



# BANNER

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<sup>32</sup> Pentecost Eyes  
<sup>37</sup> Sola Gratia

<sup>22</sup> Following  
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<sup>18</sup> Missions and  
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### Synod 2017

Synod 2017 will be held June 9-15 at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Ill. Download the *Banner* app on your mobile device or follow us at *thebanner.org*, Facebook (*TheBannermagazine*), and Twitter (@crcbanner) throughout synod.

You can also follow synod via webcast and synod news office press releases, all of which can be accessed via the Synod 2017 website ([crcna.org/synod](http://crcna.org/synod)).

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

# If I Had a Hammer

**“IF THE ONLY TOOL YOU HAVE IS A HAMMER,** you tend to see every problem as a nail.”

Of course there's nothing wrong with a hammer. It's very handy for nailing pieces of wood together. But it might not be the best tool for tightening a screw.

The Christian Reformed Church is gifted with a very strong intellectual tradition based on a robust theology, coherent philosophy, and biblical worldview drawn from its Dutch Reformed heritage. We should not lose sight of these strengths. This intellectual strength is often expressed or applied in a number of positive and negative ways, including study committees, theological disagreements, excellent organization and policies, restructuring as a path to renewal, and obsession with church order. Most of these are on display again in the *Agenda* for Synod 2017.

Looking through the agenda, Overture 11 from Classis Southeast U.S. caught my eye. It asks the denomination to address declining membership by discovering the cause and developing a unified plan to reverse the trend with annual progress reports. I commend Classis Southeast U.S. for naming what is on the minds of many Christian Reformed folks.

To be clear, this trend is not unique to the CRC. Many other denominations across North America, both mainline and evangelical, are facing this decline. The decline is worse in Europe. All of these churches are trying various ways to reverse the trend. But the story is much more positive in Asia, Africa, and South America: Christianity is growing in those continents. Similarly, I believe the declining membership trend in North America is also predominantly among traditional Western churches. The decline is not as acute or is even reversed among many immigrant and so-called “ethnic” churches.

But back to the CRC. I believe that for decades the denomination's leadership has observed the problem of declining membership and has, in various ways, tried to reverse the trend. They just haven't blatantly named their efforts as doing such. There have been various long-term plans, goals, strategies, and programs aimed at revitalizing or renewal, with the hope of attracting more folks into Christian Reformed churches. Some of these programs focus on outreach and evangelism, some on faith formation and discipleship, others on cross-cultural relationships or on community development, and so forth.

We have drawn on our intellectual strengths in dealing with this problem. We have struck various study committees, strategized, planned, and restructured numerous times—but, it seems, to no numerical success. Perhaps, as Overture 11 implies, we have never really dealt with this problem head-on.

But here is another possibility. What if the problem of declining membership is not something we can solve with our intellectual strength? If it were so, shouldn't we have solved this problem long ago, after all our efforts? To put it another way, what if we have overly relied on our intellectual hammer and this problem is not a nail?

I don't have the answers. I suspect there are multiple causes for the declining membership. And there might be multiple solutions. But I wish to caution us about relying only on our intellectual hammer and turning every problem into a nail. Perhaps it is time we humbly look to other strengths, especially from the less dominant cultures in the CRC, including our African American, Korean, and Latino members. These people might have tools besides a hammer. And we can all only be stronger for it. ■



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

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# BANNER

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Christian Reformed Church

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# Faith of Our Fathers

When I was young and sitting in church  
we used to sing *Faith of Our Fathers*,  
a rouser of a hymn, in which we braved  
dungeon, fire and sword, and stayed true till death.

What was our father up to  
while my sisters and brother and I slept  
or sat in school,  
and did mom know, and what was faith  
that he was getting us into so much trouble for?

At the same time you could tell  
it wasn't our own flesh-and-blood dad  
sitting next to us in the pew that the song was about,  
though he sang loud and strong  
like it was great we could all be in jail together,

so maybe it was his father,  
the older, kind-looking man in the photograph,  
whom we children of immigrants wanted to  
but never met—which seemed even less likely.

The song said their faith was *living still*,  
meaning it hadn't died; father after father,  
all down the line, they'd passed it on,  
kept it going, like a small fire,

a life-giving flame that cooked their food  
and warmed their bones, and that when push  
came to shove they'd fight to hang onto,  
though this hadn't happened in a long time.

Or maybe *living still* meant their faith was quiet and calm,  
reflective, like flood waters in the lowlands  
on a windless day. Or both.

But what was it? Faith?

I still didn't know. Something to do

with fire and water. Because he was my father,  
and because mom did know, and agreed,  
I have carried the fire and entered the water  
also singing, although the words now are changed  
and we brave not dungeon and sword  
but doubt and difference, while staying true  
to sweetness words could not touch,  
but poured from their mouths like honey. ■



John Terpstra is a poet and carpenter who lives in Hamilton, Ont. Reprinted from *Mischief* by John Terpstra, Gaspereau Press, 2017. Used by permission.

# Denial Perpetuates Rape Culture

Rape culture is teaching women to avoid getting raped instead of transforming the culture so that men do not rape.

JOHNYSLLR/PIXABAY

**I AM TROUBLED** that the article “Rape Culture and Christian Colleges” (March 2017) unintentionally perpetuates the false idea that sexual violence and rape culture are not part of Christian college campuses or Christians’ experience.

To the many readers who have been sexually assaulted, one of the most hurtful realities is the denial of one’s experience, the minimization of the problem. Even worse is the placement of blame for their own victimization.

Rape culture is the environment in which sexual assault is prevalent and sexual violence is normalized and perpetuated. It is reflected and reinforced in language, images, laws, and everyday interactions. Examples include the trivialization of sexual violence through comments such as “boys will be boys” and using euphemisms such as “sexual misconduct” (when in fact, sexual assault—a broader term than rape—is a criminal offense). Rape culture is teaching women to avoid getting raped instead of transforming the culture so that men do not rape. Statistics (such that 1 in 5 women is sexually assaulted in college) reflect rape culture. Rape culture is the tendency for colleges to cover up sexual assault (as in the recent charges at Baylor University).

We need to boldly shine a light on the truth that sexual violence and rape culture are prevalent, impacting individuals we know and the communities in which we live. For instance, at Calvin College, we have collected information on the problem. This data suggests that approximately 1 in 10 students experience a form of sexual violence during an academic year. And if you think this refers only to women, you’d be wrong.

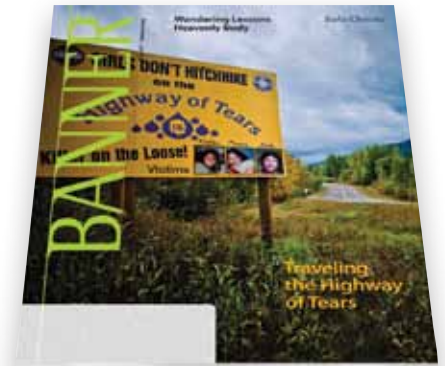
Denial of rape culture IS rape culture. Instead we must acknowledge this aspect of brokenness in our world. Only when we repent and identify our role in the problem can we move toward restoration. Religious beliefs, texts, and teachings can serve both as roadblocks and as resources for victim-survivors. Similarly, religious institutions can promote justice by acknowledging the truth, or they can perpetuate myths related to sexual violence, thereby reinforcing rape culture.

Any amount of violence is worth fighting against, and any symptom of rape culture needs to be addressed. Here are a few examples of what we are doing at Calvin:

1. Collecting data on incidence of violence and perceptions of the campus climate.
  2. Providing training related to sexual violence prevention for all students.
  3. Organizing events to raise awareness.
  4. Providing information about reporting and services to victim-survivors.
  5. Offering individual counseling and support groups for victim-survivors.
- And yet, we have a long way to go. ■



**Rachel Venema** teaches sociology and social work at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. She attends Sherman Street CRC.



## Divorce Care

I went through a divorce while I was a member of a CRC (“Divorce Care,” Apr. 2017). Almost 10 years later, it remains the most painful experience of my life—not the divorce but the way I was treated by my former church. I was sent a letter of admonishment from the pastors and elders in which I was told I would receive their support only if I tried to reconcile with my husband. I was told by one pastor that I was “severely, clinically depressed” while my other pastor strongly urged me to convince her that my marriage was bad enough to justify divorce, seeming to invite me to disparage my husband, which I would not do.

Because I was the one who initiated the divorce, I received no pastoral care, very little outreach from fellow members, and no effort from the elders to understand my pain. All this from a church that is considered “progressive” in the denomination. One particularly painful exchange was when an elder greeted me with what I hoped were going to be some words of kindness; instead she said, “I’m just so disappointed in you.”

It is my prayer that no one else will be treated the way I was. I hope church lead-



# TTERS

ers will realize that behavior like this creates long-lasting pain and disillusionment with the church. I am still not a member of a church and doubt I ever will be.

*Name withheld*

## Christ's Inauguration

I believe that the “good news” that the disciples proclaimed after Jesus’ ascension was that the kingdom of God *had already come* through Jesus’ death on the cross, that it was present in the here and now, and that it would come in its totality when Christ returns (“Anticipating Christ’s Inauguration,” Apr. 2017).

In 1 Corinthians 15:20-25, Paul speaks of Christ reigning in his kingdom; in Philippians 2:9 he states that Jesus has been exalted to the highest place. “God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them” (Heb. 2:8).

Perhaps we do not implement God’s mission of reconciliation, forgiveness, and sacrificial love in anticipation of Christ’s inauguration. Rather, as children of the reigning King and ambassadors in his already-established kingdom, we have the joy and privilege of discovering and uncovering more and more of his kingdom, for his glory.

*Linda Nydam  
Waterloo, Ontario*

## Free Enterprise

Calvin and Kuyper must be in tears! (FAQ, Ethics, Apr. 2017). Are we to believe that every inch, with the exception of economics, belongs to our Lord? The exact opposite is true! Scripture is full of direction both for macro and micro eco-

nomics and how we might influence the structure of these systems to optimize outcomes. A macro system that rewards hard work and risk taking and innovation wins every time. The five- and two-talent servants in Matthew 25 doubled their master’s monies entrusted to them. Their economic system must have provided them with this potential. Clearly there are implications for rule of law, our environment, training and education, benevolence and giving. However, a Jubilee recipient of family land who has no training or ambition to generate an income from that asset will soon be forced to sell the land once again. A temporary reset at best!

We may disagree on the extent of government involvement in our economic system, but Scripture is quite clear what is expected of us. An economic system that optimizes our ability to meet these expectations is my vote! He is Lord of all . . . every inch!

*Jack Byeman  
Redmond, Washington*

## Beyond Our Fears

Some thoughts as I read “Beyond Our Fears” (March 2017):

I have lived all my life in the United States. At a certain age I became a member of the Christian Reformed Church. At a certain age I also became a member of the Republican Party. At a certain age I was drafted into the U.S. Army, where I became acquainted with people who had different viewpoints than I did. I came to respect those with different views and they respected mine.

It is my understanding that we citizens of the U.S. (and Canada) have a right to

our viewpoints. I believe we should make use of our freedom to lovingly respect the rights of fellow humans.

*Bill Brouwers  
Grand Rapids, Mich.*

## The Gift of the Law

The well-written “The Gift of the Law” (Apr. 2017) may provide comfort to some *Banner* readers, but it is one-sided. For balance, another article perhaps should be written about the liberty we have in Christ. The law that Jesus came to fulfill was the Torah, the entire New Testament, and not some set of ceremonial laws fabricated by the Scribes and the Pharisees. The article appears to be caught in the Lutheran dilemma of law versus gospel.

*Harry A. Van Belle  
Edmonton, Alta.*

## Not Funny!

We enjoy your Punch Lines (in general), but a couple of the ones in March 2017 were offensive to Christians.

*Gerrit Top  
High River, Alta.*

The Punch Lines joke [about the zoo] (March 2017) is not funny. It’s disturbing.

*Carolyn Vrieling  
Salmon Arm, B.C.*

# NEWS

## CRC Farmer Protects Edmonton Land with Conservation Easement

**T**he city of Edmonton, Alta., is thriving. With a population that has grown to over 1.3 million people—a growth of more than 13 percent from 2011 to 2016—it is no surprise that local land that could be turned into suburban developments is in high demand.

Despite this seemingly lucrative opportunity, Doug Visser, who owns 93 hectares in Horse Hill, a farming neighborhood within Edmonton city limits, has chosen to place a conservation easement on his land to ensure that the top-quality farmland could never be

legally used for anything beyond community-based agriculture.

Visser, a member of Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, comes by his passion for both agriculture and social justice honestly. “My Mom and



Clarence Visser, left, and his son Doug.

Dad bought the farm in 1958 from the homesteaders, and they did well by it,” he said. “At one point in their life, they were transformed, in that they no longer needed to continue to accumulate wealth so much. That transformation came from their travels with Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (now World Renew) in Haiti and in Sierra Leone.”

Visser said that in the 1980s, his parents’ strong social justice bent led them to put a restrictive covenant on the land, even as they continued to farm. Eventually they gave the land, with its restrictive covenant to preserve it in agriculture, to Christian Stewardship Services (CSS), a charity. They donated the land and kept the lease, which enabled them to stay living there, he said.

Visser and his wife began a vegetable farm on the land and did well enough that they were



ED KAISER, EDMONTON JOURNAL

able to buy the farm back from CSS. The restrictive covenant stayed in place, but the general public was unaware of its existence.

Because of the pressures of suburbanization and development, it became possible in the province of Alberta to put a conservation easement on agricultural land as well as wild land, Visser said. “Our land has some pretty unique characteristics for growing vegetables and a great natural area—we’re along the river and there is old-growth forest there. We thought we should put a conservation easement on because it puts it out there in the public sphere.”

The Edmonton Area Land Trust (EALT) was tapped to be supporters of the easement, and a fundraising campaign was started to cover the fees, with Visser himself pledging to match donations up to \$70,000.

The conservation easement, in addition to preventing valuable agricultural land from being paved over, also ensures that community agriculture, such as Riverbend Gardens (run by Visser’s daughter and son-in-law, Janelle and Aaron Herbert), can continue, as well as preserving 28 hectares of old-growth forest in the river valley, which is currently used for First Nations ceremonies.

The King’s University will receive part of the land when Visser dies in order to run programs for its environmental studies students.

Visser insists that the real story is not about him or his family but about the land itself. “We’re just here for a moment in time. We have an opportunity to hopefully prevent [the land] from being paved over so that it’s there in the long run. Technically I’m the owner, but really I’m a part-time steward for a short time, and there are many people involved in advocating for the land.”

—Krista dela Rosa

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# SYNOD 2017

## Synod 2017 Asked to Approve New Mission Agency Name

The Christian Reformed Church's new mission agency is getting a new name. If approved by Synod 2017, the agency will be known as Resonate Global Mission. The name was endorsed by the CRC's Board of Trustees and now goes to the annual general assembly of the CRC, which meets in mid-June.

The full name follows:

### **Resonate Global Mission**

Engaging People. Embracing Christ.

*A ministry of the Christian Reformed Church*

The new mission agency is the result of bringing Christian Reformed World Missions and Christian Reformed Home Missions together into one unified agency.

Promotional material from the mission agency explained some of the rationale for the new name. Josh Leo, communications manager for Christian Reformed World Missions, said, "This name illustrates what we as a new agency will aspire to, seeing individuals and congregations resonate with God's mission and serving and equipping them to make that mission echo throughout their village, community, town, or city."

The naming process included research and surveys that indicated a desire that the new name portray an innovative and imaginative new agency. That same research led to the decision not to include "Christian Reformed" in the name itself. "This is a huge opportunity to have communication with people who are not CRC or Christians," said John Eigege, new mission agency board member. "It's an icebreaker, a door opener."

Members of the Board of Trustees did not raise questions about not including "Christian Reformed" in the name. But trustee Chris deWinter said he was struck by the fact that the word "gospel" was not in the name. "These are the evangelistic agencies of the CRC. I don't discount that this is part of the broader mission, but these are our evangelistic ministries. Salvation for sinners, the gospel mission."

Trustee Cal Hoogendoorn said he liked the name. "I think it captures the essence of what we try to do."

Synod delegates will have the final say when they gather in June.

—Gayla R. Postma



**Christian  
Reformed  
Home  
Missions**



**Christian  
Reformed  
World  
Missions**



## Banner Garner Church Press Awards

*The Banner* was honored by both the Evangelical Press Association (EPA) and the Associated Church Press (ACP) for work published in 2016. The ACP is the oldest church press association, and the EPA is the largest association for the evangelical publishing industry.

### Awards from the ACP included the following:

#### **Best in Class Award of Merit**

Denominational Magazine, National; Shiao Chong, editor

#### **Awards of Excellence**

"I Never Had a Chance to Say Goodbye," Robert Koornneef (*1st Person Account*)

"Our Lady Too," Leonard J. Vander Zee (*Theological: Seasonal Article*)

#### **Awards of Merit**

"Synod 2016," Gayla R. Postma (*In-Depth Coverage by Magazine*)

"Our Lady Too," Leonard J. Vander Zee (*Devotional/Inspirational*)

#### **Honorable Mentions:**

"Seeing Christmas with New Eyes," Shiao Chong (*Editorial*)

"Then and Now: Commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women in the CRC," Janet A. Greidanus (*News Story*)

"Nothing Is Wasted," Debra Rienstra (*Devotional/Inspirational*)

### Awards from the EPA

#### **Fourth Place**

"Slowing Up," Joe Veltman (*Poetry*)

"Why I Want You to Invite Me Out for Coffee," Hannah Biggs (*Student Writer of the Year*)

#### **Fifth Place**

Shiao Chong (*Standing Column: Editorial*)

# NEWS

## CHURCH WORLDWIDE

### Philosopher Who Argued for God Wins Templeton Prize

American scholar Alvin Plantinga, a pioneering advocate for theism, or belief in God, as a serious philosophical position within academic circles, was named the winner of the 2017 Templeton Prize.

Plantinga, 84, a former Calvin College professor who retired from the University of Notre Dame, won the award for revolutionizing “the way we think,” said Heather Templeton Dill, president of the John Templeton Foundation, which awards the annual prize.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TEMPLETON PRIZE/JOHN HARRISON

#### Templeton Prize winner Alvin Plantinga.

“Alvin Plantinga recognized that not only did religious belief not conflict with serious philosophical work, but that it could make crucial contributions to addressing perennial problems in philosophy,” Dill said on April 25 in an online announcement of this year’s award.

Because of Plantinga’s influence, it is no longer unusual for philosophy professors to bring their religious commitments to bear on their work, whether they be Buddhist, Jewish, or Muslim, the Templeton Foundation’s statement said.

Until Plantinga, many philosophers viewed theistic belief as logically incompatible with the reality of evil.

Countering that, Plantinga, whose own religious tradition is Christian Reformed, argued that, “in a world with free creatures, God cannot determine their behavior, so even an omnipotent God might not be able to create a world where all creatures will always freely choose to do good,” the announcement said.

Plantinga’s landmark 1974 “God, Freedom, and Evil” is now “almost universally recognized as having laid to rest the logical problem of evil against theism,” the foundation noted.

In a statement, Plantinga struck a modest note, saying that if his work played a role in transforming the field of philosophy, he “would be very pleased.”

“I hope the news of the prize will encourage young philosophers, especially those who bring Christian and theistic perspectives to bear on their work, towards greater creativity, integrity, and boldness,” Plantinga said.

The Templeton Prize, worth about \$1.4 million, was established in 1972 by the late investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton. It is one of the world’s largest awarded to a single individual and “honors a living person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life’s spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works,” according to the foundation, which is based in West Conshohocken, Pa.

Previous Templeton winners have included Mother Teresa, Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The 2016 Templeton laureate was Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the former chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth.

—Religion News Service

## Noteworthy



#### Ravyn Lenae

Eighteen-year-old **Ravyn Lenae**, a singer-songwriter and lifelong member of Pullman Christian Reformed Church in Chicago, Ill., was **named by Rolling Stone as one of 10 new artists** you need to know. Her music was described as “thoughtful and highly lyrical electronic soul.”



#### Matthew MacNeil

**Matthew MacNeil**, an advocate for the Canadian Down Syndrome Society and chair of Voice at the Table for Advocacy, made a **presentation at the United Nations World Down Syndrome Day** in March. MacNeil is a member of Tillsonburg (Ont.) CRC.



#### Korean CRC 34th Council

**The 34th Council of the Korean Christian Reformed Churches** met in Clifton, N.J. Rev. Hyung J. Park and Rev. Se H. Oh were honored. Rev. Dong Il Kim and Rev. Moon B. Kim were elected officers for the coming year.

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

## California Church Hosts 'Know Your Rights' Workshop

Bethel Christian Reformed Church, Sun Valley, Calif., is located in a state that reports 2.5 million undocumented immigrants and in a community where 50 percent of residents are foreign born. On April 2, 40 participants attended a "Know Your Rights" workshop hosted by the church to gain legal insight about the rights of immigrants. Sara Van Hofwegen, supervising staff attorney with Public Counsel, presented the workshop, with private consultations following.

Public Counsel is a public interest law firm in Los Angeles, Calif., that provides free legal services to individuals and communities with low incomes. Van Hofwegen explained that the firm's Immigrants' Rights Project represents particularly vulnerable immi-

grants, including asylum seekers, victims of crime, children facing removal from the U.S., and detained immigrants.

As part of her introduction to the workshop, Van Hofwegen addressed concerns of subversion: "I will absolutely not be promoting anything illegal or advocating that people violate the law," she said, as that would be a violation of her profession's ethics. Van Hofwegen further clarified that the workshop would not be taking a political position.

"The [political] situation impacts families adversely, and they are fearful and anxious about government action," said Stewart Treiling, a member of Bethel CRC. "Aside from the broader issue of the morality of the removal of



**"Know Your Rights" presenter Sara Van Hofwegen of Public Counsel.**

undocumented persons, they still have legal protections that are guaranteed by law, based on the constitution."

Rev. Micah Bruxvoort, pastor of Bethel CRC, said, "Many immigrants in our community have spent hard-earned dollars trying

to legalize their residency in this country, only to find out later that they were following misguided legal advice." In contrast, Bruxvoort countered that this workshop offered a list of places offering accessible, free, or low-cost legal advice. "We are commanded in Leviticus 19 to love the immigrant in our midst as ourselves. This is just one way of expressing our love and concern for our immigrant brothers and sisters," he said.

Van Hofwegen said, "I hope that those who attended gained understanding of their own situations and are better prepared for the challenges ahead, and are more equipped to help those who need our support."

—Shashi DeHaan

## Iranian Refugee's Paintings Displayed in British Columbia Church

*Song of Salvation* is a series of paintings that reflect the journey of faith and freedom of Banafsheh (Violet) Behzadian. Behzadian, an art and architecture professor, fled her native Iran rather than renounce her faith after converting to Christianity in 2006.

She arrived in Canada three years ago with her husband and their son. They were sponsored and befriended by members of the Ladner Christian Reformed Church community.

Behzadian began painting again soon after their arrival in Canada. Bev Bandstra, a member of Ladner CRC, curated an exhibit of her works at Regent College's Lookout Gallery on the campus of the University of British Columbia.

Now the artworks will hang in the foyer at Willoughby CRC in Langley, B.C., for a number of



**Artist Banafsheh Behzadian (right) with chaplain Dena Nicolai.**

weeks. The show opened there a week after Easter to help raise awareness of refugee needs.

The *Song of Salvation* paintings are a reflection of Behzadian's own story. Painted over a period of nine months, they all depict women and are accompanied by the Scripture that initially inspired the images.

In a conversation with the artist hosted after the service, Behza-

dian told her story of a slow but sure conversion to the Christian faith after having been given a copy of the gospel by a cab driver in her home city of Tehran. She began to attend a Christian church and her husband soon joined her. She spoke of encountering and being drawn to God through Jesus Christ, with whom she now has a living, loving, and personal rela-

tionship. Her conversion led to her being fired from her position as a professor at the University of Tehran.

Shortly after that, she went with her family to Turkey before they arrived in Canada. The family has since been joined by Behzadian's parents through the Canadian government's family reunification program. The birth of a daughter into their family two years ago has rooted them to Canada in yet another way.

On the opening Sunday, the message was preached by Dena Nicolai, a chaplain and refugee support mobilizer for the CRCs in the area. She helps provide a bridge between a Vancouver refugee welcome center and the church.

—Jenny deGroot

# NEWS

## SYNOD 2017 What to Watch for at Synod

**W**hen Synod 2017, the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church, meets in Palos Heights, Ill., in June, the agenda will have something for just about everyone. For policy wonks, there is much about policy, governance, and bylaws. For confessional wonks, Synod 2017 will revisit the discussion on the Belhar Confession and receive a lengthy report about the doctrine of justification.

Synod is made up of 192 delegates from regions across the U.S. and Canada. It meets for one week each June to discuss the ministries and policies of the denomination.

Two years ago, Synod 2015 approved a governance change from a 30-member Board of Trustees to a 52-member Council of Delegates. This is the group of people who act for synod in the interim between its annual meetings. The transition was originally expected to happen in 2018, but the board will ask synod to move that deadline up to July 1, 2017. It comes with plenty of paperwork, starting with the new Council of Delegates handbook, which, with appendices, fills 85 pages in the synod *Agenda*. An interim executive committee has already been elected to act until October, pending approval by synod.

Synod 2017 will also receive, by way of the supplementary agenda, documentation that combines eight sets of bylaws—the Canadian and U.S. bylaws for Back to God Ministries International, Christian Reformed World Missions, Christian Reformed Home Missions, and the Board of Trustees—into four, the Canadian and U.S. bylaws each for both Back to God Ministries International and the CRCNA.

Synod 2017 will also mark the launch of the new mission agency that combines the work of Christian Reformed World Missions and Christian Reformed Home Missions—the culmination of two years of work after the unification

was approved by Synod 2015. Synod will be asked to approve the new agency's name, Resonate Global Mission. Delegates will meet Rev. Zachary King and be asked to ratify his appointment by the Board of Trustees as director of the combined agency.

The *Agenda for Synod 2017* also includes more than 40 pages with graphs and charts as a response to Synod 2016's request to provide an overview of the history and funding of each ministry of the CRC after delegates last year said they wanted to prioritize and reduce the denominational footprint. Synod 2016 refused a request to increase ministry shares (the money contributed by congregations to fund shared denominational ministries). This year, no increase is being requested. At synod, delegates will be asked to give their own personal impression of each ministry's value; time will be set aside for group discussions.

On the confessional front, Synod 2017 will once again deal with the Belhar Confession. Synod 2012 declined to adopt it as a confession but instead designated it as an *ecumenical faith declaration*. The problem is that the CRC's ecumenical partners did not recognize or know what to do with that designation. So the CRC's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC) is issuing recommendations this year that include eliminating the ecumenical faith declaration category and providing a definition for a contemporary testimony category. *Our World Belongs to God* has

### Finding Love at Synod

For Rev. John Medendorp and Ashley Bootsma, a match made in heaven started at Synod 2016, the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church.

Medendorp was a delegate to last year's synod held in Grand Rapids, Mich., and Bootsma was a young adult representative. "Knowing few others, I tagged along with my pastor at the time, Chris deWinter, and met some of his friends," Bootsma said. DeWinter was also a delegate.

One of those friends was Medendorp, pastor of Community CRC in Kitchener, Ont. "We spent our evenings hanging out with friends and learning more about each other," Bootsma said. After synod, they started texting each other. "While he was the



John Medendorp and Ashley Bootsma

first to reach out after synod, it was definitely me who asked him out."

Four months later, they decided to marry, announcing it publicly in December. They are planning an August wedding.

"While neither of us was even remotely thinking of meeting a spouse at synod, God used synod to radically change our lives for the best," Bootsma said.

—Gayla R. Postma

always been known as a contemporary testimony, but the category has never been defined. If approved, the Belhar Confession will also be declared a contemporary testimony alongside *Our World Belongs to God*.

Also included in the EIRC's report is a document about the doctrine of justification and the story of how 40 years of CRC mission work in Sierra Leone has resulted in the Christian Reformed Church of Sierra Leone asking to be an ecumenical partner with the CRC in North America.

Much attention will be paid to Church Order Article 23, which pertains to commissioned pastors. Commissioned pastors are ordained only within their own classis for a very specific role. Synod 2017 will be asked to allow commissioned pastors to retire as commissioned pastors, *emeritus*, allowing them the authority to continue to perform official acts of ministry. Synod will also be asked to add resources and protections for commissioned pastors being released from a congregation, analogous to the way that ministers of the Word receive resources when released from a congregation. The role of commissioned pastor will also receive consideration as a bridge to ordination as a minister of the Word.

Synods always receive overtures (requests) from the various classes (regional groups of churches), and this year is no exception. There are 18, ranging from asking that all study reports longer than 10 pages include an executive summary, to translating significant confessional documents into several languages, to asking synod to cease using water bottles.

Delegates will convene for Synod 2017 at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill., from June 9-15. *The Banner* will post articles on its website throughout the week and keep readers updated via Twitter and Facebook and *The Banner* app. There will also be a live webcast and press releases from CRC Communications. The July/August 2017 issue of *The Banner* will contain a round-up of news from Synod 2017.

—Gayla R. Postma,  
news editor

## Board of Trustees Meets for Last Time

Early in May, the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church held its final meeting. On July 1, the group that will act on behalf of synod between its annual meetings will be the Council of Delegates. The Council consists of 52 members representing every classis (48 regional groups of churches) plus at-large delegates.

At its meeting the board

- recommended to Synod 2017 a ministry shares amount of \$339.48 per adult member, the same amount as last year. Ministry shares is the money received from local congregations for shared denominational ministries.
- received and will recommend to Synod 2017 the name for the new mission agency: Resonate Global Mission. The new agency was formed by unifying Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed World Missions, a process that will be complete on June 30, 2017 (see p.11).
- elected officers for the transition period until the Council of Delegates holds its first meeting in October: Emmett Harrison, Paul DeVries, Don Draayer, Andy de Ruyter, Mark Volkers, Stan Workman, Cory Sytsema, Beth Fellingner. DeVries will function as interim president.
- requested that Synod 2017 remember, reaffirm, and reinvigorate the denomination's commitment to a comprehensive and integral response to people who are hungry, poor, or rejected in our world and in our own nations.
- heard that registration for Inspire 2017, a denomination-wide conference to be held in August in Detroit, Mich., is over 400, with much hope for significant increases.

—Gayla R. Postma

## By the Numbers

- 65** years the boys' group Cadets has been in existence
- 17,000** girls who participate in GEMS groups
- 1,200** Friendship groups in 28 countries for adults with intellectual impairments
- 18,000** Friends in Friendship programs around the world
- 78** % of readers who are somewhat or very satisfied with the *The Banner*
- 75** years of CRC's Chaplaincy and Care ministry
- 999** active pastors in the CRC
- 2,200,000** printed devotional booklets produced by Back to God Ministries International in six languages
- 796,200** people in 39 countries assisted by World Renew
- 250,392** hours by World Renew volunteers
- 39** Reformed denominations with which the CRC has an ecumenical relationship

(From *Agenda for Synod 2017*)



## More Online

For more good reading, visit [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org)!

### Just War: Let's Keep Talking

In our *As I Was Saying* column, retired chaplain Rev. Herm Keizer responded to David Hoekema's article ("From Just War to Just Peace," April 2017), lamenting that the CRC has had limited discussions about how the Just War principles are used. "When and if war becomes necessary, we need to wage it with justice and with the goal of restoring peace. One of the principles of the Just War tradition is that going to war must be waged only as the last resort. Peacekeeping and peacemaking can help us push that choice down the road. So let's talk!"

([tinyurl.com/thebanner-letskeptalking](http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-letskeptalking))

### The Gifts of Science Are Worth Celebrating

At about the time there were large gatherings to celebrate the achievements of the natural sciences, Richard Mouw wrote in our *As I Was Saying* column that although some people use scientific investigation as a means of undermining faith, large numbers of people, including many fine scientists, accept the gifts of scientific investigation with deep gratitude.

([tinyurl.com/thebanner-celebratingscience](http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-celebratingscience))

### Ministry Crawl in Montreal Highlights Missional Communities

Krista Dam-VandeKuyt reported that members of Christian Reformed churches in Montreal and Ottawa took part in a ministry crawl, visiting four ministry sites that are part of Mission Montreal and supported by their congregations.

([tinyurl.com/thebanner-missionmontreal](http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-missionmontreal))

### CRC Scholars Among Those Who Oppose Decision to Rescind 2017 Kuyper Prize

Lori Dykstra wrote about some prominent academics, philosophers, and theologians of the Christian Reformed Church who protested the decision by Princeton Theological Seminary to rescind the 2017 Kuyper Prize designated to Rev. Dr. Tim Keller. "Keller has done remarkable work in New York City as head pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church," said Nicholas Wolterstorff, recipient of the 2014 Kuyper Prize, former Calvin College professor of philosophy and professor emeritus of philosophical theology at Yale University. "I think he deserves to be honored for that despite the fact that I disagree [with his views on ordination]." Along with Wolterstorff, two other CRC leaders signed: Alvin Plantinga, 2009 Kuyper Prize recipient and professor emeritus of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame and Calvin College; and James Bratt, professor emeritus of history at Calvin College.

([tinyurl.com/thebanner-KuyperPrizeKeller](http://tinyurl.com/thebanner-KuyperPrizeKeller))



Growers in Canada Galana harvesting coffee beans.

## Michigan Church Partners with Honduran Coffee Growers

When parishioners at Mayfair Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., have their coffee after Sunday services, they are providing an economic boost to the farmers who grow the coffee through a unique business partnership.

The Galana Coffee Company was established to develop a source of sustainable income for farmers who grow coffee in the small Honduran village of Canada Galana: in English the name means "beautiful valley." The partnership grew out of a sister church relationship between Mayfair and a Honduran congregation that has been in place for seven years. Mission teams from the church visit the village annually.

Unlike "fair trade" arrangements in which farmers sell the coffee to an exporter, who then marks up the price to make a profit, Galana Coffee pays the farmers directly at a higher price than they might receive from a fair trade exporter, according to Lisa Buffinga, a Mayfair member who recently visited Canada Galana.

"Last August was the first time we were able to import. We imported about 3,000 pounds of coffee," Buffinga said. The farmers receive about \$3 per pound, whereas they might only get about \$2 per pound from a fair trade exporter.

Mayfair purchased a solar-powered coffee dryer for the farmers to help improve the quality of the coffee beans; representatives from World Renew have provided assistance on farming practices.

Buffinga hopes that other CRC congregations will consider purchasing their coffee through Galana Coffee. She hopes that at a high enough price, Galana will be able to pay the farmers a fair price as well as provide the opportunity to reinvest in better farming practices. If successful, the partnership could provide a much better life for the villagers, she said.

"Our dream, our hope, is that through coffee, maybe this village can climb out of desperate poverty and have a reason for their children to stay in the community," Buffinga said. "We're at the baby stages."

—Gregory Chandler



# Geneva House Chaplaincy at Queen's University

**W**hen Mary-Jane Tigchelaar's children reached university age, she and her husband asked themselves a hard question: How well have we equipped our children to leave home and live at university? The Tigchelaars live in Hamilton, situated at the west end of Lake Ontario; when their son chose to study at Redeemer University College in nearby Ancaster, they were able to maintain regular contact. When their daughter Abby chose to study psychology at Queen's, a public university located in Kingston at the east end of Lake Ontario—about 400 km by road from Hamilton—Mary Jane faced a new challenge.

"We wanted to make sure Abby would be living in a good house, in a good neighborhood," she explained. "We wanted her to connect with Geneva House, the CRC chaplaincy ministry at Queen's. We met [CRC chaplain]



Abby Tigchelaar with Julia Kooy (right).

Steve Kooy and his wife, Julia, on Abby's first day in Kingston, and she has been connected with them and the Geneva House campus ministry ever since. We have a sense of partnering with the Kooy's in caring for our daughter. For example, when my daughter was sick a couple of years ago,

I called Julia to let her know—and Julia made some chicken soup and made that visit for me!"

CRC pastor Steve Kooy is now in his 10th year of chaplaincy at Queen's University; Julia Kooy recently took a part-time appointment as head of women's ministry there. He explains, "The Geneva

House chaplaincy has been here on the Queen's University Campus for more than 25 years.

"We have always worked hard to make and build strong ties among Christian students on campus, especially through what we call 'huddle groups.' Geneva House has a few rooms available for missional living by students, and this year we added two new residences. We have a group of male students living in the parsonage of St. Andrew's Anglican. We have a separate house for women, and Abby has taken a leading role there, helping to create a family feel to the group living there. I'm very excited to see how the experience of living together in community can give students a much richer experience."

Kooy is currently writing a doctor of ministry thesis at Tyndale University on the topic "Discipling University Students through a Missional House Model."

—Ron Rupke

## Junior Ambassadors

Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold, Ont. launched its Junior Ambassador program, inducting Isaac and Luke Tenyenhuis as two of nine children and teens recognized as making a meaningful difference in their community. Isaac (13) and Luke (9) are two young members of Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines. They have been fundraising for the community food bank and support agency for eight years.

—Alissa Vernon

Isaac and Luke Tenyenhuis



BY JAMES C. SCHAAP

# MISSIONS AND MALADIES

**T**HE FIRST TIME I looked for them, I had more than a little trouble. Let's be clear—Morton, Minn., is no metropolis. Like a thousand other burgs in the Upper Midwest, its population losses have been the big story for a century already. Really tall monuments shouldn't have been all that difficult to spot in a town that small.

But I couldn't find them, even though I drove down every last street and avenue, looking. Nothing.

I did find a museum. Someone there, I thought, had to know where I could find Morton's Dakota War monuments; after all, the docents were even older than I was. They had to know local history.

Nope. They didn't seem to know what I was looking for.

Maybe I'd asked the question wrong. Maybe they didn't understand my stut-

tering descriptions. Even those seniors didn't appear to know what I was talking about.

I got back in the car and told myself those monuments had to be standing somewhere, because I'd read they overlooked the Minnesota River. Finally, a weathered sign pointed up a gravel road that wound through old hardwoods, ever-narrowing as I ascended the bluff. And there they were—two towering cement obelisks, out of view from the town below.

I wasn't the first to go up there; the monuments are over a century old, after all. And there'd been recent visitors—kids, I'm guessing, from the bottles and cans beneath fallen tree branches and a thick scattering of leaves. Things up the hill weren't at all kept up. Two tall war monuments were not only hidden but largely forgotten, or so it seemed to me.

Now, you could argue that in the neighborhood of the Dakota War of

1862, people would just as soon forget all that killing. That war took the lives of hundreds of people on both sides and resulted in the largest mass hanging in American history—38 Dakota warriors on massive gallows in late December, just up the river in Mankato. Maybe it seemed best not to talk about the whole horrifying business, even though 150 years have already gone by.

And also not talk about the monuments themselves, for these towering memorials were created to honor specific participants in that war: "Erected in 1899 by the Minnesota River Historical Society," one of them boldly states, "to commemorate the brave, faithful, and humane conduct of the loyal Indians who saved the lives of white people. . . ."

The story sounds selfless and heroic. But it's probably fair to say that today few of the Dakota who still live in and around the valley would care a great deal about

# SOME SEE SAINTS IN THE NAMES ETCHED INTO THE STONE; OTHERS TRAITORS.

cleaning up around that particular monument. After all, at the very moment those celebrated Dakota men saved the lives of white people, they walked away from their own. Several of the men whose names are listed beneath the etched tribute played significant roles in freeing the prisoners of Dakota bands who had slaughtered as many as 500 pioneer Minnesotans—and held many hostages—107 whites and 162 mixed-bloods, 269 prisoners in total.

From the outset, the Dakota men memorialized on that monument had opposed the war that slaughtered so many on both sides. For a decade or more before the war, they'd begun to leave their own culture and assimilate into what would soon become the majority culture of white pioneers streaming onto what had been Dakota land. Several of the men were converts to the Christian religion—they were Christian Indians.

Praise the Lord—right? Yes, but before you stand up and sing, remember: there are people listening who are not lifting their hands and saying amen.

The area atop the bluff was cleaned up the next time I visited, a few years later, at a time when Minnesota had begun to revisit the 150th anniversary of its own civil war. Still, to most people—Native and Anglo—that particular Morton monument creates discomfort and makes the Christian faith and Christian missions particularly difficult to discuss.

The Dakota warriors who fought—were they savages or freedom fighters? And those who sided with the whites, those Christians—were they heroes or part of a Judas band? Who gets to define terms? Who gets to answer those questions?

Diane Glancy, a Cherokee poet and novelist, and a Christian, told me that in the gatherings and conferences she attends as a Native writer, the topic that's most difficult to talk about is the Christian faith. No themes create such angry divisions.

Why? Because this country's First Nations had trouble determining the difference between missionaries and militia. Everything seemed part of a way of life carried along by white folks flowing endlessly into their worlds, taking up residence as if the original inhabitants were invisible. These new people dressed strangely, cut their hair in an odd way, disciplined their children in manners some Native parents thought obscene, and prayed, oddly enough, without pipes or sweat lodges. That strange life was putting Dakota lives and cultures at risk, taking apart every vestige of a way of life that had given them breath. "Bending the knee" was not so much a spiritual as a cultural posture.

Good people, I'm sure—some Christians, some not, some Native, some white—would just as soon leave a monument to Christian Indians behind the trees and out of view. Some see saints in the names etched into the stone; others traitors. Both views, like it or not, are wholly understandable.

In the introduction to *Dakota Cross-Bearer: The Life and Times of a Native American Bishop*, Father Raymond A. Bucko remembers the funeral of a Lakota spiritual leader named Frank Fools Crow. The ceremony brought hundreds of Pine Ridge folks together to celebrate the life of a beloved man. Two groups formed at St. Barnabas Episcopal cemetery, Bucko remembers. At one end, Christian clergy in clerical collars, several of them Native, observed the ceremony; at the other, equally attentive, stood traditional spiritual leaders in feathered headdresses.

News crews covered the event. What Father Bucko remembers is that the video cameras shot the traditional Native spiritualists exclusively, keeping their backs to the Christian clergy.

"In the nineteenth century, the cameras could well have pointed in the other direc-

tion," Bucko wrote, "focusing only on the Christianized Indians." Not so today. Not so at the funeral of Fools Crow. "Rarely," he says, "have the two realities been integrated into a single picture." Rarely do Christianity and Native identity occupy important places in the same sentence.

Make no mistake; Christ's final injunction to his people is no less current, no less a calling than it ever was: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." As we know, however, sometimes the gospel may be more vividly expressed in silence, in tolerance and goodwill, in a simple ministry of presence.

The divide between can be a shame for many reasons, one of which means we're kept from remembering the stories of the men whose names are on the monument. Some of those stories beg to be told.

What's more, the contributions of Christian missions to Native life are very real. Some are frightful. Horror and bigotry and brutality were all carried along by some who claimed to be wielding Christ's love. The man who might be considered central to the Great Sioux Wars of the 19th century, the barrel-chested Col. John Chivington, whose volunteer Colorado cavalry massacred Cheyenne and Arapaho people at Sand Creek, is often referred to as "a Calvinist preacher."

Still, what those video cameras miss when they don't show the Christian missionaries is a story that begs to be told—maybe, today, only in hushed tones.

The Osage people suffered immensely during the 1850s and 60s. Disease, much of it spread by contact with whites, devastated the people, in part because they were forced to live in clusters in which contagion flourished. Living where they were in southeast Kansas put them in the middle of the bloody attacks carried on between slave-owners and free »

men after the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Life itself was deadly.

In *A History of the Osage People* (2004), Louis Burns, himself Osage, claims that three factors basically saved the people. “These were Andrew J. Dorn, their agent; the Jesuits; and the school at Osage Mission.” Dorn, a tribal agent, was a good man in a job frequently filled by crooks. The Jesuits were the missionaries, and the Osage Mission was the school they created. “These three factors,” Burns wrote, “were the counterbalance that saved the Osages from extinction in this period.”

John P. Williamson, a Presbyterian missionary to the Santee/Dakota people of Minnesota, stayed with the vanquished warriors who weren’t hung at Mankato in December of 1862— stayed with them through three-year imprisonments, ministered to them when hate was as poisonous as it was overwhelming, hate that came even from fellow clergy. Williamson was attacked, physically, for continuing to worship with the imprisoned Lakota. “Holiest rites of the church given to red-handed murderers,” one journalist wrote. “God was mocked.”

Today, that story, like the Morton monument, may well be better kept beneath the trees and fallen branches.

There’s more. Father John Schoenmakers, a Dutch-born Jesuit, was one of those clergy Louis Burns credits with holding together the life of the Osage people in the mid-19th century. On the night of August 11, 1875, Schoenmakers fell gravely ill, even though he was attended by the agency doctor. The Osage people, sensing death, crowded around him in the infirmary. When the doctor told them to leave, they threatened to scalp the doctor if Schoenmaker died.

So he bargained a compromise. Two Osage warriors were stationed at Schoenmaker’s bedside to watch closely while the doctor treated the priest they so loved. Special tribal guards stayed with him night and day until he was healthy enough

to leave his bed. A decade later, when the beloved priest died, 3,500 people attended his funeral.

The story goes that once upon a time, not long ago, one of our own missionaries to Native people gave a guided tour to long-time mission supporters. When he did, he talked about the mission itself, as well as the tribe and problems endemic to all Native reserves and reservations— unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, and family dysfunction. When the long-time mission supporters put their interview up on social media, some Native people discovered the conversation and weren’t happy. They were, understandably, angry.

Forgiveness is always in order, but in this case, understanding how what was said felt like insult and prejudice is greatly helpful to those of us who don’t understand and have little knowledge of Native life—as it was or as it is today.

Because prejudice is not behind us. Recently, my home town dedicated a new veterans’ memorial downtown. Etched in the onyx walls are sketches and numbers—pictorial references to the wars this country has fought, along with the names of those who gave “the supreme sacrifice.” The memorial is brand new, and the community is proud of the honors it bestows on those who gave their lives.

One of the plates is given to the Indian wars, and the tally is an estimate—1,000 dead Americans. But who can possibly deny that there weren’t hundreds of thousands more, the original Americans, the First Nations, the aboriginal people, who died in all those wars—from Block Island in Massachusetts to Temecula, California?

Not to consider Native Americans as Americans is more than embarrassing, isn’t it? Just like that tall monument above the town of Morton and the valley of the Minnesota River, there’s so much more to the story, more that needs be said.

Permit me to tell just one more story. Gall was no giant, but he must have been built like a grand piano. General Custer’s

wife, Libby, once gushed that she had never “dreamed there could be in all the tribes so fine a specimen of a warrior as Gall.”

When Gall stood to speak against the Fort Laramie Treaty, he showed the Peace Commission the museum of scars he’d picked up in countless fights, a testimony and a warning.

Six years later, along with his friend Sitting Bull, Gall and his people took a place along the banks of the Little Big Horn and then rode fiercely in the middle of the bloodletting. Gall rode as an Indian fighting for freedom, but also to avenge the deaths of two of his wives and children.

After Little Big Horn, Gall and his people went north to Canada, where they stayed for four years until conflicts with other Native tribes arose, much of it attributable to poverty. Weary and homesick, Gall and his people left Canada in 1881 and surrendered in Montana.

One Sunday, on his horse, Gall was riding slowly by St. Elizabeth’s, the mother church of all the Episcopal churches on the Standing Rock Reservation, when from inside came the distinctive and beautiful sound of a hymn, music he had never heard before. He stopped and listened, almost transfixed. That moment, some say, was the first step on the road to his being adopted into the Christian faith.

Just that fast, just that quickly. From outside, what he heard through that open door was a hymn I’m sure most of us know, some of us by heart: “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

That’s a story hard to keep under fallen branches. Next time you sing that hymn, think of Gall, out at Standing Rock, on his horse, in a kind of bewonderment.

Let those who have ears, listen. ■



**James C. Schaap** is a writer who lives in Iowa.

## Water and Wine

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!)

**THE GUESTS KEPT COMING**, and I kept mixing. Smiling. Laughing at their antics. Letting the joy and the energy and the music seep into my blood and my hands as I worked.

I wasn't alone. My teammates mixed with the crowd, clad in unassuming black and white, balancing hors d'oeuvres and avoiding elbows, a study in grace and the art of disappearing in plain sight.

The bride and groom arrived. We laid dinner before the guests, each plate a work of art. Toasts rang out—words that spoke of life-long friendship, love, of struggle and strength. And of the deep connections our hearts can form when given half a chance and a whole lot of grace.

The night lived on. Corks filled the trash can at my feet, and my pile of empty bottles grew. I stopped mixing cocktails at the pre-planned hour—but then the beer ran out. The crowd dwindled. The music slowed.

As the night drifted toward its end, all I had left was water and wine.

Two thousand years and half a world away, another wedding ran out of supplies. The party was far from over, but the wine was dipping closer to its dregs. The servers were trying to be stingy, but still watched their stock dwindle with alarming swiftness. Their hospitality, with the goal of abundance, was about to grind to a sudden and mortifying halt.

It was the first century A.D. I didn't attend that party (obviously). Jesus did.

The fear of the servers had reached the ears of his mother, Mary, and she knew the solution instantly. Jesus could provide. Her faith never hesitated. And so he honored her trust by turning approximately five hundred liters of water into the best wine anyone had ever tasted.

Jesus didn't just provide. Oh, my love, no. He broke the very laws of the world, of the scarcity that holds our hearts to death and moves our hands to violence. Heaven walked those floors and Eden overflowed in that house for one impossible night, making eyes widen and heads spin with the irrational goodness of it all.

The guests delighted in it. The master of the feast marveled at what he thought was the groom's wealth and fine taste. But the ones who bore the full weight of Jesus' power and glory that night were the ones whom no one else saw. The servers.

I can see the back room of that house in Cana, a rough-hewn table surrounded by workers. Tired feet, aching shoulders. Watching as someone pours the water-turned-wine into crude cups. Tentative sips, marveling. Tasting the goodness of their Master's immeasurable love.

A few years later, that same Master poured himself out on a cross.

A law-breaker, taking the rules and ruler of this world and crushing them under his feet. A winepress, trampled and overflowing high as a horse's bridle. Eden on earth again. Water and blood, washing us clean.

Love unrestrained, over-abundant.

Without reason.

Without lack.

This is my Master, who tells me to give lavishly without thought of loss, to see those who are used to being unseen, to serve freely and excessively and absolutely without reservation. Cup after cup, full and good and satisfying—confronting, with grace, a world afraid of running out.

Have no fear, my love. This wedding is in the hands of a Lover who knows no lack, no limit. He has washed your feet, he has set the banquet table before you, he has filled your cup to overflowing. ■

**Janelle Haegert** writes and bartends in Tucson, Ariz. She's also an avid cyclist, an amateur guitarist, and a member of Second Mile Church.



Heaven walked  
those floors and  
Eden overflowed  
in that house for  
one impossible  
night.

## Following the Spirit

by Brian Clark

**W**hen Sara Pavlova was applying for colleges, she knew she would have to depend on God to provide the funds to attend. Her upbringing as the daughter of a church planter from Macedonia had already prepared her for that.

“I came from a poor family,” said Pavlova, whose family lived in the base-



Sara Pavlova is a third-year student at LCC International University in Lithuania.

ment of a house in the early years of her childhood.

Eventually, Pavlova’s grandfather helped her family build their own house. Then, just as they were getting settled in to this more established way of life, they felt God calling them to plant a church in another town.

“We all felt that we were called by God, but it was so hard because our lives were in this city,” Pavlova explained.

Pavlova’s family ultimately decided to answer God’s call. They gifted their home to a single mother and moved on to the next church planting experience. During

her childhood, Pavlova’s family also followed God’s lead to serve in Bulgaria, India, and the United States. The family never had much money, but these experiences helped Pavlova learn to trust God.

Pavlova applied to LCC International University in Klaipeda, Lithuania, and trusted that God would provide the finances. Her faith grew before she even set foot on the campus.

“I was accepted with a message that 90 percent of my tuition would be covered the first year,” said Pavlova. “I really learned to trust God.”

The next few years, LCC was not able to provide Sara with the same amount of funding, but Sara was once again amazed by how God provided for her.

“I got a job for which I was praying a long time ago, and God also gave me several other small opportunities like babysitting and tutoring, which helped me financially.”

Among these smaller jobs was a position as a piano teacher for three of the children of Scott and Lisa Neumann, missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) who serve at LCC.

“Coming to Lithuania has developed my relationship with God on another level,” concluded Pavlova. “I have learned to trust God so much more, even praying for the rain to stop, so I can get home dry.”

Pavlova’s awareness of the Holy Spirit’s direction for her life is a gift that CRWM missionaries recognize as they serve alongside people around the world. This year, as we celebrate Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit here on earth, we’ll explore ways that the Spirit has been at work around the world.

### Following the Spirit in Honduras

Amidst the coffee, corn, and cattle in the rolling mountains of Honduras’s Olancho region, the Holy Spirit has been preparing Rigoberto Juarez for ministry in an unlikely way.

Juarez left his hometown of Mangulile for the gang life at a young age. His activities in the gang led him to fear for his own life. Vulnerable and helpless, Juarez fled back to Mangulile, where he eventually joined the church.

“In Honduras, you either join a gang or a youth group,” said CRWM’s Caspar



Juarez (standing) is recognized as a leader in his community of Mangulile.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CASPAR GEISTERER

## People are having fun and learning what it means to be Reformed.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CASPAR GEISTERFER

**Juarez (center, blue shirt) explores God's Word with other members of the Cornfield Theology group.**

Geisterfer, who came to this generalization after serving as a missionary in Honduras since 2008. "Everyone has a basic need to belong, and the strongest sense of belonging in Honduras is either on the streets or in the church."

Like many new Christians, Juarez was still grasping what it meant to belong to this new group when he first met Geisterfer. Most of his ideas of what a Christian looked like came from watching Christian television programs, but he longed for a deeper understanding.

With people like Juarez in mind, Geisterfer developed a practical tool to help Honduran Christians understand what the Bible is saying to them. He calls it "Cornfield Theology."

"We work with less-educated pastors and church members," said Geisterfer, describing how Cornfield Theology uses real-life examples to explain theological ideas. "Together, we discover the purposes of God and the ways of the kingdom, using the Heidelberg Catechism."

"People don't take the time to teach others how to read the Bible," Geisterfer added. "Cornfield Theology is very conversational and relational, helping people meet God where they already are."

From the very first question—What is your only comfort in life and death?—participants discover what it means to belong to the body of Christ with relatable examples.

"When we talk about belonging, we talk about the tattoos or hairstyles that show you belong to a gang," Geisterfer cited as an example.

As he developed Cornfield Theology, Geisterfer knew that he needed local people to help him come up with practical examples. Juarez quickly became one of his top choices.

"Rigoberto is one of those people who just can't sit still because he has to tell others about Jesus," said Geisterfer.

Today Geisterfer and Juarez have about 90 participants in five different Cornfield Theology classes around Mangulile. Together they draw on their own experiences—Rigoberto as a gangster and Caspar as a missionary—to share what the Bible means to them.

"People are having fun and learning what it means to be Reformed," Geisterfer concluded.

### Following the Spirit in Uganda

Often the Holy Spirit leads us to places we wouldn't go by our own choice. That was definitely the case for members of CRWM's Global Prayer Safari (GPS) in Uganda.

From pristine sandy beaches to garbage-filled fishing villages, members of the GPS team saw many sides of Uganda's capital region of Kampala. But one place stood out for many of the participants—the Zika Forest.

The mosquito-borne disease that originated in this forest has recently made headlines for its spread across Central America, but its history in Uganda goes back much further.

Local pastor and member of the GPS team Musoke Kisule is well-versed in this history. He pastors a congregation right at the edge of the Zika Forest. Kisule says the place has been known as a "place of burial" since the 1800s. »

**Members of the Global Prayer Safari pray over the land where the Zika virus originated.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN LUBBERS



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN LUBBERS

### Following the Spirit in the New Mission Agency

Christian Reformed World Missions is now looking forward to its next phase of ministry, joining with Christian Reformed Home Missions into a new, unified agency. Zachary Segaar-King has been nominated to be the director for this new agency, pending synodical approval. He and the staff of both agencies see the Holy Spirit as central to their future.

One of the primary goals Segaar-King has for the new agency is to help the denomination become more aware of the Spirit's leading. He feels that those in the CRC can learn from the great examples of Christians from other cultures and denominations—those like Sara Pavlova, Rigoberto Juarez, or Musoke Kisule—to increase our spiritual awareness.

"I think we as a denomination and I as a person need to grow in walking in step with the Holy Spirit," Segaar-King said. "I say that based on my Pentecostal roots, growing up struggling to spend so much time in prayer and being in a country [Haiti] where people will pray, pray, pray. Sometimes it seems overwhelming, but I think we can continue to benefit from walking in step with the Spirit." ■



Zachary Segaar-King

» "After the death of many people in a great battle, the king ordered a mass grave to be dug," recalled Kisule. "Many people who died were buried in that forest."

Decades later, when the virus started to spread, people initially blamed these deaths on the spirits of the people who were buried in this mass grave.

"People started consulting ancestral spirits, and there the forest was dedicated to the devil," said Kisule.

Even after researchers discovered the virus, the forest is still regarded as a spiritually dark place. People continue making sacrifices to these spirits, but God has been at work through people like Kisule.

"God has given us grace to plant two churches around the forest," said Kisule. "We've been struggling to pull down the stronghold of evil powers from all these years."

When Kisule and other local pastors heard that missionaries and volunteers were gathering in Uganda to pray with them at the Global Prayer Safari, they knew this would be a great opportunity to continue re-claiming this forest for Christ.

On the first day of the event this past February, the volunteers hiked to the Zika Forest with some reluctance. They had

### Members of the Global Prayer Safari prayed at more than 100 places.

heard much of the history, and they had already had a full day of walking and praying.

"I usually consider myself a pretty flexible person, but that day I found that I could still be uncomfortable," said Ken Koning, pastor of Calvin CRC (McBain, Mich.).

In the forest, the group prayed for cleansing and renewal. They prayed that the evil spirits would leave and never return. They prayed for peace and safety for those living near the forest.

"As a missionary in Uganda, it was interesting to watch the spiritual warfare battle in action," said CRWM's Karen Lubbers. "The African men and women got louder and louder in their prayers, stomping the ground and punching the air. The Westerners took steps back to see what was happening, watching with wide eyes. Everyone knew that God's Spirit was at work."

"Praying together manifested the glory of Jesus in ways that we couldn't experience in our one-on-one time with God," added Kisule. "It brought divine intervention and breakthrough in the community and in the lives of everyone participating."



Brian Clark, Christian Reformed World Missions



You add.  
God multiplies.

# 'Ten Ways' Tools Equip Churches for Ministry

by Paola Fuentes Gleghorn

Pastor Jim Poelman of Redeemer Christian Reformed Church in Sarnia, Ont., was faced with a newly-elected group of elders about to do their first round of visitations. Many of the elders had never served in this role before, and they felt ill-equipped to visit individuals and families in their homes to talk about their lives and faith.

To prepare them for this task, Poelman decided to use two of the "Ten Ways" tools from a recently released Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) resource packet. He set aside half an hour of an elders' meeting to read through, discuss, and pray over the resource titled "Ten Ways to Be a Caring Elder." He also gave each elder a copy of "Ten Ways to Talk with Someone about Their Faith" to read on their own.

A few days later, one of the elders told Poelman that she had successfully connected with teens in her care circle, thanks to some of the things she learned from the "Ten Ways" resources.

The tools Poelman used are each one page long and offer practical ways to address ministry challenges. Developed by Faith Formation Ministries (FFM), several of these "Ten Ways" pages have been compiled into a resource packet and are now available to Christian Reformed churches across North America.

The packets also contain introductory brochures for five online "toolkits" that offer hundreds of practical ideas for growing and strengthening faith in children, youth, and adults. All of the materials are designed to encourage and

equip local Christian Reformed ministry leaders in their calling to shape intentional, lifelong faith formation in their unique context.

"Churches using the tools in this resource packet have found that these resources have the most impact if three or more leaders explore them on their own for an hour and choose five ideas to bring to a meeting," said Syd Hielema, director of Faith Formation Ministries. "In conversation with others, they can discern the two strongest ideas that best suit their context."

Churches can also reach out to an FFM regional catalyzer for advice on a specific plan to implement those ideas in their congregations.

"The toolkits and 'Ten Ways' tools are clear, concise, and beautiful—a simple, straightforward resource that leads people deeper to more online resources if they choose to go there," said Pastor Chris DeWinter of Trinity CRC in St. Catharines, Ont. He has used the materials for small group leader training, elder development, and council conversations about developing intentional church culture.

If your church has not yet received a Faith Formation resource packet at a classis meeting or elsewhere, please contact FFM at [faithformation@crcna.org](mailto:faithformation@crcna.org), and they will be happy to mail one to you. ■



Paola Fuentes Gleghorn,  
Faith Formation Ministries

**Ten Ways**  
TO BE A CARING ELDER

**Ten Ways**  
TO BUILD A STRONGER YOUTH MINISTRY

**Ten Ways**  
TO BE A MORE INTERGENERATIONAL CHURCH

**Ten Ways**  
FOR FAMILIES TO ENGAGE KIDS IN WORSHIP

**Ten Ways**  
TO REDUCE THE PROFESSION OF FAITH 'FAIR FACTOR'

**Ten Ways**  
TO STRENGTHEN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

**Ten Ways**  
TO TALK WITH SOMEONE ABOUT...

## Christian Citizenship on Canada's Birthday

I doubt God has a favorite nation when it comes time to cheer at the Olympics. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that God favors one nation over another—except maybe Israel. Even then, New Testament Christians read Romans 11 and understand that the church is the new Israel. God's "favorite" is actually not a nation but the church universal—not Israel, not Nigeria, not Australia, not the United States. You may think it odd, then, that I take up space here with what seems like an ode to nationalism.

But this is a special occasion. July 1 marks the 150th birthday of the Canadian confederation. As a proud Canadian, I do not need much of an excuse to state why I love my country of birth. I love our concern for the group first before the individual. I am proud of our historical pursuit of peace around the world and our longstanding openness to immigrants. I appreciate our diversity of cultures and languages. But I also know that Canada is not perfect.

From the very beginning with our first prime minister, there is a list of national sins we Canadians should be honest about. Our history with Aboriginal people and communities is riddled with injustice. Our track record on a variety of environmental issues is shame-inducing. And the nature of some governmental decisions seems to go against the thrust of biblical morality.

As Reformed Christians in a country of such mixed reviews, then, we have a very clear *raison d'être*. Writing on civil law in his *Institutes* (ch. 20), our spiritual forefather, John Calvin, said that the purpose of the magistrate is to uphold God's glory, to preserve divine truth, and to ensure the continuance of the kingdom of Christ. In so doing, Calvin reminds us of our civic duty: to expect of our government that which serves Christ and builds his kingdom.

We have every right and responsibility as Christian citizens to expect that our government and our nation will do that

which honors God. It is up to us to hold them accountable. We should praise them when they succeed and reprimand them when they fail. That's the role of the church—and it's the role of a Christian. And it's one more reason why I am proud of our Christian Reformed Church.

We are not a denomination that leaves our faith to be worked out solely between individuals and God. Our faith is larger than our own little worlds. Together, as a denomination, we

have the capacity to speak collectively into governmental issues through entities like the Centre for Public Dialogue or the Office of Social Justice and through the ecumenical partnerships we maintain on a national scale.

At a personal level, being a good citizen means that we are concerned for what Norman Wirzba called "the restoration of all of life to something approaching God's original and sovereign intention. To loosen the grip of injustice and oppression so that [people] can be freed to live out the peace, joy, and delight that marked the first Sabbath sunrise" (*Living the Sabbath*, p. 120). That type of citizenship can be exercised individually

toward neighbors, friends, and family members. It can be shown as a small group within your church or neighborhood. It can be demonstrated as a local church in your town or city.

When we each take responsibility for this type of citizenship, the church is blessed, and God becomes known as an agent of change in the place where we reside. That's something to cheer about. ■

To join a conversation about how Canadian CRC members are commemorating Canada 150, visit [network.crcna.org/ministry-canada](http://network.crcna.org/ministry-canada).



reflect • celebrate • inspire

July 1 marks the 150th birthday of the Canadian confederation.



Darren Roorda is director of Canadian Ministries.

You add.  
God multiplies.

Rachel, 11, shows off her drawings of *Kids Corner* characters.



## Rachel Loves Jesus

**R**achel, 11, lives in Edmonton, Alta., and describes herself as “artsy and creative.” But more important, she says, “I love Jesus very much.”

About a year ago, Rachel and her 9-year-old brother, Noah, discovered the radio program *Kids Corner* produced by ReFrame Media, the English-language outreach of Back to God Ministries International.

They originally came across the audio drama on the radio but now access all the episodes on *kidscorner.net*.

“I like that the characters are always getting into ridiculous situations, like when Liz thought Granny’s tractor was a UFO,” said Rachel.

“My favorite characters are Julia and Lucille because they are nice and always try to do the right thing.”

Using lizard-like characters from the town of Terrene, *Kids Corner* adventures present a Christ-focused message to kids and their families.

The entertaining stories teach the wisdom and truth of God through issues and challenges that affect a child’s life. The goal is to help children ages 6-12 develop an interest in the Bible and become lifelong followers of Jesus.

“Rachel and Noah enjoy *Kids Corner* very much,” commented Rachel’s mother, Rebekah. “These stories teach good lessons and biblical values and open up great discussion.”

Rachel was so inspired by the program she submitted a story idea to *Kids Corner* producer Ron Vandenburg. He was especially touched by Rachel’s concern for one of the *Kids Corner* characters, Chamy, who has not yet given her life to Christ. “I have friends who aren’t Christians,” Rachel explained.

Rebekah added, “As parents who are striving to provide good quality stories and teaching for our children, we thank you for making these stories.” ■

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

## Compost and Cucumbers Bring Increase

**M**ahir (name has been changed) worked hard, picking up any job he could. Often he worked as seasonal help on farms near his village in Bangladesh—anything to try to make ends meet for his family.

Meanwhile, Mahir’s wife joined a local women’s group led by World Renew and its partner. Through the group, she learned about health, ways to generate income, and saving. She saw value in what she was learning and encouraged her husband to join the men’s group.

In the men’s group, Mahir received training to help him improve his agricultural skills. What he learned changed his outlook on farming and motivated him to start his own farm.

On his own plot of land, Mahir put to use what he learned about vegetables and compost. Now in addition to cultivating rice, he is growing a variety of fruits and vegetables, including pumpkins, okra, radishes, papayas, and cucumbers.

Mahir has especially spent time and money producing cucumbers. Each year, this crop has required a large amount of fertilizers, fungicides, and pesticides. This year, Mahir decided to try using compost as he learned in his training.

Using the compost helped Mahir decrease his production costs. When he sold the cucumbers at the market, he was thrilled to make a larger profit.

“Not only have I done well with cucumber, but through the group I have learned many other skills. My wife has learned about seed saving, and she inspires me to save seeds. In fact we now sell seeds to our neighbors,” said Mahir.

—Taylor Smith,  
*World Renew*



Mahir shows off one of his crops.

## The Holy Risk of Renewing Churches

“... I have placed before you an open door. ... I know that you are tired but you have been faithful” (Rev. 3:8).

Pastor Kris Vos used this paraphrase from Revelation 3, which gives instructions to the church at Philadelphia, as his theme for pastoral encouragement at a recent Church Renewal Lab gathering at Calvin Seminary.

Renewal teams of pastors and lay leaders from 19 churches gathered in the seminary chapel on a Saturday morning to worship and refuel before working with coaches in groups addressing such ministry responsibilities as worship, outreach, children, and youth.

Speaking to a packed chapel of men and women who are committed and determined to help their churches renew themselves around God’s mission, Vos



Kris Vos talks to church planters at Calvin Seminary.

acknowledged many had stood before God’s open door of calling.

“You have stared failure in the face and said, ‘I would rather die advancing the kingdom than surrender to a lukewarm existence.’”

Vos told his own story of leaving a thriving multi-site church in Indiana that he had planted and led for 20 years, to pastor a dying church in Florida whose only hope was a relaunch.

He said God had his grip on him in a way that certainly got his attention, but he knew that he needed to walk through the door that led to Florida.

Vos told his listeners that he knows from experience that renewing or relaunching a church is very hard work.

Two years into his Florida call, Vos gave credit to God’s blessings that he and his team have seen. God has already accomplished much at Sunlight Community Church in Lake Worth, Fla., he noted. But what remains to be done can feel daunting.

Vos wrapped up his message by describing steps he and others have taken when walking through doors of big challenges.

It begins with the call and is quickly followed by abject terror, tamed by the decision to obey, he said.

Then major problems are encountered, followed by more terror and second thoughts. His audience laughed knowingly when Vos noted that these steps can be repeated several times.

But heads started nodding when Vos underscored that deeper faith emerges and hope is renewed when you stay the course of your call and give it all you’ve got. ■

—Jinny De Jong, Calvin Seminary

## Taking a Holiday from Church

Becky grew up in a “Bible-thumping home,” waking up on Sundays “with a sense of doom.”

Not only was her view of Sundays unappealing, so was her view of God.

“God was punitive and controlling,” Becky recalled. “God only lived in the pages of the Bible. I rarely ever saw him in my everyday life.”

So she decided to take a holiday from church. Despite feeling a small measure of relief, she experienced an underlying sense of loss.

During this dreary season of longing she learned of New Hope Hillside in Calgary, Alta., through a relative



Becky found a community of believers that welcomed her in.

who had attended the church.

“From the first moment, I felt like I had come home,” said Becky. “No pretensions, expectations, or dress codes. Just an open invitation.”

The underlying theme that God is everywhere changed Becky’s outlook on life.

Now New Hope Hillside pastor Rich Braaksma brings the experience he gained as

a church planter to his new position as Western Canada Regional Leader with Home Missions.

Among the things Becky remembers about those first Sundays at New Hope Hillside were the stories.

“I was reintroduced to old, well-known Bible stories and ideas that became new and deeply personal for me. I found time and again that I was experiencing wonder from things I had grown tired of.”

“I know God has always loved me, but now I find it easier to love him back.”

—Brooke Fry, Christian Reformed Home Missions

## Guatemalan Artists Are Focus of Research

In the past three years, Peter (Sunshine) Cahill has returned four times to Guatemala, where he lived for most of his life, to research the ceramic work of the Q'eqchi' people in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala.

The first time he made the trip was as an undergraduate studying art at Calvin College.

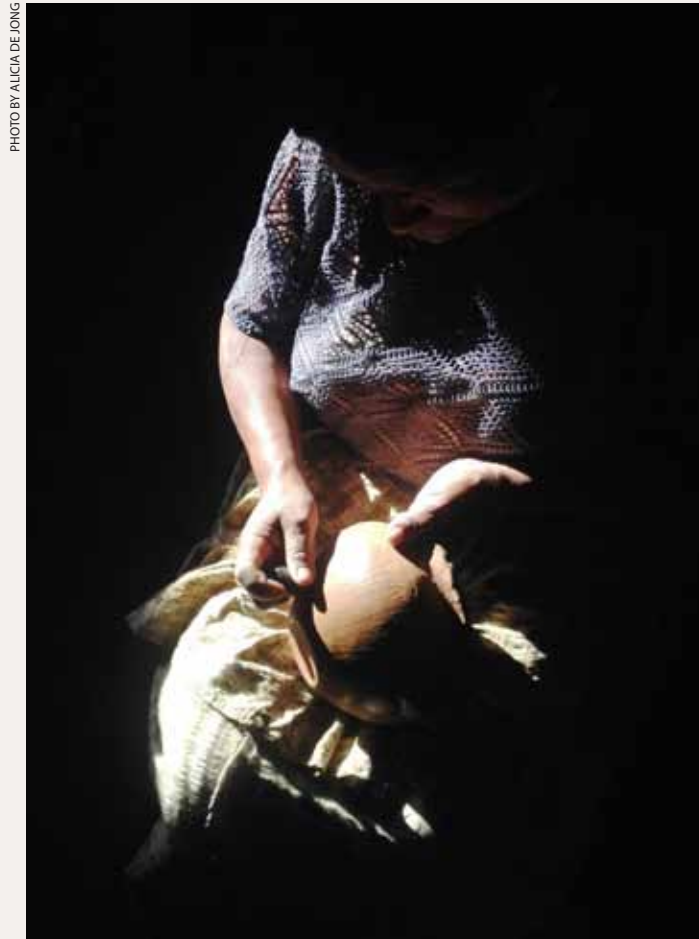
After graduating in 2016, Cahill carried this project into his postgraduate life, most recently to the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA), where he presented his research findings in a lecture titled "Q'eqchi' Pak'ok: Village Potters in Guatemalan Highlands."



**Peter Cahill**

In trips between 2014 to 2016, Cahill visited potters at their homes in Alta Verapaz or at the village school. All conversations were in Q'eqchi'.

A majority of the artists with whom Cahill connected were women of the Q'eqchi' ethnic group or a few other ethnicities.



**A Guatemalan potter at work.**

To understand the practice of Q'eqchi' ceramic art, he looked for answers pertaining not only to the technical aspects but also the motivations.

His presentation at NCECA was well attended, said Calvin art professor Anna Greidanus, Cahill's former professor who also attended the conference.

Cahill highlighted in his lecture the careers of three women: Elvire Bol, Leonicia Yoj, and Dolores Aisg, each from a different subregion, and each of whom was working to

overcome her own set of challenges through ceramic art.

Cahill plans to continue working on this project and remain invested in the field.

"Since graduating, I've been following wherever the path goes—mostly on my own accord, but with the advice of a few friends, mentors, and other wise individuals," Cahill said. ■

—Jacquelyn Hubbard,  
Calvin College

## SHORT TAKES



### CRC Names New Youth Ministry Leader

Ron deVries, who began his career as a businessman and has been involved in youth ministry with the Christian Reformed Church for more than 20 years, has been named to serve as the first-ever denominational youth ministry leader.

In his new role, deVries will be working as part of Faith Formation Ministries (FFM) to help classes, congregations, and church members find ways to reach young people.

He and others, said deVries, will be "creating a gracious space for and in youth ministry within the CRC, where ministry leaders can experiment, be recognized, be encouraged, and be supported in their work in youth ministry." ■

—Chris Meehan,  
CRC Communications

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

# Get Outside

Unless you live somewhere warm, you've waited all winter for the weather to be nice. Summer vacation is right around the corner, so get out there and enjoy God's beautiful creation! Feel the warm

sun on your face and the wind in your hair. Listen to the birds singing. Watch for animals. And have fun with your friends and family! Here are some great things to do outside this summer.

## Breakfast Picnic

Have a breakfast picnic in your pajamas! Put a blanket on your lawn or porch. Bring your breakfast outside and eat it while you watch the world wake up.

Here are some yummy breakfast ideas:

- **Breakfast burritos:** Wrap scrambled eggs and shredded cheese in a tortilla.
- **Yogurt parfait:** Put about an inch (3 cm) of yogurt in the bottom of a glass. Then add an inch of fruit, then an inch of granola. Repeat all the layers one more time. Top it off with fruit.
- **Breakfast banana pops:** Peel a banana and cut it in half. Push a popsicle stick into the bottom of one banana half. Then roll the banana in granola, crushed cereal, coconut, or other fun toppings.



## Shadow Shapes

On a sunny day, put a large piece of white paper on an outdoor table. Put some things with interesting shapes on the paper. You can use toys, branches, flowers in a vase, or other things. Move them around until the shadows fall where you want them. Then trace the shadows that you see.



## Dino Zoo

Take some plastic dinosaurs or animals outside. Build a zoo for them out of sticks and stones. Make sure they have food to eat, water to drink, shade to keep them cool, and fun things to do. And don't forget to separate the meat-eaters from the plant-eaters!



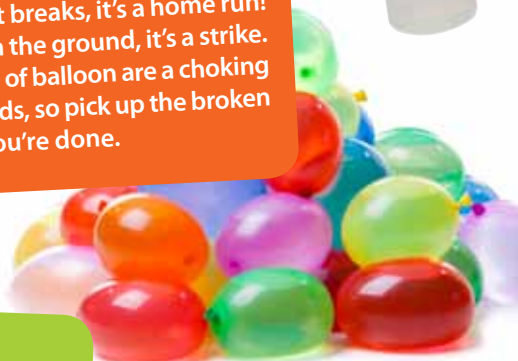
ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY PHOTOS BY WIKIMEDIA

## Outdoor Games

**Kick the Can:** This is a WAY more fun version of hide and seek. All you need is a big empty can, like a paint can, and a large outdoor playing area. One player guards the can while the rest try to kick it over when that person isn't looking. You can find the rules at [fungameskidsplay.com/kickthecangame.htm](http://fungameskidsplay.com/kickthecangame.htm).

**Spray Bottle Tag:** Freeze tag is more fun with water! Give everyone a spray bottle filled with water (you can buy them at a dollar store). Choose someone to be "It." If that person sprays someone, the person who got sprayed has to freeze. The other players can unfreeze the person by spraying them again. If the person who is "It" freezes everyone, the game is over.

**Water Balloon Baseball:** Fill a bunch of balloons with water until they're the size of a baseball. Tie them closed. Then have batting practice. If you hit the water balloon and it breaks, it's a home run! If you miss and it breaks on the ground, it's a strike. **Safety note:** Broken pieces of balloon are a choking hazard for pets and little kids, so pick up the broken pieces of balloon when you're done.



## Sidewalk Superheroes

Draw buildings, clouds, and a cape like this on your driveway or sidewalk with chalk. Then lie down on the ground right below the cape. Ask an adult to stand on a ladder or look out a window and take your picture from above. You'll look like you're flying!

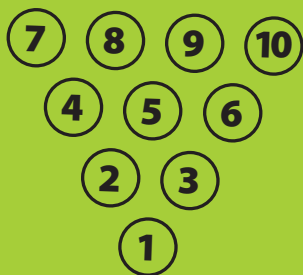
You can also try drawing butterfly wings instead of a superhero cape. Or draw a tight-rope and make it look like you're walking on it. The possibilities are endless! Grab an adult and search "sidewalk chalk pictures" on Pinterest or Google to find lots of great ideas.

## Night Bowling

Did you ever bowl at night? Try it! Here's what you need:

- 10 plastic water bottles with caps
- 10 glow sticks from the dollar store
- A rubber ball (a small basketball works great)

Fill the bottles with water. Put one glow stick in each bottle. Put the caps on the bottles. Then set the bottles up in a triangle shape like this:

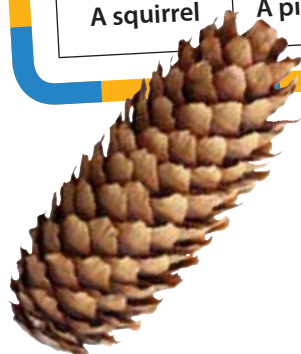


Take turns trying to knock all the bottles down by rolling a ball at them, just like in real bowling. If you don't have glow sticks, you can bowl in the daytime without them.

## Nature Bingo

Go on a hike in the woods or visit a park to look for these things. Mark your finds off on this chart. If you're the first person to get five in a row (either up and down, sideways, or diagonally), yell "Bingo!"—you win!

Something rough	Moss	A Y-shaped twig	An acorn	Spiderweb
A flying bug	A piece of bark	Pine needles	A mushroom (don't touch)	A dead tree
A worm	Water	<b>FREE</b>	A flower	Something brown
Something red	A smooth stone	A bird	A crawling bug	A leaf with a hole in it
A squirrel	A pinecone	Ants	Something prickly	A seed



**Sandy Swartzentruber** works for Faith Formation Ministries and attends Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. She loves reading outside in the summertime.



↓

# Pentecost EYES

**W**E OFTEN ASSOCIATE the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost with the images in Acts 2: violent winds, tongues of fire, and people speaking in tongues. I'd like to add one more image to that list: good eyes. Let me explain.

### **Pentecost and Thanksgiving**

In the Old Testament, Pentecost is known as "The Feast of Weeks," or *Shavuot* in Hebrew. It is one of the major festivals God instituted to demonstrate his goodness and generosity to his people. Observed each year 50 days (seven weeks) after Passover, it highlighted the salvific event that set God's people free from their enslavement to Egypt. On Pentecost, the Jews were given the Torah and became a people committed to serv-

ing God. Pentecost also marked the all-important and jubilant wheat harvest in the land of Israel. Pilgrims would travel to the temple in Jerusalem; there joyful crowds would congregate, bringing their offerings of wheat to the temple and celebrating the good harvest God had given.

### **Pentecost and Generosity to the Poor**

In Leviticus 23, God gave specific instructions regarding offerings to God of wheat, firstfruits, and sacrifices on Pentecost. But what I find unusual and interesting is that God adds an obscure commandment as to how his people must celebrate Pentecost: "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 23:22).



# FOR THE LONGEST TIME, JESUS' TEACHING ON MONEY DID NOT MAKE SENSE TO ME— AT LEAST, NOT ENTIRELY.

Rabbis would teach that true thankfulness to God was best shown by giving to people in the village who were marginalized. So when the grain was harvested, the corners of the field were left standing to be gleaned by people who were hungry. We do not know how widely this command was actually practiced in the Old Testament; evidence suggests that many Jews took a legalistic approach in working it out. According to teacher and biblical historian Ray Vander Laan, some Jews would come to the rabbis and ask just how big the corners of their harvesting fields should be!

## Jesus' Sermon Revisited

Jesus seemed to know what was going through these folks' minds. In Matthew 6, he taught first-century Jews how they should be grateful to God and look after the poor and the aliens in their midst.

In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, in good Reformed style, makes three points. First, in verses 19 to 21, he talks about how we are to regard money and possessions. Jesus is stating what we already know: that money has power over us; we worship it with our hearts. And in his third point (v. 24), he challenges us to choose either God or money as the ultimate object of our worship. But it's Jesus' second sermon point that especially caught my attention: "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are not good your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (vv. 22-23). Why was he talking about the eye here? This is where his sermon became confusing to me.

For the longest time, Jesus' teaching on money did not make sense to me—at least, not entirely.

Nonetheless, what became obvious to me was that Jesus was using a literary technique called "chiasm." One way of understanding it is something like this: Imagine there are three movements in a story, as in A-B-C. If "A" and "C" mirror each other, then "B" is the key that unlocks the meaning of "A" and "C." In this case, the meaning of verses 22-23 in Jesus' sermon is pivotal for understanding his teaching on God and money. Those verses about "good eyes" are the key!

## Good Eyes

Then, back in 2004, I visited Israel with Ray VanderLaan on a study tour, and the penny dropped. He explained that the phrase "your eyes are good" is a Jewish slang term describing someone who is generous toward the poor. In the first century, if you left large corners of the field unharvested for people who were poor, or foreigners, or orphans or widows, your

neighbors would say of you, "His eyes are good!"

Back to Jesus' sermon. Once you and I experience divine generosity, that is to say, once we realize that Jesus became

poor so that we may become rich, then we are able to overcome the power of money and choose to serve God as the object of worship in our hearts. We will know this transformation is taking place when we are able to show generosity to the poor.

And then, after the Day of Pentecost, it happened.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need (Acts 2:42-45).

The promise of Shavuot is now fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He has kindled the fire of his Holy Spirit in the hearts of his disciples to continue the joy and generosity of Pentecost. The followers of Jesus Christ were not only able and willing to leave the corners of their fields unharvested, but they sold the entire fields for the widows, orphans, and the aliens among them.

## Pentecost Today

The joy and celebration of the harvest continues to this day. We too should sing with tongues of fire and dance in the violent winds because the Holy Spirit has been given to us. We should be filled with the Holy Spirit and live out Acts 2 in our communities, schools, workplaces, and various spheres of influence.

Now that the Holy Spirit is residing in us, shouldn't we practice hospitality by inviting our neighbors for coffee and dessert and rediscover the art of neighboring? For hospitable people are generous with their space. Shouldn't we volunteer at organizations that promote the shalom of God, so that we may bring about his justice and compassion in our cities and neighborhoods? For hospitable people are generous with their time. Shouldn't we joyfully and sacrificially practice the celebration of the tithe? For hospitable people are generous with their money.

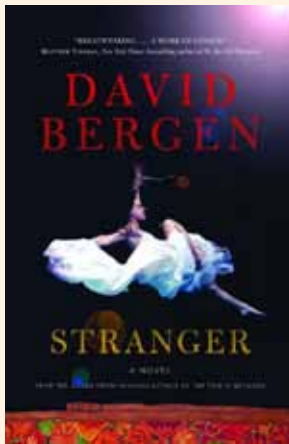
The real question is: "Will your friends and neighbors say about you, "She's got good eyes"?" ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



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

## 15 Fun and Fascinating Summer Reads



### Stranger

by David Bergen

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Set in a not-too-distant future, *Stranger* is the tale of Iso, a young woman employed at a Guatemalan fertility clinic situated on the shores of a peaceful mountain lake where barren women from the U.S. dip in the hopes of being able to conceive. When her own baby is taken from her at birth, Iso embarks on a life-and-death journey to find her

child. The novel subtly examines consumer culture, poverty, and illegal immigration. Plot-driven and well-paced, this is an unsettling tale with a satisfying conclusion. (HarperCollins Canada)

### Piecing Me Together

by Renée Watson

reviewed by Kristy Quist

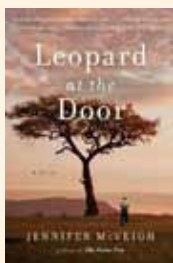
Jade attends an affluent, private, mostly white high school. She's an excellent student and a talented collage artist. She also happens to be African American and lives in a low-income neighborhood. Grateful for opportunities, she is nevertheless tired of being viewed as a stereotype, a project, while everyone else assumes they know what she needs. It's time to speak for herself. This insightful and moving young adult novel reminds readers to see all people as wholly individual. (Bloomsbury)



### Leopard at the Door

by Jennifer McVeigh

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



In 1952, after six years of exile in England, 18-year-old Rachel returns to her childhood home in Kenya hoping to recover memories of her mother and reestablish a bond with her distant father. As tensions proliferate on both the domestic and political fronts, she is drawn into a secret relationship. McVeigh's historical novel poignantly exposes the injustice and oppression that British colonial powers inflicted on Kenyans. It also reveals the lengths to which desperate people will go as they fight for their rightful freedom. (G.B. Putnam's Sons)

**MORE REVIEWS  
ONLINE**



### Unscripted: The Unpredictable Moments That Make Life Extraordinary

by Ernie Johnson Jr.

reviewed by Paul Delger

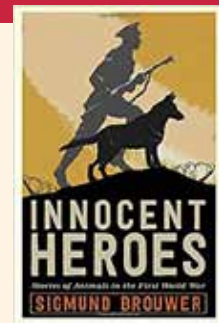
Ernie Johnson Jr. is a well-known and talented sportscaster, but that role doesn't define his life. This encouraging and heartwarming autobiography delves into the places outside the public eye, centering on his roles as husband, father, cancer survivor, and man of faith. Writing with grace and humility, Johnson introduces the term "black-berry moments" to refer to unexpected, extraordinary moments. He opens up about challenging circumstances he has faced and fills the book with inspiring stories. (Baker)

### Short

by Holly Goldberg Sloan

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Julia Marks is extremely short compared to other children in her middle school. She decides to boycott the word *short*. But when her mother enrolls her in a local production of *The Wizard of Oz*, and she is cast as a Munchkin, her perspective on being short begins to change. This gentle, somewhat eccentric, and humorous middle school novel relates the griefs, struggles, insights, and triumphs of a pint-sized girl with a big heart and exciting dreams for her future. (Dial)

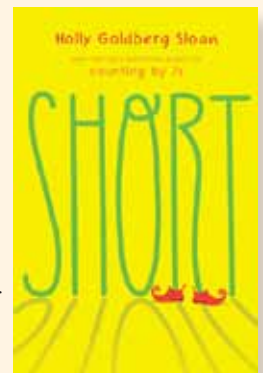


### Innocent Heroes: Stories of Animals in the First World War

by Sigmund Brouwer

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In World War I, three Canadian soldiers bond as they face terrible hardships. As their platoon prepares to attack Vimy Ridge, they are assisted by various animals, including a cat, a carrier pigeon, and a mule. Each story is based on actual animals who performed heroically; some even received medals. In this juvenile novel Brouwer weaves together fact and fiction, celebrating the contribution of Canada's First Nations' soldiers to the war effort while exposing and lamenting the unjust ways these soldiers were treated after the war. Ages 8 and up. (Tundra)



## The Turning Aside: The Kingdom Poets Book of Contemporary Christian Poetry

by D.S. Martin, editor

reviewed by Adele Gallogly



D.S. Martin curates a blog called “The Kingdom Poets,” where he shares weekly the work of Christian poets. For this anthology, he narrowed the field to poetry written in English by poets who were alive in January 2000. The poets come from various denominational backgrounds; some are widely regarded as masters while others are newer to the fold.

Their work varies in style and form, which makes this a vibrant collection of very different voices. These skilled poets are boldly and imaginatively seeking God’s face, creating an unforgettable feast of words made flesh. (Cascade Books).



## Over and Under the Pond

by Kate Messner

reviewed by Gwen Marra

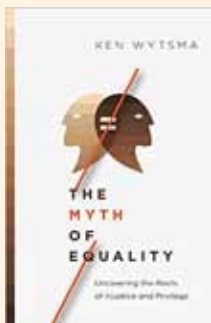
Need an idea for summer fun? This book takes the reader on a field trip above and below the surface of a pond, examining and exploring this ecosystem using words and illustrations. Visit ospreys and mink,

caddisfly larvae and painted turtles in their natural habitat as a mother and child spend a day rowing, watching, and learning on the pond. The author includes notes about the animals and resources for further exploration. Ages 4 and up. (Chronicle)

## The Myth of Equality: Uncovering the Roots of Injustice and Privilege

by Ken Wytsma

reviewed by Reginald Smith



Talking about white privilege in our circles can lead to either polarization or avoidance of the elephants of injustice and history in the room. Along comes Ken Wytsma, a college president well-versed in the history of race in the U.S. who has taken seriously the burden to speak to Anglos about

power and privilege with pastoral honesty and tact. Wytsma uses personal stories of failure in his own life and from history as mirrors to invite white brothers and sisters to see how white privilege and power has worked in American life. (IVP)

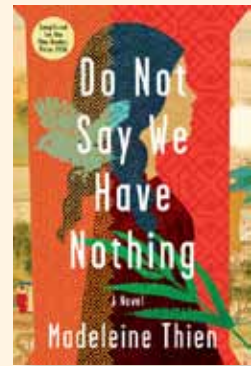


## Triangle

by Mac Barnett

reviewed by Gwen Marra

The book’s title is *Triangle*, but it is square in shape. A coincidence? I think not! Author Barnett is teasing the reader, pulling you in to see if you can guess the sneaky trick. Is the triangle being sneaky or is it the square? And who actually wins this battle between the shapes? You will have to read the book to find out. This book will keep children in the early elementary years engaged and guessing. Ages 5 and up. (Candlewick Press)



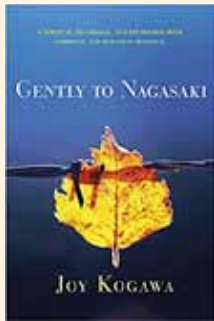
## Do Not Say We Have Nothing

by Madeleine Thien

reviewed by Jim Romahn

This excellent novel about a family of talented musicians traces recent Chinese history and politics from the occupation by Japan through Mao Tse-Tung’s revolutionary rule to the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square massacre. The narrators vary from grandparents to their grandchildren, each adding richness. Throughout, music and a secret “book of records” tie everything together. (W.W. Norton)





## Gently to Nagasaki: A Spiritual Pilgrimage

by Joy Kogawa  
reviewed by Jenny deGroot

With humility and longing for understanding within a Christian framework, Kogawa gently unpacks her lifelong struggle to make sense of the internment of Canadians of Japanese descent, the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Japanese denial of atrocities perpetrated in China. Equally haunting, Kogawa spends much of her adult life trying to make sense of a dark family secret. She yearns for the forgiveness and reconciliation that needs to be lived out among the nations and within her own family. Her painful story is filled with the redemptive; this is a memoir to be pondered. (Caitlin Press)

## Writing to Save a Life: The Louis Till File

by John Edgar Wideman  
reviewed by Phil Christman

When a black person is killed in America, you can't trust the official story. This is both a truism and—for 13 percent of the country—a conundrum that shapes lives and steals sleep. The novelist John Edgar Wideman's writing style, which blends fact and fiction and conjecture and what-might-have-been in

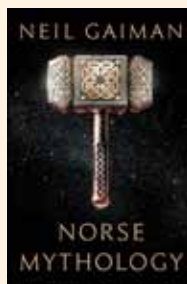
long, associative, agrammatical riffs, perfectly captures this ambient anxiety. In this book he uses it to examine the story of Emmett Till's father Louis, a ne'er-do-well and Army private whose 1945 court-martial and subsequent hanging leave unanswered questions. (Scribner)

## Midnight Blue

by Simone van der Vlugt, translated by Jenny Watson  
reviewed by Adele Gallogly



This historical novel set in the Dutch Golden Age follows Catrin, a driven and talented young widow desperate for a fresh start. While Catrin's new life is complicated by secrets from her past and possible romance, her artistic pursuits land her a role in the creation of Delft Blue pottery. This novel takes several melodramatic turns, adding suspense to the story. The author artfully handles the true-to-life tragedy of the Black Death and probes the difficult religious conversations often evoked by suffering. While not wholly realistic, *Midnight Blue* is highly readable. It captures the excitement, energy, and tension of a culturally vibrant period. (Harper Collins)



## Norse Mythology

by Neil Gaiman  
reviewed by Otto Selles

In this collection, master storyteller Neil Gaiman provides an elegant retelling of tales tied to Norse gods. Gaiman begins with a series of chapters that explain the nature and origins of these ambiguous gods. Readers will find many parallels to Christianity. For example, a terrible serpent lives in the bottom of the sea and Thor—son of the all-father—is determined to crush its head. Through Loki, the tales also examine the seductive, capricious, and destructive sides of evil. While many of the myths encapsulate nuggets of wisdom, many more offer pure amusement worthy of a campfire. Parents be aware, some stories often drift into PG-13 territory, especially when Loki gets involved. (W.W. Norton and Company)

## Still need more? Check thebanner.org for full reviews of these and other books:



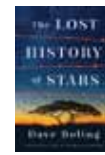
*Evensong* by Kate Southwood: A dying woman comes to grips with the way her prideful, bullying husband affected her children and her life. For fans of Elizabeth Strout. (W.W. Norton)



*The Boy Who Loved Too Much* by Jennifer Latson: Young Eli has Williams syndrome, which makes him love complete strangers; Latson studies the syndrome, the parenting challenges it presents, and the way Western society responds to "too much" affection. (Simon & Schuster)



*The Great Wall of China and the Salton Sea* by Russell Rathbun: Irreverent ruminations on human ambition. For fans of Sarah Vowell. (Eerdmans)



*The Lost History of Stars* by Dave Boling: A beautifully written novel about the little-known suffering of Boer women and children held in camps during the Boer War in South Africa. (Algonquin)



*Of Stillness and Storm* by Michèle Phoenix: A bittersweet novel about a missionary family in crisis. (Thomas Nelson)

# Sola Gratia

Who is this  
Abraham guy,  
anyway?

**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*).

**OUR FAMILY HAS QUITE THE COLLECTION** of Bible storybooks, gifts from loved ones who pray for our son's faith formation. Most of the storybooks are very good, and we enjoy working our way through the stack at bedtime. At times, though, I find myself rephrasing a line or two as I read the book aloud. I judge that some important detail has been lost trying to craft the story for children.

I struggle to find the right words, and perhaps these books do too since the Bible itself does not always read like a children's book. Take Genesis 12 for example: the chapter starts with God speaking to Abra(ha)m. It feels like we are jumping into the middle of a conversation, like we accidentally skipped a page in the storybook. God commands Abraham to leave everything and go to the land God will show him. Then God bestows on him an extravagant blessing that extends to all peoples on earth (Gen 12:1-3). But who is this Abraham guy, anyway? Why has God chosen him? He seems to be just another name in

chapter 11. What makes Abraham so special that he should be the one through whom all nations will be blessed? It seems like some important detail was left out and we need to supply it.

Some storybooks do just that with Genesis 12. Before God says anything, the narrator introduces us to Abraham. We might get details like: Abraham is a good man, or Abraham believes in God. Sounds harmless, right? This may be a nice way to set up the story, but when we read Genesis 12 like this we are in danger of missing what is so profound: Scripture never says why God chooses Abraham. There is no lost detail.

Genesis 12 helps us reflect on the principle of *sola gratia*, grace alone. Abraham receives undeserved favor. We are not told what distinguishes him from others members of his family. We know nothing about his character or belief. The story of Abraham does not begin with Abraham; it begins with God. God speaks first. God reveals his overwhelming desire to bless. To supply extra details would make the story less wonderful.

*Sola gratia* focuses our attention on what God does instead of what we do—God's big story and not our details. In particular, *sola gratia* refers to the Reformation emphasis on the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ; no one is able to earn or merit salvation. Not even Abraham deserved God's favor, even though

it is tempting to justify Abraham's election as we read the story of his life.

Maybe, like me, you have caught yourself misreading your own story, living as if you can supply your own lost details of faithfulness and righteousness. For us, confessing *sola gratia* means facing the hard truth that these details do not save us. In his new book, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, Kevin Vanhoozer says, "Grace contradicts every system of religion precisely because God's free mercy cannot be predicted, calculated, or manipulated. Grace is especially troublesome for control freaks—sinners curved in on themselves, bent on securing their own existence and status" (p. 40).

Instead of getting lost in self-examination, God invites us to look up and see our place in the one grand story revealed in Scripture. This is ultimately a story not about us, but about God and God's gracious initiative—a grace displayed most clearly in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The stories of our lives do not need details like "he was a good person" or "she believed in God"; the main theme is always God's amazing grace. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



**Sarah Schreiber** is assistant professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary and an associate pastor at Grace CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

# FAQs

## Relationships

**Q** Does Jesus still heal today? In spite of my crying out to God for healing of my severe anxiety and panic disorder, nothing changes.

**A** Yes. As we Christians seek to represent Jesus in answer to his call to follow him and to be his healing presence in the world in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, God provides for us and heals our diseases in four different ways:

1. God has created our bodies with the ability to heal themselves in many ways. Notice how our immune system fights off infection and watch how a cut on a finger heals, leaving only a scar.

2. God has given herbal and pharmaceutical healing agents, which are imbedded in plants and minerals, as well as many healing arts, both Eastern and Western.

3. Christians are exhorted to share each other's burdens and to pray for each other. In the sharing and praying, God lightens our burdens. As we lift them up to Christ together, Jesus receives them from us, and we experience release and healing. Christians gifted and trained in healing prayer often refer to this as "inner healing" or "healing of memories" or "transformation prayer ministry." Your experience of panic may respond well to such prayer healing.

4. The Holy Spirit, our Counselor, knows what we need. Jesus was emphatic when he said he would not leave us (his followers) as orphans. God is our parent. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, to whom we are to relate as children, God washes away our sin and heals our diseases as he sees fit (like a parent). Trusting the Holy Spirit and learning to listen to his counsel gives us direction and a path to follow, either toward healing or acceptance of a "thorn," knowing God's grace is sufficient (cf. 2 Cor. 12).

By all means, explore one or all of God's healing graces outlined above, and know as well as believe that God, as your Father, desires to give good gifts of healing to all in Jesus' name.

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

Love for others should shape why, when, and how we speak unpleasant truths.

## Ethics

**Q** Isn't telling people they are sinners in need of repentance an act of love? We need to speak the truth, not shirk the truth, in love (Eph. 4:15a).

**A** Before pointing out other people's sins we need to first consider our own sins, lest we succumb to hypocrisy. Then we need to consider our motivations for doing so, and how, when, and with whom. Anonymously over the Internet, for instance, is not the right time and place.

What does it mean to speak the truth in love? If we take 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 as the apostle Paul's definition of love, then we can expand it this way: speak the truth patiently, kindly, and without ill will, such as envy, pride, or boastfulness. Do not speak rudely, out of self-interest, out of anger, or out of keeping score. Speak the truth by focusing on the truth, not by delighting in people's misery or bringing evil on them. Speak the truth to protect, to encourage trust, to give hope, and to help people persevere.

Consider also with whom and when. Jesus, for example, dealt very differently with the rabbi Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman (John 3 and 4). He was more blunt and direct with Nicodemus. But Jesus only gently pointed out the woman's sin after she brought up the subject herself. If Jesus communicated differently with people in different stations of life, we would be wise to emulate that.

Love for others, therefore, should shape why, when, and how we speak unpleasant truths. Ultimately, our goal is to help all grow into Christ-likeness (Eph. 4:15b).

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

## Church/Doctrine

**Q** How do I discern whether God is calling me to be an elder? I've been nominated to serve as elder for the first time, and I'm feeling unsure.

**A** "For the first time," you write, and that helps me to start answering the question. Those who have served before have a perfectly good idea about what is involved in the task and likely have overcome any initial anxiety. Their process of discernment includes thoughts about whether they can afford the time, serve effectively at this junction in the church's journey, and feel somewhat positively about the challenge.

For first-timers, I believe, the process is much more complex. Now that the council has nominated you, you already know that there's a call. But it's an external one, and your struggle is to determine whether it's also internally confirmed. You will need to dwell on the "job description" found in Article 25b of the Church Order and consult the denominational website, choosing just two or three items from the vast amounts of materials written (Louis Tamminga's *The Elder's Handbook*, say, or one of the webinars for elders' training). Having done that, you will need to assess your own God-given talents. Not just by yourself but in the context of your community. Do relatives, friends, and members you are close to believe you have the required gifts? Do you need to hear more from the council about how it is they believe that? Do you find encouragement and affirmation in what they say? Sometimes I wish communities would do this before nominees are decided upon.

At any rate, your final decision should be bathed in prayer. Ultimately it's between you and God. Just decide—and never second-guess!

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

# ADS

**Deadlines:** July/August issue is 6/13/17; Sept. issue is 8/8/17. 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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## 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.

### Admitted into the Ministry

Candidate **JESSE WALHOF** was examined by Classis Heartland at its March 4, 2017 meeting. Having sustained his examination, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies, he was ordained March 26, 2017, at Living Water Community CRC in Sheldon, Iowa. May the Lord richly bless his ministry. Rev. Robert Drenten, S. C.

### Retirement



**PASTOR BERT SLOFSTRA RETIRES**  
Gateway Community CRC in Abbotsford, BC wishes to congratulate Pastor Bert Slofstra, together with his wife Diane, as they celebrate his retirement in June 2017. Our congregation gives thanks to God for 27 years of faithful service and ministry

with us, as well as 6 years in Georgetown, ON and 4 years in Lucknow, ON, along with serving on Synod, the Board of Trustees, Abbotsford Christian Leaders Network and Classis BCSE. If you would like to send pictures, stories &/or words of encouragement, please send to: [office@gatewaycra.org](mailto:office@gatewaycra.org). A special worship service will be held June 18, 2017 at 10:00am at Gateway Community CRC in recognition of this momentous occasion. (2884 Gladys Ave, Abbotsford, BC, V2S 3Y2) We ask you to join us in praying for them both as they transition into this new phase of life and ministry!

**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.

## Congregational

### Church's 50th Anniversary

**GENEVA CAMPUS CHURCH** in Madison, Wisconsin will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary the weekend of July 21-23, 2017. Information and a registration form for the weekend can be found at <http://genevacampuschurch.org/about/anniversary/>

## Birthdays

### 95th Birthday

**JOHN KOOY** of 301 Homestead Blvd apt 330, Lynden WA 98264 celebrates his 95th birthday on July 2 with children Wayne, Beatrice, Brenda, Greg, Garth, Ted and spouses, 13 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren.

**EVELYN (Dykema) STEGINK** will celebrate her 95th birthday on June 12. Greetings may be sent to 2585 S. Columbine, Denver, CO 80210. She is the mother of LeRoy (Anjean), Keith (Margaret), Calvin (Carol), David (Dale – deceased), Karl, Susan (deceased), and Carol (Ernie – deceased). She has 15 grandchildren and 32 great-grandchildren. "She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. – Proverbs 31:26."

### 90th Birthday

**DR. DERKE BERGSMAS** will be celebrating 90 years of God's rich blessings on August 29. Praising God with him are his wife Doris, children Deb & Dan VanProoyen, Derk & Cheryl Bergsma, Diann Otten and Danette & Rob Buikema, 13 grandchildren, 10 greats. We are thankful for his

love, faithful life & ministry, especially his work at Trinity Christian College and Westminster Seminar. Derke & Doris live at Park Place of Elmhurst, Unit 2313, 1050 Euclid Ave, Elmhurst, IL 60126.

**GERTRUDE KOOIMA TAZELAAR**, 2000 St. Regis Dr. 4G, Lombard, IL 60148 will celebrate her 90th Birthday, July 14. We, her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, give thanks to God for her loving, servant spirit. Please join us in celebration by sending a card or letter. Happy Birthday Mom, Grandma, Great-grandma!

**MARION BOUMA TIEMEYER** will celebrate her 90th birthday on June 3. Please celebrate life in Christ with her by sending cards and letters to 5947 146th Ave, Holland, MI 49423

**AL VANDENBOSCH**, with gratitude to God, will celebrate his 90th birthday on June 22. Congratulations may be sent to 330 W. Rock River Dr., Edgerton, MN 56128

**MARGE VANDERKOOY** will celebrate her 90th birthday on June 8. Her family is grateful to God for His faithfulness in the life of our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

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## Anniversaries

### 70th Anniversary

**SPAAN, REV. HOWARD AND MARGARET** (Twight) celebrate 70 years of marriage. The wedding was on June 27, 1947 in the Whitinsville, MA CRC. They are thankful to God for many years of ministry together in the church. They have been blessed with four sons, two grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

## Church Position Announcements

**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.firstcristhomas.com](http://www.firstcristhomas.com) for more details. Email a cover letter and resume to [firstcriststthomas@gmail.com](mailto:firstcriststthomas@gmail.com) or by mail to 320 Elm Street, St. Thomas, ON N5R 1J7

**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](mailto: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: [pastor4cfc@gmail.com](mailto:pastor4cfc@gmail.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](mailto: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](mailto:searchteam@faithcrcpella.org) to learn more.

**DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & WORSHIP** Modesto, CA CRC is seeking a full time Director of Music and Worship. See detailed description at <http://www.modestocrc.org>

**DIRECTOR OF OUTREACH** Modesto, CA CRC is seeking a Director of Outreach. See detailed description at <http://www.modestocrc.org>

**FULL TIME LEAD PASTOR POSITION** Maranatha CRC in Lethbridge is looking for a lead pastor to join us in our growing community in sunny Southern Alberta. Our vibrant, engaged, intergenerational community desires to be challenged and encouraged to relate our faith to our daily lives through solid biblical teaching and leadership. We strive to effectively build relationships in our community and be a light in our city. If you are a compassionate and caring person that is excited about equipping the next generation and feel a calling to explore the opportunity to join us on our faith journey, please email us at [maranathasearchcomm@gmail.com](mailto:maranathasearchcomm@gmail.com).

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR STRATFORD CRC** Stratford is a small city in rural Southwestern Ontario. We are an active intergenerational

### 65th Anniversary

**BRENTON, ROBERT (BOB) AND MARION** (DeVries) were joined in Christian union June 21, 1952 in the First CRC of Lansing, IL They were members of that church, then charter members of Bethel CRC in Lansing. Presently they are members of the Delavan CRC in Wisconsin. Praising the Lord with them are their four children and spouses, eleven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. God is good!

**HAAN, DON & GRACE** (Hoving), 2919 Condit St, Highland, IN 46322 will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary June 18. Thanking and

congregation of 150 families. Primary focus to be pastoral care of seniors, shut ins, and those with long term needs. Discipleship to include encouragement and support of bible study and small group ministries, and to enhance outreach. Also includes preaching 3x/month with AM and PM services. Any interested parties contact [searchcommittee@stratfordcra.org](mailto:searchcommittee@stratfordcra.org) to submit your profile.

**FULL TIME YOUTH PASTOR** Pine Grove Community Church (Howard City, MI) is seeking a dedicated, compassionate and energetic Christian to effectively lead and grow the youth ministries in our church community. Visit [www.pinegrovechurch.net](http://www.pinegrovechurch.net) for more information.

**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](mailto:sbouman@pacbell.net).

**DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY** First Byron Center CRC is a growing church located just outside of Grand Rapids, MI. We are seeking a full time Director of Youth Ministry to direct our ministry to middle school and high school students. For additional information please contact [firstbyronyouthpastorsearch@gmail.com](mailto:firstbyronyouthpastorsearch@gmail.com)

**PASTOR** Trinity CRC in Anchorage, Alaska has a unique opportunity for an experienced pastor who has a passion for God's Word and is blessed with a shepherd's heart. See the pastor search page at [www.trinitycralaska.com](http://www.trinitycralaska.com) for more information.

**FULL TIME PASTOR** Jamestown CRC is seeking a full time pastor to replace our minister who is retiring in April, 2018. We are a multi-generational, blended worship-style congregation in West Michigan; close to Grand Rapids, but in a rural country setting. For more information or to submit a resume contact [jdevries@charter.net](mailto:jdevries@charter.net). [www.jamestowncra.org/](http://www.jamestowncra.org/)

**SENIOR PASTOR POSITION** Maranatha CRC in Belleville, Ontario is seeking a senior pastor to lead a full/part time staff of seven and approximately 700 or more people who consider Maranatha their home. We are a church founded by postwar immigrants, but today have a congregation that is over half non-dutch, non-CRC background. Our mission is to Reach the Lost, Restore the Broken, Equip the Saints and Release the Workers. We value evangelism and discipleship based on being honest with each other and with God about the brokenness and issues in our lives - we believe the gospel of Jesus still transforms lives at the deepest level. For more information about the church and its ministries, go to our website <http://maranathachurch.com>, or contact the search committee at [info@maranathachurch.com](mailto:info@maranathachurch.com) for more information and church profile.

**SHORELINE CRC SEEKING PASTOR** Shoreline Christian Reformed Church, located just north of Seattle, Washington, is seeking a full time pastor who will provide challenging, biblical preaching from a reformed perspective, partner with us in outreach to our community, bring leadership, and foster strong relationships. If you are interested in this opportunity or would like to make a referral, please contact [Pastorsearch@Seattlecra.org](mailto:Pastorsearch@Seattlecra.org)

**NORTH HILLS CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH** of Troy, MI, seeks a full-time Director of Youth and Education to oversee our growing youth programs and to facilitate educational programming for K-college. The successful candidate will enjoy a competitive salary, benefits, and a healthy work environment. For a detailed job description, or to apply, contact [randyengle@aol.com](mailto:randyengle@aol.com) up to July 1, 2017. The position will be available on August 1, 2017.



praising God for His faithfulness. Love from your children & spouses, grandchildren & spouses, & great grandchildren.

#### 60th Anniversary



**DEBOER, BOB AND CAROLE DEBOER** (Decker) of 2175 Lakeridge Drive Holland, MI 49424, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on July 26, 2017. Bob and Carole are the parents of Lori and Wayne VanDerKolk, Terry and David VanDerKolk, Kimmy and Calvin Rietveld and Bobby and Brandi

DeBoer. They have 11 grandchildren: Alison and David Baldrige, Cara and Mike Boss, Nathan Rietveld, Audrey and Justen Morrow, Erin and Hans VanVeen, Catelyn VanDerKolk, Austin Rietveld, Jordyn Rietveld, Carter VanDerKolk, Allan DeBoer and Lauren DeBoer. They also have 6 great grandchildren: Caroline Baldrige, Oliver Boss, Patrick Baldrige, Harrison Boss, Cora VanVeen and Evelyn Morrow. Their love for Christ, each other and family will truly be their legacy.

**GOUDZWAARD, LARRY & GRACE** (Dykstra) 7310 W. 152nd Place, Orland Park, IL 60462 will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary June 7. They, with their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, praise God for His faithfulness and blessings. An OPEN HOUSE celebrating this occasion will be held June 3, 1-4 pm at Palos Heights CRC, 7059 W. 127th St., Palos Heights, IL.

**KUYERS, MILT AND CAROL** (Winkelhorst) of 13625 W. Burleigh Rd. #9, Brookfield, WI 53005, will be celebrating 60 years of marriage on June 20, 2017. Their 4 children & spouses, 11 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren rejoice with them for God's faithfulness and blessings throughout their marriage.



**VAN KOOTEN, DELMER AND WILMA** (Jansen) 806 East Union St. Pella, IA 50219 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on June 20, 2017. Their 4 children and spouses, 12 grandchildren are thankful for their love and support. Praise God from Whom all Blessings flow.

#### 50th Anniversary

**DE WEERD, Allen & Donna** (Petersen), 2967 Ottogon St., Hudsonville, MI 49426, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 15, 2017. Thanking God for blessing their parents' marriage are 5 children (Dale, Brent & Julie, Mike & Carol, Kim & Tom Vredevoogd, Mark & Sara) & 12 grandchildren.

**ROERSMA, JOHN & HAZEL** (Heida), of Artesia, CA, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on June 23, 2017, together with their children and grandchildren: John & Julie Roersma (Elin & Emily), Maggie Williamson (Lorien & Nolan). Psalm 100:5

**WERKHOVEN, WALT AND EVIE** will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 16 Children: Steve & Jolene, Jerry & Brooke, Laura & Marcus Windham, Kristi & Brian Brimager and 12 grandchildren. Thank God for a long and loving marriage

#### Obituaries

**BEL, MARTHA C.** age 95, went to meet her Lord and Savior on Wednesday, April 26, 2017. She was preceded in death by her husband, Tennyson Bel, and is survived by her sister, Patricia J. Ryan; step-son Herman (Doreen) Bel; 2 grandchildren, and 5 great grandchildren.

**BLOEM, ROSETTA (ROSE) May**; age 89; Grand Rapids, MI; April 21, 2017; Rose is survived by children: James H. (Diane) Bloem, Nancy E. Bloem, David R. Bloem, and Michael S. Bloem; nine grandchildren; five great grandchildren; brother: John (Pat) Carrel; and in-laws: Henry and Lillian Entingh, Henry and Ada Bloem, and John and Hilda DeVries. She was preceded in death by her husband Harry in 2012.

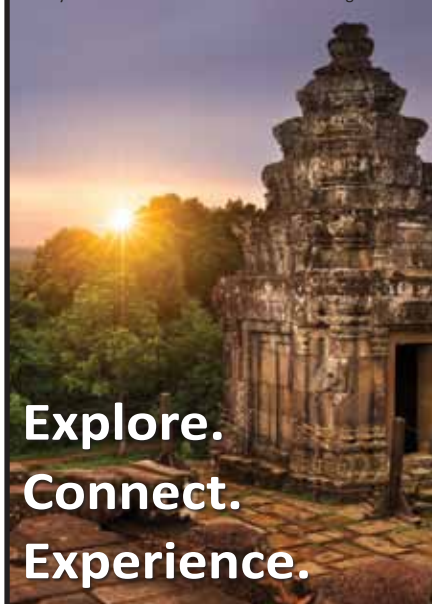
**BYKER, ALICE**, nee Pott, age 98, of Rock Rapids, IA, went home to be with the Lord on February 12, 2017. She was preceded in death by husband, Gerrit, and daughter, Sandra. She is survived by her children John (Kathy) Byker, Ged Byker, Shar (Greg) Dengler; her 10 grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren

**DE YOUNG, ALVIN H.**, age 87 (formerly of Lakewood, CA) passed away on April 18, 2017 at Artesia Christian Home. Al is survived by his wife of nearly 65 years, Gerry, children Susan (Diek) Meyer, Nancy (Stan) Winters, Bruce (Michele) De Young, 8 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, and sister Ruth (Corwin) Schenk. Phil. 4:4-7.

**FEENSTRA, JANET (KWANTES)**, age 96, of Grand Rapids left her earthly home on April 26, 2017 and entered her heavenly home to be with her Lord and Savior. She was preceded in death by her husband, Ernest. She will be lovingly remembered by her children, Barb McCune (Jim deceased), Ginny and Jim Postma, Joyce and Rick Tyler, 4 grandchildren, 4 great grandchildren, 2 brothers and their wives: Pete and Dorothy Kwantes and Ken and Irene Kwantes. Psalm 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

**HOFSTRA, DAVID**, age 79, of Jenison, MI, formerly from South Holland, IL and Roseland (Hofstra's Bakery), passed away Feb. 21, 2017. Beloved husband of 58 years to Ahleen. Dear father of Dal, Don and Joy. Five grandchildren.

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**HOLLEMAN, NANCY** (Postema) went to her heavenly home on March 31, 2017. She is survived by her husband of 48 years, Bob, and four children Benjamin (Mindy), Julie (Jay Serrao), Rob (Amy), Lesa, five grandchildren, and spouses Rev. Jerry Postema and Judy Weeks.

**KOOP, RICHARD P.**, age 88, U.S. Army Veteran. Beloved husband for 64 years of Katherine Koop, née Smilde. Loving father of Annette Goris, Peter (Shellie) Koop, John (Tammy) Koop, Gwen (Ray) Jendra and Mary (Glenn) Pniewski. Cherished grandfather of 12 and great-grandfather of 12. Dear brother of Jo (Jack) VanManen and the late Charles Koop. Fond brother-in-law of Ed Smilde. Retired teacher from Trinity Christian College and Chicago Christian High School.

**KROMMENDYK, WILLIARD (BILL)**, age 84; April 22, 2017; 2111 Raybrook SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He is survived by his wife, Sophie Looyenga; children: Dan and Sue Krommendyk, Ron and Nancy Krommendyk, Cheri and Ken Koning, Barb Jackson, Jeff and Leslie Krommendyk; son-in-law, Mike Jackson; 17 grandchildren; 25 great grandchildren.

**MULDER, ANNE**, Grand Rapids, MI, age 96, widow of Rev. John A. Mulder, passed peacefully into her Savior's presence on April 5, 2017. See her obituary at [www.zaagman.com](http://www.zaagman.com)

**NUTMA, REV. JELLE** In his 90th year Rev. Jelle Nutma has gone to be with the Lord. He leaves behind his much beloved wife Alida (Brouwer) 5 children, 23 grandchildren, and 35 great grandchildren. We will all mourn the loss of our father, grand father and great grandfather. He was born Feb 22, 1928 in Oostrum, Friesland, Netherlands. He immigrated to Canada and went to Calvin College to become a pastor, where he served in the Christian Reformed Church. He valiantly and passionately ministered in 11 churches (Athens, Acton, Dundas, Bowmanville, Wyoming, ThunderBay, Smithville, Rocky Mountain House, (initially as an intern and again later), Strathroy and part time in Chatham. In 1996 he suffered from a stroke yet continued to worship and serve his Lord and Saviour. Dad, your optimism, tenacity, desire to serve the Lord and willingness to be a humble servant will always influence and make a difference in our lives and "to the third and fourth

generations." Thank you to Shalom manor and all its staff for all your beautiful care that you gave during our dad's 11 years stay.

**SWIER, EDWARD JOHN**, 93, of Ripon, CA, met his Lord on April 14, 2017. He was preceded in death by his wives, Magdalena (Maat) Swier and Norma (Thomas) Swier, and his son Walter. He is survived by his 4 children, 4 step-children, 22 grandchildren, 18 great grandchildren and his sister, Gertrude Korver.

**VAN DALFSEN, PATRICIA ANN**, nee Dornbos, of Seattle, WA. 8/8/1936-01/24/2017. Pat was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. Cecil Van Dalfsen and is survived by her children, Pamela Van Dalfsen of Seattle, WA, Terri Hesse of Port Richey, FL, and Shawn (Heather) Van Dalfsen of Wausau WI, as well as grandchildren, siblings, nieces, and nephews.

**VELTMAN, JAY H., MD** age 87, passed away on Thursday, March 16, 2017. A pediatrician in Grandville for 40 years, Jay was born in Grand Rapids and attended Calvin College before attending medical school at the University of Michigan. Jay was a member of Ivanrest CRC, and volunteered for Bethany Christian Services. Jay is survived by, Alberta, his wife of 63 years; daughters: Jayne (Kim) Gort, Lora (Mike) Boogaard, and Beth Veltman, 6 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. Also surviving are sisters: Joyce (Marvin) Koets, Donna (Tom) Westra, sister-in-law June Vander Wall.

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## Employment

**CAREGIVERS NEEDED** Are you interested in working for the best living assistance services company in West Michigan? Visiting Angels is looking for people who can be excellent, not average; make a connection with our clients; be perfectly dependable; practice compassion and work with integrity. Contact Heather at 616-243-7080 or [heather@vangels.com](mailto:heather@vangels.com) www.vangels.com

**FAMILY PHYSICIAN, NP OR PA NEEDED** Born Clinic, P. C., is seeking a licensed family physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant to join our team of doctors and PAs. As a practitioner in our office, you will see many patients with challenging conditions and health concerns—and get good results. Practicing integrative medicine for over 30 years, we have the tools and experience to provide a wide range of patient services and testing on site. We are looking for a practitioner with the desire to make a significant difference in the lives of patients. Full-time position with good benefits including a competitive salary; CME allowance; health, dental and life insurances; medical savings account, and 401(k). No weekends or holidays. Born Clinic is located in Kentwood—a suburb of Grand Rapids and a short drive from Lake Michigan. Our family-friendly community has many churches, high quality schools, colleges and universities; museums, arts and cultural events; a beautiful botanical garden; numerous golf courses; convention centers and arena; and a variety of restaurants and shopping. Interested Candidates: Please send your resume to [Carolyn@bornclinic.com](mailto:Carolyn@bornclinic.com).

**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](mailto:ahutchins@bethanyripon.org)

## Products and Services

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

**CARING FOR AGING PARENTS?** Visiting Angels offers in-home assisted living. Our caregivers will prepare meals, do light housekeeping, run errands, provide transportation to appointments, and joyful companionship. Whether you need a few hours a day or live-in care, for assisted independent living in your home anywhere in West Michigan call Trish Borgdorff at 616-243-7080 or toll free at 888-264-3580. TRIP Participant.

**BOERS' TRANSFER & STORAGE, INC** Offering professional moving services within the United States and Canada. EXCELLENT CLERGY DISCOUNTS and an approved mover for retired CRC clergy! 13325 Riley Street, Holland, MI; 1-800-433-9799 or 616-399-2690 email: [larry@boerstransfer.com](mailto:larry@boerstransfer.com); [www.boerstransfer.com](http://www.boerstransfer.com) Agent for Mayflower Transit, LLC.

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**REMODELING?** Call Ken DeVries today for an estimate on windows, kitchen/bath renovation. 616-457-5880. Since 1985. [www.homeworkconstruction.com](http://www.homeworkconstruction.com)

**TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS** offers in home(non-medical) care to seniors. Contact us at [truebluecaregivers.com](http://truebluecaregivers.com) or call (616)406-6819. Owned by Calvin alumni, serving the Grand Rapids area. Bonded and Insured



# SYNOD 2017

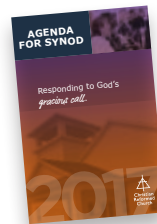
Synod is the governing body of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. This year's synod will convene on the campus of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, at 8:30 a.m. on Friday, June 9. It will run through Thursday, June 15 at noon.

You can keep up with the conversation at synod even if you aren't a synodical delegate. Visit [crcna.org/synod](http://crcna.org/synod) to read the latest news, watch live webcasts, view photos, and review reports.

For news before and during synod, sign up for the daily Synod News or the weekly CRC News emails. You can also follow the CRCNA on Facebook or on Twitter (#crcsynod).

The synod of the CRC represents the churches of all of the regional groupings (classes) of the denomination. Each classis sends one minister, one elder, one deacon, and one additional office bearer to represent them at an annual meeting.

Over the course of one week, this group of 192 men and women make decisions concerning the creeds, church order, liturgical forms, hymnals, principles of worship, policies, and moral/ethical positions of the denomination. Synod also provides general oversight for the variety of ministries that CRC churches have undertaken together.



To learn more about this year's *Agenda for Synod* or to read other related documents, visit [crcna.org/synod](http://crcna.org/synod). Printed copies of the agenda have also been sent to every CRC.

[crcna.org/synod2017](http://crcna.org/synod2017)



AUGUST 3-5 DETROIT

# Inspire 2017

*...a new kind of CRC event*

Be inspired this summer! Summer is a great time to relax and unwind with friends and family. This summer will also offer you a chance to refuel and re-energize yourself for ministry. Join people from more than 1,000 CRC congregations as they gather in Detroit

from August 3-5 for three days of powerful worship, practical breakouts, engaging speakers, and conversation. You won't want to miss it.

**Visit [crcna.org/Inspire2017](http://crcna.org/Inspire2017) to learn more and to register.**

## WORSHIP TEAM



**Kizzy Thomas**



**Josh Rodriguez**



**Mary Rodriguez**



**Nate Glasper**



**Greg Scheer**

## GATHERING SPEAKERS



**Ann Voskamp**



**Harvey Carey**



**Ruth Padilla DeBorst**



**Richard Mouw**

## BREAKOUT SPEAKERS



**Kevin Adams**



**Mike Johnson**



**Carol  
Bremer-Bennett**



**Reeshida  
Washington**



**Bernard Ayoola**



**Heather  
Garretson**



**Mark VanAndel**



**Martin Boardman**



**Greg Elzinga**



**Sharon  
Garlough Brown**



**Gina Dalfanzo**



### Choose from over 60 breakout sessions . . .

Teach Your Children Well • 5 Ways to Grow an Intergenerational Leadership Culture Where Youth and Young Adults Can Thrive • Muslims: Understanding and Enfoldng • Listening as Leadership — Circle Style • Four Essentials That Help Churches Come Alive • A Love-Hate Relationship with the Church: Ministering to Young Adults Today • The PRO in CON-flict • From Pew to Neighborhood • Universal Design for Worship: Everyone Is Welcome • Your Church Online • Fill Me Up, God! Practices for Those Who Pour into Others • Uplift Your Community Through Marriage and Family Ministry • Pre-School Ministry: The Benefits of Starting, Sharing, Sustaining, and Nurturing the Commitment • Re-Placing Church: Lessons Learned from Neighborhood Church Planting • Truth in a "Post-Truth" World • 10 Ways to Make Giving Easier and More Cost-Effective • One by One: Welcoming Singles in Your Church • *and 48 more!*

### and other activities!

Morning prayer walk along the Detroit River • EXPO tour • Morning stretch sessions with a trainer • Dessert bar • Prayer room • After party with the Broken Halos • Inspire 2017 Choir • Morning centering worship • *and more!*

Register now at [crcna.org/Inspire2017](http://crcna.org/Inspire2017)

# Think you can change the world *from the stage?*

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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!

**Y**esterday I held the door open for a clown. Why? Because I just thought it was a nice jester.

*R. Smit*

**W**hen our son and his wife attended a conference in a distant state, we stayed with their two little boys for a week. Sleeping on a waterbed was a different experience for us. I realized just how different when I was awakened one night to hear my husband muttering in his sleep, "I'm seasick; oh, I'm so seasick."

*Gladys Gritter*

**D**riving home from church on Sunday, we asked our sons, 4 and 6, what they had learned in Sunday school that day. Without skipping a beat, our 4-year-old piped up, "Goliath is a HUUUUUGE pickle."

Pretty sure the teacher must have used Veggie Tales to tell the story that day!

*Lisa Westerningh*

**A**Sunday school teacher decided to have her class memorize Psalm 23. One little boy was very excited about the task,

but he struggled to learn it. After much practice, he could barely get past the first line. On the day the children were scheduled to recite the psalm in front of the congregation, he was very nervous.

When it was his turn, he stepped up to the microphone and said, "The Lord is my shepherd—and that's all I need to know."

*Gerrit Feyer*

**S**ign of the times:

As we sat around the campfire in the deepening dusk, my 7-year-old looked up from the marshmallow he was toasting to the brilliant Milky Way. In a voice full of awe, he said, "Wow, Mom, look at all those drones!"

*Joy Schuurman*

**M**y grandson asked how old I was. I told him I was 80. My grandson looked at me and then asked, "Did you start at 1?"

*Dick Bylsma*

**W**hen my parents vacationed in Florida for the winter, they always attended a local Baptist church. One day after the service as people were leaving, a member of the congregation said to my dad, "Well, John, when are you going to become a member?" Another member who was right behind him mumbled, "It takes more than a sprinkle!"

*Gerrie Fortuin Natelborg*

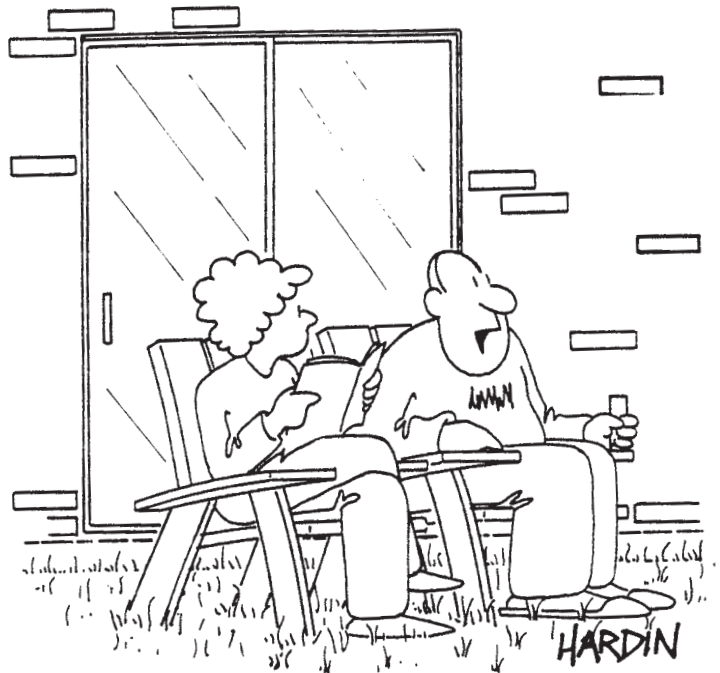
**R**ecently I told our 5-year-old granddaughter, "I love you so much that I just wish we could adopt you!" She asked me what

that meant. I told her, "That means you would be a Van Schepen." She looked at me and said, "No, I want to be a doctor."

*Willie Van Schepen*

**W**hen our grandson was 3 the family lived on a military base. When he was walking through the neighborhood one day, a chihuahua got away from his owner and chased the little guy, jumping on him and making him cry. That night, when it was time to pray, he said, "Lord in heaven, thank you for the animals you gave us . . . except chihuahuas. Amen."

*Sally Brandsen*



"Last night I dreamed our creditors met our debtors and decided to eliminate the middle man."



— · | · | · | · —  
Led by the  
Spirit  
— · | · | · | · —

**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.** Acts 1:8

The Holy Spirit is leading the way in our church, community, and world. On Pentecost Sunday, we celebrate the Spirit's call for each one of us to follow its leading to the ends of the earth.

Your prayers and financial support for the ministries of Christian Reformed World Missions help missionaries answer the Spirit's call on their lives and empower local leaders to do the same. Thank you!

[crwm.org](http://crwm.org)

