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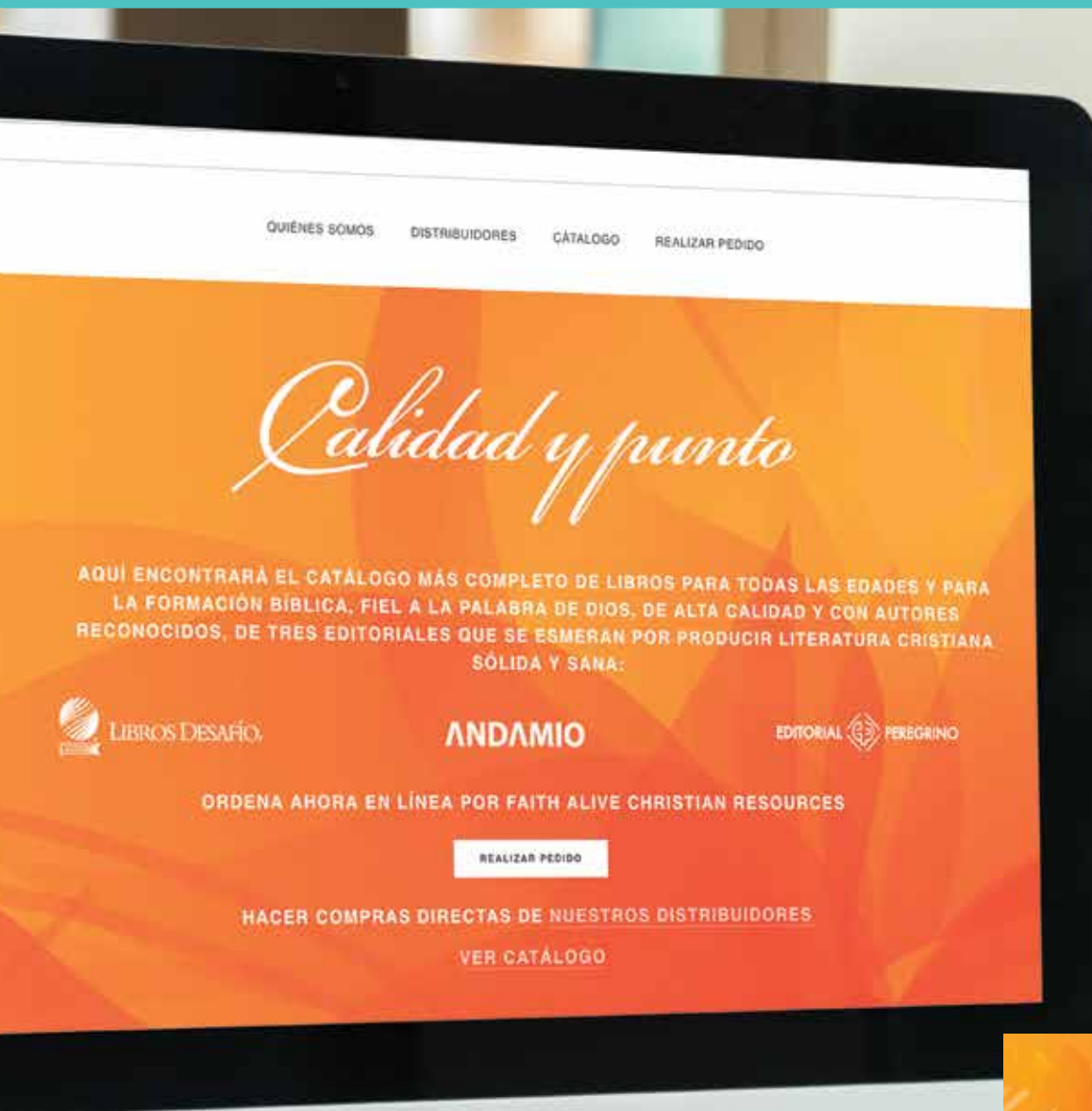
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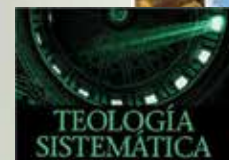
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United in Mission

One of the things I admired most about Graham was his ability to unite Christians of various stripes around God's mission.



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

Spanish and Korean translations of this editorial are available at TheBanner.org.

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Este artículo está disponible en español en TheBanner.org/spanish.

BILLY GRAHAM, often called “America’s preacher,” passed away on February 21. There is no denying his influence on Christianity in North America and around the world. During his lifetime, Graham was respected and loved by millions, and his preaching and ministry transformed lives.

No doubt Graham had flaws in addition to his many laudable qualities and achievements. But one of the things I admired most about Graham was his ability to unite Christians of various stripes around God’s mission. His evangelistic crusades always involved the cooperation of local churches from different theological stripes, from evangelicals to Catholics, including some Christian Reformed folks. Despite differences, Graham was willing to work with any Christian believer to proclaim the gospel. My sense is that for Graham it was never about one’s “tribe” but always about God’s mission.

That is my dream and hope as well. I dream of a CRC that is united around God’s holistic mission. I have previously written about God’s mission “in 3-D,” including the dimensions of reconciling people to God (community), reconciling people to each other (community) and reconciling all things in Christ Jesus (commonwealth). Although Graham emphasized the communion dimension of mission, I believe he would not have objected to the other two. For example, Graham opposed racism in America when it was not yet popular to do so, prohibiting segregated seating at his crusades starting in the mid-1950s. Graham’s example of working across Christian divisions to fulfill God’s mission inspires us to do likewise.

I am heartened to see examples of that happening. In this *Banner* issue, for instance, you will read about how we are helping to equip the global church for mission, how four people from different backgrounds call the CRC their spiritual home, and how God “lives” in the city yet is with us in our pain and suffering. Being united in God’s holistic mission is already part of who we are.

According to Graham, the key to Christian unity is love, not uniformity:

[Jesus] prayed for unity among believers. God, who wills man’s unity in Christ, is a God of variety. So often we want everyone to be the same—to think and speak and believe as we do. Many Scripture passages could be called to witness that love is the real key to Christian unity. In the spirit of true humility, compassion, consideration, and unselfishness, we are to approach our problems, our work, and even our differences (billygraham.org/devotion/true-unity/).

Another of Graham’s qualities I admire is his humility. Despite his celebrity status, he always emphasized his team and humbly worked with local pastors and lay leaders to organize his crusades. I believe humility is a mark of spiritual maturity. No one who is close to God can have an arrogant spirit. If we truly know the holy and all-loving God, we cannot help but be humbled in awareness of our own sinfulness and shortcomings. Such humility should make us less judgmental of those we disagree with, quick to listen, and slow to speak (James 1:19).

Despite our ideological and political differences, I hope we can unite around God’s holistic mission in humility and love for the sake of both God’s kingdom and the CRC. **B**

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REPLY ALL

Gun Culture

The most poignant and thought provoking “go-to” writings in *The Banner* are, for me, those of editor-in-chief Shiao Chong. His contributions shed light into the heart of not just Christian Reformed churches but the kingdom church.

“Faith and Gun Culture” (April 2018) offers a welcome journey into the spiritual question of gun culture in North American society.

I am well aware that in some congregations on any given Sunday, there are those who carry concealed weapons—those who are “designated shooters.” I ask the question, with Chong, “How does this gun culture align with the fruit of the Spirit, which includes love, peace, patience, and gentleness?”

» Barb Clouse, Battle Creek, Mich.

I’m so deeply grateful for the recent editorial “Faith and Gun Culture.” Thank you for your brief, beautiful, and spot-on insight into this issue facing American Christians and truly all Christians around the world.

» Linda R. Rubingh, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor Chong’s proposal that the CRC needs an “official position on gun culture” is possibly taking too narrow a view (“Faith and Gun Culture”). Wouldn’t any study be better if it focused more inclusively on the issue of societal violence as a whole, and not just the use or misuse of one tool? There was a reason why God gave us the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not murder.” The act of violence begins with an attitude or a thought, not with an object.

» Sam Laswell, Redford, Mich.

Thank you, Mr. Editor, for your biblical response to the question of carrying concealed weapons in church (“Big Questions,” March 2018). After every mass shooting in the U.S. there is hand-wringing and talk about “thoughts and prayers.” But nothing changes, not even after Sandy Hook. Too many members of Congress are beholden to the National Rifle Association, which blocks every attempt at gun control. Surely followers of Jesus can raise a cry for justice and demand that their legislators in Washington do something about the insanity caused by [the U.S.’s] outmoded Second Amendment. Some will say that since I am from Canada I have no business speaking to this issue. But before we are Americans or Canadians, we are followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Our quest for righteousness and peace does not depend on political affiliation but on our obedience to our Savior.

» Gerald Hogeterp, Brantford, Ont.

#MeToo

Thanks for publishing the excellent article by Amanda Worst (“#MeToo and Becoming a Safer Church,” April 2018). It made me think of the Olympic biathlon—skiing and shooting. The circles are synods, classes, and councils. The bull’s-eye is the pulpit. Worst writes, “Breaking the silence means speaking about sexual violence in all its forms from the pulpit.” When was the last time you heard from the pulpit about one form: pornography?

Preaching the whole counsel of God on Sundays does not require a synod, a classis, nor council meetings on Mondays.

» Jake Prins, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Remembering Herm Keizer

On Jan. 27 there was a ceremony remembering four chaplains of different faiths

who sacrificed themselves to save others when a U-boat sank the USS *Dorchester* in 1943. Yet the chaplain mentioned most during the ceremony was the CRC’s recently deceased Chaplain (Col.) Herm Keizer (“In Memoriam: Herman Keizer Jr.,” March 2018) because his passing was a great loss to the veterans’ community. I honor him as a fellow veteran of great courage and admire his work for our denomination and our country. I disagreed with him on issues of war and peace. So what? I need to fellowship with people whose opinions on nonreligious issues are different from mine—we all do!

» Raymond P. Opeka,
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Eating toward Shalom

I have worked with dozens of agricultural producers for almost 30 years now (“Eating toward Shalom,” March 2018). The farmers I come into contact with are some of the most conscientious and humane people I know, going to great lengths to care for their livestock. We live in an era where the largest percentage of the world’s population (6 billion people) lives above the poverty level. There is still work to do as 700 million people remain below that line.

Farmers provide a safe and efficient food supply system that feeds the world. Genesis 1:26 speaks of humankind’s dominion over the fish of the sea, birds of the air, and livestock. That mandate is an obligation to be good stewards of those resources for the good of all. If we go to the food ethics system suggested by the writer, we will face greater food costs, which will cause an increased number of people to be priced out of the market from an economic standpoint and result in a lesser food supply.

» Don Koops, Osborne, Kan.

In response to “Eating toward Shalom”: As a producer of milk, beef, and grain, your article has led me to many places, but none is peaceful. Part of God’s calling for my life as a farmer is care for his creation, which includes confined livestock. Everyone likes a belly full of cheap food—even those who only eat

vegetables. So in some way we're all using God's creation.

» J. Paul Vellema, Harris, Iowa

I am a proud Canadian egg farmer. Our hens reside in enriched colony housing where they have a nest box, perches, scratch pads, and 48 square feet to roam, allowing them to exhibit their natural behaviors. Eggs contain six grams of protein and 14 essential nutrients for about \$2 per dozen. Not sure how this contributes to "needless suffering, degrading health, or marginalizing the poor" ("Eating toward Shalom"). Aren't we called to feed the world (affordably and sustainably) with plant and animal diets as the Israelites were?

» Andrew Elgersma, Elora, Ont.

Thank you, thank you, Matthew Halteman, for your eloquent article ("Eating toward Shalom") on meat consumption. The responses we get from fellow Christians when we tell them we don't eat meat indicate that they are startled and bewildered.

» Doreen Oom, Grandville, Mich.

Concerning the article "Eating toward Shalom": A big thank-you. This information about the treatment of animals on "factory farms" is why I became a vegetarian about 35 years ago. Readers, please support local farmers who treat animals humanely.

» Sue McCarthy, Dorr, Mich.

Mental Illness and the Church

IT SEEMS TO ME that we as a Christian Reformed community are missing something. I and my family have been dealing with mental health issues for a lifetime. Within the church, people are often very specific when discussing cancer or other physical ailments. But in my experience, it is difficult for people to relate to those of us with mental health issues. I am not alone when I say that people with mental health issues find it difficult to get much-needed support from the community. As a community, we need to move beyond generalities in discussing these issues too.

The number of people living with mental illnesses, including autism, has reached epidemic proportions. Mental illnesses affect our Christian community as well as the public. But the Christian community remains strangely silent. We are members of this community but remain largely misunderstood. Are we not as important a part of this community as anyone else? I refer to Paul's imagery of one body that cannot do without each of its many members.


I hear time and again, "We don't know what to do!" Let's find out, then, what we can do! Ignorance can never be an excuse for doing nothing or too little.

There has been much discussion on declining church membership. But a big part of this discussion is missing: the high percentage of those of us with a disability, especially related to mental health, who don't go to church. I've heard many who live with mental illness say that the church community is not a safe place to be. The spiritual nourishment of these church members is nearly nonexistent. Why is that?

Ignorance can never be an excuse for doing nothing or too little.

One of the main reasons for a lack of empathy or understanding, perhaps, is an inability to relate. In our conversations, we are not specific enough in describing how mental health affects our communities. But awareness is only as good as our willingness to do something with that awareness.

This is also a social justice issue. People with mental illnesses are members of our church communities. In large part, they are expected to fit in with our existing ways of being. And we seem to think that outside the church, in everyday life, they can manage on their own.

People with mental illnesses are stigmatized. How many of us, when we think of those affected by mental illnesses, think negatively? We as a Christian community can work hard to change that. We can make a difference. Are we willing? 



Harold Struyk is a working father with four adult children. He has been happily married to Dorothy for 34 years. He has been active with various disability concerns for a number of years. He lives in Drayton, Ont., and is a member of Drayton CRC.

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Joshua Rawson-Harris on Unsplash

Faith and Feminism

Amanda W. Benckhuysen

MeToo. At the end of 2017, this hashtag went viral as woman after woman disclosed that she too had experienced sexual harassment

or assault. The sheer number of women who shared stories of being shamed, demeaned, and mistreated serves as a powerful reminder of why we still need feminism today.

For many, the term “feminist” may call to mind images of angry, bra-burning, men-hating, abortion-loving women. But a feminist is simply a person who believes in the inherent equality of men and women and is committed to advocating for a world that reflects that equality. Feminism questions why, since men and women share a common humanity, one sex has more privileges, opportunities, influence, resources, freedoms, and protections than the other. Feminists also aim to correct this disparity by securing legal and political rights for women.

While Christian feminists may disagree with particular commitments

of some modern feminists, including support for abortion, they share with them a fundamental conviction that men and women are created equal and that this equality should be manifest in homes, churches, and society.

But how do Christian feminists reconcile this position with the teachings of Scripture? Doesn't the Bible assert that men are the head of the home and that women are to be silent in church? While some Christians certainly read the Bible this way, it is not clear that this is what it intends to teach.

Indeed, Scripture's first word about woman is that she is created in the image of God. Along with man, woman is commissioned to have dominion over the earth: to rule over, invest in, contribute to, and care for God's created order (Gen. 1:26-28). No indication is given of hierarchy, nor is a distinction made between male and female roles. As Lee Anna Starr, an early 20th-century commentator, noted, “Women's God-given sphere is as wide as the earth's

circumference, as high as the firmament, and as deep as the sea” (*The Bible Status of Woman*, 21). In other words, women would have to step off the earth to transgress the limits of their divinely ordained sphere!

Similarly, Genesis 2 depicts the male-female relationship in ways that accentuate mutuality and companionship. Woman was created, the text tells us, because the man needed her. In the patriarchal culture of the ancient Near East, the idea that the man needed the woman would have been startling. Yet this is precisely what Genesis 2 says. Man was alone, and it was not good, so God created the woman to be man's partner and friend.

Absent from these chapters is any indication that the woman is created to assume a supportive role to her husband or that women should not be leaders. In fact, only with the entrance of sin into the world does the man assume dominance over the woman. In Genesis 3:8-19 we sense God's horror and grief as

he describes for Adam and Eve the consequences of their sin. Man ruling over woman, it turns out, is not God's intention but a result of the fall and an indication of what is broken in the male-female relationship.

While some might assume that this state of affairs is the "new normal" for men and women, the Bible teaches that there is more to the story. In steadfast love, God resolved to set the world right again, redeeming and restoring all that was lost in the fall—including the relationship of equality between men and women. Thus, in light of Christ's death and resurrection, through which all things are made new, Paul can say, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28). And as we await the time when the fullness of God's redemptive work will be realized in Christ, we are invited even now to lean into this new reality.

But what of that handful of texts (Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:34-36; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Pet. 3:1-7) that seem to reinforce limitations on women, particularly in marriage and in the church? Don't they clearly articulate God's design for humanity? The short answer is: not exactly. In many cases, translation issues and convoluted arguments obscure the plain sense of these texts. Even more problematic, however, is that these texts seem to contradict other parts of Scripture. Paul's prohibitions against women speaking in worship (1 Cor. 14:34-36), for instance, conflict with his words a couple of chapters earlier where he affirms women prophesying (1 Cor. 11:5-6). Verses that suggest that a woman not teach or assume authority over a man (1 Tim. 2:11-12) stand in tension with Paul's commendation of the work of Priscilla in teaching and correcting Apollos (Acts 18:26), Junia in her work as an apostle (Rom. 16:7), Nympha and Apphia as leaders of house churches, and Euodia and Syntyche as evangelists or coworkers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3).

Moreover, Jesus himself seems either unaware of or indifferent to notions of divinely ordained roles for women. Take, for instance, his approval of Mary for choosing to learn theology over attending to domestic duties (Luke 10:38-42) or his commissioning of the women at the tomb to go and proclaim the good news to the male disciples that he is alive (Luke 24:1-12).

Man ruling over woman is not God's intention but a result of the fall and an indication of what is broken in the male-female relationship.

Throughout the gospels, Jesus shuns the patriarchal expectations of Roman culture and instead treats women in ways that reflect God's original intentions as laid out in Genesis 1.

Given Jesus' attitude toward women and Paul's own commendations of women's activity in the work of the gospel, it seems doubtful that in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:34-36; and 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Paul intended to impose a universal prohibition on women's preaching and leadership. It is more likely that in these texts, Paul is addressing some disruptive behaviors by a specific group of women in the Corinthian church and that his comments are particular to this situation.

Furthermore, a close reading of Paul's comments about men and women in marriage suggests that while he was not explicitly challenging the patriarchy of the Roman culture, he

doesn't exactly accommodate it either. Instead, Paul redefines submission in marriage as an act of Christian discipleship and mission. He calls both men and women to practice mutual submission as a sign of their identity in Christ (Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-7). In other words, Paul was calling these early Christians to a radical discipleship that was countercultural in all kinds of ways, not least in male-female relationships.

Christian feminists believe that God still calls people to a radical, countercultural discipleship in the area of gender relations. We live in a culture that continues to objectify and devalue women while at the same time perpetuating toxic notions of masculinity that leave both sexes alienated from what God intended for them. In this context, Christians are called to champion healthier understandings of what it means to be male and female, recognizing in each other the image of God and relating to each other in mutual love, submission, and respect. Let us, then, as followers of Jesus Christ, reach for a world where both men and women can flourish and where no woman ever has to say "me too" again. **B**

For the CRCNA's official position on women in ecclesiastical office, visit tinyurl.com/crcna-position.



Amanda Benckhuysen is professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary. She attends Kelloggsville Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word *feminism*? What may have created that image for you?
2. After reading this article, do you consider yourself to be a Christian feminist? Why or why not?

READ MORE ONLINE

BIG QUESTIONS

Digital Life

I've been reading quite a bit about the addictive nature of our digital devices. Should I be concerned about my kids? Myself?

People who study human behavior as it relates to technology think so. They point to dopamine, a chemical released by the brain to signal pleasure, as the likely culprit. Like the sound of a beloved coming through the door, the blinking lights and pings of our phones promise something good is about to happen. Unlike the sounds of that door, however, our phone's reward—those endless texts or pictures or posts—most often don't live up to the promise. But we still reach for them, letting them interrupt our conversations, keep us from sleep and work, and, some would say, keep us from being creative.

So what are we to do? It's not as if these devices are going away anytime soon. Nor should they.

At a family gathering recently I asked my nieces and nephews for their ideas. Once they got past putting the onus on parents who don't limit their kid's time on these devices—including their own, presumably—they had some thoughts:

- » Put everyone's devices—including Mom's and Dad's—on the kitchen counter before going to bed.
- » Go outside. It's hard to text when you're riding a bike or climbing a tree.



» At gatherings of family or friends, ask everyone to put their phone in a basket when they come in the door.

- » Turn off sound and light notifications. Decide for yourself when you want to take the time to see what's come in since you last checked.
- » Designate a day a week or weekend when you don't use your phone at all—a digital detox of sorts.

During this conversation, I noticed no one checked their phones and all were actively participating. It seems we're all aware of the problem and agree we need to do something about it. Talking about it—online or off—might be a start.

Dean Heetderks is co-director of ministry support services of the Christian Reformed Church and art director of *The Banner*. He is a member of Covenant CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Vocation/Calling

Is there a calling for people with disabilities? My daughter has Down syndrome. Does God have a calling for her to fulfill?

Yes. All members of the body of Christ are called to be filled with the Holy Spirit, grow in the fruit of the Spirit, and both receive from and contribute to other

members of their communities. In the U.S., one in 691 births are children with Down syndrome.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23, NRSV). People with Down syndrome have the same calling to cultivate these Christian virtues as typical children and adults do. Parents have a special calling to help their children grow in the Spirit's fruit, and the broader Christian community must fertilize this cultivation for all its members.

Even if the world devalues people with Down syndrome, the church certainly should not do so. The least in the eyes of the world are the most important in the church and the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul says, "[T]he members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect" (1 Cor. 12:22-23, NRSV). People with Down syndrome contribute to their families, their schools, their coworkers, their employers, and society. Siblings of children with Down syndrome report their relationship with them is one of the greatest gifts of their lives. Kids with Down syndrome have

hopes and dreams and want to make a difference in the world. Though it may take longer, these children go through all the stages of typical development, and many adults with Down syndrome go to college, have rewarding jobs, and marry. They too must discern their gifts, concerns, and opportunities for service as they discover and live out their callings.

Douglas J. Schuurman is a professor of religion at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.

Church/Bible/Doctrine

My church does not approve of women serving as elders or ministers. If the denomination permits this, how is it that a congregation may “opt out”? Isn’t this gender discrimination?

You raise an issue that has been wrenchingly difficult for many in our denomination. We still don’t see eye to eye on it. What many of us became so concerned about in the early 1990s is that both sides started believing that people on “the other side” were just plain ignoring the clear teaching of Scripture. Synod 1990 seemed to say this by deciding to remove the word “male” from Article 3 of the Church Order. Then Synod 1994 seemed to say this by declaring that “the clear teaching of Scripture prohibits women from holding the offices of minister, elder, and evangelist.” One delegate had the following negative vote recorded: This is “an insensitive assertion that Scripture is clear on this matter despite a 20-year discussion and biblically defensible alternatives.”

The following year synod drew back and chose to “recognize that there are two different perspectives and convictions, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, on the issue of whether women are allowed to serve in the offices.” In other words, we made room for each other and enlarged our tent.

This has allowed us once again to focus on the heart of our mission.

Years earlier, the CRCNA traveled a similar path on the issue of women’s suffrage. Synod 1957 allowed the practice of women voting at congregational meetings but did not insist on it based on “clarity” of the biblical message. When some eventually asked that we no longer allow the other option because it is “discriminatory,” Synod 1983 refused the request. It did “urge churches to grant women the right to vote” but stopped short of demanding it. If we truly believe what Synod 1995 declared—namely, that both perspectives honor the Scriptures—perhaps we should consider the same course of action and continue to permit both options.

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

Stewardship

I feel torn among the demands of my family, work, and church. A couple of times I’ve been asked to serve as elder and said no because I’m already busy. But I also feel guilty because others in similar situations have said yes. How can I find a balance in using my time wisely?

Ah, for a magic formula into which you could plug your distinctive set of circumstances—gifts, abilities, obligations, and opportunities—and out would pop the things to which you should say yes and those you should decline! But no such formula exists. It is a matter of discernment, best achieved in conversation with people whose insights you value and those affected by your decisions.

We have more potential callings than our time and energy allow: vocational/occupational, educational,

civic, familial, and so on. Some of these, such as parenting, can’t be set aside or compromised. They are nonnegotiable commitments.

As for the others, we need to listen to the promptings of heart, mind, and community as well as to echoes from prayer. It’s difficult not to have guilt or social pressure play a role. But allowing these to be the determining factor in our decisions can lead to other forms of guilt as well as burnout.

Three suggestions to consider: First, pay close attention to the ebb and flow of anticipated responsibilities. These change from year to year, even during children’s school-age years. There may be a window of opportunity for a period of leadership service. Second, consider sharing a leadership position with someone in a similar situation. Especially if work demands ebb and flow (for example, a tax accountant or a seasonal worker), pairing with someone who can cover during busy times may allow you both to serve without overburden.

Finally, creative scheduling of meetings or other responsibilities might make it possible to carry out the tasks you are gifted for in a way that creates less conflict with work or family demands. Church leadership, if open to nontraditional meeting times and methods of meeting responsibilities, can support this as a possibility.

Rolf Bouma is pastor of academic ministries at the Campus Chapel in Ann Arbor, Mich., and teaches in the University of Michigan’s Program in the Environment.



Financial Shalom Project Hosts Bivocational Pastor Conference

NEWS

For more news and longer stories about the churches and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, visit *TheBanner.org*. Or get the free app by searching for “CRCNA Banner” in your app store.

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UPDATE ON DO JUSTICE BLOG

In May 2018 (p. 16) we reported that a CRC staff delegation met with leaders of Classis Minnkota regarding the *Do Justice* blog. Since then, a contentious post regarding participation in a new moon ceremony has been deleted. Staff stated: “The post’s continued presence on this blog has become a barrier to dialogue, and for that reason, Centre for Public Dialogue and Office of Social Justice staff have decided to take it down so that communal discernment and dialogue may continue in a healthy way.”



Melvin Jackson sells real estate in Los Angeles, Calif., and also works on approving loans for people looking to buy a home.

Meanwhile, in Niagara Falls, Ont., Allen Kleine Deters works in a cigar shop and is also a blues musician.

They are two of several “bivocational” pastors within the Christian Reformed church—people who hold an outside job in addition to their pastoral duties. They were among about 50 people who attended a two-day conference in Grand Rapids, Mich., on the future of bivocational ministry within the denomination.

Jackson, who pastors Grace Unlimited Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in Los Angeles, has typically held a sales job for the 17 years he has been a pastor. He says having a job outside the church gives him a way to connect with people that sometimes leads to them coming to worship. “You end up being able to understand them as people in the workforce because you are there also,” Jackson said.

Kleine Deters, pastor of The Bridge, a missional CRC church plant in Niagara Falls, agrees.

“It gives me a lot of valuable recognition and networking in the community,” he said. “It builds relationships with people

Participants at the conference for bivocational ministry in the CRCNA.

who I may not have been able to [meet if I were a full-time pastor].”

Amy Schenkel, U.S. national director for Resonate Global Mission and a former bivocational pastor herself, says more than half of CRC church planters hold jobs in addition to their pastoral roles, and that may eventually lead to changes in denominational policy.

“What is already happening in practice, our denominational polity hasn’t caught up to yet,” Schenkel said. “The structures and systems that we run our denomination by haven’t changed to accommodate that yet.”

The conference was put together by the Financial Shalom project, an initiative that seeks to assist CRC pastors who face financial challenges through providing support for immediate financial needs as well as long-term financial management training.

—Gregory Chandler

Multisite Churches: One Ministry, Many Places, Some Challenges

Multisite churches are a growing trend among churches in North America and around the world. In most of these churches, leadership is based in a central location while one or more campuses worship in separate spaces but form a single church with a shared vision, mission, and goals.

A campus might be a school gym, movie theater, or church building. Sermons might be live-streamed or preached in person by a pastor. Outreach programs and weekly small groups might happen at one of the campuses or in homes or public spaces.

While the movement started about 20 years ago, it's relatively new to the Christian Reformed Church. Madison Square in Grand Rapids, Mich.; The Tapestry in Richmond, B.C.; Thrive Ministries in Fulton, Ill.; and mosaicHouse in Edmonton, Alta., are some examples. One of the newest multisite churches in the CRC is Forest City Community Church (FCCC) in London, Ont., which opened an East London campus in January 2018.

New ways of doing things come with both challenges and opportunities. Decisions need to be made about location, worship space, leadership structure, and who will become part of the new campus.

One of the opportunities, said FCCC senior pastor Rob Hogendoorn, is reaching new people with the good news of Jesus—the very heart of the church's mission. Forest City is a growing church that has expanded several times and was outgrowing its existing space. Church leadership wanted to work creatively with this momentum.

The church already had a presence in the city, said Hogendoorn. "There's an awareness of it in a lot of people who are not Christians [and] it has a unique vibe. And so you sort of go, 'Can we actually reach



(above) Forest City Community Church's original campus in London, Ont.



(left) The site of Forest City Community Church's new East London campus.

more people with what we're doing, in a different part of the city?"

After prayer and discussion, church leaders eventually settled on East London, an economically disadvantaged part of the city. The church's youth pastor was from East London, had a heart for the people there, and was willing to serve as a campus leader for the new site.

Soon after announcing the planned new site to his congregation, Hogendoorn reached out to the pastors of two CRC churches already in East London. He wanted to give them a heads-up about the new site, assuring them that "the last people our church is trying to reach are people who are [already] going to church in East London."

The development was presented to Classis Chatham, the regional group of churches, just months before the launch of the new site. There was some surprise and a few questions but more excitement and encouragement. "It's a new thing for many of us," noted classis ministry committee chair Derek Bouma, and with new things naturally come

questions. The bigger question, said Bouma, is, "How will God use this new site to bring the gospel to the people who need it most?"

Like every other church in the regional group, a multisite church sends two delegates to classis meetings, and denominational ministry shares are calculated on a per-member basis.

For congregations considering moving to a multisite model, Hogendoorn suggested looking for three things: experienced growth and growth potential; a place in the community where what you're doing can expand the reach of the gospel; and a core group of people willing to become part of the new site.

—Anita Brinkman

What to Watch for at Synod 2018

Perusal of the *Agenda for Synod 2018* indicates that Synod 2018 may pick up where Synod 2017 left off, when fault lines appeared over how the Christian Reformed church carries out its mission to “do justice, show mercy, and walk humbly with God.”

Nearly 200 delegates and advisors will gather from June 7-14 at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. (Synod is the annual general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church.)

Justice

Church members agree that the denomination must promote mercy and justice, but there is disagreement about how that should happen. Two classes (regional groups of churches) are asking synod to tell CRC staff to stop lobbying on behalf of the denomination (*Agenda*, pp. 319-330). Another overture wants better discussion and education focused on biblical principles for public discipleship (pp. 317-319).

A report with input from staff of several denominational agencies, at the request of the executive director, commenting on the overtures noted that synod has a long history of providing the instructions for the activities found inappropriate in these overtures. The report also noted that “our denomination has a history of leaning into an ecclesiology that embraces justice and reconciliation work. When synod provides an instruction



relative to social justice action to its ministries, for example, the church assumes that such matters have moved into the ecclesiastical realm given their doctrinal and/or ethical gravitas.”

The Council of Delegates endorsed the report and is forwarding it to the synod advisory committee dealing with the overtures. It will not be distributed to all delegates or published in the supplementary synod agenda materials. (See p. 19.) The Council of Delegates acts on behalf of synod between annual meetings of synod.

Reformed Church in America

This year, the annual synod of the Reformed Church in America, the CRC’s closest sister denomination, is meeting at the same time at Calvin College. Delegates from both synods will spend a lot of time together in worship, workshops, plenary sessions, and advisory committee sessions. The joint nature of the two synods is one ongoing result

of the so-called Pella Accord struck in 2014. That year, both denominations agreed that they are to “act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel [us] to act separately.”

The two denominations already have several joint church plants, combined ministries such as Disability Concerns, and joint grants for various projects. At this synod, delegates from both synods will gather in groups of 20 to address topics of interest in both denominations. Last year, both synods viewed a video about options for further collaboration or the creation of a new denomination. Some delegates will see the same video and hear the feedback given then.

Classis and Commissioned Pastors

Of course, synod spends much time on internal issues. This year, delegates will take a closer look at the role of classis, including a request to change the definition of classis in the Church Order (*Agenda*, pp. 44-50).

A denominational classis renewal group wants each classis to submit a ministry plan to synod. A few churches want to move to different classes based on whether the classis does or doesn’t allow women to be classis delegates. One classis wants synod to allow one classis to appeal directly to another rather than going through synod (*Agenda*, pp. 312-314).

Also related to classis are extensive changes to Church Order Article 23 being recommended by the CRC’s Candidacy Committee. Article 23 deals with the position of commissioned pastors, people who are ordained to serve in a specific role within a specific classis (*Agenda*, pp. 203-228).



Karen Huttenga

Safe Church

Synod 2018 is receiving a request that it address patterns of abuse of power in the churches (*Agenda*, pp. 282-307). In a related matter, the CRC's Council of Delegates heard that the Safe Church office is getting increasing numbers of calls regarding incidents of abuse in the #MeToo movement creating heightened awareness of abuse in North America. (See p. 20.)

The Council of Delegates is sending a report to synod that points to the Abuse Victims Task Force report approved by Synod 2010. Among the recommendations in that report was to allocate resources to provide support for pastoral care and healing (*Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 862-866).

Faith Formation

Classis Huron wants Synod 2018 to approve funding for new curriculum development. The Council of Delegates previously approved curriculum proposals but said there was no money to fund it. Faith Formation Ministries has raised some money outside of ministry shares

and hopes to receive money from a proposed ministry shares increase.

Classis Huron also wants synod to clarify the mandate of Faith Formation Ministries. When the Faith Alive board was disbanded in 2013, synod said that critical functions, such as Sunday school curricula, would be continued. But it never specified who would make that happen. This overture wants that specified.

Ministry Shares

The Council of Delegates is recommending that Synod 2018 approve an increase of \$7 to ministry shares total. Ministry shares are monies collected from congregations for shared denominational ministries.

That would bring the amount per adult member to \$346.48 for the calendar year 2019. If approved, it will be the first increase since 2016. The reality is that the denomination only receives about 60 percent of the recommended amount each year from the churches.

The recommended allocation to the major ministry agencies and educational institutions remains the same. The additional money would be allocated to Congregational Ministries, which includes, among others, Faith Formation Ministries, Candidacy, Chaplaincy and Care, Pastor Church Resources, and Safe Church.

In other discussions by delegates, there seemed to be an expectation that the entire amount would go to Faith Formation Ministries for curriculum work. However, Safe Church also needs more resources.

John Bolt, Director of Finance and Operations for the CRC, said, "The \$7 ministry shares increase comes with no strings attached and is not pre-designated for a particular ministry but will be allocated within Congregational Services by the leadership as needed."

Listen More, Speak Less

It will be a full week with some tough discussions. The question is whether delegates will heed the urging of Cor Pool, president of Synod 2017. In his closing address, he urged delegates to "keep moving forward with humble hearts. Listen more. Speak less. Build oneness and unity."

—Gayla R. Postma

Detroit Church Plant Expresses God's Steadfast Love

The home base for a recent church plant in Detroit, Mich. is just that—a home.

Hesed Community Church has taken root in a community that has seen significant disinvestment—people packing up and leaving—even by churches. So Hesed's pastors, Mark Van Anandel and Nate Bull, wanting to bring a consistent presence of the body of Christ into the neighborhood, bought a house.

Van Anandel noted that God has not forgotten the people living in the Brightmoor community and is meeting people's needs. The Hebrew word *hesed* means "covenant-keeping love of the Father," often translated as "steadfast love." Frequent questions about its meaning open opportunities to speak of the desire to demonstrate God's love within Detroit's neighborhoods.

The Hesed ministry began through the street ministry of Bull and Van Anandel, ordained, respectively, in the Reformed

Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church. People still come to the ministry house through relationships developed on the streets. Others come through word of mouth. Now identified by many as the Prayer House, according to Van Anandel, Hesed has also become known as the place to do laundry, get food or clothing, or take a shower. Because tangible needs are being met daily, Hesed is perceived as a friend in the neighborhood.

Hesed's formal gatherings are on Thursdays, when lunch is provided and Bible study occurs, and on Fridays, when discipleship class is held. The discipleship group often accompanies Bull and Van Anandel when they preach in partner churches and occasionally hold worship services with other neighborhood gatherings of Christians.

This unique ministry is the result of God calling both Van Anandel and Bull to this



Pastors Mark Van Anandel (left) and Nate Bull.

work and of a collaborative church planting effort of the CRC and RCA. The two denominations established the Detroit Kingdom Enterprise Zone in 2012, paving the way for Hesed, whose leadership team now has representatives from CRC and RCA congregations near Detroit. Resonate Global Mission, the home and global mission arm of the CRC, supports the work as a partner.

—Anita Ensing Beem

The Banner Honored with Press Awards

In April *The Banner* received awards from both the Evangelical Press Association (EPA) and the Associated Church Press (ACP) for work published in 2017. Commenting on the magazine's overall variety and balance of content, an EPA judge wrote, "*Banner* provides many voices and types of articles—a feast!"



ACP awards included the following:

Awards of Merit

"The Disabled Savior" by Shiao Chong (Apr. 2017)

"Reading the New Testament with Jewish Eyes" by Shiao Chong (Oct. 2017)

Honorable Mentions

Synod Coverage 2017 by Shiao Chong (Editor), Gayla Postma, Peter Euwema, Karen Huttenga

"Do Justice, Love Mercy—But How and When?" by Gayla R. Postma (July/Aug. 2017)

"The Five Solas," series by James R. Payton, Stephen Martin, Shiao Chong, Sarah Schreiber, Reginald Smith

EPA awards included the following:

Editorial, Second Place: "Stand Together"—Shiao Chong (Feb. 2017)

Department, Second Place: "Just for Kids"—Sandy Swartzentruber, Rachel Lancashire

Cause of the Year Illustration/Photo: The Reformation, Second Place: "The Reformation: What Did We Gain? What Did We Lose?"—Frank Gutbrod, Dean Heetderks (Oct. 2017)

READ MORE ONLINE

Council of Delegates

Comments on Justice Overtures

Two overtures (requests) are going to Synod 2018 asking that denominational staff be constrained from issuing statements on political issues on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church. Synod is the annual assembly of the CRC. The denomination's Council of Delegates (COD) has the right to comment on overtures going to synod, and for these overtures, it did.

The overture from Classis Columbia (a regional group of churches) noted that "when the agencies and offices of our denomination take stances and engage in political lobbying on these complex issues on behalf of the entire denomination, they are purporting to speak with one voice for every member of the Christian Reformed Church in North America." It wants synod to instruct ministry agencies to stop political lobbying on behalf of the denomination and instead "encourage the denominational agencies to continue to use their resources to help members of the Christian Reformed Church think biblically about matters of biblical justice" (*Agenda for Synod 2018*, pp. 323-330).

Similarly, Classis Minnkota wants the CRC's Council of Delegates to instruct agencies to "take up ecclesiastical matters only and to refrain from political advocacy," stating that stepping beyond that violates the denomination's Church Order. The overture states that political advocacy "brings the divided world of politics into the church, creating further division; arrogantly asserts only one political solution into gray areas where godly Christians can disagree; and confuses the pure preaching of the gospel with mere human opinion." Further, the overture states, political advocacy applies general principles approved by synod to specific policy positions and elevates those positions to that of the Christian Reformed Church (*Agenda for Synod 2018*, pp. 319-323).

A report written with input from staff of several denominational agencies, at the request of the executive director, commenting on the overtures was subsequently endorsed by the council. It pointed out that statements issued over the name of a ministry agency or the executive director are not intended to be representative of the denomination. It pointed to CRC's Office of Social Justice website FAQ section that explains it this way: "When the CRCNA articulates a view on a social or political matter (or when it is silent on those matters), it does so as a broad association of church members, not as a collection of individuals who all agree on everything."

The report also noted that synod has a long history of providing the instructions for the activities found inappropriate in these overtures. "The COD may wish to remind synod that most often synod has provided the initial instruction behind CRCNA social justice activity. . . . CRCNA ministries . . . have faithfully responded to these instructions and have stepped into the political realm, without partisan commitments, as a result." It also noted that "our denomination has a history of leaning into an ecclesiology that embraces justice and reconciliation work. When synod provides an instruction relative to social justice action to its ministries, for example, the church assumes that such matters have moved into the ecclesiastical realm given their doctrinal and/or ethical gravitas."

Delegate Susan Hoekema, Classis Muskegon, said the request for endorsement of the report "came about partly because of the overtures and because staff has really been under fire this year about the work they are doing."

Tim Bosscher, Classis Grandville, said that it is possible for a church member to take a different view, and it's possible many people do. "At the end of the day, I don't question the rightness of what

you're doing. I question the wisdom. I don't think this will cause a breakaway of churches, but dribs and drabs of people saying 'I didn't leave the Christian Reformed church, the CRC left me,' if they don't feel they have a voice."

The COD endorsed the report and is sending it to synod, but only to the advisory committee dealing with the overtures. That means that other delegates will not see it, and it will not be included in the supplementary *Agenda* materials.

In setting this precedent, COD chairperson Paul DeVries said, "By making our comments directly to the advisory committee (as opposed to public comments through the agenda supplement), the COD can forward appropriate and helpful communications without unduly influencing the process. This allows synod itself, through its advisory committees, to be fully informed while maintaining the right of synod to determine what to do with the information."

—Gayla R. Postma

NOTEWORTHY

Captain Thomas Walcott, an ordained chaplain of the Christian Reformed church, was installed as the **11th Chaplain of the Coast Guard** in a change of watch ceremony April 12, 2018.



Disability Concerns, the joint ministry of the CRC and Reformed Church of America that promotes belonging and serving by people of all abilities, received an **Award of Excellence from the Associated Church Press Awards** for its "best in class" blog (online collection of personal stories). network.crcna.org/disability-concerns

Safe Church Work Increasing Exponentially

Two years ago, in the first quarter of the year, Safe Church director Bonnie Nicholas received seven calls concerning abuse incidents. Last year she received 14 calls in the first quarter. This year during the first quarter the number was already at 28.

That was the report heard by the Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church at its May meeting. Safe Church is charged with education and abuse prevention in the churches.

The Mercy and Justice Committee of the council said that the increase in the work requires more resources. The committee pointed to the Abuse Victims Task Force

report approved by Synod 2010 (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC). Among the recommendations in that report was one to allocate resources to provide support for pastoral care and healing (*Acts of Synod 2010*, pp. 862-866).

Susan Hoekema, Classis Muskegon, said, "We're turning back to synod and saying we need resources allocated."

She noted that with the #MeToo movement, North America is facing a heightened awareness of abuse. "The churches need to step up."

The question is where the money would come from. Chris DeWinter, Classis Niagara, wanted to know what resources

were being asked for and from where. "We're leaving that to synod," she said. "Part of that could come from an increase in ministry shares."

Executive director Steven Timmermans noted that synod requires a financial plan for recommendations. "I'm not saying it isn't worthy," he told delegates. "We have a budget, staff worked very hard on it. It doesn't have other money in it."

The delegates voted to send the request to Synod 2018.

—Gayla R. Postma

Taizé Services Provide Contemplation on Campus

Brian Bork is a Christian Reformed campus chaplain at the University of Waterloo, in Waterloo, Ont. In his work within the campus community, Bork tries to foster worship, discussion, and fellowship in some creative ways: pub discussions, a Veritas Forum, collective kitchen nights, mentoring, and a book club. So when a colleague in chaplaincy suggested ecumenical Taizé-style worship services, Bork was excited about the opportunity.

"The world can be abrasive and distracting and . . . frenetic," said Bork. "[Taizé-style worship] is an alternative to that. There's space to hear yourself and hear others sing, and to hear Scripture."

Taizé is a contemplative style of worship that originated in France. The idea to bring the services to Waterloo campus came from Bork's colleagues at Conrad Grebel, a Mennonite college within the university. They work together on



the services each month during the university year. The first service, held in the fall of 2017 in the Conrad Grebel chapel, drew about 70 people from both the college community and the surrounding area.

Since then, services have been held in the fieldstone basement of the oldest building on campus, an 1860s farmhouse called Brubacher House. About 20 to 25 people have been attending. "There

are candles everywhere, and a Christ candle in the middle of a circle of chairs, and people come and sit in the circle," said Bork. "We have a fire going in the fireplace."

While Taizé worship is often a cappella, Bork and two other musicians play guitar, keyboard, and violin, leading worshipers in slowly singing eight or nine songs. This is followed by five minutes of silent contemplation and then Scripture reading. Typical of Taizé worship, there is no sermon or offering.

Reflecting on the value of the quiet, slow style of Taizé, Bork noted, "I think campuses right now in general are preoccupied with mental health and wellness, and I think this is a way of offering a deeply spiritual means to address busy lives and maybe overwhelmed lives . . . that other styles of worship might not necessarily meet in the same way."

—Anita Brinkman

News Digest



Trinity Christian College Hosts End of Life Care Conference

On April 16, Trinity's departments of nursing, social work, philosophy, and chaplaincy/theology presented a day-long conference open to students as well as hospice workers, volunteers, and medical staff from local institutions. Afternoon sessions included palliative, patient, and family care as well as a philosophical look at the moment of death. Dr. Farr A. Curlin, co-director of the Theology, Medicine, and Culture Initiative at Duke Divinity School, and Gilbert Meilaender, Ramsey Fellow at the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture, delivered the plenary session focused on end of life sedation.



'Just Show Up' Retreat Blesses Pastors

Pastors of Korean Christian Reformed congregations near Seattle and Tacoma, Wash., came together March 8-9 for a "Just Show Up" Book Club retreat. Organized by the Korean ministry of the CRC, the event was partially supported by a grant received from Grace and Mercy Foundation. Participants included pastors who attend Just Show Up meetings every Thursday and a couple of pastors from other denominations. They enjoyed learning and sharing opinions as they reviewed *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* by Peter Scazzero and *Preaching* by Tim Keller.



'Tuesdays at First' Offer Fellowship, Learning

First CRC in Sarnia, Ont., hosts free community seminars every April as a way of creating connections. The events, which have run for a few years, first presented topics delivered by members of the church. They later came up with the name Tuesdays at First, which volunteer John DeGroot said is a spin on the book *Tuesdays with Morrie*, and opened the floor to leaders and topics with broad appeal. One well-attended seminar this year was "Experiences as a Muslim" led by Seema Shahjahan, a member of the Sarnia Muslim Association and an adjunct faculty member at Lambton College.

Congregation Teaches Spiritual Conversation Skills

Members of Hope in Christ Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in Bellingham, Wash., have been learning and practicing nine arts of spiritual conversation in monthly gatherings. The skills are a step toward growing in evangelism as part of the congregation's focus on renewal. After discussing things like noticing, listening, and asking questions, participants are encouraged to practice and to come to the next training session with stories of their experiences. "This sharing of evangelism encounters is new to our congregation and is beginning to spur others in the church to pray and share," said pastor Scott Roberts.

— Banner correspondents

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IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Howard (Howie) Vanderwell

1937-2018

A great storyteller and a man of warmth and kindness, Howard Vanderwell will be remembered for his pastoral and mentoring presence. He died on March 23 after a 15-month valiant fight with pancreatic cancer.

After ordination in 1962, Vanderwell pastored the following Christian Reformed churches: Lebanon, Iowa; Trinity, Jenison, Mich.; Bethel, Lansing, Ill.; and Hillcrest, Hudsonville, Mich. He also received a D.Min. from California's Westminster Theological Seminary. After 40 years as a congregational pastor, Vanderwell began a second career as a resource specialist and adjunct professor of worship with the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship and Calvin Seminary, where he served until two weeks before his death.

A delegate to synod numerous times, Vanderwell served as its president three times. He is the author of many books, including *Proven Promises*, a devotional written from the perspective of his own encounters with cancer. He enjoyed gardening, walking, photography, and model railroading. In 2017, he received Calvin Seminary's Distinguished Alumni Award.

Vanderwell leaves behind Ellie, his wife of 57 years; three sons and their spouses; and 10 grandchildren. He was predeceased by his daughter, Barbara Jean.

— Janet Greidanus



Equipping



the Global



Church

by Brian Clark and Nancy Vander Meer

EVERY SATURDAY a group of Iranian Christians gathers for worship. Most are new to the Christian faith, and more newcomers join almost every week. Together they sing songs, dig deeper into God's Word, and fellowship with one another in the Farsi language they grew up with.

As each week's service draws to a close, a sudden change takes place—a change that represents the larger culture these believers are adjusting to, as well as the spiritual freedom they now have. They sing a final song in German.

These worship services take place in an emerging church in Berlin, Germany, where Iranian refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants can meet to find community and feel God's presence. The Christian Reformed Church is coming alongside this congregation by supporting the ministry of Dave Kromminga and Mary Buteyn, who serve with Resonate Global Mission in the areas of pastoral care, language education, and leadership training.

This ministry also stirs up images from the book of Acts and Pentecost—a time when the Holy Spirit used the gift of languages to send the church to the world. Today the agencies of the CRC continue to join in the work that began on Pentecost, equipping congregations and denominations across the globe with their unique areas of focus.

Equipping the CRC of Sierra Leone in Word and Deed

Sometimes equipping the global church takes place before a community even considers that the Spirit is at work there. Such was the case in the village of Medina, Sierra Leone.

Like the Islamic holy city in Saudi Arabia that Medina is named after, almost everyone living in this community adheres to Islam. But when the people looked for assistance in developing their community to reduce poverty, they turned to Christian Extension Services (CES).

World Renew and Resonate Global Mission established CES in the 1980s as a way to work together in word and deed in Sierra Leone. Today CES is run by national leaders; through it, the CRC in North America continues to provide food for the body and the spirit among communities where poverty is a way of life.

"CES is the John the Baptist of our communities!" says Istifanus Bahago, referring to how the agency helps prepare the way for Christ. Bahago serves as a missionary in Sierra Leone in partnership with Resonate and the CRC of Nigeria.

Four years ago, CES began working in Medina. CES helped the people organize a leadership team whose members identified growing more rice as their most urgent need. In response, CES began to assist them with a sustainable agriculture and food security program and, later, a community grain-storage building.

The villagers provided local materials including sand, stones, and wood. With gifts from CRC members and congregations to World Renew, CES provided roofing, cement, paint, and doors.

But the story hardly ends there.

During a follow-up meeting with leaders from CES and Medina, a group of about 20 community members suddenly stood up. In their local language, they began to sing.

"It turned out they were a small group of Christians singing gospel songs they had learned!" said Daniel Lepp Friesen, World Renew consultant in Sierra Leone. "Following the songs, one of the singers stepped forward and asked if CES could assist them in building a church meeting space."

With an enthusiastic "Yes!", CES workers returned to the office they share with Resonate to pass along the request. Soon after, Bahago and other pastors met with the people of Medina in a village schoolroom for worship and prayer. A group of more than 30 people attended the first worship service, and some gave their life to Christ that day.

God's work in Medina demonstrates the transforming power of the gospel and people's "willingness to accept Jesus as their personal Savior," said Bahago, who continues to meet with members of Medina to plan the church building's construction—a project made possible through support from Resonate.

"Praise God with us for these combined results, which are exciting developments in the global growth of the church of Jesus Christ!" said Lepp Friesen.

The Journey Continues: Equipping the Global Church through Media and Seminary Training

Dawei Lin's* journey to faith eventually led him from his home in China to Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich. Since then, God has continued working in Lin's life to prepare him to return to China and work with the new media outreach of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI).

"Our goal has been to find indigenous Chinese writers who can speak authentically into the culture in China," explained Jerry An, BTGMI's Chinese ministry leader. "Dawei has taken on the responsibilities of editor for the Chinese *Today*."

The Chinese *Today*, which celebrates 30 years of ministry this year, has primarily been translations of the English versions of the *Today* devotional.

“Under Dawei’s leadership, we will continue to translate some English devotionals to maintain the rich heritage of the CRC as we continue to grow and strengthen the church in China,” An added, “but we will also recruit more Chinese authors to write the devotionals.”

The Chinese *Today* is available in audio form, on a ministry app, through social media, and by email subscription.

Long before he had heard of BTGMI and the CRC, Lin had been serving as a church planter for believers in their 20s and 30s. In that ministry, he used the Chinese *Today* to disciple new believers. During this time, Lin became convicted that he needed more training to serve this young church. That’s when God led him to Calvin Seminary in 2013.

Soon after coming to Calvin, Lin met Rev. Jimmy Lin (no relation), BTGMI’s Chinese ministry leader at the time. Rev. Lin recognized Dawei Lin’s gifts and asked him to contribute to the Chinese *Today* as an intern. Dawei’s wife, Meilin,* also helped translate the *Today* devotional for the Chinese ministry.

The relationship between the Lins and BTGMI continued to grow. After his graduation from Calvin Seminary, Dawei Lin was sure of his calling: Return to China to teach the Reformed faith in a local seminary and help believers grow in faith through BTGMI’s new-media resources.

“I have experienced God’s providence and his hand on my life,” testified Lin. “Through the entire process, God affirmed his will to lead me for future ministry.”

*names changed to protect their identities

Equipping South American Pastors through Timothy Leadership Training

While each of the four CRCNA ministries mentioned—Resonate Global Mission, World Renew, BTGMI, and Calvin Theological Seminary—equip the global church in unique ways, they all use their own specific areas of focus to train biblical leaders. To this end, all four ministries partner with the Timothy Leadership Training Program.

Jose Never, a pastor from Colombia, summed up TLT’s purpose at the first annual Andean Summit of TLT in Peru: “We have been to Bible school, and we know what a pastor does but not how to do it,” said Never. “TLT taught us how to be pastors.”

At the summit, Never joined about 60 other TLT advanced trainers in sharing best practices learned through TLT, excitedly sharing the impact the training made in these pastors’ communities in Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador.

One pastor shared how TLT’s stewardship manual helped him earn more money to replace his church’s leaky thatched-roof building with a concrete structure, allowing his church to worship through the entire rainy season.



Peruvians who started taking part in Timothy Leadership Training 10 years ago organized and led the first annual Andean summit in February.

Jennifer Owens, TLT’s finance and operation manager, said the event was like “experiencing an image of the kingdom of God here on earth.”


“Standing in the same room worshipping together were leaders from very different denominations, from conservative Baptists to Pentecostals, and from metropolitan cities like Lima to tribal mountain groups.”

Owens continued, “It is very unusual that these groups would attend the same event, let alone do so to learn from one another. It was clear this unity had gone past the surface when they invited the Pentecostal [pastor] to pray over the group!”

TLT trainings take place in more than 40 countries worldwide, but these pastors in South America are already seeing a multiplication effect just from the training they have received.

A Bolivian pastor at the event shared how a group from Mali, West Africa, were in Bolivia for vacation. While there, they heard about TLT and traveled deep into a small jungle village to take the first course during their vacation. Now they are back in Mali and are excited to implement their training at their own churches.

“From the jungles of Peru to Mali and beyond, it was a blessing to see God at work among these pastors and leaders who passionately care about teaching others how to pastor,” Owens said.

Whether you are passionate about planting churches, training leaders, community development, or media ministry, thank you for supporting ministries of the CRC that equip our global church. 

International Student Scholars

Explore New Avenues at Calvin Seminary

TWO ESTABLISHED Chinese scholars at the forefronts of their fields never imagined that one conversation would lead them to study in West Michigan, creating new connections and bringing fresh approaches to research into Reformed thought. But in the summer of 2010, one conversation did just that.

Spouses Jin Li and Mary Ma came to Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) from Shanghai, China. Li, an economic historian at a prestigious university, had served in campus fellowships and house churches for over a decade in Shanghai; Ma was a sociology faculty member at another esteemed university.

In 2010 Li and Ma were awarded a research grant to conduct a multicity study of urban churches, allowing them to travel to the U.S. for an academic conference. There the pair met Corwin Smidt, then director of the Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics at Calvin College. Smidt introduced them to the work of Calvin Seminary.

Ma recalls their first meeting: “[Smidt] boldly witnessed the Reformed faith to a group of Chinese scholars, most of whom were atheists.” Li and Ma, who are Christians, quickly recognized God’s hand in their meeting with the outspoken Smidt.

Li and Ma’s interest in the works of Abraham Kuyper and other Reformed theologians, as well as potential access to Reformed scholars in a wide range of academic disciplines through nearby Calvin College, further solidified their desire to attend the seminary. The couple was admitted for the 2012-13 academic year. After receiving an offer of scholarship support, it was clear that Calvin Seminary would be the next step for the faithful and academically curious duo.

The couple has thrived in the Calvin community. Despite having impressive résumés before starting their Calvin Seminary education, both Li and Ma wholeheartedly



Spouses Jin Li and Mary Ma are accomplished academics who came to Calvin Theological Seminary from Shanghai, China. They credit the seminary with helping to shape their understanding of Reformed theology.

agree that their Calvin Seminary studies have been rich and formative.

“As we expected, CTS proved to be a seminary with solid intellectual groundings,” Ma noted. “The required readings and instruction for each class we took were of good quality to prepare us both academically and spiritually. Classics are valued here, but there is also room for theological dialogue about contemporary issues.”

While Li continues his doctoral program in philosophical and systematic theology, Ma completed her master’s in theological studies in 2016 and now serves as a senior research fellow at the Henry Institute.

“Although the seminary is always in flux with people joining programs and graduating, there is always a community that cares,” Ma said. “In our experience, this sense of community is not in abstract terms. We have staff members who befriended us and have become our go-to persons when we are in need. Our hearts bonded with them, and we know they will continue to be our confidants and prayer support.”

—Amanda Greenhoe, freelance writer
for Calvin Theological Seminary

Calvin Seminary’s international student body is diverse. Historically the seminary has attracted many students from South Korea, but in recent years the list of places students come from has grown. Students regularly come from China, Indonesia, Nigeria, Brazil, and Kenya. Overall, 30 countries are represented in the student body. The seminary’s international student population (those coming from outside of North America) has grown from 59 students in 2008 to 88 students in 2017. This growth is exciting for the seminary community. President Julius Medenblik says: “At Calvin Seminary, we have the privilege of meeting Christians from across the world, which helps all of us grow as witnesses of the gospel.”

The View from Here

God Is Using the CRC to Advance His Kingdom

WHILE THE CHURCH is shrinking in North America, globally the church is growing. This has shifted how we carry out global ministry.

The good news is that the Holy Spirit is using the Christian Reformed Church in North America to bless the church worldwide through organizations such as Back to God Ministries International, Resonate Global Mission, and World Renew. These groups serve around the world, often in partnership with local churches and parachurch organizations.

In addition, for more than 20 years the Timothy Leadership Training Initiative (TLTI) and its network of ministry partners have been developing church leaders in over 50 countries by offering ministry-focused training in more than 30 languages.

We also are participating with the global church in higher education. The University of Mkar (Nigeria) and the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, for example, both identify CRC representatives as instrumental in their development. And Dr. John Kromminga, after retiring as president of Calvin Theological Seminary, became president of International Theological Seminary in El Monte, Calif., just two years after its founding. This school was designed to equip church leaders from developing countries to grow the church in their own communities.

Similarly, Dr. Theodore Lim, a Christian Reformed pastor from Los Angeles, regularly steps into a post at Tahan Theological College and Seminary in Myanmar, and a small group of Christian Reformed pastors and members support the continued development of the Reformed theological college.

And we can't overlook the hundreds of international students who have attended Calvin Theological Seminary or associated institutions of higher education. The kingdom advances when these students return home and become leaders in their churches either from the pew or the pulpit.

Before we conclude that our work is sufficient, let me share what happened after Synod 2017. Many representatives from partner denominations in East Africa attended synod as ecumenical delegates. They stayed for two extra days and met with representatives from Calvin College, Calvin Seminary, Partners Worldwide, World Renew, TLTI, and others.

The best part of this post-synod consultation was to see brothers and sisters working as colleagues in ministry. While seeking to avoid the trap of ecclesiastical colonialism, it soon became clear that the next frontier for these East African churches—a frontier toward which they encouraged us to travel with them—is leadership training.

Their churches, they said, have grown far more quickly than their ability to identify and train pastors and other church leaders. As a result, members step into these roles with little or no training. The basic introductory teaching provided by TLTI meets part of this need. However, the delegates spoke fervently of the need for the next level of education: more in-depth theological education short of seminary and not necessarily part of a formal degree program—something that might be appropriate for those seeking to serve as commissioned pastors in North America.

Might the CRC be able to help? We have formal education programs at

Calvin Seminary that have already been modified to reach Hispanic pastors who are serving churches but need a certificate in theology. We have ancillary groups such as the Church Leadership Center at Kuyper College, a robust program that has developed strong curricular and instructional methods for those seeking non-formal routes to ministry in North America. Is there more we could do?

Imagine with me what the future might include: Calvin Seminary and others of our affiliated colleges converting their robust theology and ministry programs into accessible (and often online) non-formal certificate programs; TLTI using its network to help launch such programs in partnership with African denominations; and best of all, groups of pastors in the rapidly growing churches of the global south deepening their knowledge and furthering their learning while serving their congregations.

Are we willing to journey with our ecumenical partners toward this new frontier?



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

Spanish and Korean translations of this article are available at TheBanner.org.

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Finding Hope in Times of Trauma

ONE DAY, Moussa got on his bike and rode down a path. When he neared some bushes, several bandits jumped out and blocked his path. They stole his money and his bicycle. “I worked hard for the money and the bike,” he said. “Now they are gone. There’s nothing I can do.”

The scene above comes from a skit performed by members in a West African community troubled by the problem of theft in their area.

The scene ended with Halima, played by one of the participants, spreading encouragement in light of the situation: “I know it is so troubling what is happening with the increased banditry in our area. We must continue to keep praying to God for safety but also for wisdom and courage to act together. If we join forces, there must be something we can do to fight against it.”

But sometimes it can be hard to feel God’s protection.

Caleb experienced this directly when armed bandits entered his home, calling him by name and holding his family at gunpoint while they searched for money.

Traumatized by the situation, Caleb could hardly function. He lived in fear and shame, continually asking himself how people who knew him by name could do this. “I resolved never to forgive them,” he admitted.

Because trauma and anger are problems that paralyze many people in West Africa, World Renew funds workshops using the curriculum of the Trauma Healing Institute to help people address unresolved trauma resulting from situations like Caleb’s.

Full of unforgiveness, Caleb attended the workshop and experienced a transformation: “I realized that what I was feeling was completely normal. The road to healing is long, but now at least I know where to start!”

In addition to workshops such as the one Caleb attended, World Renew, along with partnering organization Showing Everyone Love, invited representatives from a nearby village to figure out what they could do as a community to address the problem of increasing theft.



Caleb (in the khaki shirt) attended a trauma healing workshop in his community.

By learning how to forgive and how to tackle these underlying forces, the cycles of violence could stop.

Participants were asked which character from the skit they felt more like: Moussa or Halima.

Before the gathering, the community members all said they felt more like Moussa, discouraged and hopeless. Afterward, everyone said they felt more like Halima, empowered by knowing there is something they can do. Together they made a plan to mobilize a community watch. One year later, after taking this collective action, the village reported that theft in the community has decreased.

—Allison Todd, World Renew

An Inspirational, Adventurous Life

ABOUT HIS LIFE following graduation in 2017 from Calvin College, Garrett Bazany said modestly, “Just me living my normal life and staying active, and trying to find ways to make things work, is making a difference in other people’s lives.”

But take a quick scan of Bazany’s Instagram and Facebook pages and it’s pretty clear he isn’t living a “normal life.”

From paragliding to mountain biking, kayaking to wakeboarding, Bazany’s life screams “adventure.” “When a new opportunity presents itself, I take advantage of it,” said Bazany.

What makes Bazany’s adventures even more amazing is that he does everything without being able to move the lower half of his body.

In 2010, Bazany landed on his neck attempting to do a double backflip on his backyard trampoline. The injury left him paralyzed from the chest down.

As a high school cross-country runner, skier, and adventure enthusiast, that new reality didn’t sit well.

“I had about a week of ‘Woe is me, what am I going to do with my life?’” recalled Bazany.

But it didn’t take long before a switch flipped. “I have arms too. I realized the adaptive sports that are out there. I can still be active and do things like that.”

And so he has. Opportunities he never could have imagined are now open to him.

Last year, with the help of a friend and use of a walker, he made his way across the stage for graduation from Calvin College.

Most recently he went to Korea, where he skied alongside Korean youth before attending the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games as a spectator.

The project Adaptive Sport for Social Change through the National Ability Center allowed Bazany and 11 other individuals from the U.S. with disabilities to spend three days in PyeongChang in March working with 40 Korean youth with disabilities, inspiring them to see the possibilities that adaptive sports can offer.



Garrett Bazany hit the slopes in Korea before attending the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games as a spectator.

Following their time skiing together, they attended a number of events at the Paralympics.

“I would never have imagined I’d come this far in eight years,” said Bazany. “I never thought I’d make a difference internationally, make a difference for these Korean youths. The things I’ve been doing here [in the U.S.] and taking for granted are not present everywhere, and these kids [in Korea] don’t have as many opportunities. Now I’m helping create those opportunities.”

Bazany sees plenty of opportunities in his future as well. He plans to move west in the next year to study to become a physician’s assistant. And he hopes to start his next adventure: training at the National Ability Center in Park City, Utah, to try to qualify for the next Paralympics.

“A lot of coaches say I have a lot of potential to be good because of my attitude and work ethic,” said Bazany.

“The injury has made me who I am. It’s given me opportunities I never would have had and allowed me to impact others’ lives in ways that wouldn’t have been possible without the injury. You could be bummed out and sit there thinking ‘what if,’ but I realize this is God’s purpose in my life and continue to stay positive.”

—Matt Kucinski, Calvin College

'I Am Not My Own' Tour to Visit CRC Congregations Across Canada

IN THE LEAD-UP to next year's Canadian Gathering, musician and worship leader Jeremy Benjamin will be spreading a musical message from the Heidelberg Catechism to Christian Reformed congregations across Canada.

Accompanied by his wife, Lara, and their two children, Benjamin will be driving an RV and stopping every week along the route to visit and sing his songs at Christian Reformed churches and local Christian schools.

A feature of each stop will be teaching the crowd to sing "I Am Not My Own," which comes from the first Q&A of the Heidelberg Catechism. Thousands of voices will be recorded for inclusion on Benjamin's album launching next spring.

The "I Am Not My Own" tour, based on Benjamin's song, will begin in June at Charlottetown CRC on Prince Edward Island. After visiting nearly 50 churches, Benjamin will pause the tour in British Columbia in October. It will pick up again later in the year, making additional stops at Christian Reformed congregations and schools in Ontario and elsewhere before ending in May 2019 at the Canadian Gathering in Edmonton, Alta., where Benjamin will serve as the worship leader.

"I am absolutely delighted and surprised and excited to see what God is doing here," said Benjamin, who served for several years as worship leader at Talbot Street CRC in London, Ont., until deciding a year ago to make his living solely as a songwriter and musician. He landed a deal with True North Records and has had the chance to write several songs.

But something else happened because of the popularity of "I Am Not My Own."

"Going on this tour was not on my radar until late last year, when I began to see the amazing response we were receiving from views on YouTube and elsewhere of my song," Benjamin said. "Churches from all over were asking for music for the song."

It became clear to him that "the song filled a need in the church" and became "a vehicle to speak and learn about the Heidelberg in a meaningful way."

"I saw that it bridges a generation gap," Benjamin said. "People of the



older generation have adopted the song even though it is upbeat and contemporary, and it has given them a way to share what it says about comfort to younger people."

Realizing how many churches were singing his song, he had an idea: Why not find a way to record many of the voices now singing it in churches everywhere, and include those voices on an upcoming album?

Benjamin connected with Darren Roorda, Canadian ministries director for the CRCNA, and mentioned how his song was catching on. From there, it didn't take long to come up with the idea for the "I Am Not My Own" tour.

Going on the cross-country tour this summer will be a challenge for Benjamin and his family, but he is grateful for the chance to join worship teams for morning services to teach them some songs and to learn from them.

"I believe it is the corporate worship experience that connects us to God," he said. "During this tour, we hope to be showing and reminding people of something bigger."

Benjamin will offer acoustic concerts of his songs in the evenings and will perform at Christian schools.

The tour will help raise awareness of and engagement in local ministries while also raising funds for the work of World Renew.

"This tour will not just be about singing to God, but also directing our

mission efforts to local and global contexts. . . . As we travel, we [will] see what God is doing in the CRC across Canada," said Benjamin.

"This is about understanding the vision of what Christ has called us to be as Christians and as churches," added Roorda. "We are not our own but are called to wholeheartedly live for him."

Visit iamnotmyown.org to learn more, sign up, or find tour stops near you.

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



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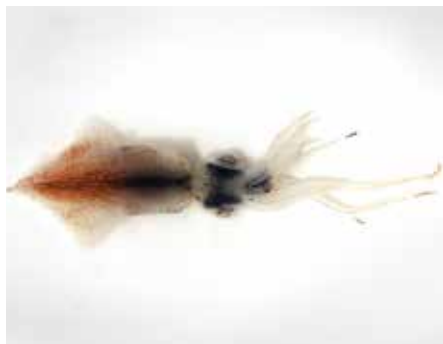
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Creatures That Glow



Firefly squid



Anglerfish



Glowworms



Comb jellies

But most animals that glow live deep in the ocean where the sun does not shine. Giving off their own light helps many of these animals catch food or steer clear of pesky predators.

Check out some of these cool glowing creatures!

- » **Firefly squid** This squid is about three inches (7.5 cm) long. It makes its home in the ocean waters off Japan. Unlike fireflies, these creatures flash their lights in the ocean. They wash up on sandy beaches and look like shining stars in the night.
- » **Glowworms** Glowworms are not really worms but glowing baby insects. These baby bugs live in Australia and New Zealand. They start out as larvae and grow into small flies. They make sticky threads from their bodies and glow with a soft, blue-green light. The glow is used to attract small bugs into their threads for quick snacks!
- » **Anglerfish** Only the females of these strange and angry-looking deep-sea fish have their own lanterns. The light shines from a small rod on their heads. Smaller animals and fish come to the light and quickly become this fish's next meal.

Wikipedia Ja, Copyrighted free use

WARM SUMMER NIGHTS can feel magical. They are filled with soft breezes and shining stars in the night sky. One summer bug that shines like a star is the firefly. Some kids call them lightning bugs and catch them in a jar. But did you know that these bugs are not really flies? Instead they are beetles that use a chemical to shine their light. There are lots of other animals that are able to glow. Some fly, some glide, or squirm, or swim—and God created each of them to shine!

How Do Animals Glow?

Animals that shine their own light are called **bioluminescent**. These animals have chemicals in their bodies that cause them to glow. They include land animals such as fireflies, some kinds of worms, and even some snails and cockroaches.



Christin Baker is a stay-at-home mom and writer.

Make Your Own Glow-in-the-Dark Fireflies!

What you need:

- » Glow-in-the-dark paint (yellow or green is best)
- » Thin paintbrushes
- » Small empty jar

Use your paintbrush to carefully paint lots of small dots on the inside of your jar. Do this until the entire jar is covered with dots. Let the paint dry. At night, turn off the light in your room and watch the jar glow. It will look as if your jar is filled with glowing fireflies! **B**

Why I Am Christian Reformed

A FRIEND RECENTLY asked, “Why do you care so much for the CRC?” The Christian Reformed church hasn’t always been the most hospitable place for me.

I did not go to a Christian school and was always a bit of an outsider growing up. I have a painful childhood memory of sitting in the pew under the watchful eye of a disapproving elder while the adults took communion at a big table at the front of the church. As a woman with a calling to ministry, I continue to find tables at which I am marginalized or not welcome.

The biggest challenge to my commitment to the CRC came after a brief journey with treatable cancer, when I experienced a season where the things of faith seemed brittle and empty. Scripture seemed to mock. Worship was so at odds with where I was spiritually that it was viscerally difficult to attend Sunday services. God was silent. It was a classic “dark night of the soul.”

This personal journey took place in our ministry context of Cambodia, where most people have deep wounds from genocide, decades of war, and subsequent years of grinding poverty. I came to question not only whether I had practices or a way of living that could carry me through suffering but also whether I had anything to offer others.

No doubt the Reformed tradition has a sound biblical understanding of suffering. But in the face of my own raw struggle and the suffering all around me, it didn’t seem to be enough. How was I to lead others to the living God, the only one who could heal the deep wounds of the soul?



Eventually, I found that others had made sense of my experience and offered hope in a more accessible way. I found help in spiritual practices that were not a part of my upbringing or training. Part of the struggle, though, was “Am I allowed?” Not only did my background lack resources for my journey, but I also felt constrained from looking elsewhere.

I’ve learned that the CRC does not own all the answers. God has scattered good gifts among a number of streams of faith across history. Our own church, like a family, is a place where our deepest values and perspectives are built into us. The CRC has given me the touchstone of grace and a conviction deep in my bones that Christ is the Lord who is making everything new. Sometimes our families do constrain us, and we need to push back against them. But the point of struggle is often also the place of growth. I’ve found that the point of my struggle with the church is also the place of the Lord’s deep, redeeming work in me.

Joyce Suh is SSE Asia regional leader for Resonate Global mission. Together with her husband, Gil Suh, she has served in Cambodia for over nine years.



I remember being introduced to the Reformed tradition at Kuyper College in 2001. Before that, I had never known there was such a thing. At Kuyper I began to hear rich doctrine and teachings that burned in my heart. Finally I was getting the words to articulate the faith I had held so dearly since I was 11 years old. That faith brought me to Grand Rapids and changed my plans from becoming an electrical engineer to a call into full-time ministry.

One of the truths that holds me fast is that God is providential. God cares for all of creation, and I am a part of that creation. I come from a broken family that had its chaotic moments; there were times when I felt out of control. But knowing our sovereign God is watching over me and is helping me through difficult times anchors my heart and soul. This I learned in the Reformed tradition.

Another precious kernel of the Reformed tradition is that we serve a covenant-keeping God. I rest in the fact that God has never broken a promise. This God we serve has made promises all the way back to Genesis and has fulfilled them in Christ—and in me. I have the

privilege of participating in the rich blessings of these promises, and I saw them repeated in the baptism of our three children. I am honored to baptize children of other believing parents whose children receive the covenant blessing of God's care in their lives even before these children are aware of God. This is something I hold dear in the Reformed faith.

One more thing that is wonderful to me is that the Christian Reformed church is interested not only in what God has done but in how God continues to speak and work in our world today. Our contemporary testimony, *Our World Belongs to God*, gives me hope that our denomination wants to discern together how God might address issues like gambling, divorce and remarriage, racism, and how to care for and interact with LGBTQ people who bear God's image. Karl Barth once said we must have the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. I take that to mean we as Christians do not duck our heads in the sand but rather serve a God who uses us to respond to shootings, terrorism, famine, poverty, injustice, and tumultuous times. Christians must be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world that he is already working in. We have a role to play in God's redemption of the world. Although we won't see it fully in our time, we can be agents of transformation in our own small ways.

The Reformed tradition has given me the language to articulate the hope within me. However, I believe the most important reason the Reformed faith is dear to me is because it is part of God's sovereign plan, predetermined before the foundations of the Earth, and for his glory. I don't know about you, but that's enough for me.

Darrell Delaney is pastor of Madison Square Church's Square Campus in Grand Rapids, Mich.



I am part of the Christian Reformed church because of Egyptians—more particularly, because of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church. In my early 20s, I spent a number of years in Egypt. There I had the privilege of friendship with Coptic Orthodox Egyptians and occasional opportunities to worship with them as well. Among the Copts, I witnessed a deep sense of identity—a community alive with its own history, immersed in the stories of its great cloud of witnesses. Although a minority as Christians, with a 2,000-year-old history that includes suffering the Western church can only imagine, these Egyptians had a profound confidence as followers of Jesus.

I also saw a community undergoing revival. While its history includes periods of entrenchment and walling itself off from the wider society, the Coptic Church I experienced was beautifully open to renewal and to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Above all, it was a community that found its home clearly within the church. It was not only the clergy who spoke about following Christ as inseparable from being part of his church; my friends spoke this way as well. They saw the church as integral to the revelation of Christ's love, and they believed their existence within it is key to expressing that love for the life of the world.

When I returned to Canada, it was with the conviction that I wanted to

I am part of
the Christian
Reformed
church because
of Egyptians—
because of the
Egyptian Coptic
Orthodox Church.

better understand my own existence within the church. For I realized that while the Christian Reformed church, into which I was born and raised, had taught me to know and love Jesus, I'd not yet learned to know and love his church. I also realized that the way I would learn this best was not by leaving the CRC but by staying within it. By making that commitment, my eyes have been opened further to the goodness of our denomination (as opposed to just its brokenness), and my gratitude to God for placing me here has grown.

Here in the CRC I have recognized our own cloud of witnesses—from my grandfathers to the saint in the pew next to me to the giants of our tradition who faithfully walk alongside those of us who are newer to the journey. These are people who make room for hard questions while seeking to root us in our own history, urging us to see the path from the Apostles' Creed to the Heidelberg Catechism and onward as a story of God's unfolding grace.

Within that unfolding grace, I have witnessed a denomination willing to wrestle with its own brokenness. I have learned from voices among us calling us to repentance and restoration from sins both personal and systemic—racism, classism, sexism, and more. Whether in the catechism classes of the local church or in the denominational offices, I have met people willing to do the often painful work of “working out our salvation with fear and trembling,” challenging us to ask what shape Christ’s love, God’s justice, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit will take in us in our various cultural moments.

I have also found a community committed to be always reforming. We are far from perfect, and (most days) we know it. Our continuing reformation takes place in everything from learning to care for and lament with one another through illness and tragedy and pain, to learning to open ourselves up beyond certain cultural and historical confines. For all of this, and more, I am grateful.

Ultimately, I am part of the Christian Reformed church because within the beautiful diversity of Christ’s body, this is the particular church and community to which God has called me. It is here that I am home.

Dena Nicolai is a chaplain and refugee-support mobilizer and a commissioned pastor with the Christian Reformed churches of British Columbia. She is a member of First CRC Vancouver.



I love most the liturgical structure of services in the Christian Reformed church. In the charismatic church where I grew up, services would begin with an extended period of singing followed by a sermon, and ended with a time of prayer and (usually) more singing. There was no logical progression of themes and ideas, and the songs were assembled more or less randomly—except, perhaps, for an attempt to arrange them so key changes weren’t so abrupt as to disrupt the natural flow from one song to the next.

Upon attending a Christian Reformed church for the first time, I was at first confused by the structure but then enthralled with it. Everything was in place. Everything served a purpose. I remember singing songs throughout my childhood with elements of confession in them, but we never set aside time to truly lament our sin and the brokenness of the world and ask God to make things right. We sang songs that referenced the power of Scripture to transform lives, but we never sung uniform prayers asking God to illuminate his Word to shine upon our hearts and impact us personally in our efforts to join in the redemptive work of Christ in the world. We took

wafers and grape juice once a month, but never had a eucharistic service in which we would meditate on the great mystery that is the body and blood of our Savior. Suddenly everything had so much more meaning because of the way it was assembled to emphasize theological truths. There was time to experience each part of the service as an ongoing dialogue between God and God’s people.

This had profound implications for the way I as a church music leader thought about planning services. The beautiful paradox is that the structure of the liturgy actually frees us to do more creative and meaningful things in worship. The service itself becomes an artistic unit created to have an impact rather than just individual songs or parts that stand alone.

Another thing I love about worship in the CRC is our effort to engage with musical styles of various cultures. Recently in my congregation a cellist played a Bach prelude and a Tchaikovsky offertory. After that, the praise team sang a contemporary praise and worship song, then finished the service with a sending tune from South Africa, sung in Xhosa and featuring several different drums. This variety in any given service is more than just fun or entertaining. When we do this we join in the the global song of God’s people. We sing the song of the refugee with the refugees; the song of the persecuted with the persecuted; the song of the children of God with the children of God. **B**

Luke Enders is a student at Calvin College studying music theory and composition. He is on staff at Second Christian Reformed Church in Grand Haven, Mich. In his free time, Luke enjoys playing guitar, hanging out with friends, and singing show tunes.

God Lives in a City

Think of it:
God living in a city
—a city of political
chaos like Washington,
D.C., but also “the
city of God” sung
about in Psalm 87.



Dr. Rod Jellema, a member of Washington D.C. CRC, is a poet and professor emeritus at the University of Maryland, College Park.

WHERE DOES GOD LIVE? Our quick and easy answer is almost dismissive of the question but at the same time almost staggers us with its implications. “God is everywhere.” Easy. “God’s omnipresence,” our teachers called it.

I’m reputed to have explained it at age 5 to my mother this way: “Right now God’s sitting right on top of my head.” That’s a fine fancy with a wisp of truth in it. But it’s not very useful in the world I came to know. I find that God’s absence is much easier to see than his real presence in the bread and wine of communion. We know the wrenching cry all through history: Lord God, where are you? Where can we beat fists on your door to make you hear us?

In the riches of the Jewish tradition, God has always a place, a residence. God is in the ark of the covenant as it is lugged by unwilling wanderers through the desert or is behind the veil in the Holy of Holies in the temple. More broadly, though not much thought about, God lives in a large city—a city with seven hills and graceful trees, with slums and palaces along filthy streets teeming with beautiful people and people who are crippled, crooks, children, soldiers, and magistrates.

Think of it: God living in a city—a city of political chaos like Washington, D.C., but also “the city of God” sung about in Psalm 87. Forget the green meadows and still waters for a moment. We still know God’s town as Jerusalem. The Lord God “loves [its] gates,” through which people flow and by which they are protected. All the other cities or towns settled by Jacob’s descendants

are nothing in comparison to Jerusalem. Strangely, it’s the city eternal that’s meaningful in time.

Although this city of God is a center, it does not exclude from citizenship people who were not born inside its walls. The chorus that sings this psalm sings it first to the Jews, God’s chosen—even Jews born in alien places: Canaan, Babylon, Aleppo. But its citizens can be born in Grand Rapids or Toronto, and they can be, like me, adoptees. God counts “this one and that one” as born in Zion even if they weren’t.

What the psalm is celebrating is not geography. Zion is not defined by boundaries. Psalm 87, like many other psalms, makes visible an actual place and condition in which a resident God with divine urbanity, we might say, can be more easily understood, trusted, and believed. Zion’s bricks and stone give body to a mighty idea. Centuries later St. Augustine would pick up the thread of this powerful image and further weave it into the book called *De civitate Dei* (*The City of God*).

We should notice that this psalm about God as an urban dweller does not end by giving us strategies for getting our passports or citizenship papers stamped. Nor are we handed a key to some big downtown Drowsy Dell Slumber-On Hotel. The psalm speaks of the joy of living in the city of God. “Glorious things are said” about it and sung about it. Of all things, it is the singers and the players of instruments who have the last word here. They praise the city’s possessing “all [the] fountains,” all the creative flow that enlivens and nourishes all humans, all of whom are created in God’s image. **B**

1 Read Psalm 87. What words or phrases strike you? What do they suggest to you?

2 What does the picture of God living in the city mean for your faith?

[READ MORE](#) [ONLINE](#)

When Pain Won't Go Away

Grace came through four lively, lovely, and loving daughters.



Alfred E. (Al) Mulder, a retired CRC minister, attends Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids. His wife, Darlene, died on August 7, 2017. Their surviving daughters are Bonny Mulder-Behnia, Diane Garcia, and Carla Huber.

DARLENE AND I attended the same church from birth. Yet I didn't really notice her until she was a teenager and her swollen arm was in a sling because of a bee sting. A few weeks later, after I left for college, I sent her a playful note about her tiny attacker.

This note became the catalyst for our courtship and, later, our marriage. Curiously, the bee sting also was a precursor to significant pain in Darlene's life. It was out of this crucible of pain—physical and emotional, and often without relief—that we reflected frequently on the apostle Paul's encounter with pain that would not go away: "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take [my thorn] away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" (2 Cor. 12:8-9).

No Pass on Pain

One of life's hard lessons is that living for Jesus does not give us a pass on pain. Christians are not exempt from suffering. The night before his unimaginable suffering on the cross, Jesus clearly warned his followers: "In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). Any notion that following Jesus is a ticket to a trouble-free life did not come from Jesus.

Life has happy times. Life has trouble.

The apostle Paul was an example of this. Within the Jewish tradition, he was a person of privilege and influence. As a follower of Jesus, he experienced "highs" such as being "caught up to paradise" and receiving "surpassingly great revelations" (2 Cor. 12:4, 7). But he also knew trouble—that "thorn in [his] flesh" that persisted in spite of his pleading with the Lord to take it away.

There was good stuff in Darlene's life. She was a good daughter, a good student, and a good worker. As a wife, she loved me fiercely all her years. God gave us four daughters, 10 grandchildren, and even more "greats." By most comparisons, she enjoyed pleasure and privilege.

But it also was hard to be Darlene. When she was 13, she was traumatized by her mother's emotional breakdown. Years later, when she was her mother's age and our oldest daughter was 13, Darlene recognized negative generational patterns. She decided to get help—psychodrama therapy, hypnotherapy, electroshock therapy, outpatient therapy, and inpatient therapy—45 years of it.

God used these means to help Darlene function reasonably well. Yet therapy also uncovered deep wounds—"thorns" that tormented her all her days. She pleaded with God, and so did the rest of us, to remove the thorns. Yet, over the years they became more deeply embedded, eventually leading to disability. In her final years, pain was a constant.

God's Grace Is Enough

When God does not remove our pain, this does not mean that God has no answer. God's answer is profound and life-giving: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). God's answer to every need is his grace.

Grace comes in many forms.

For Darlene, grace came through four lively, lovely, and loving daughters. Grace came through meaningful work. Grace came through a small circle of friends. Grace came through caregivers.

When God does not remove our pain, this does not mean that God has no answer.

In her homebound and bed-bound stages, grace came through extended family and visits from our pastor and other faithful church folks. Grace came through notes of encouragement from an African-American sister 10 years her senior. Grace came through grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Above all, however, it is God's grace that is sufficient. The good news is that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Grace: God's riches at Christ's expense! Never is this grace more crucial than when we transition from this life to the next.

At one point in her final hours, Darlene was murmuring fitfully, "I will never say that again." One of our daughters reassured her, "Don't worry, Mom. Jesus died for us, and our sins are forgiven." Darlene repeated over and over, "I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven."

God has given his word on that: "My grace is sufficient for you."

Power through Weakness

God's grace is sufficient because God's power "is made perfect in [our] weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). God does his best work through us when we yield to his purposes for us.

This truth became powerfully real to Darlene in her final days.

Back in 1984, our shrinking family moved from New Mexico to Michigan—me in one car, Darlene and our youngest daughter, Eva, in the other. My work required travel—a lot. Darlene and Eva were together—a lot. In 2005, in the aftermath of serious accidents and other painful circumstances, Eva and her two children moved in with us. Eight years later, Eva died. Her death was a crushing loss, especially to Darlene.

But here is the grace.

For Eva's memorial service, we used the song "I Can Only Imagine" by Bart Millard as the soundtrack to her life in pictures. We played the song so often, it became Eva's song:

*Surrounded by Your glory
What will my heart feel? . . .
Will I sing "hallelujah"?
Will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine.*

Every so often during Darlene's lingering hours, one of our daughters would play "I Can Only Imagine." One last time, when Darlene was no longer speaking, she heard those familiar words:

*Will I sing "hallelujah"?
Will I be able to speak at all?*


Amazingly, she mouthed the response: *Hallelujah!*

God was also at work in me.

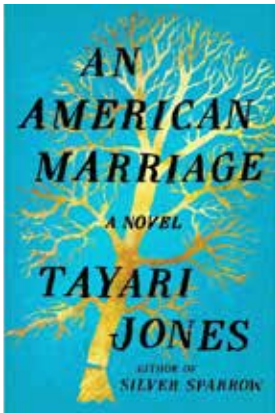
Darlene spent 80 of her last 100 days in a hospital or rehab center. Each time, the discharge team strongly advised institutional care. And each time, Darlene strongly preferred coming home. To me, bringing her home seemed like a bad idea. Yet deep down, I already knew that God's grace was sufficient for doing the right thing provided I was willing enough, humble enough, and trusting enough to submit. Upon release from her last rehab, even though I didn't know how it could work, I just knew God wanted me to bring Darlene home.

Within a week of coming home again, she began declining rapidly. Our three daughters, who had already made cross-country trips to visit their mother, agreed to come again—this time to help usher her to her eternal home. During our final holy hours together, God gave us one more taste of grace. After I read several Scriptures, a daughter said, "Let's sing 'Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling.'" As Darlene breathed her last, we were singing, "Come home, come home, you who are weary, come home; earnestly, tenderly Jesus is calling, calling, O [daughter], come home!"

We were with her in our weakness.

God was with her, and with us, in his power. 

What Will You Read on Your Summer Vacation?

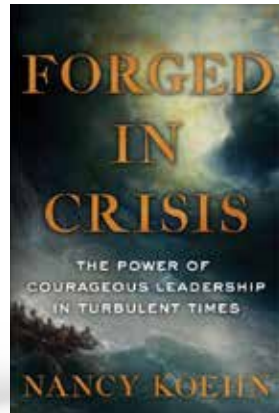


An American Marriage

by Tayari Jones

reviewed by Lorilee Craker

Roy and Celestial are living the upwardly mobile, black Atlanta dream when suddenly Roy is arrested and sentenced to 12 years in prison for something he didn't do. The vast majority of marriages don't make it when one partner is incarcerated—will theirs? Their marriage (and marriage, period) is the laser focus of the novel, but important themes of race and mass incarceration are deftly woven into the story. This page-turner promotes empathy, understanding, sorrow, and maybe even advocacy. Fair warning: This book would be rated R if it were a movie. (Algonquin)

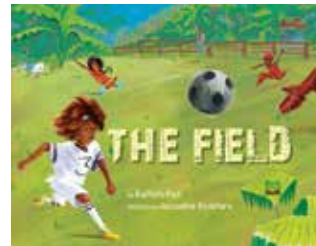


Forged in Crisis: The Power of Courageous Leadership in Turbulent Times

by Nancy Koehn

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

We live in a time when our collective faith in leaders is waning, says author Nancy Koehn, historian and professor at the Harvard School of Business. She draws on lessons learned from the lives of five historical figures: Ernest Shackleton, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Rachel Carson. Charting each of their stories, Koehn identifies how each came to recognize his or her leadership in a moment of crisis that demanded it. An excellent and accessible read that invites leaders to learn lessons from the past and be the leaders we need for a turbulent present and future. (Scribner)



The Field

by Baptiste Paul

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

On a Caribbean island, boys and girls gather in a pasture for a game of futbol (soccer). The local fruit vendor referees the friendly, spirited game. When a rainstorm threatens to end the fun, the children refuse to quit, playing on until the storm subsides and the sun peeks through the clouds. This celebration of a sport beloved worldwide is based on author Baptiste Paul's experiences growing up in Saint Lucia. He peppers the story with Creole phrases, adding to its authenticity and vitality. Jacqueline Alcántara's bright illustrations sing the joys of community, family, sports, and life. Ages 3 and up. (NorthSouth Books)

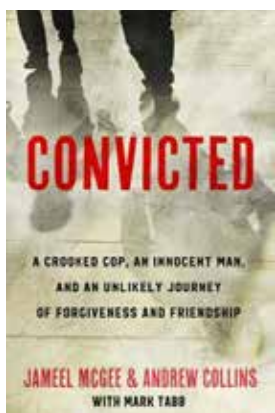


The VanderBeekers of 141st Street

by Karina Yan Glaser

reviewed by Francene Lewis

Everyone agrees that life with the VanderBeekers is not calm, tidy, or boring. It's the week before Christmas and the family of seven must move from their apartment on 141st Street in Harlem. Their secretive and cranky landlord, Mr. Beiderman, will not renew their lease. Using the powers of persuasion and everything from fresh pastries to a not-so-nice letter, the family struggles to find the right way to coax the landlord into letting them stay. The VanderBeekers' everyday escapades and small adventures provide a quiet sense of delight and enjoyment. Ages 7 and up. (HMH)

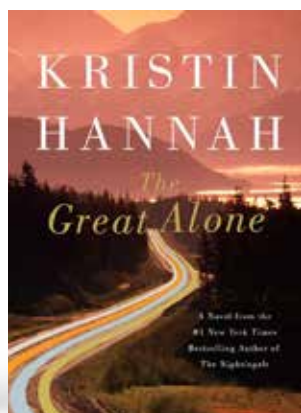


Convicted: A Crooked Cop, an Innocent Man, and an Unlikely Journey of Forgiveness and Friendship

by Jameel McGee,
Andrew Collins,
and Mark Tabb

reviewed by Sonya
VanderVeen Feddema

Andrew Collins, a white police officer, wanted to make a big drug bust. He arrested Jameel McGee, a young African-American man, on trumped-up drug charges. Each served time in prison: McGee for something he did not do, and Collins for all the things he had. Years later, the two met unexpectedly. As each listened to the Holy Spirit's guidance, their slow, surprising path to reconciliation began. In this moving memoir, readers are given a glimpse into the failures of the U.S. justice system, the pain and injustice caused by racial tension, and the devastating cost of the drug culture. More importantly, the book points to God, with whom all things—forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration—are possible. (WaterBrook)

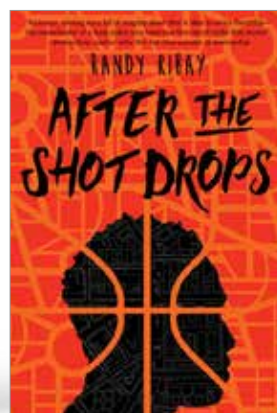


The Great Alone

by Kristin Hannah

reviewed by Sonya
VanderVeen Feddema

Thirteen-year-old Leni can barely remember a time before her father, Ernt, returned from six years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam a changed man, volatile and unpredictable. After a series of failures, Ernt impulsively decides to move his family to a remote community in Alaska. In Leni's epic tale, readers discover Alaska's "great and terrible gift"—it shows people who they really are and what they will do to survive. This adult novel, which contains some profanity, also reveals the consequences of a world in which post-traumatic stress disorder was not understood and where violence against women was not taken seriously. (St. Martin's Press)

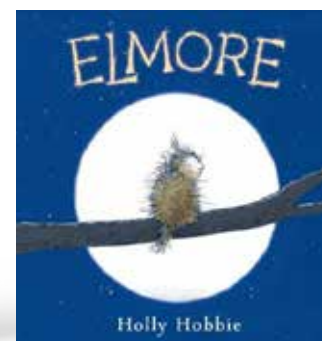


After the Shot Drops

by Randy Ribay

reviewed by Kristy Quist

When high school basketball prodigy Bunny Thompson transfers to an affluent private school on scholarship, his best friend, Nasir, stops speaking to him. Nasir faces his own problem trying to help his troubled cousin, Wallace. Author Randy Ribay tells the story through the alternating voices of Bunny and Nasir while skillfully injecting wisdom from their parents. This thoughtful young adult novel addresses the realities of racial, class, and economic differences, as well as the push and pull of friends and family when teens are working out who they are. A suspenseful plot and exciting basketball scenes make this hard to put down. Ages 14 and up because of strong language. (HMH)

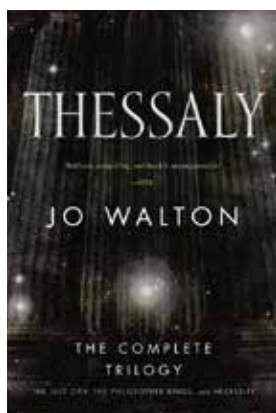


Elmore

by Holly Hobbie

reviewed by Gwen Marra

Making friends is tough, especially if you are a porcupine. Every time Elmore befriends someone, he ends up needing them. The quills that protect him are keeping him away from them. One day, while cleaning up his discarded quills, Elmore thinks of a way to help others. Soon the forest animals are using his quills as pens, and they show him their appreciation. This picture book is a great story for guiding children to be persistent in making friends. Some things are difficult, but worth it in the end. Ages 3 and up. (Random House)

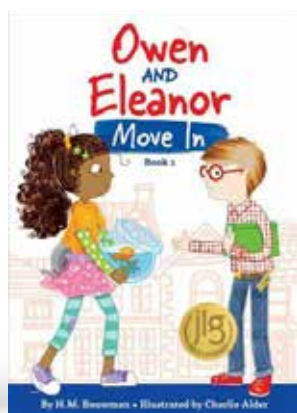


Thessaly

by Jo Walton

reviewed by Francene Lewis

Only award-winning science fiction writer Jo Walton could write a trilogy that includes Greek gods, robot workers, time travel, and an attempt to build Plato's *Republic*. In *Thessaly* (a compilation of three books), Apollo wants to learn about consent and free will after a disastrous encounter with the nymph Daphne. He joins in Athene's experiment to shape the perfect society. This intergenerational family saga follows Apollo and his household through times of love, grief, revenge, and danger. In a city where everyone is striving to become their best self, what could possibly go wrong? (Tor)

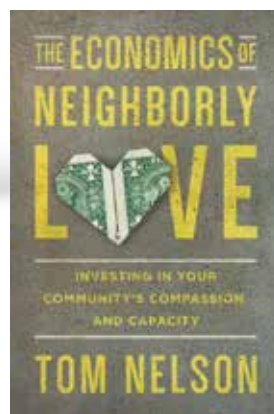


Owen and Eleanor Move In

by H. M. Bouwman

reviewed by Kristy Quist

Eight-year-old Eleanor is moving to a new home, and she's not happy about it. She doesn't want to live in a house where someone else lives in the apartment over them. Happily, the family above them includes 7-year-old Owen, and he's pretty cool. Owen agrees to help Eleanor with her secret plan to move back to her old house. Eventually Eleanor learns what "home" is really about, and that God stays with us wherever we go. This sweet and humorous chapter book is perfect for readers the same age as Owen and Eleanor. (Sparkhouse Family)



The Economics of Neighborly Love

by Tom Nelson

reviewed by Jim Romahn

Pastors occasionally preach about money, but it's the rare few who preach about the "economics of neighborly love," says Rev. Tom Nelson, who is also an economist. He argues that Jesus calls his disciples to be wise investors, generating both wealth and jobs. He explains how congregations can play a role in fostering sound economics and job creation in the poorer neighborhoods of their community. A few donations to needy people won't cut it. We need to develop relationships with people in poverty, and we need to address their number-one desire: a good-paying job. (InterVarsity)



Heart Spring Mountain

by Robin MacArthur

reviewed by Adele Konyndyk

At the start of this layered, multi-generational novel, a woman high on heroin wanders outside as Hurricane Irene batters rural Vermont. Bonnie is thinking about how she has "just found Jesus" as she walks out in the wild storm. She disappears, leaving her family unsure of her survival. It is a thematically fitting beginning for a book that explores the interconnectedness of human suffering and how identities are shaped by natural disasters, spiritual beliefs, and familial relationships. Readers seeking evidence of grace in an imperfect world will find much to ponder. (Thorndike Press).

READ MORE ONLINE



Artist's Statement:

My piece shows how Christians may become numb to the world around them, specifically within music. We may not realize how the music we listen to influences us in life. We should pay attention to what we listen to rather than becoming numb.

Numb. By Natalie Shires.
Grade 12, Covenant Day School, Matthews, N.C., a member of Christian Schools International.

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General

CALL TO SYNOD 2018 The council of Pillar Church, Holland, Michigan, calls all delegates to Synod 2018, elected by their respective classes, to meet in the College Chapel on the campus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Thursday, June 7, at 7:00 p.m. for joint worship with the delegates to the Reformed Church in America General Synod.

All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates from the CRC and the RCA synods for All for the Sake of the Gospel—a community-wide Worship Service on Sunday, June 10, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. at the DeVos Center for Arts and Worship, 2300 Plymouth Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Ajoy Kumar Lama, the Words of Hope and Back to God Ministries International director for South Asia, will provide the message based on 1 Corinthians 9:22-23.

All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 3, and Sunday, June 10. Council of Pillar Church, Holland, Michigan

WITH GRATITUDE The congregation of Brookfield Christian Reformed Church (Brookfield, WI) would like to recognize the 20 years of faithful ministry to BCRC by Rev. Peter T. Verhulst and his wife Jackie. We are grateful for your faithful preaching, leadership, and service to us.

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION The congregation of 14th Street CRC (Holland, MI) congratulates Rev. Marvin Hofman on his retirement on June 3, 2018. A community open house to celebrate Pastor Marv & Mary will be Sat. June 2 from 2-4 pm at 14 West 14th Street. We thank God for his many years of faithful ministry in the CRC, including 18 years as our pastor.

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS HEARTLAND will meet September 5-6, 2018, in Lincoln, Nebraska, convened by Northern Lighthouse CRC. Submit agenda items by July 21 to the stated clerk, Rev.

Bob Drenten, 1405 Albany Ave NE, Orange City, IA 51041.
robert.drenten@gmail.com

Church Positions Available

SEEKING PASTOR Prairie Lane CRC in Omaha, Nebraska is seeking a fulltime lead pastor to start immediately. Please contact Mike Hostetler for information: 402-981-2648 mike@hostetlerhome.com

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES Modesto, CA CRC is seeking a full time Director of Youth Ministries. See detailed description at <http://www.modestocrc.org>

SEEKING PASTOR Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, IA invites a pastor to walk with us as we seek to deepen our unity and our mission. A superb candidate will be committed to the Reformed faith and to excellent preaching and teaching. He or she will enjoy ministering to persons of all ages, thrive through collaborative and creative planning, and will work with us to develop a unifying vision. He/she will seek to foster community within the congregation and send us out in service. Contact the Search Committee at dennis.vanderplaats@dordt.edu or call 712-449-8203.

LEAD PASTOR Los Angeles Community Christian Reformed Church, located in inner city South L. A., seeks a Part-Time Lead Pastor to assist in relaunching/ leading church into the next phase. Send resume/CV to alfred.mccloud@gmail.com. 310-720-1548

CO-PASTOR Neland Ave CRC of Grand Rapids, MI seeks a co-pastor to join its ministries team. Neland values excellent Reformed preaching and seeks a person who is passionate about pastoral care and neighborhood involvement in our urban setting. Interested persons should contact the search committee chairperson, Cheryl Scott, at caj-scott@msn.com

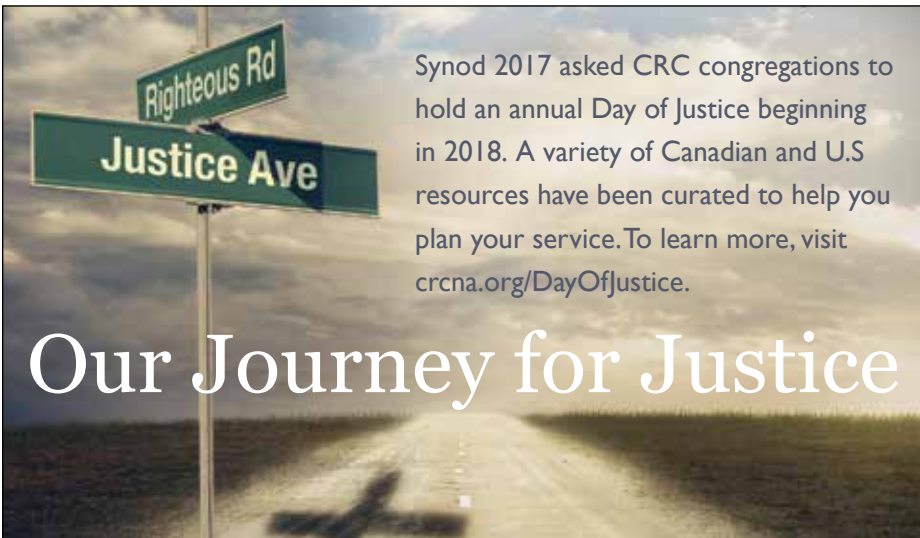
PASTOR: Gateway Community CRC in beautiful Abbotsford, BC is seeking a full time Pastor of Preaching and Congregational Care for our congregation of 745 members. We are seeking a people-oriented individual who has a strong desire to faithfully preach the Word, nourish the spiritual growth of the congregation through pastoral care and teaching and to join an energetic team. Visit gatewaycrc.org for church profile and full ministry role description. Contact Marcel deRegt, Executive Pastor, at marcel@gatewaycrc.org or call 604-859-5908

MINISTRY PROGRAM DIRECTOR Neland Ave CRC in Grand Rapids, MI, seeks candidate to equip congregation to make connections, address injustice, grow spiritually, participate in gifts-based ministry, support leadership development & develop sustainable partnerships for the purpose of spiritual & social transformation. Job description at neland.org. Email applications or questions to NelandChurch@gmail.com.

YOUTH DIRECTOR Calvin CRC in Holland, MI is looking to hire a PT Youth Director to love and disciple our youth. Inquire to dspoelma@calvinministries.org to ask for a job description, compensation details, and to set up an interview.


CLINTON CRC in Clinton, Ontario is searching for a full-time Pastor of Discipleship & Spiritual Formation. For application and position details contact the hiring team at clintoncrrcht@tcc.on.ca or at our website www.clintonchristianreformed-church.ca.

PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR Lakeside Community CRC in Alto, MI is seeking a youth director to lead our high




Synod 2017 asked CRC congregations to hold an annual Day of Justice beginning in 2018. A variety of Canadian and U.S resources have been curated to help you plan your service. To learn more, visit crcna.org/DayOfJustice.

Our Journey for Justice



crcna.org/DayOfJustice



school and middle school ministries. Must love Jesus, love students, and be able to teach from the Bible. For more info, contact Dave Bosscher at pastordave@lakesidecommunity.org.

DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP & MUSIC The Bradenton CRC FL is seeking someone who has a true commitment to the Lord and a passion to disciple people to Christ through the worship ministry. He/she must value various worship styles. Contact worshipdirector@bradentoncrc.org for info.

PART TIME SECRETARY Lakeside Community CRC in Alto, MI is searching for a new administrative assistant. Computer proficiency necessary, professional experience preferred. For more info, contact Dave Bosscher at pastordave@lakesidecommunity.org.

PART-TIME PASTOR Looking for a challenge? Trinity Fellowship CRC in San Diego is seeking a part-time (bi-voca-

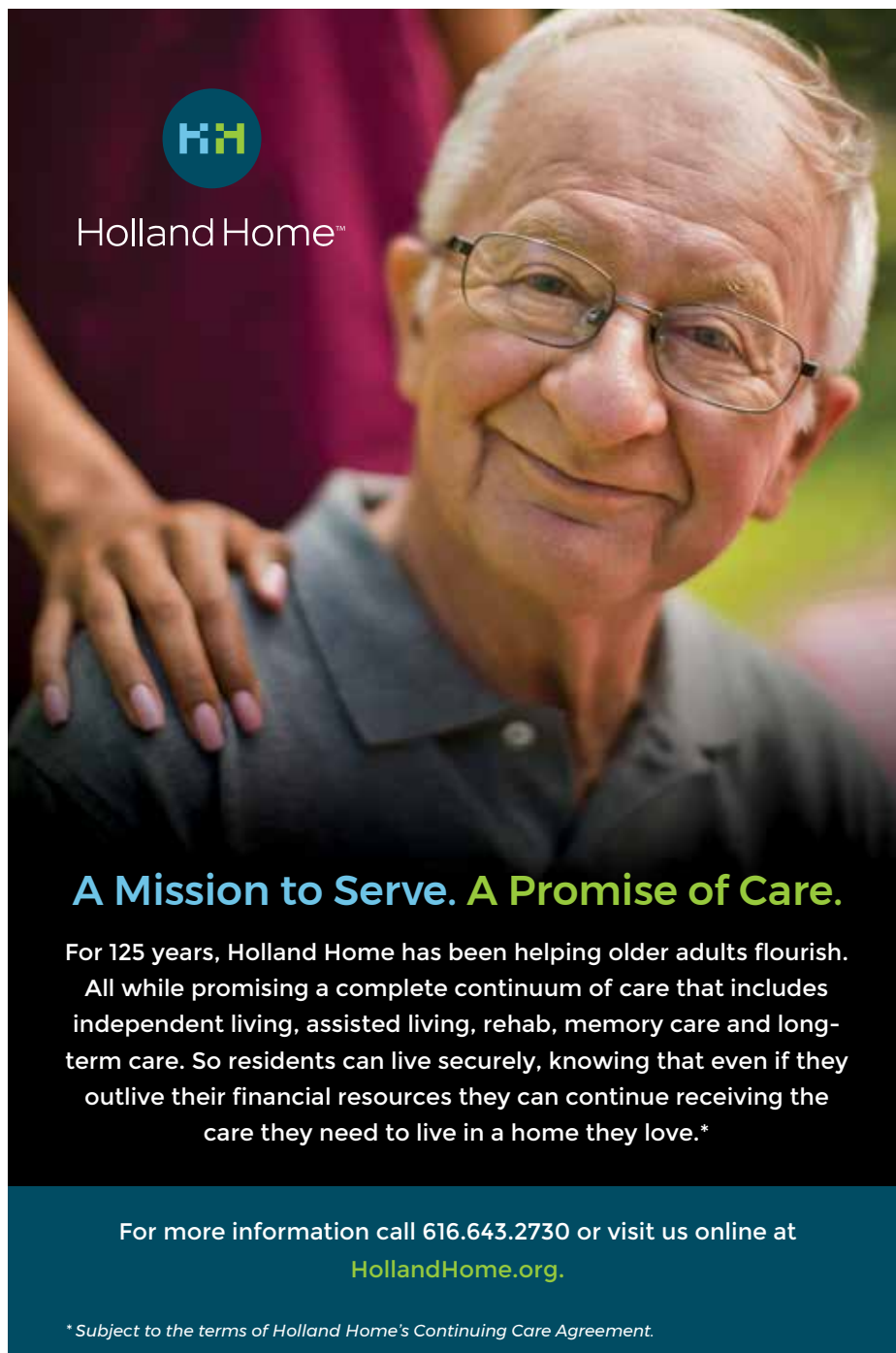
tional) pastor who is skilled in and passionate about preaching and leadership. We are a small diversified church that wants to attract, engage and enfold more members of our community. If interested please contact Mr. Jim Salle at 619-429-8715 or cell 619-254-5151. <https://trinitydscrc.org>


Anniversary

70TH ANNIVERSARY

DE WAAL Malefyt Karel & Catherine of Franklin Lakes, NJ. Praise God for 70 yrs of marriage on June 26, 2018.

DE YOUNG HAROLD and Edna (Kraker) PO Box 134, Alledale, Mich. 49401 will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on June 17 along with their children Chuck, Lorie, Chris, Bill and Mary. 3 grand children and 4 great grand children. We thank God for their faithfulness!




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65TH ANNIVERSARY

BUURSMA John and Barbara (Wiegers) celebrate 65 years of God's goodness in their life together on June 12, 2018. Congratulations Dad & Mom & thank you for loving each of us so well! God's continued blessings! Love, Dick & Sue, Greg & Kathy, Randy & Debra; 14 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15 Thanks be to God!

GELDERMAN Herman and Lula (Krikke) 61513 Rge Rd 31, County of Barrhead, AB T0G 1R2 will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on June 17, 2018. Children: Marcia, Rosalie, John, Wendell, Karen and Howard. 16 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. You have been such a gift to us and we thank God for his love, faithfulness and many blessings

60TH ANNIVERSARY

HUIZINGA Fred & Jan of Orland Park, IL. Celebrating with them are their four children: Cindy (Todd) Wessels, Darlene (Ken) Bulthuis, Lynda (Russ) Clousing, Tom (Marcia), 12 grandchildren (8 married), and 6 great-grandchildren. We give thanks for God's faithfulness.

KRUIHOF JIM & DONNA celebrated 60 years of marriage on April 25, 2018. Our family is thankful for God's blessings throughout the years. With love - Mary & Jim Stegink, John & Julie Kruihof, Amy Bergsma, Louise & Ed Vecziedins

LENDERINK Howard and Joan (Beukema) 9439 Desert Willow Tr., Highlands Ranch, CO. 80129 will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on June 27th, 2018. Children: Kimberly & Rick, Cindy & Scott, Sam & Brian, Jamie & Adam, 13 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Congratulations! We love you both and we are all thank God for His love, faithfulness and many blessings in all of our lives!

Birthdays

100TH BIRTHDAY

MARGUERITE (DEHAAN) MULDER looks forward to celebrating her 100th birthday on June 8. Thankful to God for her love and faithful Christian life are her three sons and spouses, Jim and Ruth, Ray and Linda and Bob and Sheryl, 9 grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren. Birthday greetings may be sent to Raybrook Manor DeVos Center, 2121 Raybrook SE, Room #340, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

95TH BIRTHDAY

JOHN TERMAAT WWII Veteran will celebrate his 95th birthday on July 4th 2018. Husband of Theresia (deceased), Dad of John (deceased), Joanne and Evelyn/Rich Loerop. Grandpa of 6, Great Grandpa of 9. Birthday Greetings to 2648 Falcon Pte Dr. NW, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49534.

90TH BIRTHDAY

ALVINA (SJAARDEMA) HUYSER celebrated her 90th Birthday May 28, 2018. Husband Rev. William Huysen. Children: Mark and Sally, Tom and Paula, David and Betsy, Steve and friend, Linda, Rick and Faith. 9 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren, Praise God for His Mercy and Grace.

HENRY RITSEMA will celebrate his 90th birthday on June 26. Thanking God for his love, faithfulness and serving spirit are his children: Randy & Mary Ellen, Gwen (Glenn), Mike & Jane, Curt & Darlene, Ed & Kristin, Cheryl & Tom, 20 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. Everyone is invited to an Open House to celebrate Sunday, June 24 from 2:00pm - 4:00pm at Raybrook Friendship Room. Greetings can be sent via FB, email or to Apt. 2000 at Estates 1

Obituaries

DEJONG, Dr. George A., age 100, of Orland Park, IL passed away peacefully Sunday, April 8, 2018. Beloved husband of the late Agnes DeJong, nee Van Soest. Loving father of Shirley (Dr. Ronald) Stavinga, Judy (late John) Van Vossen, and Bruce (Diane) DeJong. Devoted grandfather of Nina (J. D. Schreiber) Stavinga, Jon (Ana Milliauskas) Van Vossen, Karl (Meghan) Van Vossen, Anne Marie (Aaron) Uzenta, Scott DeJong, and Lisa (Robert) Lorenzini and great-grandfather of Sofia Lorenzini, Giutiana Lorenzini, Morgan Van Vossen, Katherine Van Vossen, Avery Moller, Melina Uzueta and Lydia Uzueta. He is also survived by one sister-in-law Helen (nee VAN Soest) McFail. Preceded in death by his brothers and sisters, Stuart (Catherine) DeJong, Bessie (William) Klein, John (Hermina) DeJong, Lambert (Rena) DeJong, Walkter (Johanna) DeJong, Olive (Ralph) Visser, Hilda (Nicholas) Duwenga, and Jennei (Simon) Visser. Dr. DeJong is survived by many beloved nieces and nephews. Dr. DeJong was a physician in the area for many years, affiliated with Christ Hospital and Lawn Medical, both in Oak Lawn, IL, and was a W. W. II U. S. Army Vetern.

DUYST David E., age 58, of Grand Rapids, MI passed away on April 16, 2018 in Marquette, MI. Preceded in death by his brother Daniel. Survived by his children David Jr. (Jodi) Duyst, Erica Duyst, Timothy (Kristina) Duyst; parents Peter & Johanna Duyst, and 4 grandchildren.

EBBERS, Janet, age 85, passed peacefully into the arms of Jesus on Monday, April 16, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. John Ebberts; son Mark; and is survived by her children: Laura (Glenn) Weiss, Doug Ebberts, Nancy (Dave) Thompson, Brian (Diane) Ebberts, Brenda (Alan) Koel; twelve grandchildren; and 3 great grandchildren.

FABER Freda, 98, March 28, 2018, Grand Rapids, MI. Survived by siblings Art (Ginny) Faber, Nell (John) Grasmeyer; in-laws Nella Faber, Esther (Matt) Woudenberg, Bob Cornelisse; nieces and nephews. Predeceased by parents Frank and Antonia Faber and siblings Willie, Ted (Ida), Jennie (Cornie) Klaver, Betty (Clarence) Bouwkamp, Fran (Herm) Schripsema, Ann (Carl) Storm, Gerard, Harriet Cooper, Bill, Evie Cornelisse. Psalm 23.



Essay Contest

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Guidelines

- » Deadline for submissions is midnight, July 13, 2018.
- » Contest open to college-age students enrolled in an undergraduate or associates/diploma program who is a member of or regularly attends a Christian Reformed church.
- » Essays should be no more than 1,000 words in length, submitted as a Word file and accompanied by a separate cover letter that includes your name, address, phone number, where you worship, and brief biographical note. Do not include this information on the essay itself. Send to info@thebanner.org.
- » Decisions of judges are final. We reserve the right to withhold one or more prizes if none are deemed worthy. Winners will be notified by July 31.

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953 Now Blessed Be the Lord Our God

PSALM 215:1-9

- 1 Now blessed be the Lord our God,
the God of Israel,
for he alone does wondrous works;
his glorious deeds exceed
his glorious deeds exceed.
- 2 And blessed be his glorious name
through all eternity;
the whole earth let his glory fill;
Amens so shall it be,
the whole earth let his glory fill;
Amens so shall it be.

Words: Psalms 72:18-20; Scottish Psalm, 1401; alt., P. 11



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FLIETSTRA Allen, 89 of Grand Rapids, Michigan, passed away on April 2, 2018. He was preceded in death by his wife Ruth (van de Geest) Flietstra. He will be missed by his children, Kathy and Mike Bremer, Jack and Carolyn Flietstra, by his four grandchildren, and by his five great grandchildren. We thank God for his life of service.

HUIZENGA Peter H., age 79, of Oak Brook, Illinois died on Wednesday, May 2nd, and was received into glory by his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He was the loving husband of his cherished wife, Heidi of 50 years. Peter loved his children; Betsy (Dave) Bradley, Greta Huizenga, Peter Jr. (Abby) Huizenga, and Tim Huizenga. His 10 grandchildren include Elizabeth, Matthew, William and Michael Bradley; Soleil and Noah Huizenga Giesen, and Hally, Hope, Peter III "Tripp" and Hannah Huizenga. Peter also had four siblings: Sue Kanis, Virginia "Ginger" Jurries, John Charles "J. C." Huizenga, and the late Elizabeth "B. J." Buntrock. For Info: www.knollcrest.net or (630)932-1500

MANNI Dean S., age 88 of Kalamazoo, MI, went to be with his Lord and Savior on April 5, 2018. He was born to H. Willard and Frances Manni on May 30, 1929. He was preceded in death by his son, Kenneth. Surviving are his wife Esther, sister Marilyn Heeren, and his children Carol (Ted) Huizinga, Cathy (Dale) Vanderwal, Kelvin (Karen) Manni, Richard (Rayline) Manni, 10 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. Memorial contributions can be made to Hospice Care of Southwest Michigan or Kalamazoo Christian School Association

VAN DINTHER Betty Mae (Zwart) age 91, went home to be with her Lord on Monday, April 30, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband, Frank Van Dintner; and is survived by her children, John, Frank (Bette), Martha (Frank) Intriery, Tina (Richard) Vandenburg, Yvonne (Garry) Ferwerda, and Beth (James) Van Tholen; 17 grandchildren; and 17 great-grandchildren.

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Dr. Paul C. H. Lim is an associate professor of the History of Christianity at Vanderbilt University's Divinity School and an award-winning historian and recipient of the Roland H. Bainton Prize for the best book in history/theology by the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference. Lim's research extends to the history of evangelism and global Christianities and he is currently writing a book on the transformation of global evangelical attitudes toward and endeavors on eradication of human trafficking and structural poverty. Lim has traveled extensively to deliver lectures and papers across the globe including Europe, North America, Asia, and Africa.

MORE INFO AT: calvinseminary.edu/neighbor



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cadence of that
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Rod Hugen is pastor of The Village Church and leader of the Tucson Cluster, a church-planting effort in Tucson, Ariz.

UNCOMBED GRAY HAIR falling down over wild eyes. The stench of the streets on unkempt clothes. He ordered coffee and sat in the booth next to me as I worked on my sermon. He muttered to himself and to the backpack, sleeping bag, and the boxes surrounding him. He pulled out empty coffee cups from various places and began to count them, pausing only to sip coffee from the cup in front of him. He caught his reflection in the darkened glass of the restaurant window and let go a string of profanity and rage.

The manager came and told him to calm down and to watch his language. He apologized over and over. "I'll be good, I'll be good, I'll be good." Then he quietly cursed at the back of the departing boss. Mumbling, he pulled a bunch of quarters from one of the paper cups, counting "One, two, three . . ." as he carefully stacked them on the tabletop, working his way to 12 or 13, then losing count and starting over. "No, no, no," he'd murmur, "that's not right." He'd start again.

Suddenly he glared at me. "Whatcha doing, working or playing?"

"Working," I said, not wanting to look him in the eye. Wishing I was more like Jesus and not so afraid to engage.

"Whaddya do?" The words were slurred.

"I'm a pastor."

"Good!" he exclaimed, and then he caught his image in the glass again and gave himself another dressing down: "You worthless piece of garbage! Straighten up, fly right, stop making a mess!" On and on he went until the manager started to walk over again. Instantly he stopped

cursing, mumbling how sorry he was and that it wouldn't happen again. The manager looked at me with a raised eyebrow. I held up my hand, mouthing that it was OK.

The man asked me the time and I told him 10 minutes before 10. He turned it into a song. "Ten to 10, 10 to 10, 10 to 10." On and on. A worker, bucket and mop in hand, came by and set out the Wet Floor cone. "Whatcha doing, working or playing?" he asked. The kid looked away.

Eventually the man began to pack his stuff away, counting and recounting, mumbling, cursing, pausing occasionally to yell at his image in the window. Then he stopped at my table and stuck out his hand. I shook it, meeting his eyes. He stared at me for a long moment and then began to recite the Apostles' Creed. "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. . . ." I joined my voice to his, and together we found the cadence of that beautiful, ancient music.

The kid cleaning the floor stopped and leaned on the handle of the mop, eyes wide with wonder. We finished the creed. In a soft voice, with a bowed head, the man began to pray the Lord's Prayer. I prayed with him. When I looked up, the kid's eyes were closed too. We finished our prayer and the ragged man looked up, eyes glowing. "Have a good night," he blurted. I wished him the same. Before he left, he put a quarter on the table. I looked at him, questioning. "For the offering," he mumbled as he turned to the door. Once again he cursed his darkened image. **B**

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