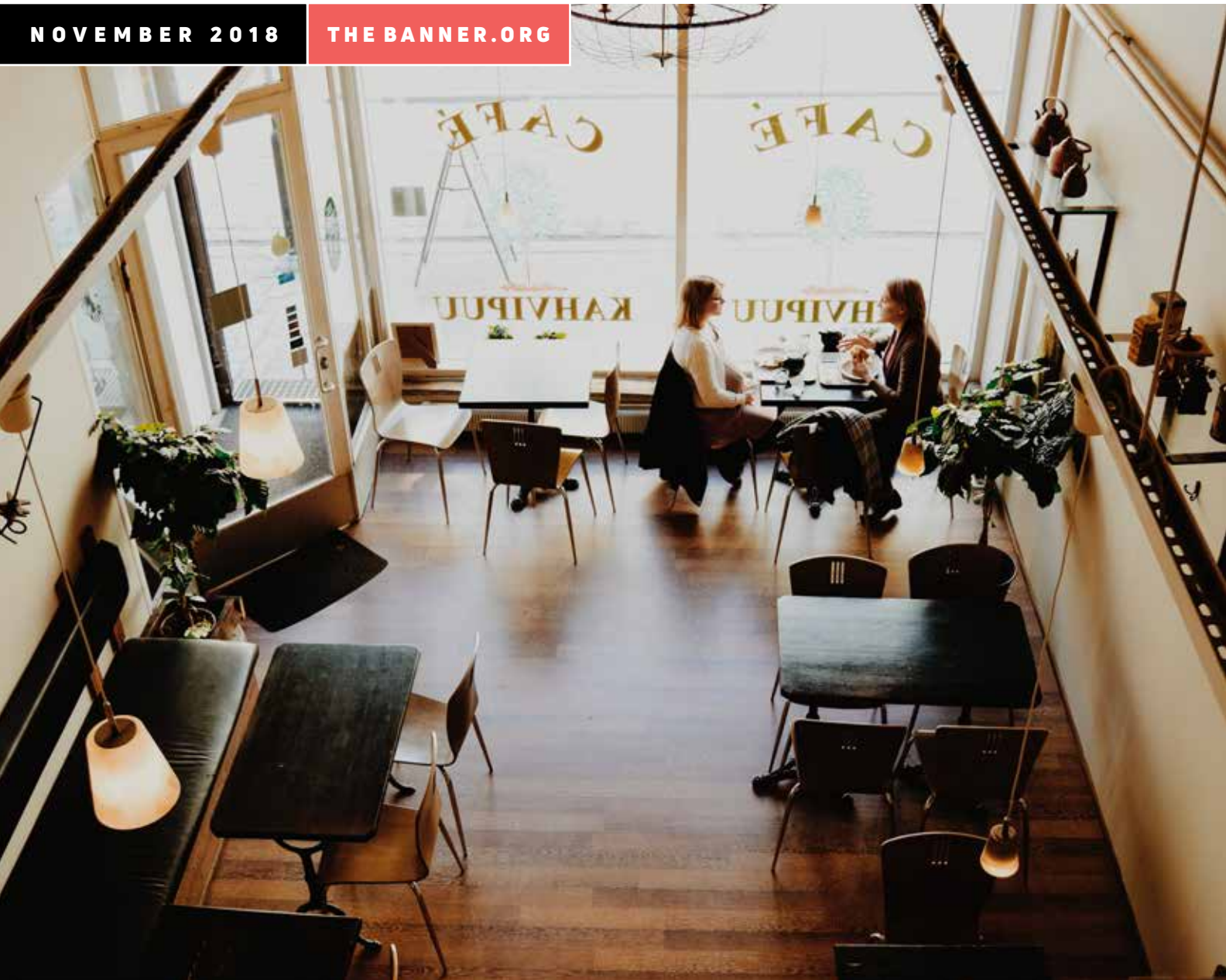


BANNER

NOVEMBER 2018

THE BANNER.ORG



A Bible for Those Who Can't Read



GOOD NEWS!

DONATIONS FROM CANADA ARE NOW TAX-DEDUCTIBLE THROUGH OUR WEBSITE!



The Solar Talking Bible

- Easy to use
- Powerful speaker
- Solar powered



Enhancing Trust



"Accredited for special offerings"

"If He can change me, He can change anyone!"

Punjab, India: Arshad was an abusive drunk. His family feared him. He sought help in the local Sikh temple, but those he asked were drunks themselves. Their advice to study their scriptures more diligently was unhelpful because he couldn't read. His years of drinking had made him sick, and he was looking to end his life.

Amid his pain and spiritual brokenness, Arshad met a Christian pastor who told him about hope in Jesus Christ and gave him a Talking Bible. Three months later, Arshad's life has been transformed. He is sober, his health is improving, and he has a growing relationship with Jesus. He listens to the Talking Bible with his family and their relationship is improving.

Arshad rejoices, "Jesus saved me and saved my life." God's Word can transform a lost soul into a thriving and growing Christian. Talking Bibles can reach through spiritual darkness and illiteracy. Please sponsor a Talking Bible Listening Group and help give God's Word to non-readers around the world.

www.talkingbibles.org

Talking Bibles International • 419 East Grand Avenue, Escondido, CA 92025 • Telephone: 855-55-BIBLE (855-552-4253) or 760-745-8105

Brick by Brick

VEENSTRA LEGACY GARDEN

Phase 2

We all have stories to tell. Someone, somewhere loved us when we needed it most. The grandparent whose prayers we still remember. The pastor who helped us really grasp the gospel for the first time. The friend whose support was the strong presence of Christ when we felt lost or abandoned.

That's why we're determined to line the Veenstra Legacy Garden of Calvin Seminary with the names of friends, mentors, and loved ones who paved our own journeys of faith.

Your contribution to the Veenstra Legacy Garden will guide the way for seminary students and visitors, while celebrating God's love through the people named on every brick.

Let's build something beautiful together:
calvinseminary.edu/buyabrick



CALVIN
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

BANNER

WHAT'S ONLINE

Looking for more? Here are just a few of the stories you'll find online at *thebanner.org*. (Try typing the headlines into the search box.)

- » Movie: *The Guardians*
- » Book: *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* by Austin Channing Brown
- » Music: *Hiding Place* by Tori Kelly
- » As I Was Saying: A Calling to Care for Mothers
- » As I Was Saying: Reforming Church



A blessed Thanksgiving Day to our United States readers!



Elders Are Called to a Ministry of Presence (p. 10). To love their congregants, elders need to spend time with them: at home, in coffee shops, or around a meal.

Photo by Seemi Samuel / Unsplash

FEATURES



10

Elders Are Called to a Ministry of Presence

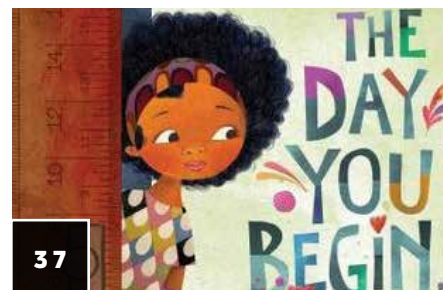
Andrew Beunk // Elders should think of visits with congregants less as a “spiritual check-up” and more as an opportunity to attest to Christ’s presence.



32

Why Christianity Still Matters

Presenting the winners of our first-ever essay contest for college students.



37

A Very Merry Mixed Media: Gift Ideas for Everyone on Your List

Great titles for young and old.

NEWS

15 After Abuse: Community in Sioux Center Begins ‘Healing the Wounded Heart’

17 Generation Spark: Growing Relationships, Finding Solutions

19 Church Reaching ‘The Broken’ Receives CRC Support

COLUMNS

7 Editorial: Good Theology

Shiao Chong // Good theology should inspire faith in Christ, hope in God’s mission, and love for God and others.

8 Reply All

9 Vantage Point: For This Child I Have Prayed

Pam Mundorf // My son is answering the call God has for him.

12 Big Questions

Why do I feel lonely even though I often text and hang out with friends on Facebook and Twitter?

31 Discover: Thankful 30

Sandy Swartzentruber // Here’s one way to practice being thankful every day!

35 Faith Matters: God’s Fierce Love: Our World Belongs to God

Chris Schoon // The contemporary testimony reminds us that God is fully present and involved in our lives.

36 The Other 6: Gloves and Grace

Bob Ritzema // I think I came out ahead in our transaction.

40 Cross Examination: Is Jesus the Son of God?

Cornelius Plantinga // The answer to this question is all about the Holy Spirit.

41 Word Play

47 Still: Writing Prayers

Margaret Schmidt // Keeping a prayer journal has taught me to pray.

OUR SHARED MINISTRY

Editor Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,
Director of CRCNA Communications and Marketing



Not for Sale: How the Christian Reformed Church Is Combating Human Trafficking

Cassie Westrate and Amy Everett // Human trafficking has many faces.

26 The View from Here: God Working in Us

Steven Timmermans // Be encouraged; live thankfully. God hasn’t abandoned us in our misery.

BANNER

The Banner is the magazine of the Christian Reformed Church

Editor Shiao Chong

Associate Editor Judith Claire Hardy

News Editors Alissa Vernon, Gayla R. Postma

Mixed Media Editor Kristy Quist

Art Director Dean R. Heetderks

Designer Pete Euwema

Contact Us 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407 info@TheBanner.org

Address Changes and Subscriptions 800-777-7270 or visit TheBanner.org

Classified Advertising 616-224-0725 classifieds@TheBanner.org

Display Advertising 616-224-5882 ads@TheBanner.org

Editorial 616-224-0824 editorial@TheBanner.org

News news@TheBanner.org

Published monthly (except August). Periodicals postage paid at Grand Rapids, Mich. Postmaster, send address changes to: *The Banner*, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508-1407. Canadian publications mail agreement #40063614. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: *The Banner*, 3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070, STN LCD 1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8. Copyright 2018, Christian Reformed Church in North America. Printed in U.S.A. The Banner (ISSN0005-5557). Vol. 153, No. 10, 2018.

Member of Associated Church Press and Evangelical Press Association.

God Loves Me storybooks

For the past 16 years, *God Loves Me* storybooks have been a well-loved and much-used resource in church preschool ministry. Newly revised in 2015, these storybooks will provide families and churches with a wonderful way to nurture faith while establishing devotional habits of Bible reading and prayer.

Visit FaithAliveResources.org/GodLovesMe to see samples and learn more.



For more news about the churches and ministries of the Christian Reformed Church, visit thebanner.org. Or get the app by searching for "CRCNA Banner" in your app store.



More resources for preschoolers, children, and youth are available at FaithAliveResources.org

800-333-8300
Orders@FaithAliveResources.org



Follow *The Banner* on social media:

- [Facebook.com/crcbanner](https://www.facebook.com/crcbanner)
- [@crcbanner](https://twitter.com/crcbanner), #crcbanner

Got a news tip?

Visit thebanner.org/news and use the "Got a Tip" button. Or contact the news editor at news@thebanner.org or 613-330-3145.

UZIMA

GIVE A GOAT GIFT



Give a goat, wheelchair, or sewing machine TODAY and offer "abundant life" to people who face hunger, poverty, and oppression.

800-552-7972 (US)
800-730-3490 (Canada)
worldrenew.net/gifts   



Good Theology

Good theology is not simply about faithfulness and accuracy to God's Word but must include a wise and loving use of God's Word.



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.

이 기사의 한글번역은 TheBanner.org/korean 에서 보실 수 있습니다.

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

I AM PLEASED to feature in this print issue the winners of our college writing contest (p. 32). We received 46 essay entries from across the United States and Canada. I was delighted to see so many young Christians writing about why Christianity, in their opinion, still matters.

In those essays, I read that Christianity still matters because God is still at work in this world and calls us to join him in this work. I read that Christianity still matters when the church obeys that calling to join God's work in restoring all areas of life. I read that only Christianity provides a narrative framework that gives healing, hope, and meaning to the suffering in our lives. Above all, I read that Christ's life, death, and resurrection are central to all of this. These young writers were doing theology.

November 2018 also marks the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dort, which produced the Canons of Dort, one of the confessions of the Christian Reformed Church. (Look for our commemorative article in January 2019.) I have had occasions to discuss the Canons with university students. Many wonder if the Canons are still relevant. Most could not get into what they regard as "theological hairsplitting."

My response has been that, at their heart, the Canons are about salvation as entirely of God's grace, from beginning to end. Not human free will or human choice or anything else can take away God's grace as the beginning and end of our salvation. In a nutshell, I believe that is what the Canons were trying to protect, preserve, and propagate. That's something I can stand behind, even

if Christians might argue about the Canons' technical points.

But I understand most young people's impatience with the theological disputes that produced the Canons of Dort. For them, such theological debates seem a lot like the "quarreling about words" the apostle Paul warned against (2 Tim. 2:14). Most of them prefer to see faith as making a tangible difference to the world and to people's lives. Intuitively, they know that good theology is ultimately about serving God and people.

In their book *Redeeming How We Talk*, Ken Wytmsa and A.J. Swoboda distinguish two types of theology: "With one, knowledge of Scripture and theology is used as a way to serve Jesus, people, and the church. The other, however, becomes a kind of tool for power and authority. For one, knowledge is a gift from God as a way to serve and love others. For the other, knowledge becomes about control, power, and authority. The first is sacred theology. The second is demonic theology" (p. 131). Good theology is not simply about faithfulness and accuracy to God's Word but must include a wise and loving use of God's Word.

Alas, I have encountered too many Christians, even pastors, who fail to recognize that truth. Their arrogance in "being right" often harms God's kingdom more than furthers it. Theology, for some, becomes not a kneeling bench that humbles them before God but a stepping stool to elevate themselves over others. They use theological knowledge to win arguments and show off their intellectual prowess, to control others and get their way. This use of theology turns many young people off—and rightly so. Rather, good theology should inspire faith in Christ, hope in God's mission, and love for God and others.

As we commemorate the Canons of Dort, let us also repent from abusing theology and let us follow our young people's lead in pursuing good theology. **B**



REPLY ALL

Do Synods Remember?

I was a synodical delegate in 2016 and 2017 and a member of the subcommittee that authored the recommendations referenced by Clayton Libolt in his article "Do Synods Remember? A Look at Ministry Shares" (Oct. 2018).

As I remember it, I was the delegate that suggested the wording "shrinking the institutional footprint," an action I dearly regret. In hindsight, I recognize that the phrasing is ambiguous, and I would like to clarify my meaning. I meant the phrase to reflect a desire to do more with less; respectfully, Rev. Libolt, I think this is precisely what the CRC, institutionally, is attempting to do. As for our request for a complete review, this too was undertaken and duly reported. Synodical memory is invested in our leadership, namely Dr. Timmermans, Dee Recker, and the Council of Delegates, and I think they've done a fine job of interpreting the will of synods.

» Gina Taylor Lunshof // online comment

Things You May Not Know about Hell

Bob De Moor wrote about 13 things we may not know about hell ("13 Things You May Not Know about Hell," Sept. 2018). I wonder if the 14th thing we may not know is this: Hell could very well be a devilish brew concocted by manipulative religious reactionaries. Not all biblical writers knew what they were talking about when they talked about the afterlife. Other than God, who really knows what happens next? And God's not telling. "Bedrock of biblical fact" sounds suspiciously oxymoronic.

» William R. Lenters // Rockford, Ill.

Editor's note: The CRC's Reformed confessions support the biblical teaching of hell and presuppose its reality.

In Bob De Moor's article "13 Things You May Not Know about Hell," De Moor gives his opinion: "We shouldn't scare people into heaven by making them fear hell." He fails to point out that Jesus often spoke about hell. Perhaps he does not know of the American Calvinist theologian Jonathan Edwards, whose sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" was the catalyst for one of the great revivals in the 1700s. I wonder if there is a correlation between the fact that modern ministers preach far fewer "hellfire sermons" and the fact that the church in North America is in decline.

» Bill Hoogland // Wyoming, Mich.

Religious Freedom in Canada

The religious freedom of institutions is an important right; other rights are also important, particularly in a Reformed approach to life. The Supreme Court of Canada's decision in the Trinity Western University case ("Moving Forward after Canadian Supreme Court's Law School Ruling," Sept. 2018) is a fine balancing of various important rights, including careful consideration of the situation and impact for all rights holders. The subsequent decision to make its community covenant voluntary ("Trinity Western University's Change on Mandatory Covenant Emphasizes Welcome," Oct. 2018) is a rights-respecting step that recognizes the moral agency of all students. I hope Reformed Christians will pay as much attention to respecting important rights of others as to preserving the rights of our churches and schools.

» Kathy Vandergrift // Ottawa, Ont.

Reach Out

I was moved by the divorced woman who wrote about judging and the pain she and her children experience alone ("Reach Out," Sept. 2019). I so identified with that because my husband has early-stage Alzheimer's. He mostly sits alone all day. Though most of the people in his church live nearby, no one comes. They did visit and bring meals when he had to be in the hospital with stroke, cancer surgery, and heart surgery. And they provide a ride to church every Sunday morning. I have asked the elders if some of the older members could come to visit, especially when I have to be away. But nothing has happened so far.

It would mean so much. It might even impress our daughter and family, who are not believers. Doesn't Jesus' prayer in John 17 talk about being in Christ and one with one another so that the world would see him and know him?

» Bertha Kramlich // Portland, Ore.

To the woman who wrote this article: If you were in my vicinity, I would certainly walk with you, look you in the eye, listen to you, and care about you and your children ("Reach Out"). You do not need to be ashamed. I am so sorry for your sad experiences. As a recently divorced woman, I can relate to a lot of the issues you mentioned. I wish you peace, and I hope someone special finds you and shows you sincere love again.

» Carolyn Loewen // Salmon Arm, B.C.



For This Child I Have Prayed

September Banner Cover

Loved your cover pic—I have many of that same lake in my photo collection, as we go there often. Its beauty is astounding in any and all conditions/seasons/ weather. However, you identified it “Peyton Lake,” but it’s really “Peyto Lake.” And it’s pronounced PEEtoh.

Why exercise myself over such trivia? Merely to honor the explorer/mountaineer/guide after whom it was named. Honor where honor is due!

» Bob De Moor // Agassiz, B.C..

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

“I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him.” —1 Samuel 1:27

GROWING UP in a town that was ethnically mostly Dutch, I never gave much thought to the police. I was taught to obey police officers, but they didn’t play a large role in my life.

Fast-forward 30 years: I am an adult living in St. Louis, Mo. I am the mother of an adult son who is a Brentwood, Mo., police officer.

My son has talked since high school about his desire to be a police officer. He attended Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, and majored in criminal justice. After college he attended the police academy. During the 2014 incident in Ferguson, Mo., in which a black teen was shot by a white police officer and riots ensued, he said, “I can’t wait to protect the community I love.” I am so proud of him.

Today I think more about the police. I pray that my son stays safe. While doing his job, his words and actions will be scrutinized at a level unknown to most of us. He will often be considered guilty until proven innocent. Instead of being honored and respected, he will often be accused of racially profiling while doing his job.

Police officers need a safe place where they can mourn the loss of innocent people—a place where they can share the weight of seeing sin and depravity in all people and all races. I hope for my son that this place is the church.

For years I prayed that the Lord would change my son’s desire to be a police officer, and later that God would change my heart so I could accept my son’s choice. My God is faithful. I no longer wish my son had

For years I prayed
that the Lord
would change my
son’s desire to be
a police officer.

chosen a different career. Instead, I admire his love for and dedication to his city and its people, and I admire even more his faithfulness in answering the call God has for him.

In a time when it is not popular to support police officers, I ask you to join me in honoring these brave men and women. Pray for them and their families. Most importantly, believe, unless otherwise proven, that their intentions are honorable and good. **B**



Pam Mundorf is a member of Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Maryland Heights, Mo. She is a teacher at Westminster Christian Academy.



Photo by Seemi Samuel / Unsplash

Elders Are Called to a Ministry of Presence

by Andrew Beunk

In my former life as an engineer, at the age of 26, I was asked to let my name stand on the ballot as an elder nominee. In my mind I had every reason to say no: *I'm too young! I'd be doing home visits with my friend's parents—how awkward is that? Moreover, I was at the beginning of a promising career at Ford Motor Company and my days were too long. I don't have time!*

That was just over 25 years ago, and I've discovered that for many people these obstacles still exist. In an informal survey in a Facebook group for Christian Reformed pastors, I asked what pastors thought were the most common perceived obstacles people saw to serving as elders. The top two reasons by a significant margin were *I don't feel qualified or equipped* and *I'm too busy*.

As I look back on my own first term as elder, slowly but surely the Lord did equip me, and my schedule somehow adjusted to make room for meetings and visits. But more than that, I discovered that the task of providing spiritual leadership in the local church was both a pleasure and a great blessing.

Elders have a wonderful calling: to help lead a community that God has declared “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9)—a community formed to tangibly display God calling people out of darkness into God's wonderful light.

Throughout the history of the church, God has chosen to delegate authority to those whom God calls and sets apart. Recall Moses, feeling burned out and overworked, being instructed

by God to “select capable men . . . and appoint them” to serve as leaders over the people (Ex. 18:21). That practice continued in the New Testament when Paul instructed the church in Crete and in every town to “appoint elders” (Titus 1:5) to govern the church in Christ's name and “promote the spiritual well-being of [God's] people” (Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons, 2016).

Jesus is the head of the church; it might be helpful to think of elders (including pastors) as the heart of the church. The health of a body depends to a large degree on the health of the heart. In my experience, the spiritual health of a congregation will not rise above the spiritual health of its leadership, and the unity experienced in a congregation will not rise above the unity among the leadership.

Consider how often God called leaders or shepherds to account when the people of God were unhealthy and disobedient: “The leaders rebelled against me” (Jer. 2:8), and “I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock” (Ezek. 34:10). In Jeremiah God reminds God’s people of their chosen calling and promises: “I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15). Jesus entrusts leadership to those who are ordained—set apart to serve as a kind of pacesetter toward congregational vitality and Christ-centered witness.

In most marathons, there are a variety of pacesetters. If you’re aiming to achieve a particular time, you look for the appropriate pacesetter and run with that person. Assuming you’ve trained, you’ll likely achieve your goal. I see this image as Paul says to the Corinthians, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). Pastor and ministry leader Henry Blackaby describes spiritual leadership as “moving people on to God’s agenda.” As the spiritual leaders of a congregation follow Christ, they prayerfully discern the leading of the Spirit toward a community life and witness that is Christ-centered, gospel-proclaiming, and kingdom-focused.

The spiritual leadership of elders is characterized by a love for and awareness of what God is doing in the congregation and in the broader community. This requires a deep reliance on prayer and discernment as well as a willingness to lead with vision and purpose.

One of the chief ways elders exercise spiritual leadership is by loving congregants and being aware of how God is at work among them. To love congregants, the elder has to be with them. Historically, the primary way this has taken place in our denomination is through the ministry of home visitation.

In my experience, this is one of the tasks that elders find most intimidating and challenging—partly because they don’t feel equipped, and partly because congregants are busy and being available for visits seems more difficult these days. In the Facebook survey I conducted, just over half of the pastors answered “no” to the

**To love
congregants,
the elder has to
be with them.**


question “Do elders in your church do regular home visits?”

How might we strengthen this particular ministry? In training I’ve done at my church, I encourage elders to think of visitation as a ministry of presence. The congregation has set elders apart to be Christ’s presence to the people, so elders should think of visits with congregants less as a “spiritual check-up” and more as an opportunity to attest to Christ’s presence. I invite them to see these visits as a time to bring a word of encouragement from the Lord, to prayerfully select a passage from Scripture to read, perhaps explaining why you chose it, and then calling on the Spirit’s presence in individual and specific prayers for the individual or family. In this way, Christ, through his Word and the intercessory presence of his ordained leader, ministers to those being visited with his grace and peace.

Such a visit may begin with a simple question: “May I visit with you? As your elder I would love to bring you some encouragement from God and pray for you.” This unremarkable and unassuming ministry works for all people of all ages in any and all circumstances. With the young adult finishing college and wondering about

their future, for example, elders might read Jeremiah 29:11 and then lift her up personally before the throne of grace, calling upon Jesus to encourage her, direct her path, and fill her with peace and joy. Consider how Christ might have you minister through his Word and your intercessory presence with a young parent, an elderly person, or a person who is unemployed.

In addition to personal visits, elders can facilitate a variety of interactions that deepen community and strengthen relationships. Our church, for example, hosts a monthly district potluck lunch after the Sunday service, thus creating opportunities for fellowship around a meal. Guests and newcomers are always invited. But no matter what innovative ways elders find to connect with God’s people, there is one thing everyone needs and appreciates: a word of encouragement from the Lord that is personally and specifically prayed into one’s life. As the Spirit fills and equips elders for that ministry, they attest to God’s grace and peace.

Elders, the church has called and set you apart for this ministry of presence. Those who feel intimidated could ask a pastor or another Spirit-filled leader to help you. I promise that your spiritual leadership in the church will bring you and the church great blessing and joy. 



Andrew Beunk is a pastor at New Westminster Christian Reformed Church in Burnaby, B.C. He has led periodic workshops and webinars for equipping elders.

1. How have you been served or ministered to by your local church elder(s)? How have they blessed you?
2. How would you describe the role of elders in your local church?...

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

BIG QUESTIONS

Relationships

Why do I feel lonely even though I text and hang out with my friends often and communicate with many others through Facebook and Twitter daily?

On the one hand, some connections are established more easily and quickly now that the smartphone replaced the telephone; on the other hand, the quality of those friendships is more casual and superficial—social media and “hanging out” have replaced dating as a way to get to know each other better. Young adults today learn how to establish contact with others easily and often, but what is quickly and easily established is by definition also going to be superficial. Depth takes time and effort.

Your loneliness is telling you that you are ready for deeper intimacy. Think of that feeling as an encouragement toward action. Begin by getting to know better someone you already like to spend time with—ask that person out for coffee, lunch, a walk, or any other activity that would allow for conversation. Keep it simple. Don't put all your hopes and dreams on the line, but do take a first step toward getting to know someone better. Then, if a desire to deepen the relationship appears to be mutual, be prepared to share more of your hopes, your fears, your dreams, your wants—in short, yourself.

Asking someone to spend time with you alone is risky; the possibility for rejection is very real.



Illustration for The Banner by Gisela Bohorquez

But accepting loneliness without trying to fill the created need it points to is worse, and it might rob your life of much joy and health. Creating intimacy is a call from God to humanity. Both loneliness and attraction are building blocks given by God to help us answer that call.

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

Missional Living

I love watching films. I want to increase my knowledge about racial justice in North America. What films would you recommend I see?

Here are six films, from the very old to the recent, that are worth watching:

Birth of A Nation (1915). D.W. Griffith's film of life after the Civil War was considered revolutionary for its cinematic achievements. The film was considered by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson as the best movie he had ever seen related to race. This movie is offensively racist, but it reflected the fears of many white Americans in the early 20th century.

Unwanted Soldiers (1999) looks at discrimination experienced by a Canadian World War II veteran of Chinese descent. Filmmaker Jari Osborne's father is the center of the documentary. Secrets kept for years reveal the strength and resilience of these fighting men who deserved honor.

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (2007) reveals the acts of Henry Dawes and his U.S. commission toward First Nations people from 1893 through 1914. The film can help viewers understand how the U.S. government contributed to disruption and destruction of the people who originally “owned” the land in the West.

Which Way Home (2010) is timely because of the political and humanitarian turmoil over migrant families taking the arduous journey to come to the United States. The movie shows the lives of lone children seeking a better life beyond the dangerous conditions of their Central American homelands.

Silence (2016). After reading Shusaku Endo's novel in seminary, I was stunned and left wanting more. Director Martin Scorsese's deeply researched journey of two young Christian missionaries (Andrew Garfield and Adam Driver) seeking to find their mentor Father Ferreira (Liam Neeson) in Japan has much to teach. I had to watch it twice because the themes of cultural intelligence are too many to count. The film's lessons will stay with you.

Marshall (2018). The late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall took cases of racial discrimination for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People across the nation. The movie depicts Marshall (Chadwick Boseman) teaming up with Sam Friedman (Josh Gad), an insurance

lawyer, to try a case of sexual assault in late-1940s Connecticut.

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

Faith Formation

What is the Christian Reformed Church's position on the use of curricula from publishers such as Answers in Genesis (AiG) for church school? I find that much of AiG's instruction contradicts Reformed theology, but our church is choosing to use AiG curriculum.

The CRC does not have an official position on curriculum. The responsibility for choosing curriculum belongs with congregations—with the expectation that they will choose materials that reflect Reformed theology. We believe theology is important whether you're 3 years old or an adult. The CRC has supported congregations with excellent curriculum through Faith Alive Christian Resources. Kid Connection and DWELL are two examples.

At times congregations pick a curriculum based on the attractiveness of the materials, how easy it is to use, or even the quality of the paper it is printed on. When they do this, they may be missing something important: Reformed theology. It is a mistake to assume that just because a lesson is for young children it can be theologically neutral. Every time we tell a Bible story we're interpreting Scripture. Many curricula reinforce the idea that the Bible is written to give instructions on how to live and that we have to be "good enough" to merit salvation. This difference can be subtle, but it changes our understanding of what the Bible is telling us, emphasizing how we can be better people instead of showing how God has been working throughout history. Any curriculum with a Reformed perspective should

approach all Bible stories as part of God's redemption plan for the world.

Good teachers can take bad curricula and adjust it to make good lessons. However, many churches don't have the luxury of people with the theological or pedagogical training to make good lessons out of bad materials. So unless you have a staff person or a trained volunteer who is revising each lesson, using curriculum that agrees with your congregation's theology is helpful.

The Answers in Genesis curriculum is written with a particular agenda: promoting a strictly literal reading of the early chapters of Genesis. This curriculum focuses on one side of a controversial topic on which CRC members differ. From our perspective, using this for your church school curriculum seems unwise.

Laura Keeley is a regional catalyzer for Faith Formation Ministries and director of children's ministries at 14th St. CRC in Holland, Mich.

Robert J. Keeley is a professor of education at Calvin College and director of distance education at Calvin Seminary.

Ethics

A young married couple with children who are active members at our church practice a "polyamory lifestyle" and see nothing wrong with it since some people in the Old Testament had multiple wives. How should the church respond?

According to one polyamory website, a polyamorous relationship is "a romantic relationship where the people in the relationship agree that it's okay for everyone to be open to or have other romantic partners." It is not to be confused with "swinging" because it emphasizes commitment and emotional love as opposed to simply recreational sex. And polygamy is only one possible form of

polyamory, as it does not insist that all romantic partners have to be married. This movement seems to be growing, even among some Christians.

Although the Bible does not explicitly condemn polyamory per se, the Bible does present monogamy as the ideal. Jesus upholds Genesis 2—the two will "become one flesh"—as the basis of marriage (Matt. 19:4-6). Other New Testament passages also point to monogamy as the ideal for romantic relationships (1 Cor. 7:2; 1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6). Polygamy was tolerated and allowed in the Old Testament but never held up as a prescribed ideal. As Jesus taught concerning divorce, God sometimes allows practices that are not ideal (Matt. 19:8-9). In fact, Scripture often portrays the dysfunctional dynamics that arise from polygamous relationships. The Old Testament examples, therefore, cannot be used to justify polyamory.

Polyamory follows our culture's tendency to reduce sexual relationships to mutual consent and desire. But feelings and desires need to be disciplined and directed. Scripture consistently used marriage as a metaphor for God's covenant love for Israel and for Christ's sacrificial love for the church. Therefore, marriage is not simply about meeting our sexual and emotional needs. Christian marriage has a missional dimension of bearing witness to God's faithfulness. Monogamy's exclusiveness better portrays God's exclusiveness (as opposed to idols) with us.

The church community should pastorally and prayerfully help this couple learn this biblical ideal through gentle and patient instruction. We should not be quick to judge but must rather aim to be kind, "realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4).

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



Remembering at a Forgotten Site: CRC Member Helps Initiate Tradition

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.

Follow *The Banner* on social media:

- » [Facebook.com/crcbanner](https://www.facebook.com/crcbanner)
- » [Twitter @crcbanner](https://twitter.com/crcbanner)

Got a news tip?

Visit *TheBanner.org/News* and use the "Got a News Tip" button. Or contact the news editor at news@TheBanner.org.



A cenotaph erected in Murrayville, B.C., in 1921 has become a site for formal services of remembrance on November 11. Grace Muller, a member of Willoughby Christian Reformed Church, was one of three people who worked to organize a 2017 service, the first in the site's 96-year history. A second service is planned for this month.

"Remembrance Day is very important to me," said Muller, who is also a member of the Langley Heritage Society. "We need to remember those who sacrificed for the freedom and peace we enjoy and often take for granted. I also believe we need to connect with the people in our community and [to] serve."

Jenna Rodermond, a young adult member at Willoughby CRC, participated in the 2017 service, leading the a capella

Jenna Rodermond (far left on microphone) sings at the Murrayville, B.C., cenotaph service of remembrance on Nov. 11, 2017.

opening singing of "O Canada" and sharing "Amazing Grace" as a solo during the service. "Jenna's singing of 'Amazing Grace' was the most moving part for me, and others expressed the same," Muller said. She added, "The service had many 'God moments,' in a time when God is culturally unacceptable. For example, it took a few discussions at the committee level before it was agreed to include a prayer. In the end I wrote an acceptable one."

Services are held at two other cenotaphs within the City and Township of Langley.

Remembrance Day services are held across Canada; two minutes of silence are observed at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, followed by the laying of down of wreaths and poppies. The date is a recognition of Armistice Day, the official end of the hostilities of World War I.

—Jenny deGroot

After Abuse: Community in Sioux Center Begins 'Healing the Wounded Heart'

"How's your swordplay?" Dan Allender, author and counselor, frequently asked of the teachers, staff, college students, and others gathered at First Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa. It may seem an odd question to pose to a community wrestling with the aftereffects of abuse. But it's part of Allender's strategy to heal from and combat abuse—employing the Bible and other resources to "sharpen our swords" so we can be knowledgeable and effective in fending off and defeating evil in the world.

Allender was speaking at the educators' session of the "Healing the Wounded Heart" conference at First Reformed and at Dordt College on September 28 and 29. The conference was held in light of incidents of sexual abuse that occurred at Sioux Center Christian School. A complaint against a teacher was made in October 2017, prompting an investigation that led to the teacher being fired and subsequently arrested. He was initially charged with two counts and eventually with 146 counts of sexual misconduct. In September 2018, the former teacher was sentenced to 15 years in federal prison,

having pleaded guilty on one count of sexual exploitation of a child as part of a plea agreement. He will be required to register as a sex offender upon release.

Even a year after the arrest, the whole community is still "dealing with trauma," said conference attendee Jill Friend, a teacher at Sioux Center Christian School. She said that the community has moved ahead but added, "I felt personally 'stuck' in a place that was not healthy." Her take-away from the conference was "the deep sense of hope for the future because of the promises in God's Word but also a deep realization that the healing will not come about unless we are willing to come face to face with the grief, anger, and shame."

Dordt College and Bethesda Christian Counseling were partners with Sioux Center Christian School in hosting the conference. "Sadly, sexual abuse is rampant in our world, and we need Christian leaders today who can lead effectively in challenging ministry settings," said Aaron Baart, the college's dean of chapel. He said that Dordt was more than willing to support the effort.

Josh Bowar, Head of School at Sioux Center Christian School, said that one of the main reasons the school decided to offer this conference was to provide faculty and staff with a shared understanding of the negative effects of sexual abuse—how it happens, the trauma that happens as a result, and how to work well with students, families, and each other. "We are on the healing journey together," Bowar said.

The school plans to do small group studies on some of the books that Allender suggested so that they can continue to process what they learned at the conference. Bowar said the school continues to provide counseling for students and staff as well as parent and student discussion groups. Seventh- and eighth-graders also meet in groups with an adult mentor in an activity known as "Grace Groups."

Resources recommended at the conference included *Healing the Wounded Heart* by Dan Allender and *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Bessel van der Kolk.

—Kyle Hoogendoorn

Wisconsin Church Celebrates 150 Years

As pastor Drew Zylstra preached at First Christian Reformed Church in Oostburg, Wisc., on Sept. 9, he noted three possible ways to look at celebrating a 150th anniversary. A church could feel they are "really awesome and smart" to have made it this far; or that they are "lucky to have made it this long"; or that "God has been faithful to his church." Zylstra said the first two viewpoints create a lot of pressure and insecurity, but the third creates a feeling of freedom and security.

Using the theme "God's Faithfulness," First CRC held services and events over two September weekends honoring its 150-year history.

Former member James Schaap returned from his home in Alton, Iowa, to share historical reminiscences. The youth group challenged past and current council members to a basketball game. Former pastors Les Kuiper and Tom Pettingway preached at special anniversary services. Kuiper focused on Lamentations 3:19-27 and Jeremiah's hope, a hope that Oostburg can share. Pettingway preached on Revelation 5. He laid out the idea of "celebrating the Lamb, prayer, and worship" as keys to lasting another 150 years.

—Kyle Hoogendoorn



#ChurchToo: Lessons from Willow Creek

Stories of sexual misconduct keep the news cycle spinning faster than ever these days. Such allegations are especially disheartening to Christians when church leaders stand accused.

In early August, the two leading pastors and all the elders of Willow Creek, a megachurch in suburban Chicago, resigned. In previous months, allegations of sexual misconduct by Bill Hybels, the church's founder and leader for more than four decades, had been made and published. After initially defending Hybels—who denied the allegations but retired from the church—the leaders acknowledged they had made mistakes in not properly investigating.

Should the Willow Creek story be a cautionary tale for Christian Reformed churches? How are Christian Reformed churches working to safeguard their congregations from abuse?

Bonnie Nicholas, director of Safe Church Ministry for the CRC, said the denomination can learn three lessons from Willow Creek.

"The first is the importance of oversight and accountability for our leaders. The fact that the Willow Creek board resigned has something to say to us," said Nicholas. "A second lesson we can learn from Willow Creek is that oftentimes church leaders don't understand how much they are revered by people. We need to guard against this. The third lesson we can learn from Willow Creek is to be willing to hear stories and find out what is true," Nicholas said.

"Congregations may not see the need to offer and manage supervision or may be fearful in raising critique and concerns," explained Miriam Spies, a communications and volunteer specialist working for the ministries of Disability Concerns and Safe Church in the CRC. "However, ministers are often in relationship with folks who are in more marginalized or vulnerable positions. . . . To promote safety for both pastor and congregant in community, in relationships of trust, accountability is necessary," she added.

"People in the pews tend to place ministers on a pedestal," said Spies. "And so, when stories of abuse arise, fellow ministry staff, lay leaders, and worshipers often want to believe the minister and defend him or her as their initial reaction."

CRC executive director Steve Timmermans agreed. "We are all sinners. Our church leaders are not exempt from that. Unfortunately, all too often, the global church has failed to respond appropriately when these instances of abuse have occurred. Our tendency is to doubt that it happened or to try to keep things secret in order to protect the reputation of our faith. The result has been more pain for victims and more distrust in the public about the Christian church," Timmermans said.

At Synod 2018, delegates wrestled with the topic of abuse of power. Delegates heard that only 60 percent of CRC churches have safe church policies and about half of classes (regional groups of churches) have safe church coordinators. In response to the discussion, synod reaffirmed goals approved by Synod 2014 to guide Safe Church Ministry and asked the denomination to track and publish whether or not CRC churches have safe church policies.

Following Synod 2018, several classes have moved to hire safe church coordinators, citing the instructions from synod.

Synod 2018 reaffirmed the five goals that were approved by Synod 2014 (*Acts of Synod 2014*, pp. 559-60) to guide Safe Church Ministry:

1. Each church has implemented a written safe church/abuse prevention policy.
2. Each church includes abuse prevention in its church school and youth education. Programs such as *Circle of Grace*, which teach positive respect in relationships, are recommended.
3. Each church has protocols in place for responding to misconduct and is aware of the recommended "Guidelines for Handling Allegations of Abuse against a Church Leader" approved by Synod 2010.
4. Abuse is acknowledged as an important issue and can be freely discussed.
5. Leadership at all levels is supportive of Safe Church Ministry, and each church is represented on a Classis Safe Church Team.

Many are using a one-time grant of \$1,500 from Safe Church Ministry.

"There is *always* more to do," said Jane DeGroot, Safe Church Coordinator for Classis Muskegon. "I have recently witnessed more stories coming from the pews from individuals [who've] suffered abuse earlier in their lives, most often from a known and trusted adult. . . . Even though it is extremely difficult and painful to unveil the past, telling the story can be a source of healing and strength."

—Roxanne Van Farowe

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

Generation Spark: Growing Relationships, Finding Solutions

Even though they go to the same church, Raven Poest, 16, and Cindi Wiersma, 51, would likely never have gotten to know each other. Yet at a recent get-together, the two were sharing photos and life updates: Poest of her recent homecoming dance; Wiersma of her house under construction. Their relationship began thanks to Generation Spark, an intergenerational mentoring initiative launched in a handful of Christian Reformed and Reformed Church in America congregations this year.

For 12 weeks, Poest and Wiersma, members of VictoryPoint Ministries, a CRC congregation in Holland, Mich., met weekly to work on a problem of their choosing. They created what they dubbed “The iNDiGO Project,” to “inspire New Direction, imagine Great Outcomes” for those struggling with self-harm and suicidal thoughts. They compiled research, encouraging ordinary people to be a listening ear to young people dealing with these difficult issues. This summer they presented their project to their congregation, distributing information as well as over 400 gray rubber bracelets stamped with “iNDiGO” and “Need help? Don’t harm.”

Started by Hope College’s Center for Leadership, Generation Spark is a research-based initiative to address the lack of connection many youth and adults feel toward the church. At least 10 mentor-mentee pairs of young adults aged 16 to mid-20s and adults over 45, work together on a problem they care about. The goal is that over these weeks these individuals will build relationships and share faith stories with one another.

Young people often yearn for connection with older adults who can walk alongside them in a different way than family members can. “Sometimes your parents are the last people on earth you want to talk to,” explained Wiersma.



Cindi Wiersma (L) and
Raven Poest

“Our habit toward silos, dividing people by ages, creates a certain efficiency for ministry, but [silos are] just deadly for the health and longevity of the church,” said Virgil Gulker, director of the Center for Leadership and one of the creators of Generation Spark. “We want to build within the body this relational power between older and younger members.”

A three-year, \$458,000 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., helps fund Generation Spark. Each church has a director, either paid or volunteer, who seeks and trains the participating mentor pairs in their church. The program began in March in four Christian Reformed and Reformed Church in America congregations; two more followed later in the year. New groups will launch in February 2019 and in 2020.

— Susan Vanden Berg

Michigan Church Pitches In with Hay Art for Town's Harvest Days

When the town of Fremont, Mich., comes together in late September to celebrate harvest with a parade and public sculptures created from hay bales, First Christian Reformed Church is part of the action.

For at least four years, a team of "hay artists" has put together a display in the church yard, picking up on a biblical or church history theme and adding creative flourishes to the raw agricultural materials.

One of the creators, Deb Wolfsen, said the church's involvement is a way to connect with their neighbors and get in on the fun. "It's really a big deal," Wolfsen said. "The hay art is throughout the whole town . . . so we do the hay art and have a float just to get our name out there and to show we do fun things."

This year eight volunteers worked on a hay bale replica of the facade of the



2017 sculpture at First CRC, Fremont, Mich.

church's original 1882 building. The team chose to look to the past since the 2018 fall harvest festival theme was "Back to the Future." Earlier hay sculptures by First CRC have depicted sheep, a cross, and the lion and lamb from Revelation 5.

A farmer who is a member of First CRC supplies the bales and delivers them to the church parking lot for sculpting.

—Alissa Vernon

Market to Church: 'Better Because You Are Here'

Ecclesia Church, a newly planted Christian Reformed congregation in North Oshawa, Ont., found that spending time at the North Oshawa Farmers' Market this summer offered a space for God's love and light to grow.

Ecclesia Church formed in 2016. They first met in pastor Jana Koh's home and now gather for worship in the city's Northview Community Centre. As part of carrying out Ecclesia's vision to be a presence in their neighborhood—bringing the hope and life that is found in Jesus to God's people—the core leadership team decided that hosting a booth at the farmers' market would be a great place to start.

When they applied to be a vendor, the market board wondered why a church would want a booth.

"They were confused [about] why we would want to be there, as we had nothing to sell," explained Koh, who volunteered each Saturday at the market from May to September. "We explained that we wanted to help build community."

Members of Ecclesia's core team as well as others interested in Ecclesia's vision took turns staffing the booth. They offered art activities such as crafts and painting for children. Ecclesia initially signed up for five weeks at the market. But when Koh met with market organizers, they wanted Ecclesia to continue



Painting and other activities helped Ecclesia Church build community at the market.

coming to the market and waived their vendor fee.

"They told us, 'The market is better because you are here.' That just floored me, as that is why we wanted to be there," said Koh.

— Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

Church Reaching 'The Broken' Receives CRC Support

The Broken in Willmar, Minn., is a church for "the sick" as in Mark 2:17: "Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

That is The Broken's key verse, and it was cofounder Chris Alle's main plea. He'd been calling out to God to provide a place for the broken—people who had walked paths of addiction, prison, and alienation as he had done—to find both complete acceptance and true preaching of the whole Word of God. Begun in May 2017, The Broken is not affiliated with any denomination but is supported, in part, by grants from Classis Lake Superior, a regional group of Christian Reformed congregations in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Manitoba, and northern Ontario.

Steve Zwart, pastor of Unity CRC in Prinsburg, Minn., brought The Broken to the attention of his classis Home Missions team. "In light of the CRC's emphasis on a cluster model for church planting, [I] proposed the idea that we [as a classis] partner with this church plant and encourage the local group of CRCs in our region to come around [The Broken] to help it get off the ground," Zwart said.

Alle has counted Zwart a mentor for close to 10 years: from Alle's "wholehearted pursuit of God" following an encounter with Jesus in jail, through his work with a ministry called The Fortress, and in the creation of The Broken.

"All of these things have formed me into going back to where God pulled me out of; to reach in and grab people that [God] has called and get my hands burnt up to pull them out of the fire," Alle said.

At the March 2018 classis meeting outside of its usual September budgeting process, delegates considered a proposal. Sourcing money from the Church Revitalization Fund, they agreed to give The Broken \$1,200 per month for one year. Classis has since passed the next budget, committing its support through the end of 2019 for a total of \$25,200.



Chris Alle preaching at The Broken.

Of the unusual process, classis stated clerk Henry Gunnink said, "Maybe God has to push us a bit to stick our necks and money out without first having all our t's crossed and i's dotted. Classis could be commended for seizing the moment when it presented itself."

Classis funding makes up about half of The Broken's overall budget. The rest of the new church's needs are met through tithes from those who attend and offerings from other churches where Alle is invited to speak. Services are Sunday nights, currently held in a theater in Willmar. From an initial group of about 30, the ministry has grown to about 60 in the last year.

"I'm surprised people still come back to listen to what I have to say, but you come to the realization that if you just stick close to the Word of God, they're coming to listen to it—they want his Word," Alle said.

— Alissa Vernon

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Dr. William
Howard Kooienga

1936-2018

Bill Kooienga was a kind, gentle, thoughtful, joy-filled man of God with a quiet demeanor and a subtle sense of humor. A pastor in the Christian Reformed Church for 38 years, Kooienga passed away peacefully on July 12. He was 82.

While a student at Michigan State University, Kooienga experienced the call to the ministry. He then graduated from Calvin College and completed Master and Doctor of Ministry degrees at Westminster Theological Seminary in California. He wrote and published *Elements of Style for Preaching* as well as numerous articles.

After ordination in 1963, Kooienga served the following CRC congregations: Clara City, Minn.; Fourth Paterson, Wyckoff, N.J. (now Faith Community); First, Crown Point, Ind.; First, Thunder Bay, Ont.

Serving on the board of World Missions (now Resonate Global Mission) for several years created a desire to serve abroad. After retirement in 2001, the Kooiengas went to Malawi and Uganda, where he taught at African Bible Colleges. The experience was life-changing. He also enjoyed camping and hiking in the mountains, travel, and photography.

Left to cherish his memory are Marilyn, his wife of 59 years, their five children and spouses, and six grandchildren.

— Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Kenneth D. Koeman
1942-2018

Steadfastly committed to his calling of preaching, prayer, and pastoral care, Ken Koeman will be remembered as a man gifted in communicating the Word of God from the pulpit and with the pen. He died peacefully on August 8 after a brief illness.

After graduating from Calvin Seminary in 1967, Koeman ministered in inner-city New York. He then served the following Christian Reformed congregations: Chelwood, Albuquerque, N.M.; Parkland, Portland, Ore.; Sonlight Community, Lynden, Wash.; and Bellevue, Wash. After retirement in 2010, he was interim pastor for churches in Washington, Montana, and British Columbia. He contributed as a member of the *Back to God Hour*, Calvin Seminary Board and Candidacy Committee, delegate to synod, and longtime synodical deputy. His writings appeared in *The Banner*, *Reformed Worship*, and *Today*. Weeks before his passing, he completed his book, *Redemption Comes Hard*, an insightful look into the life of Joseph.

Koeman will be remembered for never having lost his wonder of God's goodness and grace so marvelously displayed through creation. He delighted in pointing it out to others.

Left to cherish his memory are Kay, his wife of 52 years, their two children and spouses, and five grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

News Digest



Nine members of the Koster's home-based youth group attended SERVE with Grace Christian Reformed Church.

Home-based Youth Group Serves Local Teens and Local Church

In Midland, Va., Lisa and Mark Koster started a home-based youth group as a service to their son's soccer team. They are members of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Burke, Va., about 34 miles (55 km) away from their rural home. The group boosted the church's contingent to a SERVE trip this summer and continues to bless its community.

"The Spirit was at work in a very powerful way, and the kids came back moved, each in a different way, to continue the momentum generated at SERVE," said mom and youth group leader Lisa Koster.

Bible Gateway, 25, Got Its Start at Calvin College

In 1993, Nick Hengeveld was working in the information technology department at Calvin College, the post-secondary educational institution of the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was fascinated by the emergence of the Internet and was looking for content for the college's website, which had not yet gone public.

He started converting text from the King James Version of the Bible into hypertext (HTML), the computer language that became the first standard for creating web pages. Then he posted a question on

Calvin's electronic message board: Anyone want to test a gateway?

Hengeveld's work led to the creation of what is known today as Bible Gateway, the world's most visited Christian website and most popular Christian search engine. Now owned by HarperCollins Christian Publishing, Bible Gateway marked its 25th anniversary in 2018—with more than 14 billion site visits since it began.

Many Hands Make Light Work for Seattle Church Plant

Church planters Ashley and Geoff Van Dragt in Seattle, Wash., got help from skilled volunteers from seven different churches to prepare an old building in the heart of the University of Washington's campus for its new worshipping community.

Work days on August 24 and September 8 brought about 50 people from across Classis Pacific Northwest, the regional governing body to which the new church belongs. Volunteer Clarence Deelstra, an elder at Shoreline CRC, said, "There is something special about the unity a hard day's work can bring to a team of strangers." Ashley Van Dragt said, "To me it's a classis-at-its-best story."

— Banner Correspondents



Work crew from Classis Pacific Northwest at Church on The Ave.

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)



Christian
Reformed
Church

Supporting your church.

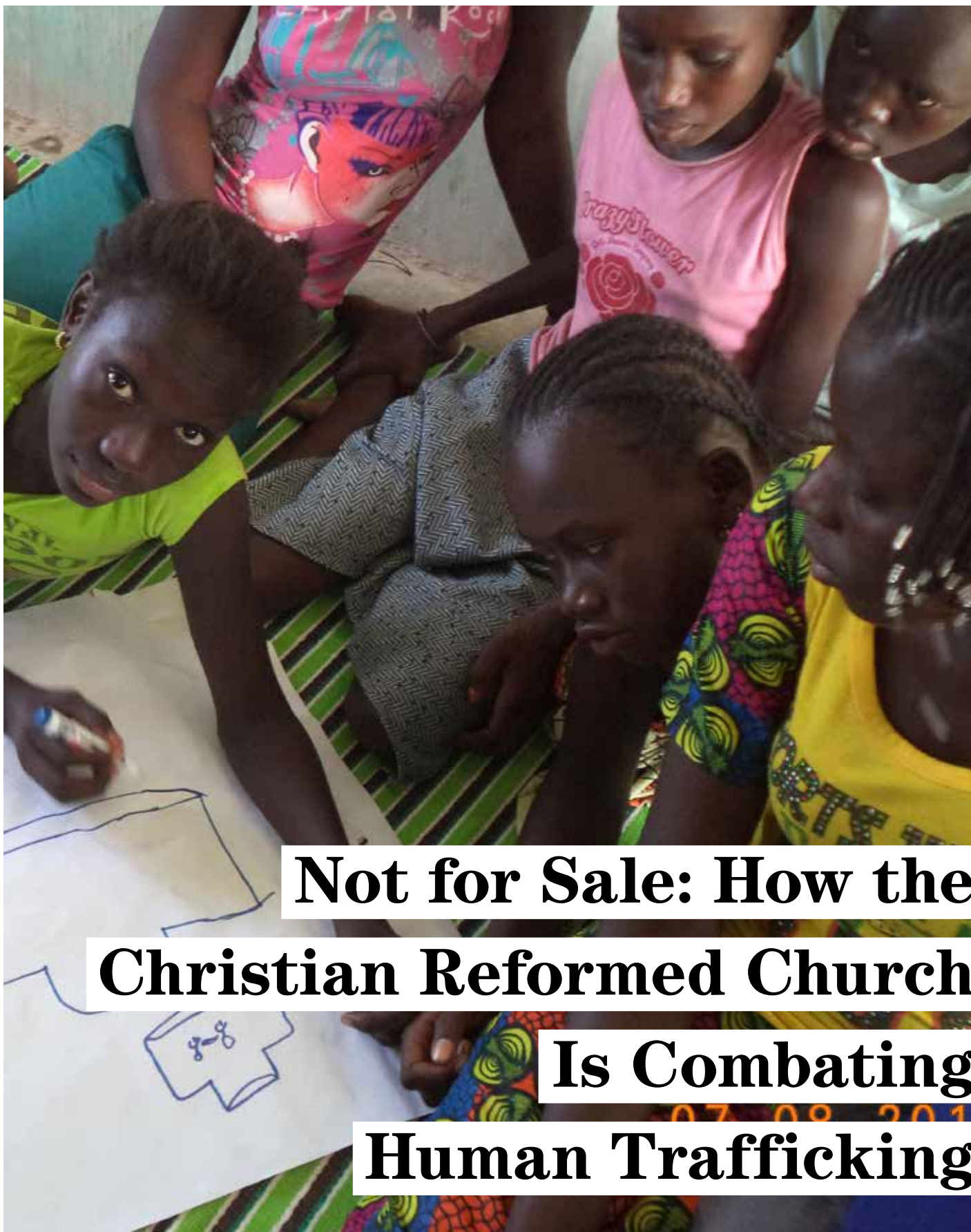
Congregational Services
ministries equip your
church as it follows
God's leading.

Supported by you.

Your gift makes this
important work possible.

Give a gift at
crcna.org/Serving

Faith Formation Ministries · Worship Ministries · Disability Concerns · Office of Social Justice
Race Relations · Safe Church Ministry · Aboriginal Ministry · Centre for Public Dialogue
Candidacy Committee · Chaplaincy and Care Ministry · Pastor Church Resources



**Not for Sale: How the
Christian Reformed Church
Is Combating
Human Trafficking**

by Cassie Westrate and Amy Everett

Human trafficking, one of the fastest-growing criminal industries in the world, has many faces.

It affects men and women, young and old, across the world. It is not always easy to identify when human trafficking is occurring. Some victims are bought and sold into forced labor or prostitution. Others are coerced into marriage or intimidated into paying unfair debts. Still others sell their bodies because they see no other option to pay for food and shelter.

In all these cases, God's imagebearers are treated as commodities. Their lives are not the lives they would have chosen for themselves.

Through its ministries and partnerships, the Christian Reformed Church in North America strives to prevent human trafficking and to free people from this type of bondage. As a result, vulnerable individuals such as Khady, Mary*, and countless others are learning about their true identity in Christ and stepping into God's purposes for their lives.

Forced Marriage in Senegal

Khady's family arranged for her to marry her cousin. A smart and capable young girl, Khady had her own dreams for her future, but she was living in a poor community in Senegal, where girls often are treated as property and forced to marry young.

Human trafficking is of particular concern in impoverished communities. Young people who are undereducated and unemployed are among the most vulnerable. Lured by the promise of jobs and a better life outside their village, they can become ensnared in a life of forced labor or sexual exploitation.

In the case of forced marriage, parents living in poverty often are overwhelmed by the number of children they must feed and care for. Agreeing to let one of their daughters get married—often at a very young age and to a much older man—is seen as one way to meet the needs of the child while also freeing resources for the rest of the family.

Peer groups in Senegal help to educate vulnerable young people about the risks of early marriage, sexual abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and human trafficking.

When Khady and her mother learned about World Renew's Adolescent Health and Rights program, however, Khady's future changed.

World Renew partners with local Christian organizations to teach communities about the risks young people face. Through these efforts, they build better futures for youth and their families.

When an educator came to Khady's house to tell them about the Adolescent Health and Rights program, Khady's mother believed it would benefit her daughter. She allowed her to join.

The program taught Khady and other young people about HIV and AIDS, sexual abuse, and the danger of early pregnancies. Hearing these risks, Khady was more determined than ever to build a different future for herself. She shared the consequences of early pregnancy with her family, and they reconsidered her marriage to her cousin.

Today Khady has new plans to start her own business by becoming a seamstress. World Renew program educators worked with her to create a strategy for achieving her goals, including attending vocational training to learn how to sew.

Khady also has a passion for helping other young girls and boys in her community. "I have shared my knowledge with my friends who are in school," she said. That is just the start of Khady's advocacy. Along with her friends from the program, she is planning events in their community to help more people become aware of the risks of early marriage and other types of human trafficking. She's inviting parents, health workers, religious leaders, and other youth.

By teaching and walking alongside young girls like Khady, World Renew makes it possible for an entire community to combat human trafficking. Together they are bringing God's kingdom to earth and building better futures for youth and their families.

Trapped in Prostitution and Poverty

Mary was alone in her motel room on East Colfax Avenue in Aurora, Colo., one of the poorest neighborhoods of metropolitan Denver. The dingy space is her home for now.

At 52 years old, Mary felt trapped in a cycle of poverty and addiction in which she sold her body to anyone willing to buy. Growing up in a broken home, she always wanted more for her own life and family, but her marriage fell apart and she struggled to raise five children by herself. She turned to prostitution because she saw no other solution.

Then one night, Shawn and Diane Sikkema knocked on her door.

"[The motels] are sort of flophouses," said Shawn, who moved into a motel with his wife to start Jesus on Colfax Ministries in partnership with Resonate Global Mission. "A



This motel in Aurora, Colo., is home to many people suffering with poverty, mental illness, drug addiction, and prostitution. Shawn and Diane Sikkema have moved in to start a ministry there.

lot of the motel population is [living in] multigenerational poverty. A lot of mental illness. A lot of very, very lonely people. A lot of drug dealing. And a lot of prostitution.”

Mary felt ashamed of selling her body. The night she met the Sikkemas, she told them, “Every night when I go to bed, I ask God to forgive me for what I had to do that day.”

Yet she could not help but wonder if she was worthy of God’s love and grace—especially when she looked at the broken home she had been born into.

Shawn and Diane showed her she was worthy of love.

The next afternoon, Diane spotted Mary across the street, dressed up and waiting for someone to cut her a deal. Mary had a Crock-Pot of food cooking in her room for friends she had invited over that night, but she was short on her rent. The motel locked her out until she could pay the remaining \$35 for another night.

Diane said to her, “You mean if I had \$35 to pay for your motel room, you could just go back to your room and have dinner with your friends?”

The Sikkemas rarely hand out money, but Mary was an exception. Diane got money from the ATM and paid the remaining fee for Mary’s motel room that night.

Shawn notes it was not by any means a permanent solution. The \$35 did not get Mary off the streets the next night. She might never find another means to pay for rent.

But people like Mary are discovering their identity in Christ through Jesus on Colfax Ministries. As Shawn, Diane, and

the rest of their team seek people out and spend time talking with them, they send a powerful message about love.

“Every once in a while someone will articulate it,” Shawn said. “They’ll say, ‘I have never in my life known what it meant to be loved unconditionally until you folks came around.’ We see that transformation in them.”

Restoring Survivors

It is often the most vulnerable people in society, like Khady and Mary, who are at risk for trafficking. Christian Reformed churches in Canada are helping to raise awareness about this issue by telling human trafficking stories and screening the movie *Priceless*.

Based on true events, *Priceless* approaches the sex trade from the point of view of James (Joel Smallbone), a man who turns to drinking after the sudden death of his wife and loses custody of his daughter. In an effort to make some easy cash, he takes a shady deal driving a box truck cross-country only to discover that he’s delivering two sisters into the hands of a pimp.

Antonia (Bianca A. Santos) and Maria (Amber Midthunder) were promised jobs to help pay off a debt their father owed. Instead they were sold into the sex trade. When James realizes what he’s gotten mixed up in, he strives to right his wrong and free Antonia and Maria from their bondage.

Spoiler alert: He succeeds. But freedom is not the end of the story.

“It takes, on average, seven attempts for an individual to leave the sex trade before they leave for good,” said Jennifer Lucking, a missionary of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and executive director of Restorations Second Stage



In partnership with Restorations Second Stage Homes, the CRC and RCA are helping to promote awareness about human trafficking in Canadian congregations.


Homes, which is partnering with the CRCNA to show this film. “When victims come forward for help, there are few specialized services that can serve the unique needs that survivors face.”

That is where Restorations steps in. An organization of the RCA, Restorations is working to develop safe, stable, and supportive long-term housing for survivors while they recover. In addition to living in a community with other survivors, residents also receive programming and services tailored to their specific needs.

“Without knowledgeable people coming alongside survivors who really understand the unique traumas and experiences faced in the sex trade, survivors feel misunderstood and unsupported,” said Lucking. “We work with survivors to think about, dream about, and plan for their future.”

Through partnering with Restorations to show screenings of *Priceless*, churches are not just raising awareness about freeing men and women from the sex trade. They are joining the effort to provide survivors with support they need to step into a healthy, purposeful life.

Bethel CRC in Waterdown, Ontario, showed the film in October 2018. “It is our prayer that we will learn how to make a difference,” said Joanne Adema, a Bethel CRC member who organized the event. “Through the showing of *Priceless* . . . it’s our prayer that [survivors] are able to break out of this life of bondage and begin a new life of freedom.”

Human trafficking has many faces. Yet God is working through churches and agencies like World Renew, Resonate, and Restorations to prevent bondage and help vulnerable individuals like Khady and Mary discover their freedom and identity in Christ. 

*Name changed for privacy.

Circle of Grace

IT’S HARD TO TALK about abuse. It’s one of those topics that many of us avoid because it is too difficult to find the exact right words to use. That’s why it is important to discover a new shared language to talk about a topic that has been ignored for far too long.

About five years ago, Safe Church Ministry began promoting a program called *Circle of Grace*. This came about as several churches asked for updated materials to help people in congregations talk about abuse, especially with children.

The *Circle of Grace* materials, available in both English and Spanish, are specifically designed for children from ages 5 to 18. Lessons are age-appropriate and include a common vocabulary for talking about abuse as well as tools to equip children and youth for actively creating a safe environment for themselves and others.

Circle of Grace is different from many other programs. It was designed from the ground up with God’s presence as a central theme. God lives with us in our circle of grace; God loves us, wants us to be safe, and is always present to help us.

To date, about 80 Christian Reformed churches have ordered the *Circle of Grace* program, and many have integrated it into their congregational life.

One child named Malachi said this about his experience with *Circle of Grace*: “When I learned more about my circle of grace, I learned more things

that I should watch out for. My teachers, they’ve all taught me that the circle of grace is the place where you surround yourself with people you trust. . . . Yeah, it just makes me feel safe.”

Malachi’s church, Madison Church Ford Campus in Grand Rapids, Mich., is one that not only integrated *Circle of Grace* into its children’s programming, but also created an educational night for parents to learn more about what it means to live in their circle of grace, allowing the same vocabulary and



Children at Madison Church Ford Campus in Grand Rapids, Mich., have benefited from the *Circle of Grace* program.

messages to continue at home and within the entire church community.

Safe Church Ministry recently partnered with Madison Church to create a new promotional video (crcna.org/SafeChurch/circle-grace) so more churches can learn about *Circle of Grace* and use the program to help prevent abuse and build safer communities for everyone.

Eric Kas, Safe Church Ministry

The View from Here

God Working in Us

EARLIER THIS YEAR, synod encouraged denominational ministries to honor the 400th anniversary of the Synod of Dort, which met in 1618-19 in the city of Dordrecht in the Netherlands. The outcome of the Synod of Dort boiled down to five points Jim Osterhouse describes in *Faith Unfolded* (available for free in the Digital Library) by using the acronym FAITH: Fallen humanity, Adopted by God, Intentional atonement, Transformed by the Holy Spirit, and Held by God.

The idea of fallen humanity was explained in the Canons of Dort this way:

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in all people after the fall, by virtue of which they retain some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrate a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling humans to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him—so far, in fact, that they do not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society. Instead, in various ways they completely distort this light, whatever its precise character, and suppress it in unrighteousness.

These statements, penned 400 years ago, remain true today. Take a look at a couple of the stories in this Our Shared Ministry section to see some examples. Forced marriage, human trafficking, and abuse of power in churches are all despicable

Be encouraged. Live thankfully. God hasn't abandoned us in our misery. Rather, God's grace is amazing.

distortions of the light. Sins like these enslave individuals, suppressing their dignity as imagebearers of God.

When we think about all the sin in our world and focus on these atrocities, we can become discouraged. While we have all been inclined to evil since our first parents sinned, there have been times in the history of societies where it seemed that light was winning over darkness. To many, it feels as if now darkness is overcoming the light.

If you are feeling this way, I offer a caution and a word of encouragement.

While threats are real and the devil is always at work, maybe we feel the burden more than ever before because we have reached our saturation point. Nearly every day, we are bombarded with awful news on our televisions and destructive comments via social media. In days past, there was so much of which we were unaware. This is no longer the case. Sin is all too painfully real wherever we look.

In other words, perhaps the darkness is not overtaking the light in a greater way than it has in the past. Maybe we are just noticing it more.

In its cue to honor the 400th anniversary of the Canons of Dort, Synod 2018 also said we should pay particular

attention to the doctrines of grace. This grace is evident as we see God using ministries such as Resonate and World Renew working to prevent human trafficking and forced child marriage. It is evident in the Holy Spirit leading congregations to use Safe Church Ministry tools to better prevent and respond to abuse.

Be encouraged. Live thankfully. God hasn't abandoned us in our misery. Rather, God's grace is amazing. As the Canons of Dort remind us:

As a result [of God's grace], a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. . . . For grace is bestowed through admonitions, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more lustrous the benefit of God working in us usually is, and the better that work advances. To God alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and effectiveness, all glory is owed forever. Amen.



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.

이 기사의 한글번역은 TheBanner.org/korean에서 보실 수 있습니다.

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

Torn between Love and Abuse

ELIZABETH (name changed) is torn when she looks back on her 27 years of marriage. “It’s like my husband is two different people,” she said.

Both Elizabeth and her husband had turned their lives around, as Elizabeth described it, from “a life of horrible binges of alcohol and being mentally and physically abusive to each other.” They faithfully attended a local church for 13 years.

Then her husband began drinking again. It took only three months for his abuse to return.

Elizabeth reached out to Deb Koster, producer of *Family Fire*, an online ministry of ReFrame Media, the English-language outreach of Back to God Ministries International. “Please help me,” she pleaded. “Pray for us.”

Koster recalled, “Elizabeth also wrote that her husband had choked her and twice held a gun to her head.”

“He has always been jealous, controlling, and manipulative, even when we were in church,” Elizabeth added. “My husband is a great provider and can be so loving and caring, but he can turn on me for no reason. My life has become a living hell. I am so lost and don’t know what to do.”

Koster responded by reminding Elizabeth that God does not intend for a loving marriage to be abusive. She also promised to pray for God to give Elizabeth wisdom to discern her way to safety and connected her to resources to protect her.

Several months later, Elizabeth wrote that she had finally left her husband, hiding from him with the help of friends. Still, she was torn between the two sides of her husband she had seen.

When her husband began to see a counselor, Elizabeth started to feel that maybe they could make their marriage work. Elizabeth asked Koster, “How will I know if he has changed enough and that he will continue to seek help for



his jealousy and anger and manipulation and controlling issues?”

Koster used her experiences as a nurse and pastor to respond. “Elizabeth’s situation is very common. She wants to be faithful to her marriage vows; she wants to believe her husband loves her enough to change his abusive ways. I encourage people like Elizabeth to be wise and not rush back to an abusive and manipulative relationship, but to give time for him to willingly make lasting change.”

As Elizabeth discerns God’s next step for her life, Koster and her team of prayer partners continue to pray for Elizabeth. Koster keeps in touch with her and is encouraged by Elizabeth’s response: “Your words have stayed with me, that I am God’s child, made in his image.”

You can join the team of prayer partners for people like Elizabeth at ReFrameMedia.org/prayer.

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

Researchers Challenge Calvin Scientist's Bold Astronomical Prediction

CALVIN COLLEGE PROFESSOR of astronomy Larry Molnar made a bold announcement in 2017: He and his team had identified a binary star in the constellation Cygnus (the swan) that was a strong candidate to merge and explode in the near future.



That first-of-its-kind prediction caught the attention of an international audience, creating excitement within the scientific community and among the general public. News papers, social media and magazines touted the finding.

This interest led Molnar's peers to dig deeper into the discovery, doing what Molnar says is "good science" by scrupulously testing his prediction.

Now, 18 months later, a team of researchers led by Quentin Socia, a graduate student at San Diego State University, has published a paper in *The Astrophysical Journal Letters* reevaluating Molnar's predicted merger, concluding it will not happen. Molnar agrees with that assessment.

"Good science makes testable predictions," said Molnar. "There have been a few other papers that have tried to poke at our project, and we've been able to poke back—criticisms that just don't fly. But this one does fly, and I think they have a good point. This illustrates how science can be self-correcting."

Molnar's prediction was anchored by data. The binary orbit is oriented such that the stars take turns eclipsing each other from Earth's viewpoint. The prediction used measured times of minimum light (mid-eclipse) from all available sources.

From 2013 to 2016, researchers used the Calvin Observatory to make an extensive series of measurements. They found archival measurements from other observatories for every year from 2007 to 2013. This was rounded out with one very early measurement from 1999 from the Northern Sky Variability Survey (NSVS).

Since the prediction was made public, over a year of new data from the Calvin Observatory has been taken that follows the predicted trajectory.

Socia and his team explored the observation gap between 1999 and 2007 by analyzing previously unpublished archival data taken in 2003 for the NASA Ames Vulcan Project. They were surprised to find the eclipses occurring a half-hour later than predicted by the merger hypothesis. This led them to re-evaluate Molnar's estimates of eclipse timing.

In the end, a discrepant value was traced to a typographical error in the paper published to describe the 1999 data. The paper misrepresented the time of the eclipse by exactly 12 hours, thereby putting Molnar's calculation off by one orbit (11 hours) plus one hour.

The revised status of what occurred from 1999 to 2003 alters predictions for the future. All of this means that the agreement between the past year of measurements and Molnar's published prediction must now be seen as a coincidence rather than a confirmation.

"This is arguably the most important part of the scientific process. Knowledge advances the most when bold predictions are made, and people question and test those predictions," said Socia.

"While this is disappointing from a public anticipation point of view, it's an important scientific step that was necessary so that we could develop the tools and techniques to look at these things more generally, so we can eventually find a pair of stars about to merge," said Matt Walhout, chair of Calvin's physics and astronomy department. "And that's something that wasn't being done by others, but we are still pursuing. We aren't packing our bags and going home—Larry has made an important contribution to discoveries about how to look for these things."

—Matt Kucinski, Calvin College

Originally published at Calvin.edu. Used with permission.

Conference Looks at Synod of Dort for Today

DRESSED IN A TALL HAT, dark pastor's robe, and ruffled shirt, and sporting a long white beard, Don Sinnema greeted attendees at this fall's Synod of Dort Commemorative Conference in the Calvin Theological Seminary auditorium.

Sinnema, a retired Trinity Christian College professor, opened the two-day conference marking the 400th anniversary of the synod—a wide-ranging gathering of Reformed church leaders—by introducing himself: “I am the Rev. Johannes Bogerman, president of the Synod of Dort, the most significant synod of the Reformed tradition. I was there at the helm. This venerable synod happened four years ago, but it is still fresh in my mind.”

Sinnema recalled for the audience the old island city of Dordrecht, Netherlands, in 1618-1619 and discussed the agenda and circumstances of the Synod of Dort. “This was a national synod with an international character,” he said, held chiefly “to settle the Arminian controversy about predestination that had been agitating in the Netherlands for about 20 years.”

Speaking after Sinnema was Paul Fields, curator of the H. Henry Meeter Center at Calvin College, who said that already in the very first sessions of the Synod of Dort, delegates commissioned a new Bible, the *Statenvertaling* (States' Translation), published in 1637.

Keith Stanglin, a professor at Austin Graduate School of Theology, then gave a deeper look the Remonstrants—the Arminians—in a talk late Friday afternoon.

The day finished with “Song of the Synod,” presented by Randall Engle, a Christian Reformed pastor who spoke about the role church organ music had in the Dutch Republic at the time of the synod.

On Saturday morning, Fred van Lieburg, professor of religious history at Vrije Universiteit (Free University) Amsterdam, described the members of the public who attended the synod, where they sat, and how they interacted with delegates. He spoke of the tensions that arose when the synod expelled the Remonstrants. “The synod attracted a lot of attention,” he said. “Dordrecht was really a tourist hotspot in those months. Many people just came to see or attended a part of the meeting in the public gallery.”

Suzanne McDonald, a professor at Western Theological Seminary, addressed the lasting effect the synod has had on the church.



Professor Donald Sinnema as Johannes Bogerman, who presided at the Synod of Dort.

Photo credit: Zack DeBruyne, Calvin Theological Seminary

On the one hand, the gathering has been framed as a dispute over who God does or does not favor for salvation. But there is much more, and the document as a whole shows the Canons have a strong pastoral thrust, she said: “You read that God’s grasp on us is much stronger than our feeble grip on him.”

The gathering wrapped up with a panel discussion. Matthew Van Maastricht, a Reformed Church in America pastor in Altamont, N.Y., spoke of using the Canons of Dort in his sermons, but first preaching about the positive things such as the “unspeakable comfort of God’s grace.”

Kathy Smith of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship mentioned how the synod came up with ways in which Reformed Christians order their worship even today. She knows of a church planter who is using the Canons of Dort as an example of an ancient Christian text that “does speak to us and has wisdom for today.”

Papers and other items for the conference are available at the website of the H. Henry Meeter Center (calvin.edu/centers-institutes/meeter-center).

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



Planning worship?

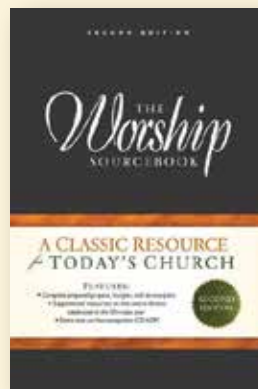
Visit FaithAliveResources.org/Worship to view these and other resources to help you lead and plan worship.



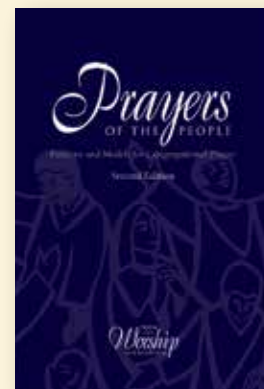
Features more than **850 hymns, psalms, and contemporary and global songs**, along with prayers and readings. Also available in spiral, large print, and digital edition, and as an **Android/iPad app**.



Features the **largest collection of psalms for worship ever published**. Also available in spiral and digital edition, and as an **Android/iPad app**.



Features more than **2,500 prayers, litanies, and spoken texts** for every element of the worship service along with a companion CD that contains the entire text of the book.



Contains model prayers, prayer outlines, and other **helps for incorporating prayer into worship**. Also available in **eBook** format.

Thankful 30



THANKSGIVING DAY is in October in Canada and in November in the United States. It's good to have a special day each year that reminds us to thank God for all the good things in our lives. But here's one way to practice being thankful every day!

Make a Gratitude Calendar

There are 30 days in November. Think you can find at least 30 different things to be grateful for this month? Let's give it a try!

First, print out a blank calendar page for November (just Google "November 2018 calendar"). Glue your calendar page to a piece of colored construction paper. Then decorate your calendar page with markers, colored pencils, or other craft supplies. Hang your awesome calendar somewhere you'll see it every day.

Every day this month, look for something to be thankful for. When you find something, write it on your calendar.

Look for Good Things

We can be grateful for lots of things. Small things like a fresh doughnut or a hug from a friend. Or big things like someone getting well after


they've been really sick. Here are some good things you might put on your own gratitude calendar:

- » Things that remind you of God's love
- » People who love you
- » Food, a place to live, clothes to wear
- » Things that make you laugh
- » Things you love to do
- » Your favorite places
- » Things you like to learn about
- » Beautiful things in nature

When You See It, Say It

Part of being thankful is actually saying thank you. When you see something you're thankful for, don't keep that thankfulness to yourself—say it! Pray a prayer of thanks to God for a beautiful sunset. Say thank you when someone does something kind for you. And look for ways to be kind to other people.

Look Back

On December 1, look back at all the things you were thankful for this month. If your gratitude calendar helped you remember to be thankful, think about making a new calendar for December and starting all over again! 



Sandy Swartzentruber works for Faith Formation Ministries and attends Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. She's thankful for good books to read.

Illustration for The Banner by Anika Barghigiani





Essay Contest Winners

Why Christianity Still Matters

We're pleased to present the winners of our first-ever essay contest for college students. Our thanks to all 46 young writers who wrote deeply and honestly about their Christian faith, and to judges Deb (Van Brenk) Flaherty, who worked in daily journalism for more than two decades and now is a communications specialist, and Bruce Buursma, who reported around the globe for The Chicago Tribune and now consults with clients to provide writing, editing, and video production services. Along with The Banner's editor-in-chief, Shiao Chong, they awarded first prize (\$1,000) to Rylan Brue (pictured left), second prize (\$500) to Juliana Knot (center), and third prize (\$250) to Paola Gracia (right). You can read Gracia's essay online. Our thanks to the donor who made this contest possible.

by Rylan Brue

No matter how wide you stretch your fingers, / your hands will always be too small to catch all the pain you want to heal" (*No Matter the Wreckage*, Write Bloody Publishing, 2014). Written by spoken-word poet Sarah Kay, these words have been running through my head lately. You see, I've just graduated, and despite all the energetic exhortations to change the world and seek shalom, I can't help but feel overwhelmed by what an immense assignment that really is. When the echoes of the commencement addresses fade and the balloons with "Congratulations!" etched across them have started to sag, I begin to recognize how poorly I've done at making a positive impression at my high school, much less the world. How will a signed piece of paper make me any better at it? This world seems so broken; where do I even start?

I don't pretend that this emotion is unique to me, however. There's a

possibility that you've had it, and I know others who've had it. Elijah had it. You can read about it in 1 Kings 19. Elijah had a tough assignment. Tasked with reforming an entire wayward nation seemingly by himself, it's easy to understand why Elijah might despair. Fresh off the dramatic showdown on Mount Carmel, you can imagine Elijah's excitement and optimism (perhaps not all that different from the immediate feelings incited by a hard-earned diploma). Surely things would be different now. This was the incisive act that would wake up a nation to who was really in charge. But, surprisingly, not much seems to have changed. Jezebel and Ahab still sit on their thrones, determined to see Elijah dead before 24 hours are up. Elijah, disappointed and afraid, flees. Called to Mount Horeb after God doesn't give him the death he asks for, Elijah pours out his feelings to God. "I've been working so hard for you, but it's all still so messed up," he cries, in effect. "I'm the only one left and I can't do it by

myself." Sounds an awful lot like the post-graduation blues, if you ask me.

However, the story doesn't end there. God doesn't leave Elijah in his despair, and God won't leave us in our despair either if we pay attention. For on the side of God's mountain comes the surprise. God, whom Elijah had just seen reveal himself in the flare of flames, reveals himself in something so hard to notice that Elijah might have missed it if he hadn't just been instructed to look: a gentle whisper. As it turns out, God had been at work in his quiet, consistent way reserving 7,000 who hadn't bent their knees to Baal. Elijah, despairing under the burden of a task he couldn't do by himself, is suddenly reminded that God was at work.

Did you catch that? God at work. Christianity is still important because God is still at work. The biblical narrative is bookended by stories of God in action. As the curtain comes up on opening night, we witness God creating. As the last pages of Revelation are read, we hear Christ's declaration, "I am making all things new!" Creating and making both draw attention to who God is and what he is doing. But if that's not enough to convince you, look between the bookends and witness the most world-changing act of all. In the humility of human flesh, God comes to us. Dying the death we deserved, Christ leaves the tomb empty, opening up possibilities of newness previously unimaginable. This is the action that makes the Revelation declaration possible.

Where does this take us? Where did it take Elijah? Where does it take me as my diploma gathers dust? Well, for Elijah, it took him back to the place he ran from. God was not ready to throw in the towel. God had plans for his people yet, and Elijah still had a role to play. Eugene Peterson likes to say that "there are no spectator seats in the drama of salvation" (*As Kingfishers Catch Fire*, Waterbrook, 2017). Although God does the heavy lifting, we are all invited to participate. If

God is at work
and has worked—
sometimes as
loudly as a stone
rolling away
and other times
as quiet as a
gentle whisper.

Christianity is important because it declares that God is at work, then it only gains importance when we realize it is also the way we participate. Where does the resurrection—God's most decisive act—take me? Back to Monday morning. Back to everyday life where the news headlines don't allow me to ignore how much work there is to be done. Like the Emmaus disciples, we return to the places we escaped from originally, the world in such desperate need of healing. But things are not the same as before. How could they be? Instead, filled with hope, we return, exploring the new possibilities of resurrection life, testifying about the God who has acted and is acting, and participating by allowing the good news of resurrection to seep into every corner of our beings in pursuit of lives that reflect the coming kingdom.

So in our Mount Horeb moments—when the brokenness of the world is so apparent, when we seem so small, when we can't imagine how things can get better—know that the Creational Reclamation Project is not one we tackle by ourselves. In fact, we can't. The perfect remedy is realizing that God is at work and has worked—sometimes as loudly as a stone rolling away and other times as quiet as a gentle whisper.

Sarah Kay is right. We can't stretch our hands wide enough to catch all the pain we want to heal, but to declare Christianity as still important is to declare that once a wooden crossbeam stretched God's arms wide enough to embrace and bring healing to an entire world.

Rylan Brue is an aspiring storyteller and wannabe poet. He enjoys words—both reading and writing them. He worships at Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, and is studying theology and philosophy at Dordt College. "If I'm not attempting some form of music making or playing hockey, you can probably find me reading a book—preferably a fantasy story by Brandon Sanderson."

by Juliana Knot

In 1997, a 27-year-old grad student was walking home from Walgreens. It was Valentine's Day, and she was getting some photos developed. Before she could get home, a man took her at gunpoint. He raped and murdered her. Police found her body a couple of days later.

In literature, there's this term called "denouement." It describes the event where the plot of the story and all of its subplots that have been building and intertwining resolve and have meaning. Denouement, which literally translates to "the untying of the knot," marks the divide between a tangled mass of string and an intricate tapestry.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, but right after, he walked hand in hand with humans. He had just brought existence out of nothing and hung galaxies across the cosmos but still took the time to sculpt his image out of the dust of the earth. God reigned sovereign above his creation yet immanent among it.

For a world that relies so heavily on story and narrative to communicate, to advertise, and to understand, we lack plot. Events happen, and days go by with no discernible end. The

tides swell and take governments down with them. A century later, it happens again. Nothing new happens under the sun. After all of our eating and drinking, the merriment loses its shine, and we begin to see that it's all gilded. When we wake up the next morning, covered in our own vomit, the sound of the party echoes in our head. The volume keeps rising, but all the sound isn't a symphony; it's just noise.

For that world, an awful death, a literary definition, and a creation myth have no connection and little significance. If anything, they're additional examples of our tragic meaninglessness. Bad things happen to innocent people, and although we can distract ourselves with good books to read and stories to entertain us, they'll never set things right. They can offer us great beauty and maybe some comfort, but at best, they only distract us from an ugly and broken world where girls die while walking home from Walgreens.

Christianity still matters, because it and only it provides the framework for meaning in both the lives of individuals and the arc of the world. It holds the narrative that binds up every single subplot and theme with our collective fate. The Bible itself is a story filled with many stories of the God of the universe interceding for widows, orphans, rapists, and murderers.

At the cross of Jesus Christ, every thread is tangled together. That girl's senseless death intertwined with the horrors of war and the weeping of mothers and rested on the shoulders of God. The man responsible for none of these threads hung bound by them, as the world below scorned him. Keeping with the tradition of

Christianity still matters, because it and only it . . . holds the narrative that binds up every single subplot and theme with our collective fate.


Genesis, God atoned for the cosmic debt of sin above while among the sinners themselves. The curtain ripped, the threads broke loose, and the creation murdered its Creator.

Three days later, the threads came together, but this time they weren't a distorted mass. Christ rose. Denouement abounded in glorious wonder. Every string, both past and present, found a place in the master tapestry. The creation that ran from God found life in him. The woman murdered 2,000 years later could now laugh at death. The physical, literal resurrection of Jesus Christ weaved together the stories of suffering into a bright display of hope.

Christ's death and resurrection, his lack of sin, and his perfect obedience continue to give meaning for us who live after the denouement. God continually assures his creation of his cosmic victory while comforting his people individually through his Holy

Spirit. As a result, Christianity has the monopoly on meaningful story.

The tides swell and overtake kingdoms, but only at the command of God for his express purpose. Cultivating beauty and comfort in this world is worthwhile because it points to the fulfillment of beauty and comfort. Every life, every thread, and every story deserves respect, for they are necessary components of the grand narrative where God defeats sin and death and ushers in love and life. He will weave each thread with the care that he took to sculpt man to create a cloth with the glory with which he decorated the cosmos.

Especially when confronted with the worst of the world, Christians have firm comfort that it will not always be so. We still live in darkness and see dimly. The story of the 27-year-old grad student is the story of my aunt, and my family can't find any reason for it in this world. However, we have hope in the promise of Christianity alone. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ holds her fast to him. Although her short thread is all that is apparent now, a greater tapestry will one day appear. And it will proclaim with her story and others' the story of the world. God created and redeemed, above and among, for the individual and for the cosmos. This is a story only Christianity can tell. 

Juliana Knot is studying philosophy and German at Calvin College and is the managing editor of *Chimes*, the college's weekly newspaper. She is lucky enough to hail from the south suburbs of Chicago, home of not only the best pizza but also the best people. Her big family and extended church family are some of the greatest blessings in her life.

God's Fierce Love: Our World Belongs to God

Without tying a nice, neat bow around the suffering we all encounter, this testimony provides hope and assurance that we always live within the grasp of God's fierce love.



Christopher Schoon is lead pastor at First Hamilton CRC (Ont.) and has taught mission and leadership-related courses at Redeemer University College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

MY DAD DIED seven years ago at the age of 62. On top of his 20-year struggle with multiple sclerosis, Dad received a diagnosis of stage IV kidney cancer in 2011. In the span of a few short weeks, my parents and the rest of our family found ourselves making decisions along a surreal continuum of quantity versus quality of days. We were thrust into what the contemporary testimony *Our World Belongs to God* calls "life's raw edges."

I am in awe of how the body of Christ honored the sacred trust of my dad's life (*OWBTG*, 44) in the midst of our sorrow. If I close my eyes, I see the tenderness of the hospice nurse. I hear my parents' small group enveloping us with songs from the backyard. I feel the embrace of four members from the church who drove five hours to show up for the visitation and funeral. In the shadow of Dad's death, we received strength, healing, and hope through God's people (34).


Looking back, I see how those days reverberated with the lived truth of the contemporary testimony. Without tying a nice, neat bow around the suffering we all encounter, this testimony provides hope and assurance that we always live within the grasp of God's fierce love (5).

From beginning to end, *Our World Belongs to God* testifies that God is fully present and involved in our lives. "God has not abandoned the work of his hands" (4), but "set out on the long road of redemption" with "patience and tender care" (18). Joining "our humanity in Jesus Christ" (23), God chooses us so that we might "become like [Jesus] in every way" (26). On Pentecost Jesus drenched "his followers with his Spirit, creating a new community where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit make their home" (28), a

gift that anticipates the new creation, when we will "dwell forever in the presence of God" (56). These assurances wrap us within the strong yet gentle arms of our Savior, who is "God with us" in all circumstances.

Our World Belongs to God overflows with compassion. Early on, it recognizes that we "struggle with the spirits of this age" (3) and in our sin fear "the nearness of God" (13). Acknowledging that we are "sinners who offer nothing but [our] need for mercy" (26), this testimony speaks gently of those who feel "nameless in the bustling crowd" (34), of the church being a "broken communion in a broken world" (40), and of a world in which "millions face confusing choices" (42). Because God's "compassion knows no bounds" (42), we have hope that God will wipe away every tear (56).

In God's compassion, neither our sorrows nor our sins form the end of our stories. Rather, we "live confidently, anticipating his coming, offering him our daily lives" (57). God sends us into our own neighborhoods (41), whether single or married (46), in education (47), work (48), and rest (49). While we trust that "our hope for the new creation is not tied to what humans can do" (55), *Our World Belongs to God* invites us to see science (50), creation (51), and government (52-54) as gifts to be stewarded in service of the common good in anticipation of when God will make everything new (58).

Our World Belongs to God is a powerful testimony to God's abundant grace. Within it, we are held by God's steadfast presence, we encounter God's compassion, and we are ushered into living confidently in the grasp of God's fierce love, even when we find ourselves at "life's raw edges." 

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

Gloves and Grace

I had constructed
a little skit in
which I was the
pious Christian
helping the
needy beggar.



Bob Ritzema is a psychologist who works part time at Psychology Associates of Grand Rapids. He attends Monroe Community Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in Grand Rapids, Mich.

THE WINTER STARTED out gently but became progressively more discourteous. At least this Sunday's forecast didn't threaten snow. After church, the sun greeted us as if trying to distract us from the lacerating cold.

Not wanting to linger outside, I squeezed into my car and drove away, waiting for the car's heater to puff out some warmth. I had gone just far enough to feel the first breath of warm air when I saw a panhandler standing by the road. Holding up a sign, he had positioned himself near a traffic light, hoping for spare change from drivers detained there. I stopped, fourth or fifth in line, and noted with relief that the snow was deep enough to prevent him from walking up alongside the row of cars. It's not that I had never offered anything to roadside panhandlers. I was ambivalent about such drive-by charity, though. Better not to be regarded as a potential source of hope.

The light turned green. Driving past, I glanced in the man's direction. He had a decent winter coat, but his hands, ungloved, looked raw and red. I felt a pang of empathy. How cold his fingers must be! I thought fleetingly of giving him my gloves but quickly concluded I wasn't that kind of saint. Then I remembered—I had extra gloves with me! Months earlier I had stuck them in, of all places, the glove compartment, thinking they might come in handy sometime. Now here was someone who desperately needed them.

I parked in the first spot I could find, about a block away, and located the gloves. Walking back to where the man was standing, I pulled out a few dollars to go with my gift. I thought I would say something spiritual like "God bless you" just so he would know

he was being assisted by a believer. It seemed like the Christian thing to do. I anticipated that he would be appreciative, and that made me happy.

I handed him the money and said, "I have some extra gloves. Why don't you see if these fit?" He pulled them on, exclaiming, "Yes, they fit perfectly!" Then, before I could pronounce my benediction, he turned to me and said, "God bless you!"

That didn't quite follow my script. I stammered something like, "And may God bless you too," and we parted. I thought about our exchange later that afternoon. Why was I so startled by his blessing? Perhaps because he said the words I had planned to say but with a sincerity that I lacked. During the course of a block, after I grabbed the gloves and exited my car, I had constructed a little skit in which I was the pious Christian helping the needy beggar. I wasn't going to bless him so much as bask in the acclaim I imagined the heavenly host and God himself would express toward my act of charity. The warm glow I felt wasn't love; it was sanctimony.

So this man got a pair of gloves, and I got a blessing. I think I came out ahead. His words of grace reminded me that God speaks his grace to me when I do the right thing with the wrong motive, when I do the wrong thing for the right motive, and even when I do the wrong thing for the wrong motive. They reminded me that I too am a beggar alongside the road. God comes along and offers me not just gloves, but every blessing I need, now and forever.

What wondrous love is this! **B**

A Very Merry Mixed Media

Christmas Gift Ideas for Everyone on Your List



Becoming Mrs. Lewis: The Improbable Love Story of Joy Davidman and C.S. Lewis

by Patti Callahan

reviewed by Adele Konyndyk

Long before Joy Davidman was known as the wife of C.S. Lewis, the ambitious American writer was carving out her own spiritual and literary journey. In this historical novel, Patti Callahan places Joy in the role of first-person narrator and enlivens her fictional voice with details from biographies, personal letters, and other factual sources, including stirring excerpts from Joy's recently discovered sonnets. The novel is an intimate, imaginative chronicle of the fascinating love story between two brilliant people with a gift for artfully pondering the mysteries of the Christian faith. (Thomas Nelson)

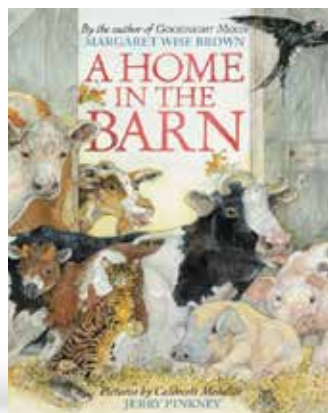


The Read-Aloud Family: Making Meaningful and Lasting Connections with Your Kids

by Sarah Mackenzie

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Sarah Mackenzie has been reading aloud to her children since infancy—but not to shape them into successful adults. Rather, she wants her children “to live out the fullness of God’s vision for their lives”—to learn to be imaginative, nurturing, empathetic, and loving children of the God of all truth. Mackenzie honestly shares the challenges of taking time to read aloud to children and gives parents tips on how to do it. Especially helpful is the last section, which offers suggestions on the best read-aloud titles for children of every age. (Zondervan)



A Home in the Barn by Margaret Wise Brown

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In this gentle tale, farm animals and other creatures are urged to enter the warmth and safety of the big red barn as winter approaches. The blustery wind urges the horses to seek shelter, and the cooling temperatures drive the field mice from their summer nests. Swallows, bats, chickens, and cats join them. As the wind howls and snow blankets the world, all is well in the barn. Jerry Pinkney’s illustrations introduce children to a place where shalom reigns—warm and safe, satisfied and well, where all creatures live in harmony and experience the love of a caring farmer. Ages 3 and up. (HarperCollins)

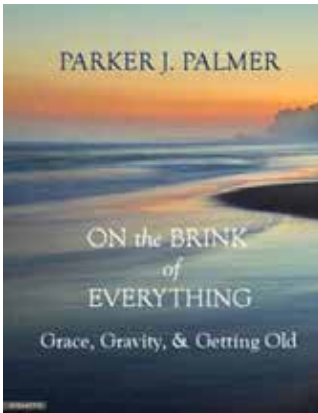


Superfans: Into the Heart of Obsessive Sports Fandom

by George Dohrmann

reviewed by Otto Selles

Superfans go a step beyond regular fans, organizing fan groups and dressing up in elaborate costumes. Through interviews and academic research, Dohrmann discusses the way fandom offers an identity, rituals, and a community. The most interesting chapters cover such topics as the interplay of religion and sports, the relationship between fans and players, and the role parents have in turning their children into avid sports fans. *Superfans* offers food for thought regarding the place of sports in our lives. (Ballantine)



On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity & Getting Old

by Parker J. Palmer

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

While many people in their 60s begin to withdraw from previous commitments, Parker Palmer continues to offer insight as he approaches 80. His wisdom comes from his lived experience. This volume is not intended to be a handbook for aging. Rather, it is a prismatic reflection on his own life experience, so much of which is universal and encouraging to others on the journey. Parker reminds readers to live fully and wholly through every season because each day we awake again to life “on the brink of everything.” (Berrett-Koehler)

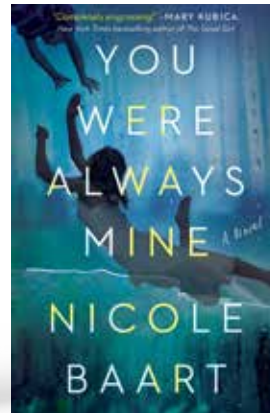


Beautifully Broken

by Plumb

reviewed by Paul Delger

Plumb creates music that is unique in its honesty, vulnerability, and hopefulness. *Beautifully Broken* doesn't stray from that—Plumb acknowledges that though we are broken, we are God's children. Plumb's young daughter, Clemente, is the inspiration for “Fight for You,” where Plumb sings, “Oh, I'm gonna fight for you, even if I have to fight with you/That's what you gotta do when you love someone.” Plumb's beautiful voice offers listeners the wonderful recurring theme that hope is always available in God. (Centricity)

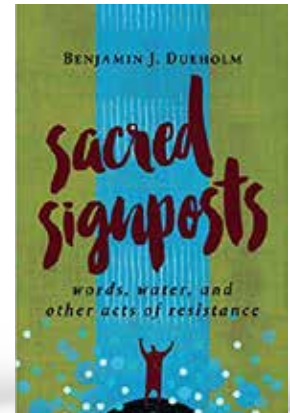


You Were Always Mine

by Nicole Baart

reviewed by Lorilee Craker

Jessica Chamberlain, dealing with the sudden death of her estranged husband, is just trying to heal and help her boys do the same. But what if his death wasn't really an accident? And how is her son's birth mother involved? Secrets start to pile up in her bucolic Iowa town, and soon Jessica is in a race against time to save herself and her children. Author Nicole Baart, an adoptive mother of five, knows how to keep her readers up all night turning pages. A satisfying, twisty, and wise family drama. (Atria)

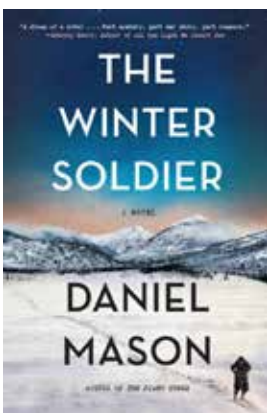


Sacred Signposts: Words, Water, and Other Acts of Resistance

by Benjamin J. Dueholm

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Lutheran pastor Dueholm explores “the central, sacred, vexing practices of Christianity, the ‘holy possessions’ by which Christians receive and enact their faith.” He shows how the Word, baptism, the Lord's Supper, confession and forgiveness, ministry, prayer, worship, and the cross shape both the Christians who practice them and the world around them. This passionate, lyrical book is a rich exploration of God's gifts to the church and their significance for our walk with God, other Christians, and anyone else. It is a valuable resource for pastors, worship leaders, and members of study groups. (Eerdmans)

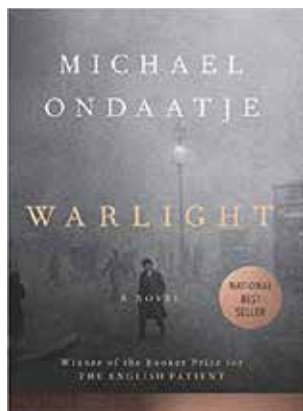


The Winter Soldier

by Daniel Mason

reviewed by Kristy Quist

Midway through Lucius Krzelewski's medical education, World War I breaks out, and he is sent to be a doctor in the Carpathian Mountains (in what's now Ukraine). Medicine, war, and romance (some sexuality included) come together in a well-written, multi-layered novel that explores the shifting borders of countries, the shifting alliances of war, and the shifting understanding of self. It also addresses the painful emotional effects of war, describing post-traumatic stress disorder in characters who have never heard of such a condition. (Little, Brown & Co.)



Warlight

by Michael Ondaatje

reviewed by Jim Romahn

In the midst of World War II, Nathaniel and Rachel are abandoned, first by their father and then by their mother. They are left in their British home with a couple of strange characters the siblings name The Moth and The Darter—mysterious but protective men. Later, as a young adult, Nathaniel turns to the mystery of his mother, trying to solve the puzzle of her life. *Warlight* is a wonderfully well-crafted tale of intrigue and espionage. (Alfred A. Knopf)

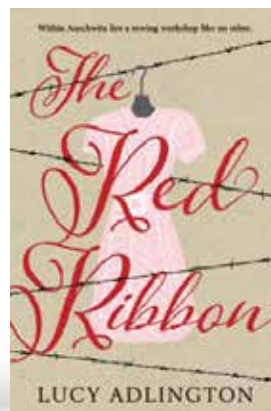


Front Desk

by Kelly Yang

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Mia has secrets, including that she and her parents live in a motel and shelter other immigrants. Her parents are the motel's caretakers. But as recent immigrants from China, they don't speak English, so 13-year-old Mia takes over the front desk. Her secret life and her public life collide when Lupe, a friend from her new school, runs into her at the motel. Based on the author's childhood, *Front Desk* deals with the realities of subtle racism. Readers will love Mia, her parents, and their motley crew of motel dwellers. A worthy read-aloud. Ages 10 and up. (Arthur A. Levine Books)



The Red Ribbon

by Lucy Adlington

reviewed by
Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In this deftly crafted novel for young adults, teens Ella and Rose become friends in a Nazi concentration camp. They survive because their skills are needed in the Upper Tailoring Studio, where a group of seamstresses make fashionable dresses for the wives of the camp's brutal ruling forces and for the female guards. They find ways to cling to their humanity, but Ella struggles to believe in future freedom. As she learns about true friendship, the power of story, and sacrificial living, she makes choices that set her on a path of integrity. (Candlewick)

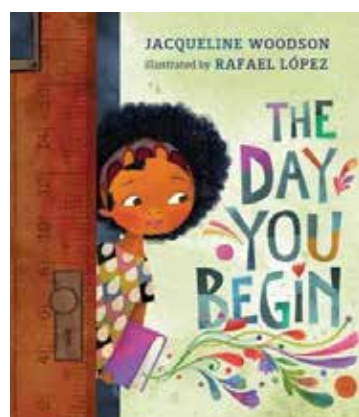


The Songs We Hide

by Connie
Hampton Connally

reviewed by Gretchen Erhardt

In 1951 post-war Hungary, singer Katalin Varga is left to rear her child without a father. When peasant Péter Benedek comes to Budapest seeking work, he discovers, amid grim surroundings, that his untrained singing voice brings unexpected calm and joy to Katalin's friends. Do he and Katalin dare hope for the future? Engaging dialogue combines with phrases from classical and folk songs to enrich carefully crafted themes. Love, sacrifice, and hope intertwine as the characters reweave commitment to family and community in a threatened culture. This page-turner will not leave its readers' hearts untouched. (Coffeetown Press)



The Day You Begin

by Jacqueline Woodson

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

"There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you." So begins Jacqueline Woodson's newest picture book. We all know the feeling of being different and how it separates us. Universal, too, is the reality that when one person reaches out, a bridge is built, commonalities are found, and friendships grow. Raphael Lopez's illustrations support Woodson's words, and the combination is rich with imagination and meaning. Ages 6 and up. (Nancy Paulsen Books)

Is Jesus the Son of God?

Jesus dwells on God's side of the gap between Creator and creatures.



Cornelius (Neal) Plantinga was formerly president of Calvin Theological Seminary. He is now Senior Research Fellow in the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

HOW DO WE KNOW Jesus is the divine Son of God?

The answer to this question is all about the Holy Spirit. We join many other Christians in finding Scripture inspiring and believable in what it teaches. And Scripture itself confirms that it has been inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, the same Spirit that inspired Scripture inspires us as we read about Jesus. We find ourselves believing what we read. We *discover* that we believe Scripture on Jesus. In fact, we go on to discover that what we believe about Jesus from Scripture is the foundation of our approach to life itself. We are Jesus followers, *Christ-ians*.

Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God incarnate. First, the New Testament writers have three titles for Jesus that are rich with divinity. Sometimes they call Jesus "God." In the gospel of John, Jesus is called "the Word" because he says only what his Father says. Just as he is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6), so he is also "the Word." John begins his gospel by stating majestically, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Alternatively, the New Testament writers sometimes call Jesus the Son of God (Heb. 1:3) and Lord (Phil. 2:9-11) in contexts where it's clear they mean to ascribe divinity to him.

Second, New Testament writers boldly apply to Jesus Christ Old Testament passages that had been about Yahweh. Hebrews 1:10, for example, addresses Jesus, the Lord, as follows: "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands," quoting the description of Yahweh in Psalm 102:25. Moreover, Paul places Jesus' name right alongside God's name, typically

greeting churches in the name of "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Third, New Testament writers attribute to Jesus Christ acts that only God can do. Jesus creates (Heb. 1:10), saves (2 Tim. 1:10), and cosmically rules and judges (Phil. 2:10-11; Rev. 22:12). He forgave people who had offended other people.

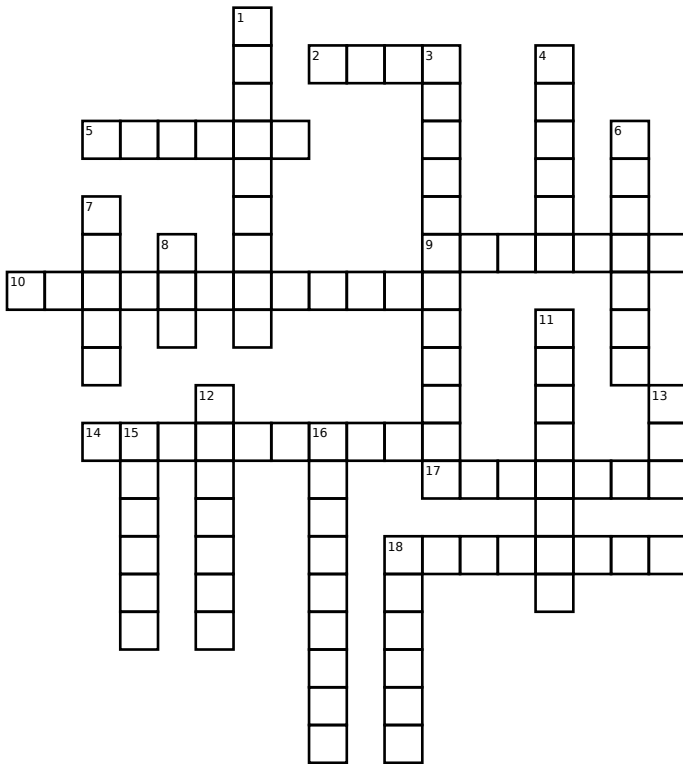
Fourth, the New Testament makes lofty divinity claims about Jesus Christ. He is not only God, Son of God, and Lord; he is also equal with God and in the form of God (Phil. 2:6). He's "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). He is God's only Son, the "exegesis" of his Father. He is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Heb. 1:3).

Fifth, the New Testament writers treat Jesus as a person one properly prays to—in fact, whom one *worships* (Acts 7:59-60; Heb. 1:6).

Many Christians possess a hazy notion that Jesus Christ is a divine person because God works in him and loves him. But the New Testament picture, as we've just seen, is far more explicit. Jesus Christ differs from, say, Abraham and Moses and Paul not just in degree, but also in kind. He is himself worthy of worship—*he*, not just the Father in him. He pre-exists in the very form of God. He judges the earth. He dwells on God's side of the gap between Creator and creatures.

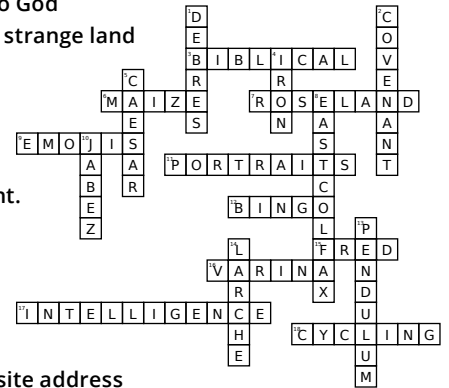
So Paul the apostle burned with a fiery intensity because he had seen the risen Lord. So the martyrs worshiped Jesus Christ while their enemies set them on fire. So our faithful ancestors, as they lay dying, said over and over, "I am not my own, but belong . . . to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1). **B**

Find clues to this crossword puzzle in this issue of *The Banner*.
See the answers next month!



Down

- 1. A ministry of presence
- 2. A home-based youth group formed from this sport
- 4. Holiday celebrated in different months in the U.S. and Canada
- 5. The Carpathian Mountains run through it
- 6. Our World Belongs to God
- 10. One who is lost in a strange land
- 11. Officer of the law
- 13. An African country
- 14. Greek for church and a church plant in North Oshawa, Ont.
- 15. Fremont church sculpts with this



Across

- 3. C.S. Lewis's wife
- 7. This magazine's website address
- 8. Its 400th anniversary is in November
- 9. Obsessive sports fans
- 12. Name of a curriculum published by FaithAlive
- 13. 2016 movie by Martin Scorsese
- 16. This Bible website turned 25 in 2018
- 17. Acronym for "inspire New Direction, imagine Great Outcomes"
- 18. ____ of Grace, a Safe Church program

Answers to the October 2018 puzzle.

Think you can change the world through media?

We do.

CHANGE can be big, like producing a television show big. Or it can be small, like writing a blog post small. It's about what you choose to do on the one hand, and who you are on the other. We are more than our jobs, and God has a calling for each of us, wherever we go.

That changes everything.

Starting with you.

redeemer.ca



REDEEMER

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

A degree you can believe in.

DEADLINES: 11/5/18 for December; 12/3/18 for January Subject to availability. Details online. Advertising in *The Banner* does not imply editorial endorsement.

PRICES: Most ads are \$0.40^{US} per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.32^{US} per character and \$50 per photo applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements.

TO ADVERTISE: Place your classified ad online at thebanner.org/classifieds or email it to classifieds@thebanner.org or fax it to 616-224-0834. Questions? Call 616-224-0725.

Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that **ERNESTO HERNADEZ** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **MARCEL KUIPER** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **NORM UNDERLAND** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Dr. Steven Timmermans, Executive Director

Church Anniversary

75TH ANNIVERSARY

SAN DIEGO CRC is celebrating 75 years of God's faithfulness. Former members and friends are invited to attend a celebration service at 10:00am, November

18, 2018. To God Be The Glory! Send questions and memories to: larryhoeksema@gmail.com

Birthdays

97TH BIRTHDAY

JOHANNA VISSER will be celebrating her 97th birthday on November 11, 2018. Wife of Gerrit (deceased) Children: Paul and Darlene Hesse, Ken(deceased) and Susan Visser, Gary and Marnie Visser, Darrell and Jan Visser, Jim and Marlene Chandler, Al and Joelene Schaap, Dan and Teresa Visser. Celebrating God's faithfulness are her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren. Wishes may be sent to her at 1480 W. San Madele, Fresno CA 93711

95TH BIRTHDAY

VELYN LANDIS of 500 Parkside Dr. #118 Zeeland, MI 49464, will celebrate her 95th birthday on November 11, 2018. Children: Judy & Art, Keith & Jacqueline, grandchildren: Kendra & Erwin, Michelle & Dave, Greatgrandchildren: Tyler, (fiancée Michelle) Kaleigh, Justin & Carter. We give thanks to God for mom's faithful example, her wisdom and love.



MARCIE SCHIPMA (nee Bui-kema) will celebrate her 95th birthday on November 15, 2018. She is loved and cherished by her children, Chuck and Mary, Jack, Trudy Voss, Doreen and Frank Voss, Susan and Doug Slinkman, 19 grandchildren and spouses, and 55 great grandchildren. She is an inspiration to us all and a model of love and faith in our Lord for us to follow. Birthday cards can be sent to 3460 Saratoga Ave. Rm 140, Downers Grove, IL 60515

90TH BIRTHDAY

LOUIS BOMMELJE, of 130 Windsor Park Dr., #C212, Carol Stream, IL 60188, will celebrate his 90th birthday on Nov. 29 along with his wife, Carolyn (Kramer) and sons: Larry (Irene - deceased), Steven (Jeanne), and Daniel (Jennifer), 7 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. God is good - all the time.

MARGE WIERSMA of 2105 Raybrook #3055, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 will celebrate her 90th birthday on Nov. 26. Her family is blessed by her faith, love, acceptance and encouragement. "We love you and wish we could be together more often."

Anniversary

70TH ANNIVERSARY

NEWENHOUSE Virgil & Marjorie, of 51 West Cherry Ave., Zeeland, MI, will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on Dec 8, 2018 - 5 children, 14 grand & 13 great. To God be the Glory.

VANDRUNEN Milton & Annamae celebrated their 70th anniversary on October 15. Children: Milton (deceased) & Rita, Bill & Kathy Dykstra, Jim & Deb Panozzo, Steve & Deb, Joel & Carol, 18 grandchildren, 39 great grandchildren. God is faithful. 3 John 1:4.

65TH ANNIVERSARY

WISSE Rev. Don and Ethel of 151 Graham Ave Apt 244 N. Haledon, NJ 07508 celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Sept. 10. Their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren feel richly blessed to be a part of their love to one another and to the Lord for all these years.

Obituaries



CHAPEL Nancy (Nadia Chaplya), age 93 of Grand Rapids, MI. went to her heavenly home on September 14, 2018. She was Born on December 31, 1924 in the Ukraine. She was taken prisoner by the German Army during WWII and brought to Germany as slave labor. Nancy was forced to work on a Christian farm. She became a missionary to

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication Title: The Banner; 2. Publication No. 0041-300; 3. Filing Date: Oct. 1, 2018; 4. Issue Frequency: Monthly except August; 5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 11; 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$28.00; 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; Editor: Shiao Chong, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; Managing Editor: Judith Claire Hardy, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 10. Owner: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49508-1407; 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None; 12. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.

13. Publication Name: The Banner; 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2018.

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total No. Copies (Net Press Run)	82,324	81,600
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	54,965	52,493
(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions	0	0
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	25,005	24,711
(4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	14	1
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	79,984	77,205
d. Free Distribution by Mail		
(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	35	35
(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541	0	0
(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	2	0
(4) Free Distribution Outside the Mail	5	5
e. Total Free Distribution	42	40
f. Total Distribution	80,026	77,245
g. Copies Not Distributed	2,298	4,355
h. Total	82,324	81,600
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	99.95%	99.95%

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete.

Jane E. Hilbrand, Operations Manager

Nigeria and later worked for Blodgett Hospital. She is survived by many loving close friends. Further information is available from Charlene Ezinga at (616) 281-2944.

GRITTER, R. Ruth, age 89, of Grand Rapids, MI, was received into glory on September 21, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband Nelson, daughter Lorraine Menninga, and sister Florence Geelhood. She is survived by her daughter Marilyn Gritter and Lauren Dennison; grandson Shawn and Noelle Pedersen (Wesley, Calvin); granddaughter Kim and Scott Frost; step-granddaughter Devon and Joe Corbett (Madisyn, Joey); in-laws Jim and Edie Gritter, Willa Kenoyer, and Dianne Long; and many nieces and nephews. Hundreds of friends, family members, and acquaintances were blessed by the card ministry Ruth maintained for many years.

LA BRENZ F. Jim, of Grand Junction, CO passed away peacefully on September 27 just three days before his 93rd birthday. He is survived by his wife of 69 years Grace and his children James Michael (Carol), Tina (Carl) LaBrenz Chan, Jana (Tim) LaBrenz Van Dam and David who died in infancy. He will also be missed by his 9 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

NAGELKERK, Evelyn, 92, of Grand Rapids, MI, passed away Sept. 25, 2018. She is survived by her husband John; children, Bill and Harriett Nagelkerk, Bob Nagelkerk, Tom and Jean Nagelkerk, Jack Nagelkerk, daughter-in-law Cindy Nagelkerk; Tim and Kathy Nagelkerk; 14 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren

ROSENDALE Anna May, age 92, of Denver, CO went to her heavenly home on September 16, 2018. She was preceded in death by her husband Don. She is survived by her brother James G. Alsum; children Donna (Pete) VanElderen, Deanne (Tom) Afman, & Dave (Cheryl) Rosendale, 10 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. She faithfully served as an organist and accompanist at Third CRC for some 50 years, taught piano students from throughout south Denver, and served the larger faith community with her gifts of music in weddings, funerals and other sacred events. Memorial contributions can be made in her name to Christian Living Communities, 7000 E. Belleview Ave, #150, Greenwood Village, CO 80111.

TUBERGEN Marianne (Peuler), age 82, of Spring Lake, Michigan went to be with her Lord and Savior on August 10, 2018. Surviving are her husband, David of 60 years, children Joyce (Jim) Desmond, Ren (Cheri) Tubergen, Jennifer (Larry) Warden and 6 grandchildren.



VAN DER MOLEN Bernard "Bernie", age 93, of DeMotte, passed away on Tuesday, March 27, 2018 at his home surrounded by his loving family. He was born December 3, 1924 in New Holland, South Dakota to Cornelius and Alice

(Alberts) Van Der Molen, both deceased. On October 3, 1952, in DeMotte, Indiana, Bernie married Kathleen Seegers. Bernie was self-employed as a farmer. Bernie & Kathleen together, shared in the labor of working on their family farm. They were known for growing blueberries, asparagus and

asparagus crowns. Bernie was a member of first Christian Reformed Church where he was Deacon and Elder. He also led a large men's Bible Study for 15 years. Bernie wrote 2 family biographies and 2 books, one titled "The Amazing 20th Century" and another titled "Memories of Our Life Together" to commemorate 65 years of their loving marriage. He also served on the Illiana & DeMotte Christian School boards. Bernie is survived by his wife, Kathleen Van Der Molen of DeMotte, IN; Children: David Van Der Molen of Merrillville, IN; Mary (Randy) Luedtke of DeMotte, IN; Ruth (Adrian) Dieleman of Visalia, CA; Debbie (Steve) Hubers of DeMotte, IN; Mark (Margo) Van Der Molen of DeMotte, IN; Liz (Paul) Kik of Hudsonville, MI; 14 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren; and sister, Ella Aasen of Long Beach, CA. Bernie was preceded in death by his parents and 7 sisters.

Controller

The Christian Reformed Church in North America is seeking to hire a Controller to manage the financial resources and the Finance Services staff for the U.S. based operations of the denomination.

Responsibilities include coordination of various denominational agency and ministry budgets, provide financial analysis and advice, oversee financial statements, coordinate audits, manage treasury functions and banking relationships, manage and report on resource utilization, manage liability insurance programs, provide management of finance managers and payroll staff, and assist churches with financial management issues.

The successful candidate will have demonstrated experience in financial software, corporate finance, developing and tracking budgets, managing processes, treasury and banking experience, and management of staff. The complete job description and additional information can be found at www.crcna.org/jobs.



To apply submit cover letter and resume online by December 19, 2018



Explore. Connect. Experience.

2019 GUIDED ITINERARIES:

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

March 11 – 23 | Pr. Bill & Lyn Vanden Bosch

Southern Spain (with Calvin Alumni)

March 14 – 24 | Cynthia Slagter

Cultural Tour of Cuba

March 21 – April 1 | John Witte

The Gospel Comes to Italy

March 28 – April 9 | Dr. Jeffery Weima

Netherlands Waterway Cruise

April 12 – 20 | Henk & Thressa Witte
Register by Nov. 15th for a FREE shore excursion to the Keukenhof Tulip Gardens!

Church Tour of China

April 23 – May 9 | Wayne & Lynn TenHarmse

Alaska Cruise

September 2019 | Mindy Alexander

Tour of the Balkans

September 10 – 25 | John Witte

Ancient Empires

Mediterranean Cruise

September 11 – 24 | Henk & Thressa Witte

Following the Footsteps of Jesus:

Israel & Jordan

October 10 - 22 | Dr. Jeffery Weima

Join a tour to Oberammergau for the 2020 Passion Play!

wittetours.com/passion-play

SIGN UP TODAY!
www.wittetours.com/banner

witte Travel & Tours

Grand Rapids, MI | 800 GO WITTE

VANDE GUCHE MARTEN, age 87, of Grand Rapids MI, went home to be with his Lord on Thursday, September 6, 2018. He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty and will be deeply missed by his children, Kevin (Teresa) Vande Guchte, Beth Fulvi (Richmond, IN), Kathi Vande Guchte; grandchildren, Shane Smith, Jessica Smith, Nathan Vande Guchte, Cammi Fulvi, David Vande Guchte, Melissa Vande Guchte; great grandchildren, Angelice, Eva, Liam, Lucy, and Josie; siblings, Peter (Judy) Vande Guchte, Wilma (Norman) DeJong; and brothers- and sisters-in-law, Nicholas (Norma) Hagedoorn, Sue (Bill) Sweetman.

Volunteers

SHORT TERM MISSION - 8 days, 7 nights Honduras. Perfect for your youth group. Two days helping in

a youth camp with 50 Honduran teens, several days of construction, and one day cultural experience. Dates flexible. Contact Mark at mvanzeelt2004@yahoo.com or 630-792-1754

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: MS Christian Family Services is seeking volunteers to assist in our thrift store and maintenance on buildings. MCFS serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. 662-873-4842

Church Positions Available

GRACE CRC, CHATHAM, ONTARIO seeks a Lead Pastor. Our prospective pastor will be one who is an energetic, humble shepherd with a serving spirit and a warm personality, encouraging to God's

flock. An ability to inspire the congregation through teaching the Word, preaching application, and encouraging discipleship. We seek someone who has a passion for and is a friend of youth. Please contact the Search Committee at themiddels@gmail.com or call 519.358.6248

SENIOR PASTOR The congregation of Graafschap CRC in beautiful Holland, MI is beginning the search for a Senior Pastor to provide leadership following the retirement of our pastor, Stan Scripps in April 2019. Our congregation has a great heritage to build on, paired with our commitment to become all that God wants us to be in the future...changes and all. Our hope is that this group of 300+ members will work together with the leadership of the next pastor to: Grow God's ministry in us--attaining personal spiritual maturity through the disciplines of worship and second, to more effectively reach our community and incorporate new believers into our communal Christian life. If interested, please contact the search committee secretary, Joe Geurink @ joegeurink@gmail.com for a job description, a specific list of our qualifications for ministry and to facilitate the first steps in getting to know you as a possible candidate.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR First Christian Reformed Church of Ripon, CA is seeking a full-time Associate Pastor who is a devout man of God, deeply appreciates Reformed theology, and who resonates with the mission and core values we hold to as a church. The applicant should have the gifts to develop an assimilation ministry, support and help expand a children's ministry, and assist the senior pastor with teaching and preaching. For a full job description and to apply, please visit our website at www.riponfirstcrc.org.

PASTOR Ideal Park CRC of Wyoming, MI, "A small church with a big heart" is looking for a pastor, full-time or part time (bi-vocational or commissioned), who can help us grow in God's word, and who would help us make a difference in reaching our community for Christ. If interested please contact: Jim at hkjimh@gmail.com

PASTOR Oakdale Community CRC is seeking an inspiring and challenging pastor who has strong Biblical knowledge and teaching that applies to everyday life. Oakdale is located in the Central Valley of California, nestled between the majestic mountains of Yosemite and the Pacific Ocean. Contact Kurt Hoekstra (hoekstrakurt@gmail.com) for more information.

SEEKING PASTOR: Following a deliberate process of transition, Maranatha CRC in Edmonton, AB seeks a full-time Pastor to serve a multi-cultural congregation that has a blend of Caucasian, Karen (Myanmar), African and Asian members. We desire a Pastor who will deliver sound, Biblical preaching that intentionally integrates the variety of cultures in our congregation and community. The Pastor will foster the importance of music in worship and actively visit and encourage members in their faith walk. To inquire or apply, go to maranathacrc.ca for our church profile or email us at ministry@telus.net.

Director of Raise Up International

Raise Up International is an affiliate of the Christian Reformed Church in N.A that is seeking candidates to fill the position of Director. Raise Up provides training, devotional and education programs for pastors, lay leaders, teachers, and many roles in Christian church globally. Raise Up International was formed by the combination of Timothy Leadership Training Institute, Global Coffee Break and Educational Care to train Christian leaders mostly in non-formal settings. Raise Up provides its programs in more than 50 countries and in more than 30 languages. Raise Up International networks closely with ministry partners to deliver such programs in a wide variety of cultures and settings.

The director must provide vision, organizational development and executive leadership in the all aspects of the work of Raise Up International. This includes communication and engagement with ministry partners and key stakeholders, oversight of financial and administrative operations and leading change in educational content and programming.

The successful candidate will have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree; training in and demonstrated leadership in organizational development; training in and understanding of missiology and educational programs; inter cultural experience either within the United States or in other countries; training in and validated competence in financial management; knowledge of the church of Jesus Christ and a commitment to the Reformed Faith.

The position will be preferably be based in Grand Rapids, MI.

A full job description and additional information about Raise Up International can be found at www.crcna.org/jobs



Application deadline is December 31, 2018

Employment

TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS is hiring. We provide non-medical care for seniors in their home. Most shifts are from 9:00 a.m. to noon, making it an ideal position for parents with school age children or retirees. Duties include: light housekeeping, meal preparation and help with personal care. All jobs are in the Grand Rapids area. Pay is 13-15 dollars an hour. Send inquiries or resumes to: truebluecaregivers@gmail.com or call 616-406-6819 for more information.

Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

MOVING TO/FROM SEATTLE/ BELLEVUE/WA? 35 + yrs exp! Allan Kuipers, Coldwell Banker Danforth. 206-850-2724, rlst8brokr@comcast.net.

FT MYERS POOL HOME FOR RENT by the week or month, Oct - May. 905-630-6711.

FOR RENT 2 BR/1BA cottage Nettles Island, Florida gated community available April thru October 2019, call 616-836-4293.

CONDO FOR RENT IN ESTERO FL. 3 bedroom 2 bath in gated community. Open Jan-March \$2400 per month Tom VanderHeyden 219-308-0458

FLORIDA CONDO FOR RENT, Clearwater, 2BR 2BA, large quiet end unit, like new furniture appliances, gated community, 2 pools, near shopping, golf and beaches. Feb. March. April. 708-433-1721

GULF SW FLORIDA Scenic seawater canal, private dock, quiet retreat. Fish/sun/walk/bike Nr beaches, pools Fully-furn hm, coastal decor. 1 or 2 bdrm @\$100 or 150/da 10-da min or \$3k/mo. Pls no smk/pet/childrn Ph/txt 503.616.1000, 503.476.6376

Products and Services

REMODELING? Call Ken DeVries today for an estimate on windows, kitchen/bath renovation. 616-457-5880. Since 1985. www.homework-construction.com

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

I CAN SELL YOUR HOME FOR \$500 or 1.5% Local Calvin grad will list your property using a cost effective business model. Full, complete service, but with savings! The system works! 165 closings in 2017 alone. 18 Banner clients in 2017! Call or email Doug Takens of Independence Realty, 6801 Gettysburg, Hudsonville, 616- 262-4574, takens@sbcglobal.net.

SECURITY CONSULTANT: Church building security, receptionist and pastor safety, alarm systems, video, volunteer security teams, shooter response preparation and policy. 37 years experience. jerry. antoon@gmail.com. Grand Rapids based.

YOUR CHRISTMAS DÉCOR CAN BE HANDLED STRESS-FREE this year by DeVries Landscape. Let the professionals design, install, take down and store your Exterior Christmas Decorations for your Home or Office Building. Call Kim (616) 669-0500. \$500 Minimum required.



MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Associate Pastor
First Christian Reformed Church
Crown Point, IN

Lead Pastor
Woodhaven Reformed Church
Byron Center, MI

Lead Pastor
Bethel Christian Reformed Church
Lansing, IL

For information on opportunities from ChapterNext, the leader among pastor search firms serving RCA & CRCNA congregations, visit www.chapter-next.com or email info@chapter-next.com.



Dordt College is seeking applications for the following areas beginning August 2019:

Faculty Positions

Agriculture
Art
Engineering/Physics
Theatre Arts
Theology

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

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

www.dordt.edu — About Dordt — Job Openings

Dordt College endeavors to diversify its staff within the framework of its mission. The commitment of the college to nondiscrimination on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, national or ethnic origin, or race is consistent with federal and state requirements for nondiscrimination in employment.

Longing for
a community
that holds
together while
things are
falling apart?

Find out more at
colossianforum.org/tcw



Discover a new Christian practice for engaging the most difficult topics of our time. Take up a new way. The Colossian Way—showing how all things hold together in Christ.





CHURCH GIVING
Continue to Give makes giving easy and convenient for online tithes

and donations. Our state of the art technologies: Text to Give, Recurring Donations, Kiosk Fundrais-

ing, Online Giving, Mobile Giving, and More will INCREASE your bottom line in donations! We have NO contracts! Let me show you how we can not only replace your current online donation provider, but we promise to make it better and more cost effective! We will make online giving easier for your donors who want to give and we will make

accounting for the donations seamless for your finance team with donor tracking and reporting! Continue to Give is registered with the Better Business Bureau so you are working with a company you can trust! In addition, Continue to Give is local servicing all over the U. S. but located right in central WI! Please let me know how I can assist with your tithing and fundraising needs! My contact information is below or you can visit www.continuetogive.com for more information! Please call or email me anytime with questions daniel.housman@payroc.com, 312 656-8605. Or To set up a meeting or phone call with me, please click on the link. calendly.com/daniel-housman

Miscellaneous

WINTER VISITORS Maranatha church welcomes winter visitors beginning Dec 2. We meet at 10 am in Farnsworth Hall 6159 E Universty, Mesa, AZ 85205. Our website is mesamaranathacrc.net. Our Facebook page is Maranatha Community Church. Check us out. Phone: Rev Harry Weidenaar 480-830-0749.

Ask. Connect. Share.

The CRC is big. Since we can't always meet for coffee, let's meet at The Network to compare ministry notes.

Covering over 60 different ministry topics, you'll find blogs, discussion topics, ministry Q&As, and much more. Get involved by asking a ministry question, posting a blog, or sharing a resource today.

[Visit **crcna.org/network**](http://Visitcrcna.org/network)

Advertising helps you connect with the CRC

616-224-5882

ads@thebanner.org

AUGUST 1-3 WINDSOR

Inspire is returning in 2019! If you're involved in ministry at any level, save the date now! At Inspire 2019, people from across our 1,000+ churches will gather for three days of practical workshops, engaging speakers, worship, and energizing conversation. Let's come together to refresh, refocus, and reimagine how our shared calling finds expression in our local communities and beyond.

Inspire 
2019

Discover. Connect. Reimagine.



SAVE THE DATE

   **#crcinspire**

crcna.org/Inspire

Writing Prayers

It's as if my whole life I've been trying to learn a language, and it wasn't until I started to write that I could finally speak it.

IT'S EVENING. LATE.

And somewhere, just beyond the edge of my thoughts, there's a prayer waiting.

I've learned by now that it won't wait long. I leave my bed and move into a quiet room where I turn on only one light. I take out my prayer journal.

The journal is kept hidden—not that there is anything I'm eager to hide, but more because my prayers aren't written for anyone but to whom they are addressed. Each prayer begins the same way, and this night is no different.

"Lord, my lord," I begin.

Often I pray like a prodigal, only turning home when I find myself lost in a strange land. So when I begin a prayer by saying "Lord," it reminds me that my place is one of servitude and of worship.


The room is quiet. The prayer that's been waiting finally comes close, and I begin to write.

I wonder sometimes how keeping this prayer journal has changed me. Perhaps I've become a little more understanding, a little stronger when facing things I would rather not have had to face. Certainly my understanding of God has grown. But it wasn't

until recently that I realized what this journal has really given me: It has taught me how to pray.

It's as if my whole life I've been trying to learn a language, and it wasn't until I started to write that I could finally speak it. I can name things now and fully recognize them for what they are. When I see something good, I can write, "Alleluia, that is God-given." In my anger, I can write, "This, God, is not what you planned for us." And when I look back and find that my prayers have been answered (always diagonally, never in the way I expected), I can understand it as God's intention.

I finish my prayer.

Sometimes I'll look back on what I've written before, but tonight I close my journal and put it away. The prayer doesn't end, though. As I turn off the light and finally slip back into sleep, the prayer stays with me, echoing into the last of my thoughts. 



Margaret Schmidt is a graphic and production assistant at Eerdmans Publishing. She lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.



HEALTH CARE across cultures

LUKE 
society

The Luke Society provides support and resources to Christian visionaries passionate about ministering to the health needs in their own cultures. Our ministry empowers nationals with gifts in medicine to share the saving grace of Jesus Christ through preaching, teaching and healing.

www.lukesociety.org

605-373-9686