds many such gatherings around service projects, and bringing young people together in auditoriums and assembly halls to worship together remains a key component of these events. Other CRC groups such as the All Ontario

Youth Convention and ReActivate also plan annual gatherings for youth.

Isn't it odd that in our denomination we have tended to limit such gatherings to the young? With the exception of events designed around specific slices of church life—such as GEMS conferences for the leaders of girls' clubs, Coffee Break conventions for women, synod for the business and administration of the church—the opportunities to gather and experience the breadth of our denomination have mainly been designed for young people.

That's changing this summer. At Inspire 2017, CRC members of all ages, from every part of North America, will gather in Detroit, Mich., for three days of learning, worship, fellowship, and inspiration. For many it will be a manageable drive. One analysis found that more than 25 percent of CRC members—from Holland, Mich., to Hamilton, Ont.—live within a three-hour drive of Detroit. For others, attending will involve a flight into Detroit Metropolitan Airport. No matter how you get there, it will be worth the trip!

Keynote speakers such as authors Ann Voskamp and Richard Mouw are magnets pulling many people to attend. For others, it is the chance to learn new ideas and techniques about a wide range of topics during breakout sessions and workshops. For all, it will be an opportunity to connect with others—people like you—involved in local church ministry, sharing ideas, and worshipping together.

Back to the math and to my cheer. Our denomination has a few more than 1,000 congregations. If some churches send two, others four, and still others six to eight, imagine the energy from the group that will assemble! Don't wait. Register now at [crcna.org/Inspire2017](http://crcna.org/Inspire2017) and join me in the cheer. *Who do we appreciate?* Our great God, whom we serve in and through the CRCNA! ■



A Young Calvinist convention in Bellingham, Wash. Can you pick out Steve Timmermans? (Hint: he's singing in a great sweater.)

“Don't wait. Register now at [crcna.org/Inspire2017](http://crcna.org/Inspire2017) and join me in the cheer.”



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

You add.  
God multiplies.



Coordinators of the Calvin College Residence Hall Community Partnership Program.

## Students Show Commitment to Community

Because Calvin College is part of the community and uses services in Grand Rapids, Mich., it is important that the college finds ways to give back, said Andrew Haggerty, associate director of Calvin College's Service-Learning Center.

"It is essential for us to have sound partnerships within the city so that we're benefiting the community as much as, if not more than, we are benefited," he said.

Some of these partnerships are housed within the Calvin College Residence Hall Community Partnership Program (RHCP), which recently received its first award.

In February, the Jon C. Dalton Institute on College Students Values conference was held at Florida State University, where the RHCP was awarded the Best Practices Award.

The initial steps toward creating the community partnership program began in 1995 when a student living in Boer-Bennink residence hall started volunteering at the Cook Library Center in Grand Rapids, reading with students and helping them with their homework.

"Between 1995 and 2000, folks in the Service-Learning Center started getting other dorms connected with partners too," Haggerty said.

Twenty-two years later, RHCP includes seven partnerships, one per residence hall.

"The RHCP program offers students who are living in the residence halls a chance to serve and learn in a Grand Rapids neighborhood," said Abby Kroon, student coordinator of the RHCP.

"Because our residence halls partner with organizations, we are able to offer a stable pool of Calvin students to our partners."

Sue Garza, director of the Cook Library Center, said the center's library offers after-school homework assistance provided by Calvin students on a drop-in basis, with an average of 30 kindergarten through ninth grade students a day in attendance.

Students who attend the after-school program are also taken to Calvin once or twice a year to experience a college student's world.

"I really think that Calvin has had a huge hand in increasing the literacy of our neighborhood," Garza added.

"We really value committing to where you are—your city, neighborhood, or place," Haggerty said. "[The RHCP] gets newer students off campus and helps them be mindful that they are in a greater context in Grand Rapids, and should be active residents." ■

—Jacquelyn Hubbard,  
Calvin College

## SHORT TAKES



Janet Steiger and her family.



Winnis, Lily, and James Chiang.

## Two Grateful Great-Grandmothers

Last year, a group of immigrant Chinese Christian Reformed Church pastors and their spouses visited CRC members in Lynden, Wash. Two stories were told of four generations of CRC members.

The first story was that of Janet Steiger, a CRC member who was born in the Netherlands and immigrated to the United States. She has four children and 16 grandchildren and has become a great-grandmother.

The other story was about Lily Chiang, who came to the CRC late in life and now, at the age of 95, worships at a CRC in California.

Despite their different histories, both families now have four generations that belong to the CRCNA. Comparing the stories of Chinese and Dutch immigrants highlighted for them how similar the struggles of immigrants are and how God provides during difficult times through his church and his people. ■

--by David Koll,  
director of the CRC Candidacy Office

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

## Recovering the Voices of Women Biblical Scholars

**Y**ou may have to drag me away from this podium because I'm very excited about what I've been learning from my research."

So began professor Amanda Benckhuysen as she presented some highlights at a recent Seminary Town Hall meeting for the book she is writing for Intervarsity Press.

In her book, she wants to recover the forgotten voices of women who were writing about biblical texts from centuries past when women were denied a place at the tables and in the halls where Scripture was seriously studied, including universities and the church.



**Amanda Benckhuysen lectures on women who found ways to write about the Bible.**

She introduced Anna Maria van Schurman, a 17th century Dutch woman who had the exceptional encouragement

of her father to pursue education. In fact, she was one of the first women to graduate in Europe, having taken her degree from the University of Utrecht. But the accommodation she had to accept as a

## A Gentle Breeze and a Strong Outcome

**A**lthough Jan and Darlene Van Ee are now retired from their official ministry in Mexico, God is still revealing ways he was at work through the time they spent sharing the gospel.

The former Christian Reformed World Missions missionaries recently attended a dedication service for a new church building in a small town where they used to serve.

"When the service was over, lots of people came to greet me," said Darlene Van Ee. "The older people—like us—had been teens or young adults back then."

And there was Maria (not her real name). Maria met Darlene when she was about 12 years old.

"There wasn't a lot of hope," remembered Van Ee. "Maria's mom worked as a prostitute. There was always work, and food needed to be put on the table."

Maria thanked Van Ee for bringing the gospel to her village and shared a vivid memory with her.

"Maria remembered sitting on a rock behind her house when she was



**Some young girls that Jan and Darlene Van Ee worked with during their time in Mexico. Photo circa 1982.**

8 years old," said Van Ee. "She cried out to God: 'God, is this all there is to life? Is there nothing else for me to do?'"

At that moment, the wind blew Maria's hair back. "She said it felt as if God was caressing her cheeks," said Van Ee. "The same breeze dried her tears, and she had a strong sense that there was a God and that she could trust him.

"As she was telling me about God drying her tears with the breeze, she went on to say how good God is," said Van Ee. "He keeps all his promises."

Maria's trust in God helped her continue to care for her sisters, and she was able to keep all of them out of prostitution. Today all of her sisters are married. One sister is a believer and is also active in church. Maria's husband also became a believer.

"We give thanks to God that we have been able to see an abundant harvest in this small town," said Van Ee. ■

—Brian Clark,  
*Christian Reformed World Missions*

You add.  
God multiplies.

female student was to sit behind a screen in the lecture halls.

Van Schurman was the exception to a norm that persisted for centuries. But in spite of many barriers, women were reading Scripture and expressing their deepest thoughts about God's Word in their lives.

Another woman Benckhuysen is studying is Christine de Pizan (1364-1430), who wrote a poem called "Letter to the God of Love."

De Pizan was taught that women were responsible for the fall of creation because of Eve's sin in eating fruit from the forbidden tree. But in her poem, de Pizan wondered if the Creator himself was being demeaned by judging Eve as a damaged creature who led Adam into sin.

Instead, because both male and female were created in the image of God, the *imago dei* was the birthright of men and women bestowed by God himself, the poet believed.

From these and several other examples, Benckhuysen is giving special attention to reflections on the first three chapters of Genesis, from which a second-class status for women has been embraced through much of history. ■

—Jinny De Jong,  
*Calvin Theological Seminary*

## Alaska Ministry Provides Safe Space for Teens

"You saved my life," Rachael said. "Not only once, but twice." When she felt like nobody cared and her depression plunged out of control, Parachute Ministries was there for her.

Parachute Ministries in Anchorage, Alaska, recently opened a teen drop-in center that offers more than just games and resources.

They provide informal mentorships with caring staff, a safe social space for at-risk youth, and a vibrant community to belong to.

The sharing of lives and stories and the formation of relationships happens primarily through conversation, said director Joel Kiekintveld. He describes the unofficial motto of Parachute Ministries as "Their story, our story, God's story."

Supported in part by a partnership with Christian

Reformed Home Missions, this ministry is becoming a well-connected partner in Anchorage.

Despite the big things going on around the ministry, Kiekintveld knows that sometimes the smallest moments of faith have the longest impact.

Rachael, whose last name is not being used, suffers from depression, and at some points in her life the severity of that depression became unbearable. Kiekintveld told Rachael to come in to the drop-in center every day, and that he, as well as the rest of the staff, would always be there to check on her.

So this is what Rachael continued to do. In return, Parachute Ministries continued to keep their promise of steady presence.

As time had passed and Rachael was about to graduate from the teen program, she

told Kiekintveld that she needed to speak with him.

Rachael said Parachute was "the only place I could come where people weren't trying to get me to use drugs." It was her safe escape.

Through the work of Christian Reformed Home Missions, lives are transformed with partner ministries and through the love and grace of Christ.

Parachute Ministries is a great example for believing communities of what it means to invite others into belonging. ■

—by Brooke Fry,  
*Christian Reformed Home Missions*

**The teen drop-in center in Anchorage, Alaska, offers more than just games and resources. Caring staff, informal mentoring, and a safe social space has made it a community for at-risk youth.**



# Teeny Tiny Creatures

Did you know that you're growing right now? You may not be able to tell, but your body is always changing and growing. By the end of this year, you could be about two inches taller! Just about every creature on earth grows. Some grow quickly, and others grow very s-l-o-w-l-y.

Some animals don't grow much at all. In fact, there are lots of animals on earth today that are no bigger than a quarter! Let's take a look at some of the world's tiniest creatures to see what BIG lessons we can learn from them.

## Small Animals, Big God

Isn't it amazing that God made every creature on earth? All different shapes, sizes, colors, and kinds. And all of God's creation, no matter how big or small, teaches us something about how great God is!

In Genesis 1:24, God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." God created each animal, and he created you too! God knows your every fingerprint and sees the smallest hair on your head. No detail is too small for God. Sometimes you may feel tiny in this huge world, but you can do BIG things with God's help.

### Match Em' Up!

See if you can match the fun facts about the tiniest animals on earth!

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. My eggs are the size of coffee beans.      | a. fairyfly                       |
| 2. I can catch flies and spiders while I fly. | b. bumblebee bat                  |
| 3. I am the size of a house fly.              | c. <i>Paedocypris progenetica</i> |
| 4. I am part of the carp family.              | d. brown leaf chameleon           |
| 5. I have tiny hairs on my wings.             | e. bee hummingbird                |
| 6. I can play "dead" to trick predators.      | f. <i>Paedophryne dekot</i>       |

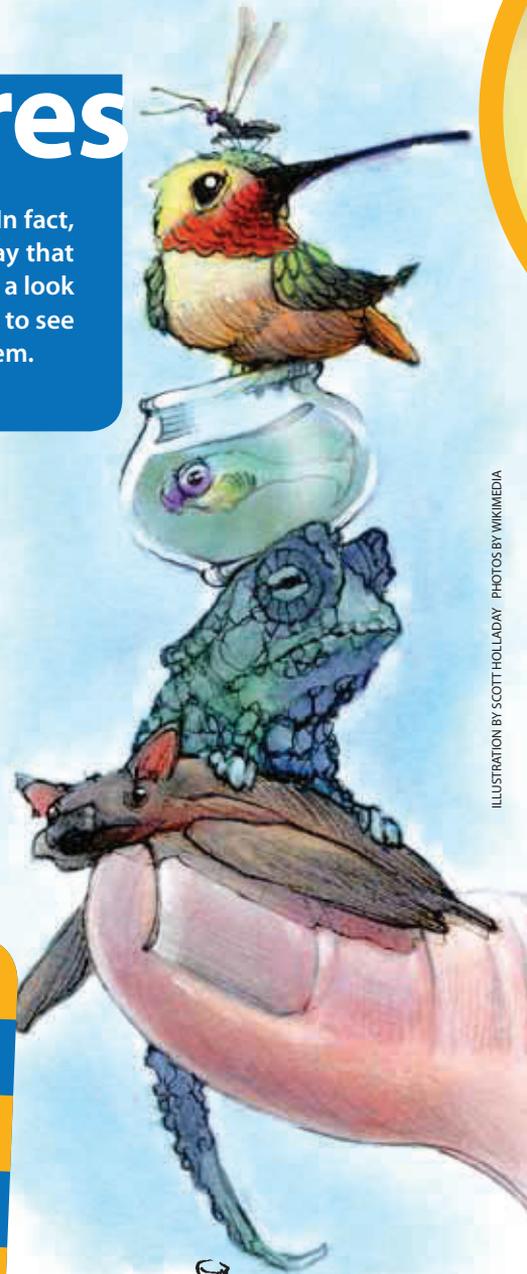
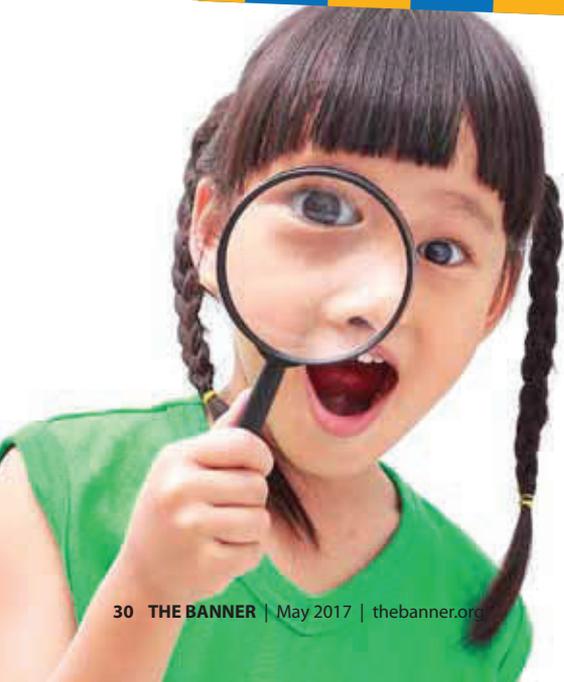
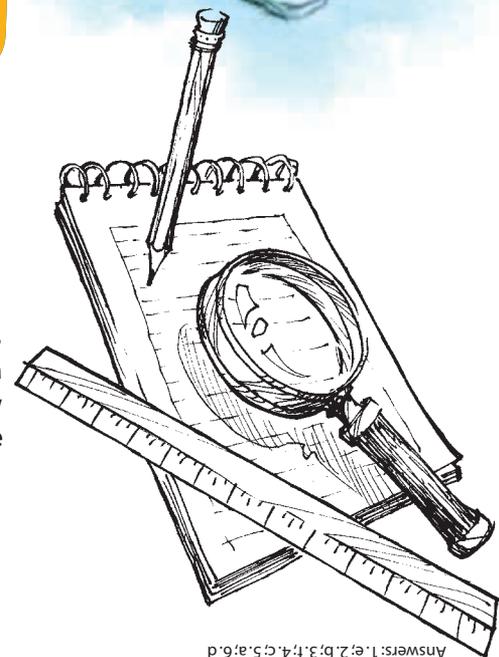


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY PHOTOS BY WIKIMEDIA



## Animal Explorers

Scientists discover new kinds of animals every day. Now it's your turn to be an animal explorer! Can you find the tiniest creatures in your neighborhood? Grab a notebook, a pencil, a ruler, and a magnifying glass. Draw a picture of each creature you find, and see if you can measure its length with a ruler.





## Bird

**Bee hummingbirds** are very colorful birds. They find their homes in Cuba and are so small that they look like large bumblebees. They eat sweet nectar from flowers and even some insects like mosquitoes and gnats. When they fly, their wings beat up to 200 times per second!

*Why do hummingbirds hum?  
Because they don't know the words!*



## Reptile

The **brown leaf chameleon** is found on the island of Madagascar. This teeny animal is about an inch (2.5 cm) long—so small it can fit on the tip of an adult's finger or rest neatly on top of a match! They can hide themselves among brown leaves and can change color. These amazing creatures would be great at playing hide-and-seek!

*What kind of tiles can't stick on walls? Reptiles!*

## Fish

The world's smallest fish is the **Paedocypris pro-genetica** (a big name for such a tiny creature). This fish is about 7.9mm. That's less than one third of an inch! These teeny little fish were discovered about 10 years ago in the swampy waters of Indonesia. They have clear bodies that look like glass.

*Why do fish live in salt water?  
Because pepper makes them sneeze!*



## Frog

The world's smallest frog, the **Paedophryne dekot** (another long name!) lives in the rainforests of Papua New Guinea. Only 8.5mm long, their name *dekot* means "very small"—about the size of an M&M!

*How does a frog feel when he has a broken leg? Unhobby!*



## Mammal

**Bumblebee bats**, like the bee hummingbird, get their name because they are about the size of a bumblebee. They are one inch (3cm) long and live in groups of 100 or more in the cool caves of Thailand. These small creatures eat lots of bugs. They are also called "Kitti's hog-nosed bats" because their nose looks like a pig's snout.

*What's more amazing than a talking bat? A spelling bee!*

## Bug

Scientists believe the **fairyfly** is the world's smallest bug. Only about .005 inch long, it is not really a fly, but a tiny wasp. But these small bugs don't have magic fairy dust—they eat the eggs of other bugs.

*Why did the fly never land on the computer? Because he was afraid of the World Wide Web!*



**Christin Baker** is a wife and homeschool mom who has worked for years in children's ministry.

She attends Tabernacle Community Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



# HEAVENLY BODY

**H**AVE YOU HEARD A SERMON about heaven lately? If not, it could be because your pastor focuses on the new heaven and earth instead. That's a healthy emphasis. The bodily resurrection of Jesus encourages it. The new heaven and earth will be our ultimate home, and we will live there in our own resurrected bodies.

Jesus spent only 40 days on earth in his resurrected body. Then, as his apostles watched, he ascended into heaven. Ever since then, Jesus has been in heaven. And he has been there in his resurrected body. But how can that be?

Yes, Jesus is divine. He's the second person of the Trinity. "He is God from the essence of the Father, begotten before time" (Athanasian Creed). But every bit as much, "he is human from the essence of his mother, born in time" (Athanasian Creed). So how can this human being, Jesus, be in heaven?

Heaven is a spiritual realm. When God wanted to take on flesh, it happened on the earth. Earth is where flesh belongs. But flesh in heaven? A human being in heaven? How can that be?

When we die, we go to be with our Lord in heaven. But we don't do that in the flesh. We leave our flesh behind. Our bod-

## OUR OLD BODIES WILL GIVE WAY TO NEW- CREATION BODIES. BODIES WITHOUT ARTHRITIC JOINTS. BODIES WITHOUT CARDIAC STENTS. BODIES WITHOUT EXERCISE- INDUCED ASTHMA.

ies are returned to the earth. We don't take them with us to heaven. It just wouldn't work.

There's a proper environment for every creature. Fish don't swim on dry land; they're created for water. In the same way, human beings are for the earth. The earth is our proper environment. Take us off the earth, and there's no place for us not unless we take a bit of earth with us in a capsule or in a spacesuit. Set us down on the surface of the moon, and we wouldn't last a moment. Move us to Mercury, and we'd melt. Put us on Pluto, and we'd freeze solid.

We are earth creatures, physical. And there is a proper place for us to be. Heaven is not that place. Not in the body.

But Jesus, in his ascension, went from earth to heaven—and he did it in the body. In that body, he is seated at the right hand of God. As the catechism puts it, with amazement, “we have our own flesh in heaven” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 49).

Again, how can that be? Did Jesus, like some heaven-bound astronaut, put on a “heaven suit”? Something over his skin? Something to take a bit of earth with him—some atmosphere, some water, some food? Not at all. He went as he was.

It's as if heaven is perfectly suited for Jesus, for his flesh. Or it's as if his body is perfectly suited for heaven. It's as if he's somehow different from the rest of us; the same as us, but still different. Jesus is different, different in a way that really matters.

Unlike Lazarus (see John 11) or the widow's son (see Luke 7:11ff.), Jesus isn't merely a dead person who came back to life. He is “the firstborn from among the dead” (Col. 1:18). And although he was raised in the flesh, it's new flesh, transformed flesh. It's the flesh of the world to come. Still flesh, but different. Still subject to hunger, but able to appear in locked rooms. Still of the earth, but able to be fully in heaven.

Christians for a long time have had a firm belief that our destiny is in heaven, that heaven is our home. Heaven is where we will go by the grace of God. However, we often picture heaven as an everlasting existence with God, but without a body. And that's not the biblical picture.

Bodies are our destiny. To be human is to be embodied, to be flesh and blood, skin and bone. Maybe your pastor doesn't say much about heaven because heaven conjures up a body-less existence. Because, in our minds, bodies and heaven don't fit together. But the ascension of Jesus addresses the puzzle of bodies and heaven.

Though I suppose that's a puzzle we typically don't care to solve. And no wonder. We don't like how our bodies look, not when we're 12 and not when we're 48 and certainly not by the time we hit 70 or 80. And we know that things are only going

to get worse as far as this flesh of ours is concerned.

Time takes a toll. We get out of shape. Our joints break down. Our arteries clog. Our minds dim. There comes a time when we're ready to say, “Enough!” The last thing we want is to be stuck with this body forever. So we'd rather imagine a future without bodies, a future without all the ugliness, without all the pain, without all the malfunctions.

Yet when Jesus ascends to heaven, he goes in a body. And it's his own body. It's recognizably Jesus, still scarred and wounded. But at the same time, it's a different sort of body, a body suited to life in heaven. A body not bound by the usual limitations of time and space (see John 20:19). It's a body that can be present at the right hand of God and at the same time be present in the sacrament of the Table, a body we can take into our own bodies, by the Spirit through faith (see Belgic Confession, Article 35), and so be fed for a new kind of life. For the new life that will be ours on that coming day when the dead are raised and “we will all be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51).

It's not just that the dead will live again. It's more, much more. Our weak, broken, corrupt, old-creation bodies, bodies subject to so much failure and complaint—our old bodies will give way to new bodies, new-creation bodies, bodies for a world where there is “no more mourning or crying or pain” (Rev. 21:4). Bodies without arthritic joints. Bodies without cardiac stents. Bodies without exercise-induced asthma. Bodies without a rainbow of pills to ingest every morning. Bodies without hearing aids. Bodies without speech impediments. Bodies without tumors. Bodies without root canals.

But it's not the “without” part that matters. It's the “with” part that really counts. We will have bodies in which we will live with one another. And most important of all, we will have bodies in which we will live with God. We will live with God in a new world that outstrips our dreams and defies our imaginations. With his ascension, Jesus has paved the way. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



**Bob Arbogast** is the pastor of Olentangy Church in Columbus, Ohio.



**Thea Nyhoff Leunk** is the pastor of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Impossible Things



Alice laughed. “There’s no use trying,” she said: “one can’t believe impossible things.” “I daresay you haven’t had much practice,” said the Queen. “When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

[Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*]

**WE WHO FOLLOW CHRIST HAVE BEEN CALLED** to believe impossible things. Why? Because the Storyteller, at whose feet we’re sitting, tends to tell impossible stories. A father hiking up his skirts and running to meet a son who shamed him. A Samaritan pouring oil and mercy on the wounds of his enemy. The stories Jesus told brought hope for a new way of living, a new kingdom’s rules.

“You’ve heard it said”: that a King would never be born in a smelly, dirty cave. That God would never walk our dusty roads, or ask an outcast for a cup of water from a well, or feel the searing pain of our sins piercing frail human flesh.

“But I tell you the truth”: that death is not the victor here. That there is Love which knows no bounds, no impossibility. That God has moved heaven and earth

in order to give us life, in a story that breaks all of our earthbound rules.

So let’s tell stories that expand the horizons, that challenge others’ understanding of what is and isn’t possible. Look for films that replace revenge with forgiveness. Read and recommend the sort of books that defiantly speak of hope in the midst of suffering. And if you can’t find any books or films—or paintings or pictures or plays—that challenge the world’s status quo, well . . . why don’t you create one?

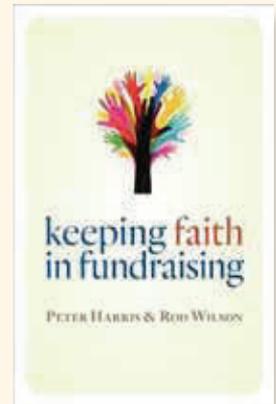
I can imagine the grin on Jesus’ face at the very thought.

Take heart—the rules of this world have already been broken. So dream impossible things, and tell impossible stories. Because when you’re following a King this powerful and playful, who knows what could happen? ■

We have been called to believe impossible things.



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



### Keeping Faith in Fundraising

by Peter Harris and Rod Wilson

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Peter Harris and Rod Wilson are friends who share a lifetime of stories and experiences fundraising for organizations that each of them are committed to and have a passion for. Drawing on the context of the early church community, they identify the need for integrating a Christ-like posture that begins with grace, is all gift, and results in generosity out of a deep sense of gratitude. This is an excellent resource for faith-based organizations to use as a study guide or for a group or board training resource. (Eerdmans)

## Hidden Figures

reviewed by Kristy Quist



In the early 1960s all of America looked to NASA as the agency raced against the Soviet Union to put people into space. It took a tremendous number of keen minds to do the necessary calculations to accomplish this challenging task. Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson were some of the human “computers” who participated, and they are representative of a much larger presence of brilliant black, female minds at NASA. *Hidden Figures* is a fun and stirring film that celebrates the courage and intelligence of those whose contributions were not always recognized, even though they helped make space travel possible. On disc now. (20th Century Fox)

## All Is Not Lost

by The Brilliance

reviewed by Robert J. Keeley



John Arndt and David Gungor, known together as The Brilliance, have crafted another thoughtful, carefully constructed song cycle with their latest release, *All Is Not Lost*. In the opening track, the brief “Oh Earth,” Gungor sings, “Oh Earth . . . your scars are deeper than we’ll ever know/They formed us all.” That brokenness hangs over all the songs, but so does hope. In two songs at the midway point, “Turning Over Tables” and “Hear Our Prayer,” the change in sound reflects the change that God’s love can make in us. This is an album that gets better with repeated listening, a truly remarkable work of art. (Integrity)

## THE LOWDOWN



**Anne Fans:** Kindred spirits in the U.S. are eagerly awaiting the first season of *Anne*, the CBC version of *Anne of Green Gables*, which will be available on Netflix on May 12.



**No Secret:** Brother Andrew began bringing Bibles behind the Iron Curtain in 1955; his best-selling book *God’s Smuggler* has been published in a young reader’s edition for ages 9-12. (Chosen)



**New Will:** This month popular author Tracy Chevalier releases a novel, *New Boy*, which is a modern take on *Othello*, Shakespeare’s play about the effects of jealousy and racial prejudice. (Hogarth)



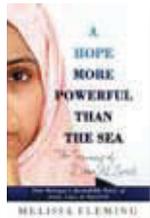
**Choose a Side:** Singer/songwriter Kim Walker-Smith, the worship leader for Jesus Culture events, offers up her first solo studio album called *On My Side*. (Jesus Culture)

**JUNE 20 IS WORLD REFUGEE DAY; these two books give insight into the refugee experience.**

## A Hope More Powerful Than the Sea: One Refugee’s Incredible Story of Love, Loss, and Survival

by Melissa Fleming

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

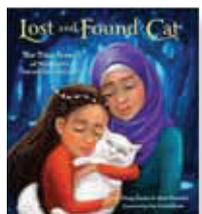


By narrating the story of 19-year-old Syrian Doaa Al Zamel, Melissa Fleming, the chief spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, puts a face to the millions of refugees who have fled their homelands. Doaa’s harrowing experiences on land and sea lead the author to ask, “Why did Doaa have to risk her life, lose her fiancé, and witness the death of five hundred others to finally arrive at this place of refuge and opportunity?” Though *A Hope More Powerful Than the Sea* includes numerous accounts of unimaginable cruelty and hatred, it also contains many stories of kindness, compassion, and generosity. (Flatiron Books)

## Lost and Found Cat: The True Story of Kunkush’s Incredible Journey

by Doug Kuntz and Amy Shrodes

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



In August 2015, Sura and her five children, along with their cat Kunkush, fled Iraq. Eventually they traveled across the Aegean Sea to Greece in an overloaded, flimsy rubber boat. When the boat reached shore, Kunkush escaped from his carrier and was lost. Incredibly, with the help of volunteers and social media, the cat was reunited with his family in Norway four months later. This picture book shares the plight of refugees with young children in an age-sensitive manner, highlighting acts of mercy and compassion. Vivid illustrations serve as a counterpoint to the seriousness of the refugees’ predicament. Ages 4 and up. (Crown Books)

**MORE REVIEWS  
ONLINE**

# How Church Is Like a Chemo Center

**HOW IS A CHURCH** like a chemo infusion center in a cancer hospital? The similarities dawned on me last night as I was feeling tired and tearful after a long day of lab work, doctor appointments, and another infusion treatment. My regimen is to go in every three weeks for immunotherapy infusions as part of a clinical trial for Stage 3 Melanoma, which—without treatment—offers a discouraging prognosis. My tears were likely a side effect of the drug, though exacerbated by a sobering experience.

The receptionist in the chemo infusion center yesterday was not very welcoming. She was busy, scurrying around and trying to take care of everyone. Her job was to usher me to my infusion chair and provide me with fresh pillows and a blanket while I waited for the nurse. When the receptionist saw me, she motioned for me to follow her as she rushed ahead, calling back to me, “You get the last chair we have.” I quipped, “Is it the worst chair?” She replied, “Pretty much, there’s no TV in this one. But hey, just be glad you get a chair. One woman had to wait two hours for a seat this morning.” And then she marched away.

I sat there in the “worst chair in the house,” which was practically in the hallway. Every sick and tired cancer patient in this crowded chemo center was staring at me, and me at them. And my eyes filled with tears. Not in self-pity, but in sadness. It felt like a factory.

Then I remembered the last time I was there, when a happier receptionist greeted me. Simultaneously my nurse had approached with a big smile and said, “We’ve been waiting for you—I saved you the best seat in the house!”

The point is not that I deserve the best seat in the house, nor that everybody



**How is a church like a chemo infusion center in a cancer hospital? The similarities dawned on me last night.**

has to roll out the red carpet for me. Not at all. The point—as I pondered it last night—is that a chemo infusion center is one place where the most compassionate, loving, and caring people should be assigned to work. Because the patients coming in there all have cancer, all are hoping and praying that their treatment works. For some, this is their last chance, and they are using every bit of energy to get there. Some are weak, nauseated, and trembling from the effects of the potent infusions.

As I considered what a chemo infusion center represents, I realized some similarities with what a church represents: a hospital for weary sinners. How do those of us who are greeters, ushers, nursery workers, teachers, elders, and pastors welcome the weary and sin-sick folks who come in search of hope? Those who are longing for a Savior, and who finally muster up the courage to put one foot in

front of another and walk into a church? Jesus once compared his ministry to that of a doctor—which would make his church a hospital. Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17).

As a pastor, I feel convicted to be more like the welcoming nurse. To greet people with a smile and warm words, even when I’m busy, so that they sense that Jesus has “saved the best seat in the house” for them. As Christ’s followers, we represent hope for those who walk through the church’s doors. May they see and sense Jesus in us. ■



**Bonny Mulder-Behnia** is executive pastor at Rosewood Christian Reformed Church, Bellflower, Calif.

## Entering into the Questions

**S** **DO YOU THINK** Jesus sinned when he was on earth?" I've just stepped into the kitchen to join the youth group girls enjoying post-church popsicles when they drop this question on me.

I fight the urge to give an easy answer that will shut down the discussion and instead say, "What do you think?"

"Well, he was fully man, right?" says Mel, her mouth turning purple with melted popsicle. "So he had to have."

"But wasn't he also fully God?" I say, pulling the sticky wrapper off my own frozen sweetness.

"How is that even possible?" says Sara. "How can someone be 100 percent two completely different things?"

These are moments, truth be told, that are equally precious as they are exhausting. After running around during the service, greeting parents, giving the children's message, and then herding the kids off to Sunday school, I don't have a lot of energy left over for taking on deep and age-old theological questions. After church I'm inclined to offer pat responses to get them off my back and move on to lighter topics.

And yet as the girls wipe sticky hands on skirts just before lobbing saliva-drenched popsicle sticks at each other, we're sharing a sacred moment. These girls are joining in the historic tradition of scrutinizing the beliefs passed down to them, of trying to pull apart the pieces of faith to make sense of them and then placing them back together. I'm honored to be drawn into this experience. I'm grateful that, for all the assurance of faith and the declarations of devotion we share during Sunday morning worship, they know the church is also a place where questions are welcome—are in

These girls' questions challenge me to look at the dusty areas of my own faith.

fact needed—in order for our love of Christ and our understanding of who God is to grow.

But mostly, I need to accept that I'm not going to be able to drive all of their theological engagement home. I'd like to think that I can provide all the right answers and solidify a firm theological basis from which these youth can go forth and live well. But I know from my own experiences of faith crisis after crisis from teen years until now that this is not an easy journey for them. It's essential for them to know they are not alone in their quests.

Minister and writer John Ortberg said, "For many of us the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it." These girls' questions challenge me to look at the dusty areas of my own faith. Am I willing to delve in and explore the complexities of the biblical story, to excavate issues of doubt I've left dormant? Am I willing to

let my faith be challenged, to continually go deeper and mature instead of taking easy answers for granted?

At every turn, I'm humbled by their questions, pulled back into my own faith wrestling. Just when I feel I've found a comfortable footing in my beliefs, these young women call me to enter into their doubts. They won't let me toss simple solutions their way; through them God calls me to a deeper and truer understanding of who Jesus is and what it means to follow him.

"These are really good questions," I say as they rifle through the box for their favorite popsicle flavors. I settle in for an ongoing discussion that won't end today but hopefully will continue throughout our lives as we work out our faith together. ■



**Melissa Kuipers** is director of discipleship ministries at Central Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, Ont.

# Solo Christo



“Christ alone” challenges us to humbly examine ourselves.

**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).

**IN COURTROOMS**, witnesses swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. This statement recognizes that the truth can be distorted when some bits are left out or added in. Similarly, the Reformation theme “Christ alone” emphasizes that salvation is through faith in no one else but Christ, and nothing more than Christ.

We see this theme embodied in the Heidelberg Catechism: “Salvation cannot be found in anyone else; it is futile to look for any salvation elsewhere” (Q&A 29). And those seeking salvation “in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere” do not “really believe in the only Savior Jesus” even if “they boast of being his” (Q&A 30).

The Reformers were concerned that some church practices, such as venerating the saints, might distract our faith away from Christ. They were also concerned with tendencies to add good works onto faith in Jesus as conditions for salvation. We see this in Belgic Confession Article 22: “Therefore, to say that Christ is not enough but that something else is needed as

well is a most enormous blasphemy against God—for it then would follow that Jesus Christ is only half a Savior.” Salvation is not faith in Christ plus something else; it is faith in Christ alone. This two-fold emphasis is still a challenge for us today.

This notion challenges popular religious sensibilities. In today’s multi-religious world, the exclusive claim of “Christ alone” is often, at best, an embarrassment. I frequently hear the objection, “Don’t all religions ultimately teach the same truths?”

Having grown up Buddhist in a Muslim country, and having served for 15 years as a Christian campus minister engaging various other faiths, I don’t think all religions teach the same truths. There are some truths that overlap, but there are fundamental and essential differences. In fact, they don’t even agree on what “salvation” is.

I believe salvation is not gained through enlightenment, obeying certain rules, or believing in certain truths. As we learned from the Reformation theme “faith alone,” salvation is through faith in Christ. It is a personal, holistic trust, not simply an intellectual assent to spiritual truths (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 21). And it’s faith in Christ alone. I can learn and benefit from what’s true in other religions, as I do from science, philosophy, and the arts. But I confess that none of those other truths can save me. They might make us better

human beings, but they cannot reconcile us to the one true God.

“Christ alone” also challenges us to humbly examine ourselves. Have we inadvertently, in theory or in practice, elevated something good to be equally important alongside Christ? Do we unwittingly shape people to place their faith in Jesus plus something else? Perhaps Jesus plus a particular form of piety, or plus a particular Reformed philosophy, or Jesus plus social activism or social conservatism, or Jesus plus. . . . Have we fallen into this trap when we judge some as the “wrong kind” of Christians? Have we put too much trust in our own unofficial “saints”: Abraham Kuyper, John Calvin, John Piper, or Jim Wallis?

Though not always easy to untangle or discern, it is utterly important to examine our hearts in these matters. Because, ultimately, these “additions” to Christ only lead us to trust in ourselves, in human abilities, ingenuity, or tradition, and to make salvation more about what we know or what we do and less about God’s grace to us. Rather, as the Reformation reminds us, salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone, by God’s grace alone. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



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

# ADS

**Deadlines:** June issue is 5/9/17; July/August issue is 6/13/17. Details online.

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

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

## Denominational and Classical

**CALL TO SYNOD 2017** The council of Crossroads Community CRC, Schererville, Indiana, calls all delegates to Synod 2017, elected by their respective classes, to meet in the DeVos Gymnasium on the campus of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, on Friday, June 9, at 8:30 a.m. All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday afternoon, June 11, 2017, at 3:00 p.m. at Crossroads Community CRC, 1538 Janice Drive, Schererville, Indiana. Rev. Drew Brown, pastor at Crossroads Community CRC, will deliver the message. All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 4, and Sunday, June 11. Council of Crossroads Community CRC, Schererville, Indiana

### Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that **JACOB VANSTEENWYK** 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

### Available for Call

The Council of Rolling Acres CRC, Mason City, IA declares that **REV. NATHAN DE VRIES** is eligible for call within the denomination. Rev. De Vries can be contacted at [natedevries@yahoo.com](mailto:natedevries@yahoo.com).

### Retirement

**PASTOR PHILIP DE JONGE** is retiring in June of 2017 after over 40 years of faithful service to the ministry. His retirement will be marked with a special worship service at 9:30am on June 25, 2017 at Seymour CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan, followed by a reception. Please send pictures and/or stories to [info@seymourchurch.org](mailto:info@seymourchurch.org) or Seymour CRC 840 Alger Street SE Grand Rapids, MI 49507.

**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](mailto:retirement@cornerstonecrc.ca) or 9800 McNaught Road, Chilliwack, BC, Canada V2P 6G2.

## Congregational

### Change in Time of Service

**RUSK CRC, ALLENDALE MI**, has changed its evening worship time to 5 pm.

### Church's 50th Anniversary

**FAITH CRC IN NEW BRIGHTON, MN** is celebrating 50 years of serving Christ this year. All who have participated in the life of this congregation over the years are invited to join us for a pig roast (\$12/adult) and carnival at the church on Saturday July 8. A 9:30AM celebratory worship service will be held on Sunday July 9. If you can attend please RSVP office@faithcrcmn.org or call the office at 651-633-5252, by June 10, 2017

## Birthdays

### 90th Birthday

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!** Don Lautenbach is celebrating 90 years! Please join us on Sunday, May 21 from 2-4 pm to celebrate in the Friendship room at Raybrook Manor.

**THERESA FOLKERTS** will be 90 on May 8th. We praise and thank God every day for our wonderful Mother, Grandmother & Great-Grandmother. Proverbs 31:28a "Her children rise up and call her blessed"

## Anniversaries

### 70th Anniversary

**VIS, Marvin & Pearl** (Bruinius) 15220 S 73rd Ct, Orland Park, IL 60462, will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary May 16. They, with their children and grandchildren, praise God for His faithfulness and blessing. An OPEN HOUSE celebrating this occasion and Pearl's 90th birthday will be held on May 20, 1:30-4pm at Palos Heights CRC, 7059 W 127th St, Palos Heights, IL

## Obituaries

**BOERINGA, MARJORIE R.**, age 89, of Allendale, passed away surrounded by her family on Sunday, March 26, 2017, and went to be with her Lord. She was preceded in death by her husband, Simon. She will be lovingly remembered by her children, Gloria and Allen Dykstra, Sandi and Rich Joslyn, Judi and Dave Fleming, Don and Bev Boeringa, Ron and Katryna Boeringa; 13 grandchildren; 25 great grandchildren; sister, Grace and Larry Goudzwaard; sisters-in-law, Mary Dykstra, Ellen Boss; nieces and nephews. Funeral services were held on Thursday,

March 30, 11am at First Allendale Christian Reformed Church, 5734 Country View, Allendale, with Rev. Tim Howerzyl officiating. Interment Chapel Hill Gardens in Worth, Illinois. Those who wish may make memorial contributions to Elim Christian School. Condolences may be sent online at [www.mkdfuneralhome.com](http://www.mkdfuneralhome.com).

**HOVINGA, HENRIETTA** nee Mulder, went to be with her LORD, March 10th, 2017. 13259 Central Ave. Palos Heights, IL 60463. Beloved wife of Frank Hovinga; fond sister of the late Willard Mulder and the late Janet (Milton) Boomsma.

**LINDEMAN, AGNES** Peters of San Diego CA peacefully entered heaven on 2/24/17 after a bout with ALS. Born in Chicago IL, on 11/27/25, she is predeceased by her beloved husband, Ralph, and a granddaughter. She is survived by her children: Kathy Amberson, Ralph and Cindy (Rozema), and Kristine and Steve Herman; 6 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren; 2 sisters-in-law and many nephews and nieces. She and Ralph proudly wore green shirts as volunteers with World Renew (then, CRWRC) for many years. Her family rejoices in her life of faith, service and vibrancy.

**PERSENAIRE, GLADYS** (Hoitsma), age 83, of South Holland, IL, passed into Glory on March 9, 2017. Beloved wife of 63 years to Ted Persenaire, loving mother to Bonnie (Paul) Zigterman, Sandy (Wally) Loerop, Rick (Val), Larry (Jan), fond grandmother of 13 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren (1 in Glory).

**PESSINK, TALENA** (nee Hovinga) (Folgers), 96, of Grand Rapids, went to be with her Savior on March 18, 2017. Surviving are her children, Carolyn (Bob) Zwiers and Jacqueline Folgers; 3 grandsons and their wives; 11 great grandchildren; brother Frank Hovinga. Memorial contributions may be given to Kuyper College, 3333 E. Beltline NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525.



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**SCHNYDERS, WILMA M.** (Nyenhuus), Age 84, of Hudsonville, MI went to be with her Lord and Savior on March 16, 2017. She was preceded in death by her husband, Joost (Joe). She is survived by her children: Steve & Tammy Schnyders, Laura Schnyders, Kevin & Janet Schnyders, 13 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren. Sisters and brothers: Jeanne & Roland Barchinger, Jack & Lee Nyenhuus, Betty Tymes, Ron & Carole Nyenhuus, Joanne Amoy, Marjorie & Dick Haines, Lynn & Dave Setsma, Ken & Bev Nyenhuus. Sisters-in-law and brother-in-law: Grace Nyenhuus, Harold Schnyders, Clara Schnyders, Pat Schnyders. Many nieces and nephews.



**TIMMER, GERRIT** - It has been a year since Gerrit went to walk with his Lord and Savior on Sunday, May 22, 2016, at the age of 92. He proudly served his country in the United States Army during World War II and spent his life being a steward of God's ground on his farm in Imlay City, MI. Gerrit is survived by his beloved wife of 71 years, Fannie, his four daughters, Cheryl (Jay) Seadorf, Connie (Paul) Dungey, Carol (Doug) Tiemeyer, and Cindy (Winn) Jewett; 13 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a grandson, Jason Douglas Tiemeyer. Gerrit leaves his family and all who knew him well with a legacy of Faith in his Heavenly Father, Honesty, and Integrity.

**VEEN, JANET** (De Haan, Vande Kieft) of Grand Rapids, MI, 96 years old, entered her heavenly home on Friday, March 10, 2017. She is predeceased by her husbands, Wilmer Vande Kieft and Alfred Veen. She is survived by her children: Sharon (Glenn) Hartger, William (Cathy) Vande Kieft, Joyce (Peter) Vande Kieft/Joppe, Linda (Wayne) Luznicki,

and step-children: Judy (Fritz) Miller, Barbara (John) Kieft, and Richard (Sally) Veen, as well as numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great children from both of her adored families. To God be the Glory.

**VERBEEK, LOIS** (Boonstra) age 90 of Munster, IN, passed away on Nov. 30, 2016. Lois is survived by her husband of 72 years Clarence (Klaas) and her children Gordon (Cathy) and Gwen (Duane) Recker. Daughter Barbara preceded her in death in 1974. Lois was the grandmother of 6 and great-grandmother of 15.

## Employment

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**NURSING HOME ADMINISTRATOR** Bethany Home of Ripon CA, has an immediate opening for Nursing Home Administrator. This is a full-time position responsible to the Executive Director for the directing, coordinating, managing and supervising of all activities for the 92-bed Skilled Nursing Facility at Bethany Home. This will include oversight of operations, managing both the income and expense budgets, and working with residents and their families in securing the highest possible quality of care. **Education and/or Experience:** Bachelor's degree (B. A.) from four-year college or university; or 5 or more years related experience and/or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience. **Certificates, Licenses:** Nursing Home Administrators License. Resumes and cover letters should be emailed to ahutchins@bethanyripon.org

**TRUE BLUE** is hiring (non-medical), in home caregivers for the Grand Rapids area. Part-time, 12-15\$ an hour. Send enquiries to: truebluecaregivers.com or 616-406-6819

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**UPPER SILVER LAKE** Cottage for rent. Spring through Fall availability. Sleeps 6. https://sites.google.com/view/cabinonthelake; or email jdcountryclipper1@yahoo.com

## 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

**2 PASTORS NEEDED** - 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 Kiestra: 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

**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.

**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.

**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

**PASTOR- FCRC RED DEER AB:** Do you have a passion for people and preaching? With the upcoming retirement of our Sr. Pastor, First CRC Red Deer AB has an opportunity for a full time ordained CRC pastor to lead a multi staff team. As a congregation, we are actively engaged in learning more about ourselves, our potential, and God's will for our ministries through the Renewal Lab process. We are a multi-generational congregation with a love for biblical teaching, intentional worship, honest fellowship and multi faceted music along with supporting our community and missionaries. Contact: pastor-4frc@gmail.com

**SENIOR PASTOR** Trinity CRC is a growing, vibrant church of roughly 496 active professing members in Rock Valley, IA. We are passionate about our youth ministries, supporting Christian education, meaningful worship, local and global outreach and serving the underprivileged. Trinity is seeking a Senior Pastor who can help us align the gifts, ministries and passions of our church. We are looking for someone who can help us translate ideas into practical application using the resources God has blessed us with. If you are interested in learning more or know someone who may be a good fit, please contact Trinity CRC at 712-476-5292 or bvhp@hotmail.com

**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.

**YOUTH AND EDUCATION DIRECTOR** Faith CRC in Pella, IA, is seeking a Director of Youth and Education Ministries to oversee our growing youth programs and facilitate educational programming for K-12. The successful candidate must create opportunities and environments to reach and shepherd youth and partner with parents in guiding children toward a life-long relationship with Jesus Christ. Opportunities may exist to use talents in worship and small group ministry. Please contact searchteam@faithcrcpella.org to learn more.

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR** Geneva Campus Church (www.genevacampuschurch.org) is accepting applications for a gifted, culturally astute, and godly associate pastor to become part of our congregation's ministry on the University of Wisconsin - Madison campus. This position entails directing our Vocation/Formation program, funded by the Lilly Endowment. Please send a letter of interest and CV to Elizabeth Toman (eliza.toman@gmail.com) to receive an application.

**YOUTH LEADER** Heritage CRC in Byron Center, MI is seeking a full-time youth leader for students in grades 6-12. Send resumes and inquiries to youthsearchteam@heritagecrc.net

**PASTOR** Clinton Christian Reformed Church located in Clinton, Ontario, Canada seeks a highly motivated Pastor of Youth & Congregational Life who has a passion for the ministries of youth & pastoral care. This calling includes occasional preaching and other possible leadership ministries, depending on the interests and skills of the candidate. Must enjoy a cooperative ministry with our lead pastor. Ordination required. Please visit our church's website for further job description www.clintonchristianreformedchurch.ca or Amanda at the church office 519-482-5264.

**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@calvarycrc.net.

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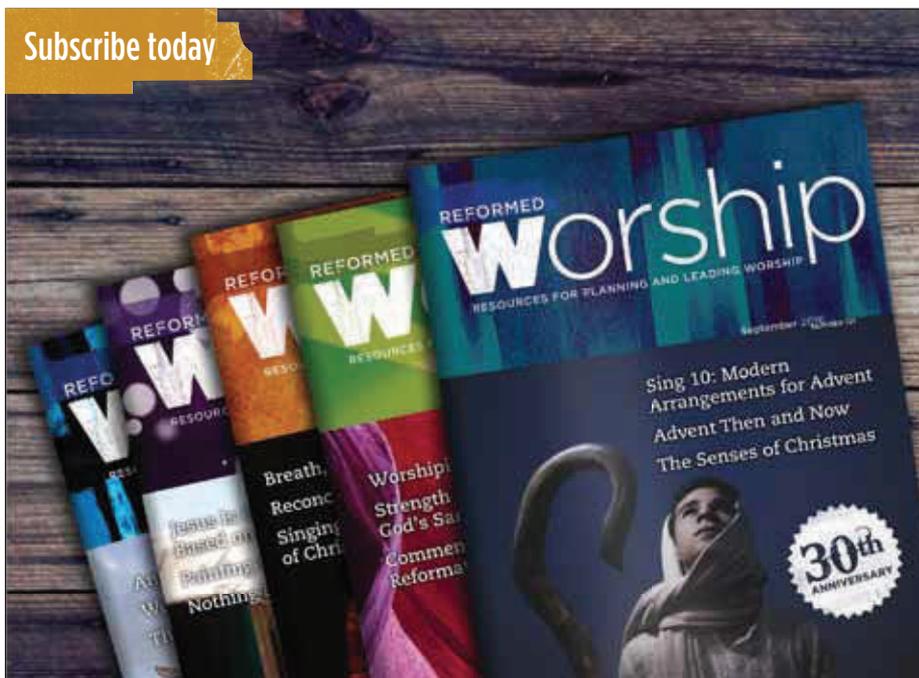
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## Miscellaneous

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*John 20:21*



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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](mailto:letters@thebanner.org). Thanks!

**W**ould you believe my neighbor knocked on my door at 2:30 this morning? Luckily I was still up playing my bagpipes.  
*Wendy Saunders*

**Y**ears ago it was expected that when a visiting pastor had a preaching assignment in our church, a family in the congregation would host him for the day. On one such occasion, the family bowed their heads while seated around the table before dinner. It was customary in their family to only pray silently. After a brief silence, the pastor proceeded to pray out loud. Whereupon the 6-year-old son blurted, "You need to be quiet. We're praying!"  
*Al Hoekstra*

**R**emember the good old days when a text was a verse in the Bible?  
*A. Whipple*

**M**y 8-year-old grandson, Eddie, was given the class assignment "Draw and describe what you'll look like in 100 years." Eddie drew a gravestone and wrote: "I'm having a blast with God.

You should come and see the new world. It's amazing up here!"  
*Jeannine Klain*

**T**he butcher backed up into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.  
*L.H.*

**S**ix-year-old Angie and her 4-year-old brother, Joel, were sitting together in church. Joel giggled, sang, and talked out loud. Finally his big sister had had enough. "You're not supposed to talk out loud in church."

"Why? Who's going to stop me?" Joel asked.

Angie pointed to the back of the church and said, "See those two men standing by the door? They're hushers!"  
*Cyndi Boss*

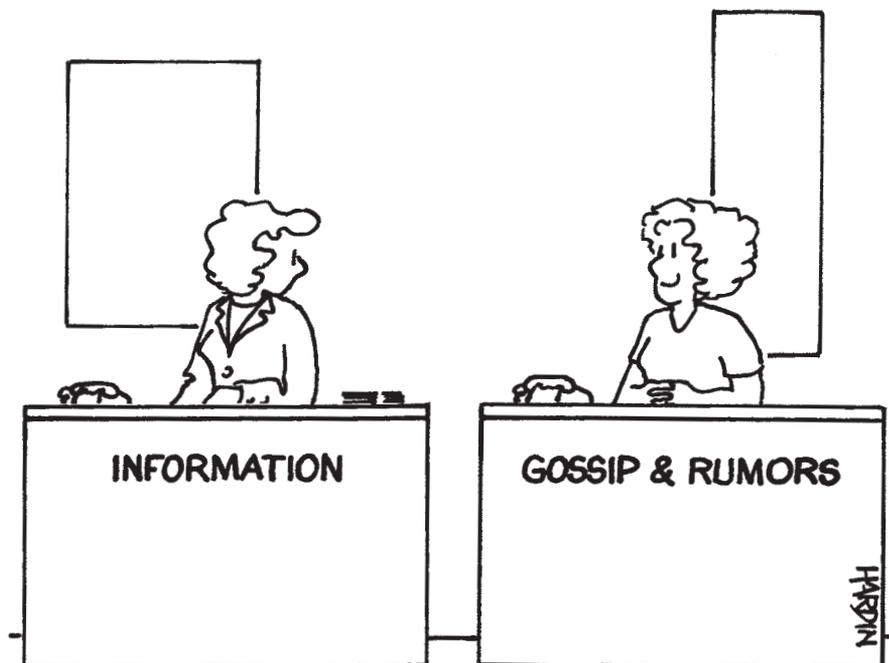
**S**ome people's noses and feet are built backwards: Their feet smell and their noses run.  
*Ralph Smit*

**W**e were celebrating the 100th anniversary of our church, and several former pastors and bishops were in attendance. At one point, our minister had the children gather at the front of the church for a talk about the importance of the day. He began by asking, "Does anyone know what the bishop does?"

There was silence. Finally one little boy answered gravely, "He's the one you can move diagonally."  
*Jan Veltkamp*

**N**ever go to an auto mechanic who works tirelessly. Especially if you need new tires.  
*Dave De Wit*

**A** 10-year-old, under the tutelage of her grandmother, was becoming quite knowledgeable about the Bible. Then one day she floored her grandmother by asking, "Which virgin was the mother of Jesus? The virgin Mary or the King James virgin?"  
*Carla Van Den Hout*



# Give a *gift* that lasts.

The ministries of the Christian Reformed Church in North America have played an important role in carrying out our calling as a denomination—to express the good news of God’s kingdom that transforms lives and communities.

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