

BANNER

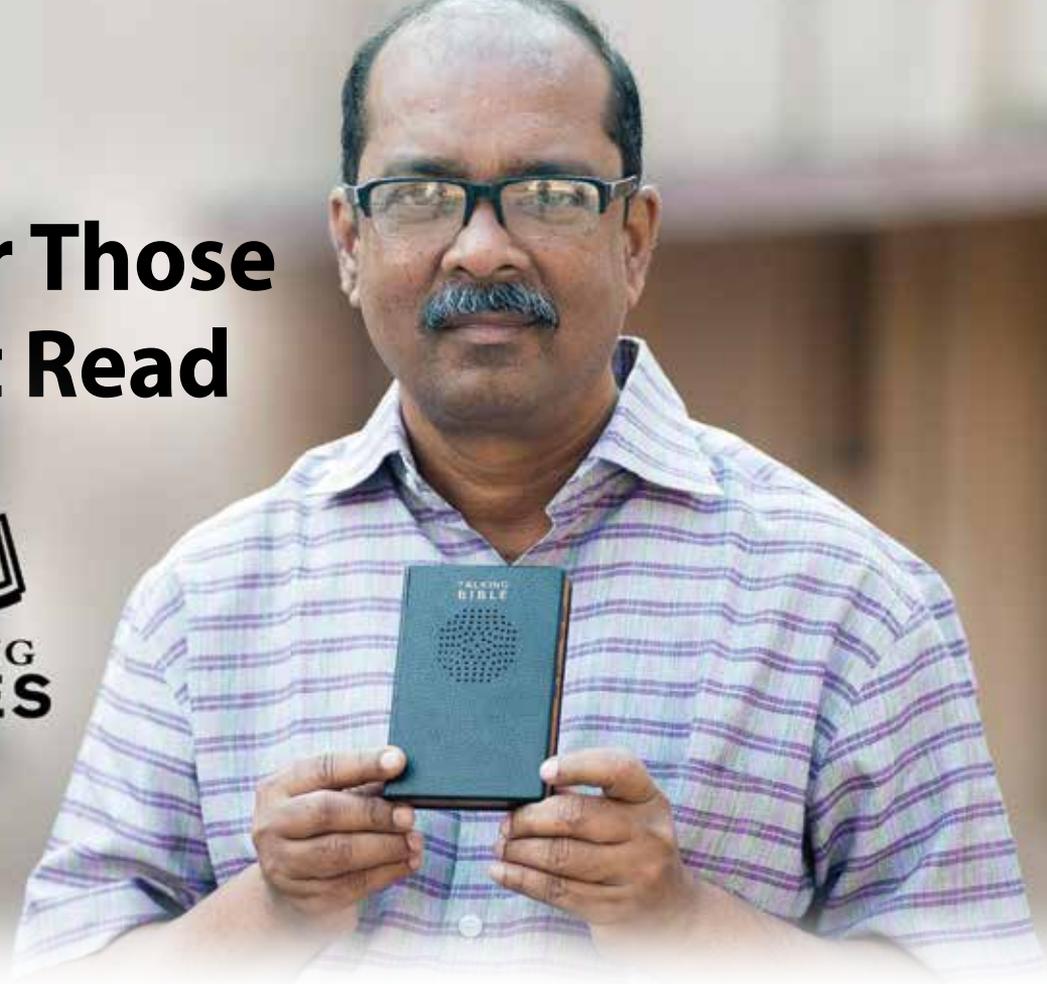
JANUARY 2019

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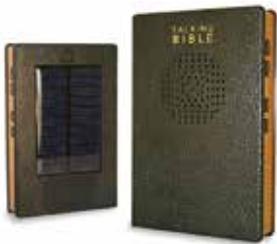
The background of the text is a faded version of Michelangelo's 'The Creation of Adam' painting. The image shows the hands of God and Adam reaching towards each other. There are several large, bright red splatters of blood overlaid on the image, particularly on the right side, suggesting a theme of violence or sacrifice.

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- » Florida Church Creates Preschool Oasis for Families
- » Arab-American Friendship Center Grows with CRC Volunteers
- » Colorado Church Expands College Ministry Space
- » Book: *Number One Chinese Restaurant* by Lillian Li
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- » Music: *One More Song* by Ashley Cleveland
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Missional Temptations

In God's eyes,
"success" in
mission is
measured by
faithfulness—to
worship God and
serve God only.



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 USED TO READ the temptation of Christ in Matthew 4:1-11 through the lens of individual piety. But now I think it serves up important cautions to the church in how to imagine and fulfill God's mission. I don't think Satan was trying to get Jesus to prove that he was God's Son. Instead Satan was saying, "If you are the Son of God, then your mission is . . .". I read this passage as Satan's attempts to distort Jesus' holistic mission as the Son of God who takes away the sins of the world.

These missional temptations are also very real for the church today. We too are tempted to distort God's mission in various ways. These temptations include the attempts to reduce God's mission to either activism, spiritualism, or imperialism.

During Jesus' time, most people under the ancient Roman Empire's yoke were just trying to survive. They were trying to put bread on the table. The temptation to turn stones into bread was asking Jesus to define his mission as meeting people's needs for survival. There is nothing wrong with bread or with feeding the hungry. Jesus did that with five loaves and two fish. We can do a lot of good by helping people in poverty, bringing justice for people who are oppressed, and engaging in all sorts of social activism to make a better world. Those are all necessary work for Christians and the church. They are not optional.

But we cannot reduce God's mission to social activism because "man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). We cannot neglect the spiritual dimension of human life and the church's task in proclaiming God's Word.

However, we also should not fall into the temptation to reduce God's mission to simply the spiritual dimension. We sometimes have gone to the other extreme of taking God's Word too literally and out of context, as Satan did in Matt. 4:6, packaging religion into something that simply meets our spiritual fancies, whatever those may be—from seeking the miraculous to seeking intellectual certainty.

Jesus said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matt. 4:7). Spiritualism turns good spirituality into self-serving consumption. Like the devil manufacturing a miracle to test God's written Word, we can manipulate theology, music, piety, or even miracles to serve our own agendas, as if we can make God do our bidding.

The third temptation we experience is to turn mission into imperialism. Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. Often we confuse God's kingdom building with human empire building, even religious empire building. Coercive power over others can seem like a shortcut to missional success. The church has often fallen into the temptation to be powerful—even politically powerful—rather than loving.

God's kingdom is not empire; it is centered on love, not power. We should never sell our souls to Satan in exchange for power. In God's eyes, "success" in mission is measured by faithfulness—to worship God and serve God only. And worship means offering our lives to God as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). That means, at the very least, sacrificing our personal agendas, our pride, and all that we use to make ourselves worthy in our own eyes.

Jesus' mission was not defined as either activism, spiritualism, or imperialism but included elements from all three. Jesus' mission was centered on his sacrificial love on the cross. **B**



REPLY ALL

Love and Abuse

Today I received *The Banner*. It was filled with various articles about abuse, most of which were well done. However, the article “Torn between Love and Abuse” (Dec. 2018) helps perpetuate the problem many face every day. I can only imagine a person in an abusive situation reading this and deciding not to leave but rather to stay and try to salvage a marriage at the cost of her own safety and the well-being of her kids. While there are not a lot of details, the tone was dismissive, suggesting prayer is the answer. And there was no call for anyone in the situation to seek professional help.

It is good to pray for a situation, but according to the article, this is a life-threatening situation and the victim must be encouraged to stay out of the relationship, not only for her safety, but for the lives of her children! A nurse/pastor is not qualified to counsel and give advice in this situation.

» Kristin Gootjes // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Response from Back to God Ministries International:

Thank you for your concern for Elizabeth’s well-being. For her privacy, we intentionally left several details of her story out, but we apologize that this caused an unclear picture of the steps we took for her well-being. Elizabeth’s relationship with her husband put her at serious risk. The team at Family Fire acted quickly over a holiday weekend to ensure her safety and connect her to resources such as an abuse prevention hotline, a local counselor, and emergency housing. Like you, we care passionately about protecting people from domestic violence and abuse, and we strive to work to ensure people’s safety.

Why Christianity Still Matters

Kudos to the young people who entered the contest “Why Christianity Still Matters” (Nov. 2018). How beautiful to see that God is raising up brilliant, sensitive new leaders for his kingdom. After reading the first-prize essay, I vowed to stretch my hands as far as possible to do what I can in the kingdom for the sake of the One who died for me.

» Nancy Tuit // Grand Rapids, Mich.

“Presenting the winners of our fist-ever essay contest for college students . . .” (“Why Christianity Still Matters”). Really? I get to page 32 (of the November issue) and you printed only two of the three winners! What a disappointment!

» Ken Kruisenga // Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor’s note: Due to space constraints, we printed only the first- and second-place winners in the November print issue of *The Banner*. All three winning essays are published on our website: www.the-banner.org.

We Need More Ralph Bakers!

Janet Greidanus’s “In Memoriam” for Rev. Ralph Baker (Oct. 2018) includes a line that begs for amplification: “Baker will be remembered for encouraging the Tiv people in Nigeria to use their native instruments in worship.” Rev. Baker was one of the few missionaries who understood that culture is a gift of God, part of God’s common grace and an element of general revelation. The impact of Rev. Baker’s efforts in promoting Indigenous musical genres was enormous.

Providentially, the column came out right next to your article on reconciliation in the Canadian churches. One thing we as a denomination need to repent of and ask forgiveness for is failing to see the

God-given beauty in Native American culture, especially in music. In societies around the world, Indigenous music has been redirected to the praise of God. We need to see that happen in North America. We need more Ralph Bakers!
» Robert Koops // Gallup, N.M.

The Banner Made Me Do It!

Because of two articles in the November *Banner* (“Generation Spark: Growing Relationships, Finding Solutions” and “Elders Are Called to a Ministry of Presence”), I invited my young elder and his wife to come to my house for a bowl of chili. I couldn’t expect them to invite me—she is recuperating from a bone marrow transplant and chemo treatments. I am 89 and can’t entertain like I used to, but a bowl of chili and a dish of Jell-O, with crackers and French bread, was sufficient. We had Klondike bars for dessert and had a delightful time. This occasion blessed me so much I just wanted to share it.

Thanks, *Banner*. I’ll keep supporting you as long as I can. Keep up the good work.
» Thelma Bergman // Muskegon, Mich.

13 Things about Hell

Why are we trying to explain the many mysteries found in the Bible that can’t be explained? (“13 Things You May Not Know about Hell,” Sept. 2018). “Sheol” or “Hades” leaves us to acknowledge only external depictions of doomsday horrors in art form in Christian eschatology throughout the history of medieval churches. Mysteries are not to be feared but [can inspire] hope for the thing not seen.

» George Lieuwen // Langley, B.C.

Give Your Pastor a Break!

Where Have All the Sad Songs Gone?

Thank you for this article about the importance of lament in our spiritual lives and growth (As I Was Saying blog post: "Where Have All the Sad Songs Gone?"). It's so very needed! In Safe Church Ministry, we recognize that healing comes only after acknowledging the wrong done, as well as the painful consequences--it requires lament. Only then we can move on to praise as the Lord is with us every step of the way in what is often a long and difficult journey toward healing and wholeness. We're not in heaven yet. Until then, we need lament.

» Bonnie Nicholas // online comment

Polyamory Question

Editor's note: My answer to the question about polyamory (Big Questions, Ethics, Nov. 2018) was confusing for some readers. Research shows that Christian polyamorists do not regard their practice as adultery or infidelity; for that reason, the standard argument that it breaks the seventh commandment fails to persuade them. And the Bible does not directly condemn polyamory either, since Abraham, Jacob, and David had multiple wives. My answer, therefore, in a limited space, attempted to show that lack of biblical condemnation does not equal biblical sanction for such a sinful practice.

A RECENT STUDY conducted by Lifeway Research found that while most pastors reported that they loved pastoral ministry, nearly half also reported that the demands of their job were too much for them to handle, and they were burning out. Is your pastor running on empty? Offering a sabbatical may be the wisest investment in—and a gracious gift for—your pastor.

Sometimes when a church floats the idea of a sabbatical, church members begin to protest: "I've worked hard my whole career, and I've never had the luxury of a three-month vacation!" There's some validity to this reaction. Pastors aren't more deserving of a period of rest than small-business owners, farmers, or stay-at-home parents. Pastors don't work harder than others. But our work is different. Pastoral ministry requires late-night visits to the hospital to comfort a bereaved family and sitting across from a couple whose marriage teeters on the edge of collapse. Pastors mediate conflict and bear the suffering of others. We can't do these things without spending ourselves in the process. Most pastors I know wouldn't trade their job for the world, yet the pressures of pastoral ministry can empty us, leading to spiritual fatigue or even burnout. That isn't good for the pastor or the church.

A sabbatical is a designated time (usually three to six months) for your pastor to recharge his or her batteries. While different from a vacation (or family leave or educational leave), a sabbatical creates time and space for a pastor away from the demands of pastoral responsibilities in order to focus on his or her spiritual, mental, and emotional health. During the summer of 2016, my church graciously offered me three months of rest. I

Most pastors I know wouldn't trade their job for the world, yet the pressures of pastoral ministry can empty us.

used the time to read and write, to travel and teach abroad, and to make lasting memories with my wife and three children.

Pastors are different from one another, so what nourishes the soul will differ from one pastor to the next. For some, a study trip abroad will be restorative; for others, a lengthy spiritual retreat will feed the soul. The point is to relieve your pastor from the pressures of ministry to instead be ministered *to*, so that he or she can in turn be more effective in serving your congregation. I returned from my sabbatical nourished in my soul and eager to return to my role as pastor.

It is generally understood that those who are always giving of themselves for others but never taking care of themselves eventually become ineffective caregivers. Give your pastor a break! He or she will come back restored and better equipped for ministry in your congregation. 



Rob Toornstra has served as pastor of Sunnyslope Christian Reformed Church in Salem, Ore., for nearly 12 years.

READ MORE ONLINE



The Gift of Retirement

Judy Cook

People in stressful and challenging vocations often begin to look forward to the season of life we call retirement.

The thought of having the luxury to rest at will begins to appeal. Or for those whose work life is all about the paycheck, with the actual work being boring and repetitive, the anticipated retirement can look like a holiday oasis consisting of pleasurable activities of one's own choosing with no accountability to a company supervisor.

For others who love their work and are used to spending long days doing what they love, retirement may loom as an enemy ready to rob them of their productive lives and earning power. It may feel a bit like being deposited into a desert place that has very little to offer (other than spending time with family) that might give satisfaction and pleasure.

All of these responses to retirement are normal and even predictable. How we face this season of our lives will inevitably be colored by our life and work experiences and the beliefs we hold about the meaning of those experiences. Our physical, emotional, and mental health will also play a part. How we see ourselves as persons of worth (or not), as persons of little or much faith, with our own unique personality traits, likes, and dislikes, full of optimism or pessimism—everything about us will be part of the frame that contains our retirement years until our deaths.

Is retirement worth planning for? Are there creative ways to help us think through how the Holy Spirit might be calling us to follow Jesus in our retirement? Or is being intentional about how we want to live as retired persons wasted energy? Is it better to expect nothing, considering that declining health and lessening energy are

inevitable? Should we just be grateful for each new day, since all we can do is decide in the moment how to fill our days as meaningfully as possible? Isn't retirement simply the season where our only calling is learning to accept our inevitable decline graciously and without complaining? Isn't it better to just take life as it comes, trusting in God's care and love and accepting each new day as God's gift?

As with so much in life, these two perspectives on entering retirement do not require an either/or response, but rather a both/and vision. In other words, God is not calling us to creatively plan for retirement *or* to trust in his grace for each new day even in the face of inevitable decline; rather, God is calling us to *both*.

It is important to remember that a call on our life at any stage is always personal, nuanced, and uniquely suited to God's own purposes as well as to our

own abilities and desires. So it doesn't follow that changed circumstances or diminished capacity means God no longer calls us. What it does mean is that God is calling us to discover his will for our lives anew. As is true for God's call at any stage of life, that task can be discerned only through prayer, time, and trial and error. The discernment process rests on the promise that God will work all things to our benefit, including our mistakes, to suit God's purposes (Rom. 8:28).

When I started to think about retiring, it wasn't my work as a therapist that felt burdensome; rather, it was the mundane aspects of my work—the need for better computer skills and the need to allow for expanded administrative time—that propelled me toward making the decision to retire.

I began to dream of how freeing it would be to use my professional skills without the legitimate constraints and demands paid employment places on an employee's time. I looked forward to a form of counseling that did not include the need for payment (Matt. 10:5-8). I also looked forward to combining dynamic healing prayer and counseling skills in a more intentional and focused way to help someone think, talk, and pray through difficulties to a resolution.

Through it all, I was aware that God was calling me into something new. Prayer with a close friend to help me discover what that new calling might look like made the discerning process feel like a shared partnership with the Holy Spirit. Now, when someone asks for my help, I offer coffee and conversation rather than "counseling." For me, setting new parameters around what I could do to be helpful without overextending myself as I grew older included (1) not being paid, (2) not keeping files, and (3) setting limits to the number of appointments to engage with a person or a couple in focused conversations and prayer—no more than one morning per month for up to four months. I explain to "clients" that if they prefer a more formal, paid, and

accountable therapeutic style, I would be happy to recommend someone else.

For this article I asked 25 seniors what they found most rewarding and most challenging about being retired. What they found most rewarding varied greatly: the freedom to pursue new hobbies, to develop new skills, to travel more, to spend

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more time with family or friends, and even to pursue new employment or volunteering in different settings.

Challenges mostly had to do with developing a new structure in retirement. Although people appreciated the freedom a retired lifestyle offers, H. remarked that "staying active" was challenging. S. observed that the "lack of a routine or structure" made retirement a "work in progress." N. noted that "finding a new structure for my days" would get hijacked by "procrastination" very easily because of the lack of external accountability. Nevertheless, R., a retired university professor, remarked that the opportunity to pursue new "learning projects" made his

retirement "a highly positive phase of life," noting that the only challenges he experienced were health-related. Others echoed that sentiment.

The task of developing new habits to bring structure to our retired lives does not have to be burdensome. God's children are called to be playful and carefree, expecting God to parent us into deeper understanding of his desires and will. We are never called to be orphans (John 14:15-21). From birth to death, life is a discovery tour. If we bring the curiosity of a toddler to the new experience of being retired, and if our expectation is that the Comforter will teach us the lessons we still need to learn before we die, then everything we engage in, including our sins and our sicknesses, teaches us lessons. "Come to me and learn from me," says Jesus, and children always learn best by observing and imitating.

Sometimes when we feel stuck, overwhelmed, depressed, or helpless to experience our retirement in a positive light, we end up cutting ourselves off from others, isolating ourselves from friends and family. It might be tempting to retreat inwardly, to allow our world to become ever smaller and narrower. If that is your experience, resolve to take a chance on a treasure hunt in a library or bookstore. Books can inspire. The book that has inspired me the most with respect to getting older was *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande. So find a book and begin to explore—and find a friend to share your experiences!

As you approach your own retirement, remember that this season is a gift that includes many treasures waiting to be discovered. **B**



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

BIG QUESTIONS

Faith Formation

Our church leadership is talking about faith milestones. What are they, and why should we be interested?

Faith milestones are celebrations of events in the lives of members of your congregation where the focus is on God's faithfulness. Such celebrations are not new, although using the term *faith milestones* is more recent.

Two faith milestones are already part of the life of Christian Reformed congregations: baptism and profession of faith. Baptism is a sacrament, but profession of faith and other milestones are not. In our congregation, we celebrate all faith milestones gathered around the baptismal font to recall God's promises to us.

Our congregation regularly celebrates two other milestones. Each February we give Bibles to all children in second grade, and all high school seniors receive blankets each May. For new readers in second grade, the gift of a Bible recognizes the importance of God's Word in their lives. Blankets remind high school seniors that wherever they go they continue to be wrapped up in God's love and in our love. The presentations include a short talk about God's faithfulness.

Your church might want to consider recognizing many other faith milestones: retirement, entering middle school, wedding anniversaries, or even getting a driver's license. The point is to reflect on important moments in our lives

with the congregation so we can all hear about God's faithfulness to us and rejoice together.

It is tempting to use events such as graduations to talk about the accomplishments of the seniors or what great people they are. After all, these young people have grown up in the church and have been part of congregational life. But by focusing on God's faithfulness, celebrating a milestone in the life of one or many people can help grow the faith of all those in the congregation.

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

Many activities that were once forbidden by the church (card playing, dancing, and movie attendance) are now considered fine. But the Bible does not change. Are these changes biblical?

The Bible does not change, but our understanding and application of the Bible's truths do change, especially when the Bible is not clear on a given

issue. Case in point: There are no biblical texts that directly forbid any of the three examples you cited—card playing, dancing, and movie attendance. Because of this, Christians have to rely on their understanding and application of biblical principles to make decisions about these matters.

In 1928 synod, drawing from biblical principles, decided to warn members against engaging in these "worldly amusements." But Synod 1966, also based on biblical principles, decided that "the difference between believers and unbelievers cannot always be detected in the products of their cultural activities, but it becomes evident in their motivation, direction, and purpose (Rom. 12:1-2)." It concluded that Christians can engage the film arts with discernment and spiritual maturity. Similarly, Synod 1982 conducted a biblical study on dancing, concluding that Christians can redeem our dancing abilities for "God-honoring use." As for card playing, its association with gambling, and in some cases fortune telling, may be reason to forbid it. But are non-gambling card games sinful?

I think it is best to approach these disputable matters on a case-by-case basis. The rule of thumb is "whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Some kinds of dancing,



Illustration for *The Banner* by Gisela Bohorquez

card playing, or movies are not God-glorifying, but others might be.

Someone once told me that people are not afraid of change; they are afraid of loss. I can sympathize with that. But Christians can—and should—turn this to our spiritual growth, honestly examining ourselves to see if what we are actually afraid of losing is godly and worth keeping. Discomfort can often be spiritually more beneficial than our comfort zones. It may drive us to rely more humbly on God than on our external circumstances.

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

Relationships

The #MeToo movement has highlighted women who have experienced sexual harassment or assault. Aren't Christians supposed to forgive rather than demand justice?

In the aftermath of abuse, it's important to note three different things at play: forgiveness, reconciliation, and justice. God in grace has opened a way for us to become free again after someone has tied us into a knot through harassment or assault. Forgiveness is a transaction between God and humanity. When we cancel the debt of anger we legitimately feel against someone who has violated us, our own debt of sin is paid for anew by Christ's sacrifice. In the same way we allow the person who hurt us to be dealt with by God through our forgiveness, so God will deal with us, which is why we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).

It is important to be clear about the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness does not involve the accused; it is an act between a person and God. Reconciliation, however, involves two (or more) people. If the person who is accused minimizes or denies that his

or her actions created harm, true reconciliation cannot happen.

Reconciliation also does not mean that either punitive or restorative justice can be bypassed. Punitive justice is appropriate when harm is not acknowledged. Restorative justice focuses on concrete steps that an accused person might need to take to facilitate healing the harm done. For example, the accused may be asked to pay for counseling for the person who is harmed or for other costs incurred, such as the loss of employment income. Reconciliation does not necessarily mean a close relationship; it may simply mean acceptance of casual contact at public events in church or community.

In any case, when coercive power, sexualized or otherwise, disrupts the life of a community, healing can be facilitated more quickly if the pursuit of forgiveness, reconciliation, and punitive or restorative justice are based on a clear understanding of each of those terms.

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

Missional Living

How can evangelism and social justice work together to promote the gospel?

I have pastored in three urban centers: Chicago, Ill.; Paterson, N.J.; and Grand Rapids, Mich. In all three settings, evangelism and social justice were closely connected in proclaiming a holistic gospel that spoke to the real issues of life. Word and deed ministry would have been truncated had it emphasized evangelism without addressing the social needs of people or social justice without being "prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

In Chicago, a multiracial congregation that cared about the souls of African Americans and held tutoring groups at church for kids like me who attended

subpar schools drew me to the Reformed faith. My church did not compartmentalize social ministries and evangelism ministries.

As a pastor in Paterson, I saw the work of tireless leaders such as the late Rev. Stan Vander Klay, Rev. Sheila Holmes, and numerous lay leaders who worked hand in hand to change political systems that kept its citizens from truly thriving while drawing many people into soul-caring small groups and Bible studies. Evangelism without seeking to address the powers that erect or enable poverty, crime, poor schools, and other social issues promotes a gospel out of touch with real life.

In Grand Rapids, my former church began a nonprofit ministry that sought to empower families by working with them on education, financial independence, and overcoming other challenges that prevented them from thriving. Along with small groups for encouragement and spiritual care, the church became an attractive picture of the face of Jesus.

I have an opportunity to visit South Korea this year. The history of the country's global presence in missions, dispatching leaders around the world, was anchored in its close connection of evangelism and social justice. Early missionaries to Korea built hospitals and schools and fought for justice against foreign powers who sought to oppress them. Their actions modeled a powerful holistic gospel that became a powerful witness.

Our churches are called to explore various ways to reach their communities through both evangelism and social justice.

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



Got a Big Question for any of our panelists? Email it to editorial@thebanner.org with Big Questions in the subject line.

RedArrow Ministries: Growing in Place

NEWS

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

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At RedArrow Ministries, a Christian Reformed congregation just outside the rural town of Paw Paw, Mich., people like Kim Miskowski are finding a home, connection, and Christ. Miskowski grew up believing in God but didn't go to church and didn't study the Bible.

"The Bible was a place for your family tree to be recorded, and I think I felt unworthy to touch those pages inside," she said.

One Sunday about 10 years ago, when Miskowski was facing a seemingly endless string of difficulties, Jan Hoffman, a friend, invited her to services at RedArrow. There she found the hope she'd been looking for.

"There were people there from every denomination, people who were not judging me but [were] there because they were hungry for the truth," Miskowski said. "RedArrow is the place where my extended family of believers meet and grow together. There is a genuine love connecting us."

"People are curious about what is going on there," said Hoffman, who, with her husband, Bill, was among the original members of RedArrow Ministries, which the Bowaters planted in 2008. She says about five or six people from her neighborhood, including Miskowski, now attend services after having been invited by a friend. "Getting them in the door is huge."

RedArrow gets its name from the two lane, east-west road that goes past the church and cuts through Paw Paw, a town of nearly 3,500 residents about 60 miles (close to 100 km) southwest of Grand Rapids. The building was once used by another CRC congregation that had disbanded.

The worship is energetic, with children and teens joining adults in leading the singing at the start of the service. Ben Bowater presents the message, using the teaching skills he honed as a public school teacher in Chicago before entering full-time ministry.

When the Bowaters started RedArrow Ministries, they wanted to be more than just a Sunday presence; they sought to build connections in the community. Over a period of five months, before they ever held a worship service, the Bowaters reached out. "I went to the chief of police. I went to

the superintendent of schools. I went to all the important ones in the community who could tell us [what was going on]," Ben Bowater said.

RedArrow soon became involved in everything from hosting Paw Paw's annual Easter egg hunt to organizing a community-wide food pantry. Ben joined a Sheriff's Department crisis response team that recently responded to the deaths of two high school students by suicide.



Photos by Greg Chandler

Above: "Everything you see [inside the church building], from the way the band is set up, the way the seats are set up, having a pool table and kids playing Wii [in the lobby]—each of these is a suggestion from someone in the community," Ben Bowater said. Right: Maria Leys-Bowater and Ben Bowater in worship at RedArrow Ministries.

Miskowski's story is one of many that can be told about RedArrow Ministries, which marked its tenth anniversary in November. The congregation has grown to about 350 worshipers who come to one of three services on a typical Sunday. That growth has primarily come through members inviting their friends and neighbors to join them—or, as church pastors Ben Bowater and Maria Leys-Bowater call it, "reaching out by reaching one."

Soup's On: Ontario Christian Housing Charity Supports Food Literacy Month

Each opportunity arose, Ben said, from the church asking the community, "What do you need us to be?"

Early in 2018 the Bowaters were approached by the local schools about hosting a parenting class. "They came to us and said, 'Our biggest need is that parents don't know how to be parents,'" said Maria Leys-Bowater, who is currently working on a divinity degree at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Lynn Bullard, who holds the dual role of Friend of the Court and juvenile court administrator in Van Buren County, encouraged some of the parents she works with to attend the Tools for Life workshop. The classes went over so well that Bullard asked the Bowaters not only to offer them again in 2019 but to expand them.

"There's nothing else like it in our area. It's a much-needed resource," Bullard said.

RedArrow will host the parenting classes at the local public library, offering child care to make it accessible for parents who might not otherwise be able to attend.

"If you're a single parent and you've worked all day, you might not have someone [available] to take your kids so you can go to a class in the evening," Bullard said. "I just think it's very generous and it addresses some of the barriers that parents [may] have to participate in this."

RedArrow members are also actively involved as volunteers at Paw Paw Early Elementary School through the Kids Hope USA mentoring program and other projects.

"All Ben and I have ever wanted to do was figure out where the Spirit was moving and follow it," said Maria Leys-Bowater. "I don't think we've ever had a 'this is what it's going to be' picture. We just prayed and discerned and followed."

— Greg Chandler



Indwell, a Christian charity that creates affordable housing in three Ontario cities, made good use of one of its community center kitchens in October, hosting its first-ever Soup Series on Wednesday afternoons.

Supporting more than 400 households in Hamilton, Woodstock, and Simcoe, Indwell also promotes community within these cities. In Hamilton, it does that through programming at the Dr. John M. Perkins Centre, home to New Hope Church, a Christian Reformed congregation. On four Wednesdays in October, the Perkins Centre kitchen welcomed participants to make and share a healthy, seasonal soup (and a sweet dessert) in conjunction with the City of Hamilton's Food Literacy Month.

Jessica Brand, Hamilton apartments program manager for Indwell and part of the leadership team at New Hope, said the series was an extension of the organization's previous efforts to have an "active food presence" in the city.

The Soup Series crew enjoys the fruit of their labors on Oct. 24.

"We have ongoing Collective Kitchens in many of our different communities, and tenants regularly prepare food together and share potluck meals," Brand said. "There are so many ways that our individualist culture keeps us separate from one another—one of the strong efforts in Housing Support is to catalyze community in our apartment buildings. Preparing food brings people together, shows strengths and talents that are sometimes hidden, and ends with deliciousness!"

Brand said tenants have asked for the soup Wednesdays to continue perhaps on a monthly basis through the winter. "January in particular can be a difficult month—post Christmas and holidays—and so cozying up with soup and a shared meal will help us through those winter blues," she said.

—Alissa Vernon

Highlights of Summer and Fall Classis Meetings

Two or three times each year, Christian Reformed churches send representatives to their classis, a regional group of churches. Here are the highlights of classis meetings of the past few months.

Those **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church** include seminary graduates Kevin Boss, Matthew Slack, Hayden Regeling, Robert Van Zanen, Steven Hull, Kristen Pikaart, Jonathan Owens, David Wing Yan Leung, Deb Koster, Bradley Zwiers, Mark DeVos, James Lee, Kelli Sexton, Michael Yang, Eli Groenendyk, Ben Verkerk, Timothy Keep, Jenna Fabiano, Todd Kuperus, Scott Muilenburg, Eric Snyder, Jonathan Kool, Albert Kae, Tyler Greenway, Jason Dahlman, Brian Schouten, Cari Fydirchuk, Jason Ruis, and Ben Gandy.

Ministers **transferring in from other denominations**: Revs. Kwon Do Lee, Seung Jun Lee, Kwan Yong Chae, Sung Chul Lee, Sung Jin Kim, Amos Joung, Phil Anderas.

Ministers released from a congregation: Rev. Luke Wynja from First CRC, Sheldon, Iowa; Rev. John Aukema from Gateway CRC, Zeeland, Mich.; Rev. Chris Allen from ClearView CRC, Oakville, Ont.; Rev. Derek Van Dalen from River Park CRC, Calgary, Alta.; Rev. Frank de Boer from Iron Springs (Alberta) CRC.

Leaving ministry in the CRC: Gerry Van Dam, Alejandro Pimentel, Jon Bushnell, Young Sik Kim, Byung Sun Lee, Chul Ki Lee, and Jessica Oosterhouse.

Ricardo Tavarez was **released**.

Classis Central California **removed the honor, title, and authority to perform official acts of ministry** for minister emeritus Larry Van Essen.

New Ministries and Ministry Changes

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

Churches declared emerging: Jesus Life Korean CRC, Fort Worth, Tex.; International Peacemaking Church of Christ, Irving, Tex.; Mision de Fe Internacional, Raynose, Tamaulipas, Mex.; Hope Community, Lowell, Ind.

Churches declared organized: Iglesia Cristiana Reformada Comunidad de Fe Poinciana (Fla.); All Nations Community Church, Toledo, Ohio.

Churches affiliating with the CRC: Las Vegas (Nev.) Logos Church; Santa Maria (Calif.) New Vision Church.

Fountain Parish, Bellingham, Wash., **disaffiliated** from the CRC.

Churches renamed: Peace CRC, South Holland, Ill., renamed Reconciliation CRC.

Church mergers: Apex Church and Horizon Community Church (Littleton, Col.) merged to become Connections Church; Calvin CRC (Oak Lawn, Ill.) and Calvary Church (Reformed Church in America) are forming a union church.

Ministries closed: Germantown Hope Fellowship Community Church (Philadelphia, Penn.); 12th Avenue CRC (Jenison, Mich.); Celebration Community Church (Holland, Mich.); Vine Campus Ministry at Dalhousie University (Halifax, N.S.); Millbrook CRC (Grand Rapids, Mich.); Living Faith Community CRC (San Diego, Calif.); El Sembrador CRC-La Semilla CRC (Fontana, Calif.); Pioneer CRC (Cedar Springs, Mich.); LifeQuest Church, (Greenville, Mich.); Gateway CRC (Zeeland, Mich.); Redeeming Love CRC (East Grand Forks, Minn.).

Synod 2019

Classis Hackensack is asking Synod 2019 (the CRC's annual general assembly) to approve having **an immigration attorney on retainer** for the denomination to help current pastors navigate immigration and to assist congregations calling a pastor from outside the U.S. or Canada, to be funded with \$50,000 by way of a ministry shares increase.

Other

Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan urged King's University in Edmonton, Alta., to **uphold the Scripture's teaching as currently articulated in the Christian Reformed Church on marriage, gender, and sexuality**, and asked that the university remove links to LGBTQ-affirming organizations on its website.

—Banner Staff

Alberta Churches Celebrate Growing 'Family Tree'



In the last 15 years, Christian Reformed congregations in Edmonton, Alta., have been springing up, supported by the roots of those who came before. On Nov. 4 the community came together to be encouraged and give thanks.

Pastors Bruce Gritter, Victor Ko, Aaron Au, Karen Wilk, and Ryan Pedde each share stories from their respective churches.

"God has a grand divine plan for Edmonton," said pastor Victor Ko to those gathered at the East campus of mosaicHouse Community CRC. "And he will provide," Ko continued. "Edmonton is ripe for the harvest."

The community heard stories from pastors working in the young congregations. The praise and worship team of The River Community Church, joined by other musicians, led worship.

This particular church family tree started growing with the germination of The River in 2003. Bethel Community CRC in Edmonton had called Bruce Gritter to plant that church. Five years later, The River planted mosaicHouse. Five years after that, mosaicHouse seeded Avenue Church, located in Edmonton's inner city. Avenue is pastored by Aaron Au who, Ko reminded the audience, was "raised up" in mosaicHouse. The River, meanwhile, planted Neighbourhood Life, a community-based mission project of the CRC supported in part by Resonate Global Mission, as are most newly planted CRC churches. Karen Wilk pastors Neighbourhood Life in Edmonton. "We are equipping everyday, ordinary believers to discover and join God in their neighborhoods by taking up incarnational practices right where they live," Wilk said.

The original mosaicHouse, located in south Edmonton, branched out into mosaicHouse East in 2016. Ko is lead pastor of both campuses. Ryan Pedde, pastor of Bridge Church in Fort Saskatchewan, 25 kilometers (about 15 miles) northeast of Edmonton, pastors the newest branch on the family tree. He emphasized how the network of church planters has been a support. "We are seeing God's hand upon us as we share the good news about him. We are seeing people of every stage of faith come along for the journey," Pedde said. Bridge Church started with one house church in Feb. 2018, had multiplied to two in September, and had nearly 90 people attending by November.

Classis Alberta North, the regional group of CRC churches, is supportive of all this church growth, having committed in 2016 to see a new church planted every three years.

—Janet A. Greidanus

NOTEWORTHY

Philip Koning, a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alta., was one of 31 Albertans to receive the **Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers** on Oct. 15. Since 1990, Koning has volunteered thousands of hours with organizations that help individuals and families deal with mental health issues, including the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta and the Canadian Mental Health Association.



Philip Koning, center, with Legislative Assembly of Alberta Speaker Robert Wanner and Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Lois Mitchell.



Members of the steering committee for the Caribbean and North American Area Council. Colin Watson is fourth from the left.

Colin Watson, director of ministries and administration for the CRC, **attended the general assembly of the World Communion of Reformed Churches' Caribbean and North American Area Council** in Georgetown, Guyana, Oct. 25-30. He was also **elected to the council's steering committee** for the next three years.

Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, director of World Renew Canada, was **elected to the governing board of international ecumenical aid coalition ACT Alliance** at its general assembly held Oct. 28-Nov. 1 in Uppsala, Sweden. She will serve as part of the seven-member executive on the 20-member board for a four-year term.



Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo

Staff of the **Canadian ministries of the Christian Reformed Church** held a **grand opening of their renovated office building** in the first week of November, welcoming dignitaries, colleagues from Grand Rapids, Mich., and Canadian ecumenical partners to tour the facility and give thanks to God for the work to be done from within it. A ribbon-cutting took place Nov. 6.

Young Adults Group 'Rooted' in Christian Connection



A few Christian young adults in and around Grand Rapids, Mich., were looking for community with other emerging adults in a similar stage of life. They wanted to be rooted in God's Word and grow together. Calling their group "Rooted," they created a collective with help from Christian Reformed pastor Cory Nederveld that has increased from just a handful of members in early 2017 to about 20.

Nederveld, pastor of First CRC in Grand Haven, Mich., and formerly a youth pastor at Cottonwood Church in Jenison, Mich., knew many of the first participants through one of those congregations. They invited friends and began meeting for worship, teaching, and study. Those first gatherings were on Thursday mornings in a funeral home. "If you are going to talk about things with eternal consequence, what better place than a funeral home?" said Nederveld.

At the beginning of the fall 2018 semester, Rooted moved from the funeral home to a larger space inside a renovated church building in Allendale, Mich. To accommodate college students, Rooted began a carpool along the East Beltline in Grand Rapids; to include members who do not attend college, they switched their meeting time to Thursday evenings. "The Lord has blessed me so richly through this community, and I am so thankful that he knew exactly where I needed to be," said

Rooted Bible study participants at the group's August kick-off for the 2018 season.

Mikaela Deur, a teacher and Rooted participant.

While the young people are taking responsibility for the group—it was their effort in inviting others that has seen the group grow—a few mature adults are contributing to equip these younger Christians. Nederveld, in his 30s, is joined by some middle-aged volunteers and a few parents, including Mike and Lisa Matthyse of Matthyse Kuiper DeGraaf Funeral Homes. Trained participants then facilitate Bible study and lead various aspects of the Thursday night meetings such as worship, prayer, or coordinating speakers and events.

"It has been a beautiful thing to see this next generation—which often doesn't get the credit it deserves—own their faith, seek community, and dive deeply into God's Word," said Nederveld.

Funding for Rooted—including expenses such as study materials, food for meetings, and a recent part-time hire—comes primarily from an Emerging Ministry Grant from Classis Muskegon, a regional group of churches. Individual contributions have also come from members of First CRC of Grand Haven and from other churches.

— Eliza Anderson

Finding a Bright Spot in the Darkness

Dorothy Fischer, a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Sarnia, Ont., lives with macular degeneration and is now legally blind. Having enjoyed using her creativity and talent in a variety of crafts, she still uses her fingers to crochet bright, colourful circles, working on them sometimes two or more hours each day. She had created quite a few when her friend and fellow church member Diane Plug began to wonder how the bright circles could be used. Plug took the question to Nina VanderVaart, who was connected to a ministry in their church called the Willing Hands Yarn Club.

VanderVaart invited both Plug and Fischer to attend the yarn club. Member Ena Welch saw the potential in the crocheted circles. Fischer's circles are now the bright centers of granny squares that make up blankets.

The yarn club, which meets twice a month, began about five years ago. They use mostly donated yarn to make projects for local and international causes.

Welch and Fischer have made three blankets so far. Two are waiting to be shipped to ministries in Cuba, Guatemala, or the Ukraine, while the third is for Fischer to keep. Plug noted, "It is to remind her in her ever-increasing dark world that there is a loving God and a loving church family that journeys with her."

— Anita Brinkman



Ena Welch, left, and Dorothy Fischer, center, teamed up to make a blanket of bright circles, displayed here with fellow First (Sarnia) CRC yarn club member Nina VanderVaart.

Workshop Offers Church Administrators Encouragement, Support

Recognizing church administrators as ministry partners with unique needs and gifts to share, two regional groups of Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario have offered these church staff a day to be equipped and encouraged.

Eighteen church administrators from churches within Classis Chatham gathered at Westmount CRC in Strathroy, Ont., on a Saturday in October to learn, share information, and be encouraged in their work.

Neighboring Classis Huron has hosted a similar event for four years. After Classis Chatham's stated clerk, Ron Middel, attended Huron's 2017 event, he noted that the day was well attended and appreciated by church staff and proposed doing a similar event in Classis Chatham.



Heather Fieten of Talbot Street Church was both a participant and an organizer of the church administrators' day in Classis Chatham.

Sessions on Oct. 17 included both practical and personal topics, with time in between for people to compare notes and network with others in similar roles.

Rev. Lesli van Milligen of Faith Formation Ministries discussed personal growth. Dorothy Vandersteen spoke about the Bridge App, a customizable application available to churches across Canada for which she is program manager. A panel presentation on effective front-line pastoral care suggested strategies for being supportive and listening well, along with advice for self-care to avoid burnout.

Christie Dreise of Good News CRC in London, Ont., said, "The day encouraged me to take more ownership over the position, as office administrators care for people in all kinds of situations." Betty Boot of First CRC in Sarnia, Ont., agreed. "[Pastoral care] is not part of my job description, [but] I am the first one that anyone talks to when they call the church . . . with good news or bad."

— Anita Brinkman

Denver Resource Center Source of Hope



Cascade of Hope's beginner level ESL class.

Cascade of Hope Community Resource Center in Hillcrest Christian Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in Denver, Col., is reaching out to build a multicultural, multigenerational body. Pastor Victor Perez-Ballesteros, a graduate of Calvin Seminary and associate pastor and church planter supported by Hope Fellowship CRC, also in Denver, leads Cascade of Hope with his wife, Sandra.

The Perez-Ballesteros are equipped with the skills to lead this ministry, but they also have the heart for it. After coming to America to find new opportunities for themselves and their family, the couple discovered how essential English language was for everything—from public transportation to filling pharmacy prescriptions. "The power and ability to communicate with other people in their language is very important for the socioeconomic and cultural development for a better life," the couple explained.

Wishing to equip other newcomers with English language and other skills, the Perez-Ballesteroses connect with supporters, recruit volunteers, and reach out to potential students through Cascade of Hope. Volunteers have provided classes in English as a Second Language (ESL), United States citizenship, and computer basics for over four years.

Resonate Global Mission is a partner of Cascade of Hope, supplying grants in each of the last three years and providing coaching and consultation. Christian Reformed congregations and other churches in the area are also partnering with financial and volunteer aid.

"Volunteers are the heart of Cascade of Hope ministries," said Victor. "They make this ministry possible; without volunteers there would not be a way for us to serve and impact the community as we have been doing."

— Maia VanderMeer

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. John Henry Primus
1932-2018

A scholar, teacher, and one who modeled Jesus Christ in humility and kindness, John Primus had a quiet strength and an unshakable faith. He died at Raybrook Manor in Grand Rapids, Mich., on Nov. 5 of complications from Alzheimer's disease. He was 86.

Born on the family farm in Iowa, Primus thought farming would be his lifelong occupation. However, after winning a Young Calvinist national oratorical contest, he decided to enroll at Calvin College. He went on to graduate from Calvin Theological Seminary and then obtained a doctorate from the Free (Vrije) University in Amsterdam.

Primus pastored West Park Christian Reformed Church in Cleveland, Ohio, before accepting a faculty position at Calvin College in 1963. He taught for 34 years in the religion and theology department. During these years he also preached and worked on school and church committees. He loved to sing, took part in faculty skits, and is remembered for his infectious laugh.

After retirement, Primus served as interim pastor in Conrad, Mont.; Washington, D.C.; and Grand Rapids, Mich. He also taught in Russia, Lithuania, and Kenya.

Primus will be missed by June, his wife of 63 years; their four children and spouses; 13 grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Mrs. Mary's House: Building to Bless

"Mrs. Mary" was a longtime volunteer with Mississippi Christian Family Services (MCFS), an organization serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Rolling Fork, Miss. With her husband, John Verhoog, Mary was a member of Exeter (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church. For more than 20 years, she and John traveled from their home in Exeter to winter in Mississippi. While there, both of them served in the thrift store of MCFS, and John led group devotions and Bible studies. When Mary died of cancer in Oct. 2017, she asked that donations be given to MCFS. This past October, her family did more than just donate money in her name.

John and Mary Verhoog's nine children, along with five spouses, six grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren, gathered in Rolling Fork with John, 87, to construct a four-bedroom supervised group home for



Cooperation: The Verhoogs work together on Mrs. Mary's House.

MCFS. Tom Verhoog, John and Mary's son and also a member of Exeter CRC, said, "Our family grew up moving around the U.S. and Canada as Dad served different churches in the Reformed Church in America. So our siblings are spread out over the U.S. and Canada, and one lives in the Ukraine. The last time we were all together was at Mom's funeral, so we used this time as an opportunity to get together to do something really



Photos by Verhoog family

The week-one Verhoog crew at Mississippi Christian Family Services.

special to honor our mom and our parents' love for the work at MCFS."

The children on site were from 8 to 12 years old. Some family members stayed for two weeks, while others were able to contribute during the first week or the second week. None of the family had formal building experience, but Tom said years of running farms and maintaining properties equipped the various siblings, in-laws, and grandchildren for the task.

Leigh Anne Tilghman, executive director of MCFS, said a local construction firm took responsibility for oversight and carried out demolition and foundation preparations on the building site in August ahead of the October build. Tilghman said the organization has been deeply blessed by the gift of this building, which was dedicated on October 12. "Watching them unite for this project was by far the most extraordinary thing I have ever seen," Tilghman said. "Their love for each other and for Jesus oozed from each of them—all of us at MCFS learned from observing their interactions with one another."

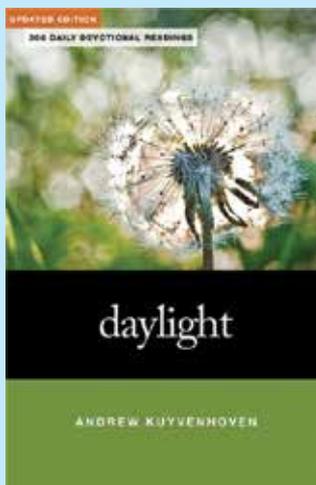
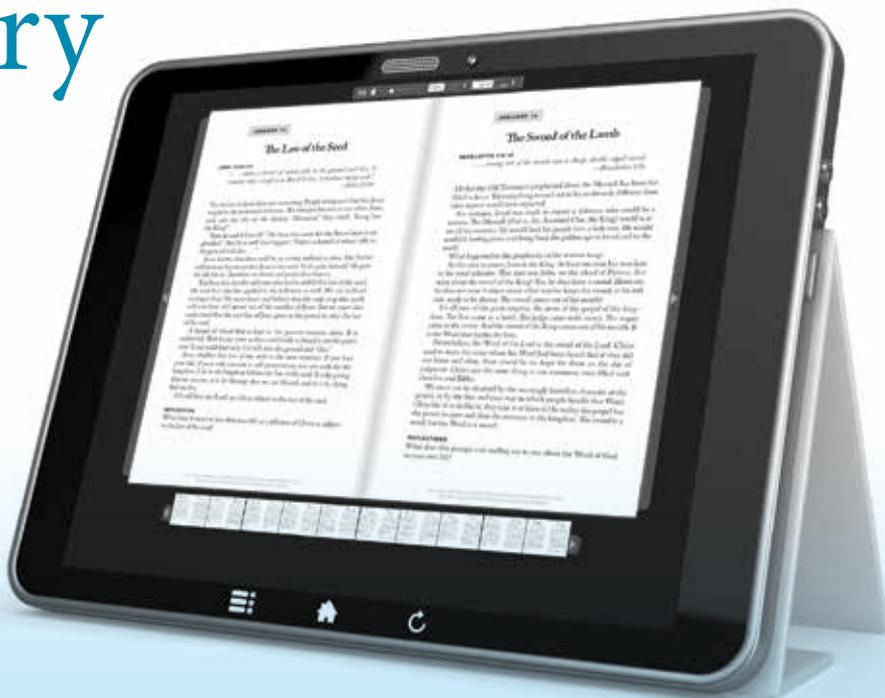
— Alissa Vernon

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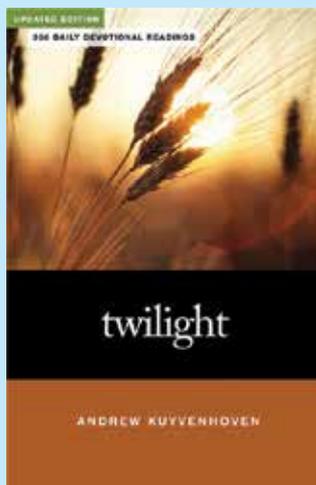
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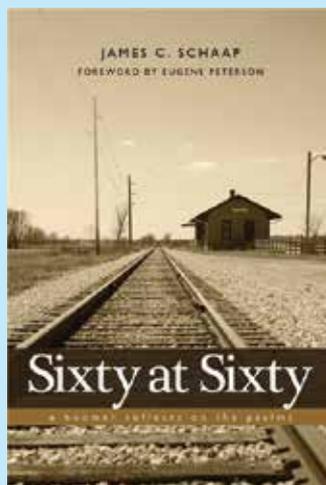
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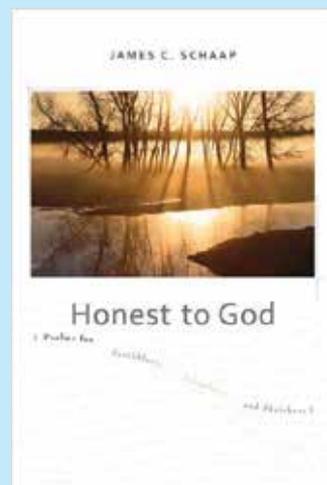
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Hospitality Is Key to Ministry

by Cassie Westrate, Resonate Global Mission

We want to be like Jesus, sharing God's goodness, grace, and love with others, but no ministry on earth compares to Jesus' ability to minister with people who are hurting, broken, or lost. Jesus calmed storms, gave sight to people who were blind, and raised the dead. What can we do?

In the New Testament, the Greek words for "ministry," "minister," and "to minister" are *diakonia* (table service), *diakonos* (table server), and *diakoneo* (to serve). Jesus' ministry is full of wonder, but is it any less remarkable that among the many miracles and parables of Jesus, our Lord also joined people for many meals?

In doing so, he invited people into relationship with him. He invited people into friendship—into holy communion.

Resonate Global Mission's campus ministers, church planters, missionaries, and other ministry leaders practice hospitality often, following a framework of table sitting, table setting, and table serving. While ministry leaders pursue distinct calls into ministry, all Christians are called to share God's love with others.

If we are to follow Jesus' example, hospitality plays an important role.

Hospitality is not only about giving; it is also about receiving. Hospitality is more than setting and serving a table; it is also sitting at a table. It is more than inviting others in; it is opening ourselves up.

Table Sitting

"I once heard someone describe how we are all like Lego blocks with eight bumps," said Martin Benckhuysen, pastor of Kelloggsville Christian Reformed Church in Kentwood, Mich. "We have room for about eight relationships, but then we are full. If that is the case, then hospitality comes down to this openness of saying to the other: I will make room in my life for you."

Benckhuysen and his congregation are learning how they can better point others to Christ. They are studying Michael Frost's *Surprise the World: Five Habits of Highly Missional People*. "It is an invitation to be learning and practicing habits—not creating new programs—so that we can be propelled outward and build relationships that 'surprise

the world' around us," Benckhuysen said. "Being missional then is not an act, but a habit."

One of the missional habits Frost lists in his book is eating with others, specifically with individuals who are not members of the church. So when a member of Benckhuysen's congregation gifted him two frozen fillets of lake trout, Benckhuysen invited his neighbor over for a meal.

He and his wife ended up being the guests instead.

When Benckhuysen mentioned he had never prepared fish before, his neighbor offered to cook the trout. When the day of the meal came, Benckhuysen and his wife cleaned the house, prepared side dishes, and set the table.

"But as we were approaching dinner time, getting ready to welcome them into our home, we found out our neighbors had done the same thing as us," he said.

Instead of having their neighbors over for dinner as Benckhuysen and his wife had planned, they brought the food they had prepared over and were welcomed into their neighbors' home. That's why, Benckhuysen noted, hospitality involves not just knowing how to give well, but how to receive well. "Embrace unknown expectations, unknown customs, and relinquish any sense of control," he said. "We cannot receive hospitality with openness while judging the lifestyle, food, drink, or home provided by the host."

Before the meal, Benckhuysen and his neighbors had been friendly—they chatted over the fence while tending their gardens and enjoyed casual backyard hangouts.

"But being friendly is different than building relationships," he said. "It really comes down to our willingness to open our lives to a relationship with the other. And in healthy relationships, giving goes both ways."

"That is probably the heart of sharing a meal," he added. "If done well and with proper motives, it shows openness to receive the other person into your home, but I think more significantly into your life."

Table Setting

"An invitation tells us we are thought about, remembered, considered," said Chris Van Zanen, a Resonate missionary.

Chris and her husband, Steve, serve as professors at LCC International University in Lithuania. Nearly every week, they invite students from their classes over to their apartment for a meal or dessert. LCC is a Christian university, but many students are not Christians or identify as Christians only by name. They come from many nations across eastern Europe and beyond. Inviting students into their home is one way Chris and Steve invite them into community—not just with one another, but with God.

Jacqui Mignault created a tea trolley to help students at Mount Royal University feel welcome.

"They are usually very appreciative," Steve said. "Sharing food is important, but opening our home to them is completely out of the ordinary. There is something almost sacred about sharing food and your place with others. . . . People tend to meet in restaurants rather than in homes. I think that bucking that trend and gathering at home with others speaks powerfully of the value placed on the person and the relationship."

This past year, one of Chris and Steve's students was baptized. She came to faith after multiple invitations into LCC's community, where she learned more and more about God's grace.

"I often ask students who are new Christians, 'How did you come to a living faith in Jesus?'" Chris said. "Often the reply begins with, 'I was invited'—to chapel, to dinner, to a Bible study, to have coffee—and I learned about Jesus.' 'How long did it take you to make a decision to believe?' I ask. 'Oh, a long time,' the student responds. It took multiple invitations."

That is not unlike our own relationships with God.

"At worship time, I have noticed an invitation to worship through Scripture, song, or statement," Chris said. "We are invited. 'Come, now is the time to worship,' we sing. We have put this time into our calendar, we come with expectation, often wearing special clothes, coming with gifts of offering, meeting with friends and family, hopefully coming away feeling met by God and glad to have been there."

Table Serving

It was the first week of school at Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alta. A freshman was wandering the halls alone, her syllabi loaded with projects and assignments. She was adjusting to a new, busy schedule, and she was wondering when the people she met would become friends.

She had been excited about the year ahead, but now she couldn't stop the doubt intruding into her mind about whether she belonged there.

And then she heard it: the tea trolley.

"They've made the floors out of bricks," said Jacqui Mignault, campus minister for Resonate partner Calgary Campus Ministry. "If you push anything down the halls, it is the loudest, clunkiest sound. You can hearing me coming half a mile away."

That didn't stop Mignault. She plastered a sign that read "You belong" onto a cart and stocked it with tea, candy, and water bottles. She ventured out into the halls to welcome students to campus and serve them.

"Those first couple weeks are so overwhelming," she said. "On campus, there are a ton of things to do, things to be part of, where students can put their time. And that's not bad,



Chris and Steve Van Zanen open their home to students as a way to invite them into relationship with one another and with God.

but there are very few spaces where students are not required to give anything back, where they are just allowed to be and receive. That's one of the things I strive to be for them."

Pushing the tea trolley around the brick hallways of Mount Royal University was awkward and clumsy. The tea dispenser leaked. There was no guarantee that students would commit their time to the campus ministry. But it was important to Mignault to serve the students. "People don't need candy to know that they belong," she said. "They do need human interaction."

Perhaps that is why God sent Jesus to live among us. Why Jesus ate with us, drank with us, and spent time with us.

"I am becoming more and more convinced that hospitality is key to all ministry," said Chris Van Zanen. "When [students] are together in our home, eating together, God is here—and healing and understanding begin to take seed."

Hospitality is about making room—not just at the table, but in life—and inviting people in: The family who lives next door. The students in the hallways and classrooms. The people who might not know they're looking for God's grace until they're sitting at the table.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat," Jesus said in Matthew 25:35. "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." **B**

Destination Church Opens Doors to Indigenous Community

ST. THOMAS MAY BE A SMALL CITY in rural southern Ontario, but the community is determined to have a big impact when it comes to inclusion and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

In 2017, as part of Ontario's Journey Together research project, a local research team met with many Indigenous people in the St. Thomas area. They discovered a great interest in creating culturally relevant and sensitive programming for Indigenous people in the community. St. Thomas applied for a grant to fund cultural programming but was denied.

That's when Beth Fellingner, pastor of Destination Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in downtown St. Thomas, came forward to offer space and support. Destination Church is centrally located and is open each weekday as a drop-in center to connect with the neighborhood. This made the church a natural fit for hosting other community programs.

Fellingner said it was important to her and to the congregation to share their resources so the Indigenous programming could have a home. "I hope to open a Friendship Center and use the church building one day a week to create a place where we can do Indigenous cooking classes, have listening circles, and [have] time for people to gather together to hear one another," explained Fellingner. "It's time to open the doors to do something more than just reconciliation. Reparation means a lot to me."

To help fund the program, Destination Church sent a proposal to Resonate Global Mission. The church explained that they wanted to get to know the



On Sept. 18 Destination Church celebrated the launch of its new Friendship Center. Pictured left to right: Sarena McLean (lead researcher for the Journey Together project), Shannon Perez, Beth Fellingner, Max Fineday (executive director of Canadian Roots Exchange), and Barry Fellingner.

Indigenous people in their own congregation, but also to build trust and learn how to listen well to Indigenous people in their community. Resonate approved the proposal.

"We are incredibly thankful to the CRC and its vision for social justice, and for providing us the opportunity to do this work together," Fellingner said.

On Sept. 18, Destination Church hosted more than 100 community members to celebrate the launch of their new programming. Shannon Perez of the CRC's Canadian Aboriginal Ministries Committee was invited to participate in the dedication of a community garden that will provide fresh food for Indigenous cooking classes.

Perez said she was inspired by how Destination Church took time to talk with Indigenous people and invite them to envision what the space would look like.

"It is validating to know that as I am working with the denomination to share this message of listening and 'walking with,' that at the local level it was already happening," she said.

When asked how other Christian Reformed churches can get involved in reconciliation work, Fellingner reiterated this encouragement to build relationships with and listen to local Indigenous groups. "When we listen well, we learn that outreach isn't just about one-off events, but about building [day-to-day] relationships with people who can teach us a lot," said Fellingner.

If you or your church is interested in learning how to get involved in reconciliation, please visit crcna.org/aboriginal or connect with Shannon Perez (sperez@crcna.org).

—Cindy Stover, CRCNA Justice Mobilizer

The View from Here

What Are We Communicating to Our Communities?

WHILE I DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW any people from the Amish tradition and faith, I do have a perception of them. I picture people wearing old-fashioned clothes and driving a horse and buggy. I think of them as being “set apart,” and I admire their resolve.

That perception makes me wonder how others perceive the Christian Reformed Church.

Consider, for example, what outsiders think of your local congregation. Do they sense your church as a warm and inviting place or as a mysterious building that gets busy only on Sundays? Do they think your membership reflects your community or that it is made up of only a certain demographic?

Similar questions could be asked about our denomination more broadly. Does the general public perceive the Christian Reformed Church as indistinguishable from the broader evangelical world? Do people see us as just another mainline church or as unique? Do they recognize how a Reformed identity shapes how we live, work, raise our families, and participate in civil society?

And then there are questions about how people perceive Christianity in general. Some might think Christians have solid family values and a willingness to help others. A growing number of people, however, are suspicious of Christianity. They have experienced Christians as people who exclude others and cast judgment. Still others believe Christians to be out of touch with the times and on the verge of extinction.

Into these conflicting perceptions we are called to live out our faith and be light to the nations (Isa. 49). Our

We can't hide
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denominational ministry plan, *Our Journey 2020*, outlines this in its first desired future: “Our congregations will flow like streams into their communities. We will meet our neighbors at community events and gathering places, listening to each other, learning from each other, and serving each other. By our presence we will become channels for the love of Christ and the Holy Spirit’s life-giving transformation.”

Historically, we have responded to this calling in different ways. Sometimes we Christians have been tempted to wrap ourselves in a hidden faith. In stressing our commonality with others, we de-emphasize our faith and lose our ability to let our light shine.

A subset of hidden faith can be described as the privatization of faith, where faith becomes a personal matter between a believer and God. A private faith often seeks to have the church be silent so that the institution does not say or do anything that could be construed as representing its members. Individual Christians can be thought of as good people, but the witness of the broader church is silenced.

A third approach to living out our faith might be called confrontational faith. In this approach, Christians are so

eager to save others from sin that they jump past getting to know people to build relationships. With confrontational faith, the witness of the church is bold, but the message falls on deaf ears. Instead of building up the perception of Christianity in society, this approach builds barriers to the gospel.

Of course, none of these approaches is all that helpful. Whether we are considering how our congregation should reach out in our neighborhood, how we as individuals should share the gospel, or how our denomination can express our faith in a way that will spread across North America and around the world, we can't hide our faith, hold it inside, or beat others over the head with it.

Instead, in humble confidence, we must ask God to help us speak with boldness (Acts 4:29). With discernment, we must share God's word in its fullness (Col. 1:25). With clarity in witness, we must give the reason for our hope to others with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15). Most importantly, in our communities and in this world, we must follow the apostle Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 12-13, always seeking to act in love.



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

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

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When Media Brings Community

AT THEIR WORST, social media sites seclude us from face-to-face interactions. But they also offer unique opportunities to connect with others. Members of Back to God Ministries International's listener communities in India would agree.

Thanks to these communities, Shaurya Singh (name changed) and his family can explore their new faith in Christ after practicing Hinduism for most of their lives. "Everywhere in our life, there was only darkness," Singh said.

Singh began listening to BTGMI's programs and later shared them with his family. "We came to know Jesus Christ," Singh said.

Although there are no churches near their village, they joined one of BTGMI's 35 listener groups. Most of the groups, including the one the Singhs belong to, meet in homes twice a week, sharing testimonies, prayer concerns, and food.



In areas where there are no churches, believers meet in homes to listen to BTGMI programs and find fellowship through testimonies, prayer, and meals.

Through Facebook

Social media sites empower people to share their struggles with complete strangers. That's why BTGMI's *Family Fire* ministry recently launched a private Facebook group for women who want to pray for improvement in their marriages. Within 24 hours, 295 women joined the group.

"Together as women, we can encourage and support each other with Scripture and prayer in the very difficult seasons of our lives," said Deb Koster, *Family Fire* producer. "What is especially exciting is seeing how the women on this page are ministering to one another, promising to pray, and offering words of encouragement."

Walking Worshipers in China

When one of Beijing's largest unregistered churches was shut down, its leaders were devastated. To continue sharing the gospel, they turned to technology, encouraging people to listen to audio sermons in small groups.

"Groups of two or three will walk in the parks, getting exercise while hearing God's Word," said Jerry An, BTGMI's Chinese ministry leader. "After the virtual church service, the listeners discuss what they heard over coffee, lunch, or in another form of fellowship."

BTGMI's Chinese ministry team has been developing similar series for on-the-go listeners. "We see new media as the future of the church," An said. "New media has no boundaries and offers us new ways of reaching out."

—Brian Clark, *Back to God Ministries International*



Left: M.Div. student Travis Jamieson shares his story of coming to Calvin Seminary at the annual Calvin Seminary scholarship reception.

Right: M.Div. student Joy Lawrence reflects on her calling to ministry at the annual Calvin Seminary scholarship reception.

Speaking of What Calvin Seminary Means to Them

“I THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF MY FAMILY for supporting the ministry here at Calvin Theological Seminary. God has used it to help me through one of the most difficult times of my life. And I believe he is giving me the skills and resources necessary to care for people and lead them to the hope of the gospel.”

Second-year M.Div. student Travis Jamieson used these words to conclude his address at the annual Calvin Seminary scholarship reception that invited donors, students, faculty, and staff to share stories and build relationships. Jamieson said that when he began seminary, his mother-in-law was in declining health; the support he received at Calvin Seminary, financial and otherwise, was crucial. His words of gratitude and hope mirror the experience of many students who benefit from the contributions of Calvin Seminary donors, who award almost

Finding Special Gifts with People with Disabilities in China

IN AUGUST, CALVIN COLLEGE professors Judy Vander Woude, Peggy Goetz, and Jill Bates traveled with speech pathology students to China to work with children with special needs at the GIFT Parents' Support Center. GIFT is a Chinese nonprofit, one of few there that create peer networks for families of children living with disabilities.

Working with Chinese churches organized by GIFT, Calvin provided onsite and online education for pastors, families, and health care providers at a week-long family camp.

In Zhengzhou, where GIFT is located, there is only one children's hospital and little to no rehabilitative services, explained Vander Woude, professor of speech pathology.

Nine years ago, Xu Bing, GIFT's executive director, saw a need to support families of children with disabilities while providing respite care for a Chinese family fostering children with special needs. After partnering with Bethany Christian Services, Bing, a trained linguist, began GIFT.

“People with disabilities are some of the most stigmatized members of most communities—including China,” Bing said. “If the church is not going to welcome them, who is?”

GIFT's vision is “to promote and support healthy families and to provide a social environment in which special needs children are highly valued by demonstrating God's love.”



Calvin faculty, staff, and students with families and volunteers who attended GIFT's family summer camp in August 2018.

Around the world there's a stigma associated with the birth of a child with a disability. “Bing is all about healing families,” Vander Woude explained, “because other people who see children with disabilities think that either the parents or children committed some horrible act in the past.”

Since 2013, Calvin has taken students on several trips to work at GIFT during the college's January Interim term. In addition, Vander Woude and Bates have been back at least once every year to speak about disability with parents, pastors, and church leaders. This year, Bing invited Calvin students to attend GIFT's family summer camp. In addition to lectures, students were able to demonstrate for parents how to play with their children and develop communication using various interactive play activities.

At the end of this year's camp, parents were able to share difficulties they have had. “We wanted them to know that they are good parents, because they don't hear that very often,” said Vander Woude.

—Hannah Ebeling, Calvin College

An Apple a Day Keeps the Hunger Away

\$1.5 million each year in scholarships. These funds help the school continue its mission to equip church leaders who cultivate communities of disciples. In many ways, the scholarship dinner is a celebration of relationships—the pairing of students with donors. Stories are shared of God’s faithfulness and calling. These relationships go beyond the monetary to become relationships of encouragement and support.

Two other students also shared their stories of overcoming challenges and listening to God’s call on their lives.

Fourth-year M.Div. student Joy Lawrence and first-year M.Th. student Lunfei Liu both shared stories of loss and fear and spoke of how, in moments of grief and confusion, God provided glimpses of hope and clarity.

The seminary also recognized the Jen family with a Legacy Award for the impact they’ve had through their family’s scholarship. Their scholarship funds Calvin Seminary students from China, a ministry with deep roots in the Jen family beginning with Rev. Isaac Jen’s ministry through Back to God Ministries International.

Today Jen’s children and grandchildren contribute to keep this fund going strong, and many Calvin Seminary students and alumni have benefited. These supportive relationships demonstrate a lasting impact.

Just ask Joy Lawrence, who at the banquet expressed her gratitude to those who have come alongside her and been there when she needed it: “You have helped catch me—did you know that? You have been the arms of Jesus, the body of Christ in my life.”

—Matthew Cooke, Calvin Seminary

USING DONATED APPLES, Pease (Minn.) Christian Reformed Church has baked and sold thousands of apple pies over the last nine years as a fundraiser for participation in the Global Partnership Program with World Renew.

The pie project, started by church member Julie Moorlag, not only raises money for World Renew’s projects in Guatemala but also brings the congregation together to contribute. They are able to cover travel costs and support ongoing community development projects in five villages.

Many members in the congregation grow apple trees, so the church never has to go far to collect donated apples. A crew cleans, peels, cuts, and freezes the apples to get them ready for pies. Between 1,000 to 1,200 pies are made each year—about 10,000 pies since the project began.

Ten years ago, Pease CRC decided to join World Renew’s Global Partnership Program. The initiative facilitates relationships between a church or group in North America and a church or community elsewhere. It

aims to create a deeper connection among Christians, educate churches about life and culture in a different country, and encourage each other’s efforts to bring communities closer to the vision God has for his people.

Pease CRC was already doing local and regional work but wanted to do more. With help from World Renew, the congregation found a partnership that aligned with the church’s gifts and vision. As a result, Pease CRC started working in Guatemala with World Renew partner Vines and Branches.

“For churches to do this [partnership] well, they need a core group of people, . . . [but] make sure that this isn’t a pet project of a few people, but get the whole congregation involved together as part of the body of Christ,” said Pastor Michael Ten Haken.

Not everyone needs to go to Guatemala to be actively involved. “Some have no desire to go to Guatemala,” Ten Haken said, “but they know that doing this will make an impact in the community there.”

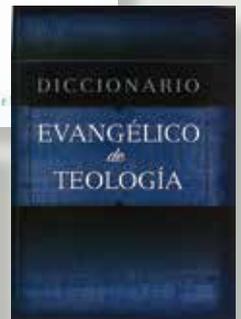
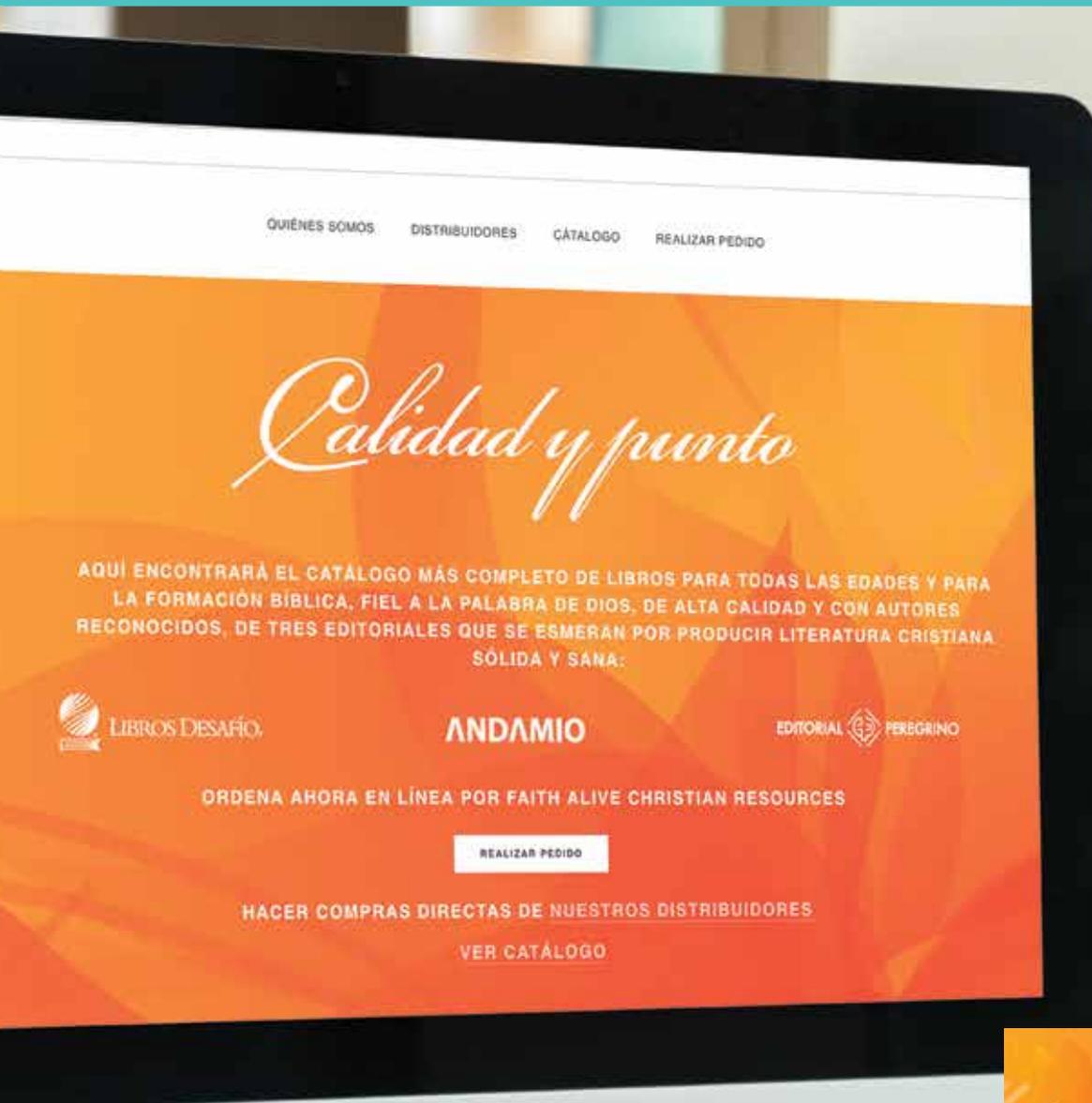
—Maydi Hernandez, World Renew



Members of Pease CRC visit ministry partners in Guatemala to build fellowship and community development.

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Polar Opposites

BRRRRR! If you live in a northern climate, this is a chilly time of year. To stay warm, you wear lots of sweaters, mittens, scarves, and a warm winter coat. But there are two places where it is cold all the time—the North and South Poles. The extreme climate at the North and South Poles makes them difficult places for most people to travel to or explore.

Why Are the North and South Poles So Cold?

The North and South Poles are so cold because they do not get as much direct sunlight as other places on earth. The North Pole is at the very northern tip of the earth. It is a huge hunk of ice that floats on top of the Arctic Sea. The South Pole is on the opposite end of the earth, on the continent of Antarctica. Underneath all the ice and snow of the South Pole is lots of land—even mountains!

Which Is Warmer?

Although each pole receives the same amount of sunlight, the North Pole is warmer than the South Pole because the Arctic Ocean is warmed by the sun. Because the water is warmer than the floating ice, the arctic air is warmer than the chilly winds of the South Pole.

Did You Know?

- » The North Pole is sometimes called the Arctic Pole.
- » There is no land at the North Pole—only ice that is 6 to 10 feet thick.
- » In winter, the North Pole is around -29 degrees F (-34 degrees C).
- » In winter, the South Pole is around -76 degrees F (-60 degrees C).
- » The largest land animal living near the South Pole is a wingless insect known as the Antarctic

midge. This tiny bug is less than half an inch (13 mm) long!

Polar Bears and Emperor Penguins

Although most animals cannot live at the North Pole because the ice is always changing, polar bears live on the arctic land masses close to the North Pole. Polar bears are excellent swimmers. They are able to live in freezing temperatures because they have thick fur and a layer of fat called blubber. Underneath their coats, polar bears have black skin. The dark color helps them soak in the sun's rays to keep warm. Did you know polar bear fur isn't really white? It's actually transparent and it reflects light, helping the bear blend in with its surroundings.

Emperor penguins spend their whole lives along the coastline near the South Pole in Antarctica. Like polar bears, they are excellent swimmers. How do they live on the coldest place on earth? They have lots of body fat and several layers of thick feathers to keep warm. They huddle close together in large groups to keep out freezing winds. The ones in the middle, where it is warmer, switch places with the ones on the edges to help each other survive.

Word Pictures

Here is a word picture from Psalm 147:16-17 that suggests the cold of wintertime:

He spreads the snow like wool
and scatters the frost like ashes.
He hurls down his hail like pebbles.
Who can withstand his icy blast?

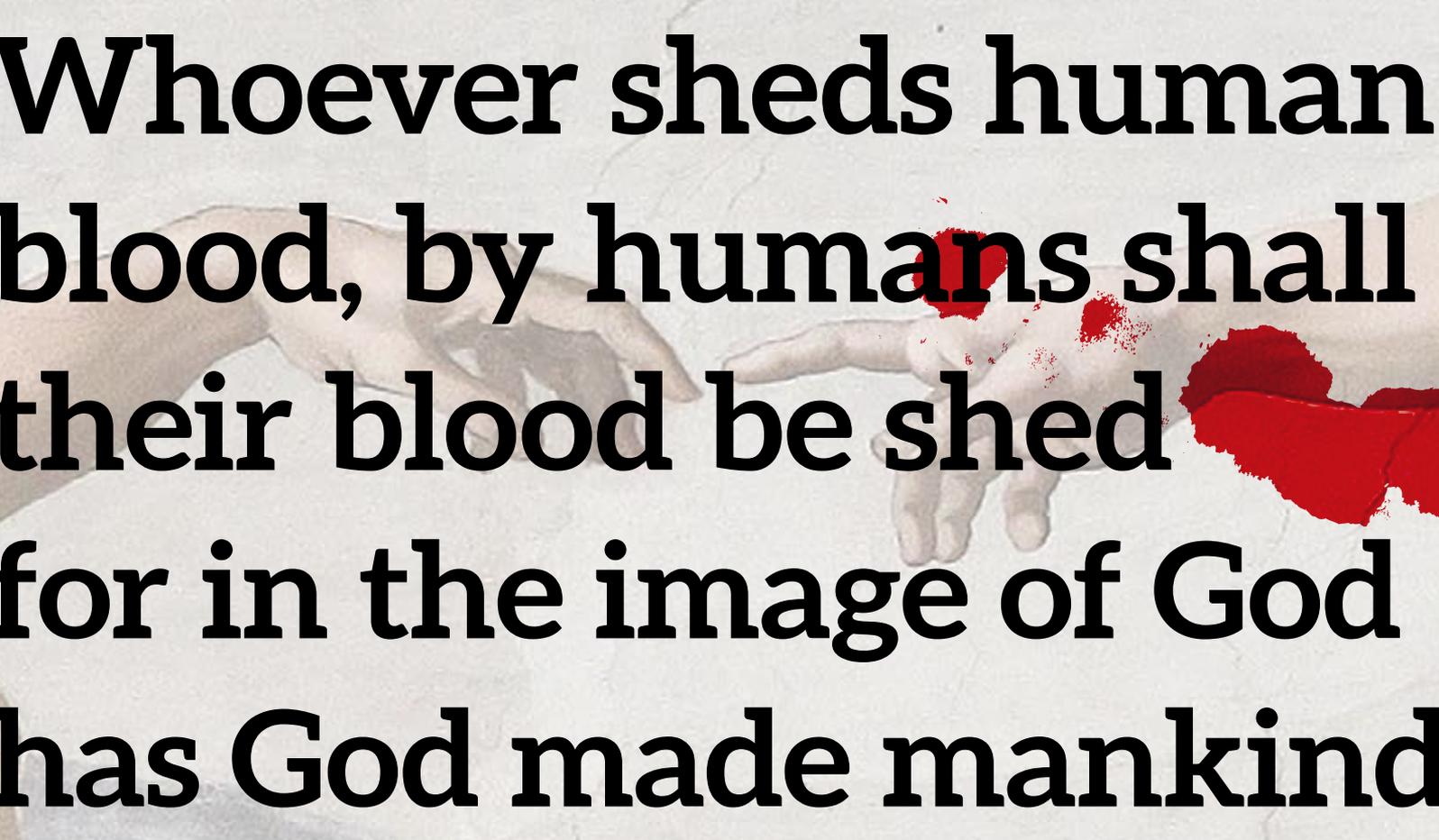
Can you come up with your own word picture? **B**



Illustration for *The Banner*
by Anita Barghigiani



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



Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed for in the image of God has God made mankind

Pro-Life Discipleship

Matthew Tuininga

Long ago the prophets Isaiah and Micah pointed to a future day when the nations “will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Isa. 2:4; Mic. 4:3). Micah further prophesied, “Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken” (Mic. 4:4).

The hope of peace and security—of *life*—is ultimately rooted in the age-old biblical teaching that God created human beings in his own image. As such, we were made for life, not death. The cataclysmic judgment of the flood was God’s response to the sin of violence (Gen. 6:11). After the flood, God reaffirmed the sanctity of life, declaring to Noah and his sons, “For your lifeblood I will surely demand

an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. *Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind*” (Gen. 9:5-6, emphasis added).

The law of Moses called for the vigorous defense of human life, but peace remained elusive even for Israel. And so prophets like Isaiah and Micah pointed to a future day of peace, security, and flourishing.

This was the dream Jesus called into being when he preached the good news that “the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matt. 4:17). Proclaiming blessings on “peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9), he called his disciples to the way of life-giving love.

It was no longer enough simply to avoid the act of murder. Jesus called his followers to seek reconciliation with one another at all costs (Matt. 5:21-26). It was no longer enough to restrain retaliation. Jesus commanded his disciples to serve even their enemies: “But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. . . . Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you” (Matt. 5:39-40).

Did Jesus intend these teachings to be taken literally? In *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, theologian Richard Hays points out that Jesus practiced what he preached. The way Jesus lived and died gives every indication that he intended his teaching to be taken quite literally. And when one of his disciples assumed that Jesus’

prohibition of violence did not apply to moments of self-defense (or, to put it more precisely, to moments in which the life of one's neighbor—or even one's Lord—is under attack), Jesus cut him short. "Put your sword back in its place, . . . for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

John Calvin noted that Jesus was not simply calling his disciples to stand down because he was the Messiah who had to die on the cross for the sins of the world, as is often claimed. Rather, "By these words, Christ confirms the precept of the Law, which forbids private individuals to use the sword."

To be sure, as the apostle Paul explicitly teaches, God has authorized governments to wield the sword. "They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Rom. 13:4). But even magistrates are not authorized to take human life with impunity. They will be held to account by the God who demands that they "uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed" (Ps. 82:3).

In 1971 a Roman Catholic pacifist named Eileen Egan described Christian teaching regarding the sanctity of life as a "seamless garment" that protects and fosters every human life from conception to the grave. Over the years many Protestant Christians have embraced this concept, at least as a general principle. Still, many Christians feel bewildered by the wide array of claims and counterclaims regarding the sanctity of life. Is abortion always wrong? Is capital punishment justified? May Christians defend themselves when attacked? In short, what does it mean for disciples of Jesus to be pro-life?

This is a massive topic, but I believe we can begin to answer this question by keeping four principles in mind.

First, contrary to popular belief, the Christian tradition does not clearly affirm that Christians may kill in self-defense. The early church father Augustine acknowledged that civil

The sanctity of life calls us to care for young, poor, or unwed mothers just as much as it calls us to maintain the rights of the unborn.

laws ought to *permit* the killing of an assailant in self-defense. However, he insisted, this does not mean that it is morally right for Christians to do so. There is a "powerful, hidden law" that requires a Christian to be willing to give up his earthly life and possessions for the sake of love. "How can they be free of sin in the eyes of that law, when they are defiled with human blood for the sake of things that ought to be held in contempt?"

Centuries later, Thomas Aquinas argued that a Christian may use force to defend herself from an assailant as long as her *intent* is not to kill but only to defend. "Such acts of self-defense, as one intends by them to preserve one's life, do not have the character of being unlawful, since it is natural for everything to keep itself in existence as far as possible."

Calvin warned that violence on the part of private individuals is almost always sinful. As he put it, "in order that a man may properly and lawfully defend himself, *he must first lay aside excessive wrath, and hatred, and desire of revenge, and all irregular sallies of passion, that nothing tempestuous may mingle with the defense.* As this is of rare occurrence, or rather, *as it scarcely ever happens*, Christ properly

reminds his people of the general rule, that they should entirely abstain from using the sword" (emphasis added).

While all of these theologians supported civil laws authorizing citizens to defend themselves from aggressors, none of them believed that such a legal right should be conflated with the duty of a disciple of Christ.

Second, Christianity teaches that all human life is sacred. The newly conceived fetus is no less sacred than any adult or child. Those of us with disabilities or painful terminal conditions are owed the same life-sustaining love as are people who are young and healthy. Indeed, the same is true of those who would seek to harm us. This principle applies also to people who have no legal right to be present in our communities.

Historically our culture has not granted all human beings the basic rights of justice. From *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in 1857 to *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States has determined that certain classes of human beings do not qualify as legal persons and therefore do not possess ordinary legal rights.

Many Christians have rightly insisted, based on Scripture (Ps. 51:5-6) and with clear scientific warrant, that human life begins at conception. And Richard Hays points out that Jesus was never guilty of "defining marginal cases out of the human race. . . . Jesus' persistent strategy was, on the contrary, to define the marginal cases in."

This means that for disciples of Jesus, abortion is immoral in all cases in which it is not necessary to save the life of the mother. It also calls Christians to avoid using any forms of birth control that potentially act as abortifacients. This is a point on which Christians need to do a lot more thinking, research, and self-evaluation.

Finally, this ethic means that all forms of suicide, assisted suicide, or "mercy" killing violate God's

moral principles, whether in cases of chronic pain, terminal illness, aging, loneliness, or despair. The gospel calls disciples to serve all human beings, no matter their stage of life or suffering, with life-giving love.

Third, the sanctity of human life requires us to do whatever is necessary to protect and preserve human life. The writers of the Heidelberg Catechism emphasized this point in their explanation of the sixth commandment. The prohibition of murder requires that I love my neighbors as myself, being “patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly toward them,” and that I “protect them from harm as much as [I] can” (Q&A 107). I am neither to harm nor “recklessly endanger” a person made in the image of God.

In short, Christ calls us to be proactive in fostering the conditions necessary for life. As Calvin put it in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, “The purport of this commandment is that since the Lord has bound the whole human race by a kind of unity, the safety of all ought to be considered as entrusted to each.” We are called to do whatever is required to “defend the life of our neighbor; to promote whatever tends to his tranquility, to be vigilant in warding off harm, and, when danger comes, to assist in removing it.”

There are few better examples of this proactive commitment to the sanctity of life than the story of the Good Samaritan. While the Levite and the priest considered their duty done, given that they had not harmed the man lying on the side of the road, the Good Samaritan “went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.” He then committed him to the care of an innkeeper, promising, “When I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have” (Luke 10:34-35).

Many Christians have therefore discerned that the sanctity of life calls

for society to care for mothers who are young, poor, or unwed just as much as it calls for maintaining the rights of the unborn. Opposing violent crime and other threats to human safety requires taking proactive steps to alleviate poverty, to enable individuals to secure education and work, and to seek reconciliation where there is conflict or mistrust. The sanctity of life requires the provision of food, clothing, shelter, and health care for people who cannot secure it for themselves. It requires society to seek the safety of those who are vulnerable to accidents, pollution, or natural disasters. Disciples of Christ should be zealous on behalf of those of us whose lives some may consider less than “productive” because of physical or mental disabilities, debilitating injuries, or lack of familial bonds. As such, we must find ways to secure the well-being of refugees, victims of injustice, and those who have no legal right to be part of our communities. Christians should be at the forefront of efforts to protect and preserve human life.

Fourth, God has established government to protect and preserve human life, and God has authorized government to wield the sword against those who take human life.

To be sure, Christians will always continue to debate the best way for government to fulfill these ends. We debate policy approaches, jurisdictional questions, and constitutional concerns. And all of this we must do. We must maintain a healthy humility about what is possible in a fallen world and about the best means of achieving justice and peace. But we can never compromise our most basic commitment to the sanctity of life of all human beings, or to government’s special obligation to protect the most vulnerable human beings.

We should therefore be sensitive to the ways in which governments wage war, police communities, and administer capital punishment, always insisting that the use of lethal

force must be in accord with the demands of justice (including just war principles of lawful authority, just cause, peaceful intent, proportionality, and respect for innocent life). While Scripture authorizes capital punishment as a means of retributive justice, the death penalty is never justified for a person whose guilt is unproven through a fair judicial process.

In a world of sin and death it is easy to fall into despair in light of the seeming cheapness of life. And yet we walk by faith, hope, and love, and not by sight. The reality is that pro-life discipleship requires that we ourselves become vulnerable as we pour ourselves out in life-giving service to our neighbors and enemies. For our Lord, this path ended in suffering and death, and we too are called to take up our cross. But as we walk the path of discipleship, we need only remind ourselves of this promise of Jesus: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40). B



Matthew J. Tuininga is the assistant professor of moral theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. He blogs at matthewtuininga.wordpress.com.

1. If, as Tuininga says, it is true that “the Christian tradition does not clearly affirm that Christians may kill in self-defense,” what does that imply for Christians who are not security professionals who carry guns today?
2. How does the Christian teaching that “all human life is sacred” apply to some of our current issues, including abortion, refugees, and euthanasia?
3. What do you think of the author’s examples of ways Christians . . .

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Commemorating the Canons

The Canons make clear that from eternity past to eternity future, salvation is entirely by God's grace.

WILL YOUR CHURCH be commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Canons of Dort? For some, the answer might be "Why would we want to do that?" Others might respond with an enthusiastic "yes," perhaps eagerly anticipating an exposition of TULIP (total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and preservation of the saints).

The Canons have a mixed reputation. It doesn't help that they deal with the doctrine of election, a topic we often prefer to avoid. The Canons remind us that sin's effects run so deep that, left to ourselves, we could not possibly turn to Christ. But this reminder points us to the sheer grace of salvation. Only by the gift and work of the Holy Spirit are we set free to respond in faith to Christ and his saving work. The Canons make clear that from eternity past to eternity future, salvation is entirely by God's grace. This is foundational to our Reformed understanding of how God relates to us and we to God.

The Canons teach that not all will receive the gift of saving faith, but they speak of this with caution and restraint. In particular, we must never make assumptions about who might not be saved. Dispelling the myth that Calvinism dampens evangelism, the Canons strongly encourage us to proclaim Christ indiscriminately to everyone. Who knows whether the Spirit will lead someone to faith through our testimony? Even so, the writers of the Canons realize that this can be a troubling doctrine, so they offer considerable pastoral comfort, including for those going through times of doubt or even apparent loss of faith.

That said, because the main task of the Canons is to refute opposing views,

the tone is sometimes harsh. It helps to explain this (if not excuse it) when we remember that disputes about election played a role in bringing the Netherlands to the brink of civil war in the years before the Synod of Dort.

Context also helps us understand the structure and purpose of the Canons. For example, have you ever wondered why they include five points of doctrine? It's because they respond to five issues raised by the Arminians. This means we should never imply that the Canons are a summary of Reformed theology as a whole. The framers of the Canons would direct us to the Belgic Confession for that! The Canons simply clarify five disputed points about one doctrine.

We should also be rather wary of the memorable but flawed acronym TULIP. Just like the Canons, TULIP does not sum up all of Reformed theology. It doesn't even say all that needs to be said about election! TULIP greatly oversimplifies the content of the Canons, and common misunderstandings of many of the terms—especially total depravity, limited atonement, and irresistible grace—distort what the Canons actually teach. Without explaining at length what TULIP does *not* mean, it can do more harm than good.

So, yes, let's commemorate the Canons. But let's do so in a way that properly respects their content and intent. Let's actually read them rather than just reciting TULIP. And let's recognize them for what they are: not a summary of Reformed theology, or even a full account of election, but a crucial clarification of some key issues that matter as much now as they did 400 years ago. **B**



Suzanne McDonald is professor of systematic and historical theology at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Mich. She is ordained in the CRC and is a member of Alger Park CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

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Excellence and Identity

My struggle
to perfect my
art mirrored
my struggle to
perfect myself.



Chris Wheeler lives in Brookfield, Ill. He crafts lyrics, poetry, liturgies, dramas, and devotionals for his church family at Western Springs Christian Reformed Church in Illinois.

I HAVE PLAYED PIANO for two decades now, one decade of which was aimed solely at making it my career. I am no stranger to the drive for excellence in musical pursuits—or any artistic pursuit, for that matter. However, it wasn't until a few years ago that I realized just how much my idea of artistic excellence was in conflict with my faith.

All I really remember about my first few years of lessons is that I wanted to play. My brother and sister both played, and it looked like fun. When I started, it was the pure joy of creating something beautiful and meaningful out of nothing. Poof—Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata." Just by pressing down white and black keys, I could make tears come to my mom's eyes. How cool is that?

During my teen years, I got serious. As a teenager and college student, I entered wholeheartedly into my craft. I was good at piano; people liked it when I played, and I had fun doing it. Everybody told me I should pursue it as far as I could go, educationally and otherwise; that I had a career ahead of me. So I pushed ahead. I began placing higher and higher value on the affirmation and criticism of others. I began to fear performing. I began to stress out about recitals and competitions and master classes.

To avoid what I perceived as the cardinal sin of the musician—messing up in performance—I pushed myself harder. I practiced more, memorized every page, made sure every note was as perfect as possible. I rationalized this concoction of pride and fear by labeling it "pursuing excellence." That somehow rang better in my ears than "self-aggrandizing" or "wildly afraid of failing." In fact, I think that's

where it all intersected: in my teenage Christian life, I was struggling deeply with the shame of sins I couldn't shake and, at the same time, with the desire to be admired for my holiness in front of my peers. Naturally, this spilled into my musical life.

As a young pianist, if I didn't do well on a performance I blamed it on everything from letting my pride get in the way to not practicing hard enough. It most certainly would have been wiser to memorize Bach than memorize the Lost Woods maze sequence from the video game "The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time" (a hypothetical situation, of course, but if you're interested: right, left, right, left, straight, left, right). The point is that it came down, somehow, to not loving the Lord enough to discipline myself and work hard. Because after all, God is the one who gave me my abilities, and wouldn't it be a waste of those God-given gifts to not work hard(er) on them? And isn't that what God wants—for us to hone our talents for his glory?

The arts are complex and wonderful gifts. The ability to manipulate sound into exquisite sonic patterns can rip a soul apart or mend it. The opportunity to mix and match colors, lines, textures, and shapes can represent something of profound meaning. One can communicate depth of feeling and truth with little black lines and arcs on a blank page. These gifts are neither small nor simple, and therefore not easily mastered, if ever. Thus we have a joyous responsibility to play skillfully, to seek excellence in our craft. Such truth and beauty are worth pursuing.

But in my heart, my pursuit of excellence was centered on who I was and



Photo by Dane Deaner / Unsplash

who I hoped to become rather than on being made new in Jesus Christ.

Fast-forward to my first few years of college, when I was wrapping my dreams for the future around my craft. The breaking point came during my senior year when I performed abysmally during a master class for a visiting pianist. I remember vividly the anger and disillusionment I felt afterward. I was simply not good enough to make a living, to get noticed, to be famous, to achieve whatever it was I was searching for. At that moment I felt lost. If I didn't have my musical ability, what did I have?

But this experience pushed me to a living truth: I associated doing

the best that I could at my craft with who I was. In this vein, my struggle to perfect my art mirrored my struggle to perfect myself.

This slowly became evident to me. Accumulated shame, disillusionment, and a class about unity with Christ converged. And gradually I realized what I had been avoiding all along—that in Christ, my identity is not mine to form or control (thank God!). I remember actually crying from the relief of this truth finally penetrating my heart.

It's often difficult to put this knowledge into practice. I can realize I'm out of shape, but until I get up off the couch and exercise, there

will not be a transformation. That is where I am now—struggling to relinquish control while striving to live a holy life. It seems like an oxymoron, but mostly what it's done is to bring me to my knees a lot.

I regularly speak these words to my forgetful self: *Excellence is not beating myself up until I get it right. Excellence is not what defines the success of my art. Excellence is not an indicator of how much I love God. Excellence is not designed to impress Christ enough that he loves me.*

Choosing to pursue that which excels—the joyous, the peaceful, the living, the holy, the viscerally true—is a real thing, motivated by real love. That familiar maxim of the apostle Paul takes on an identity focus: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil. 4:8).

Excellence is that which excels, is above, high and lifted up, lofty and beyond our understanding. Paul placed it in a litany of words such as *true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy*. We know of only one Artist deserving of such language, and that Artist has chosen to reflect his excellence in his creation. He has created on, in, and around this world, things that are breathtaking, arresting, terrifying, beyond comprehension in their power, beyond understanding in their delicacy.

True excellence in anything is linked, finally, to identity—not to a what or a how, but a Who. Excellence in art and life is an outpouring of worship to God, crafted thoughtfully and with high standards because of who we are in Christ, and trusting Christ with the results. **B**

Fixer-Upper, Hunted, or Pinned: How Have You Built Your House?

AS I PULL UP to the first of two homes where I will be design consulting, I immediately notice the washed-out paint on the garage door. Oh, and that row of old yews has to go. Inside the home, that little sunroom is inviting. The homeowner and I decide on new carpet, a warm gray on the walls, and fresh new laminate counters—I respect that she is on a budget, so no granite. Best of all, she sews and thinks she can handle new roman blinds. I show her a website with loads of ideas that will save her some pennies. As I leave, she describes one more project she saw on HGTV.

House appointment number two: Beautiful stone paver walkway, nicely groomed landscaping, and gorgeous (professionally created) planters! *Don't get jealous, Cheryl. You have all those great Pinterest pins you can use to do that yourself.* At a richly stained front door, the homeowner greets me. She is loaded with pins upon pins and has been watching HGTV for months before calling me. I think, *If you have all that, why do you need me?* But I soften when she tells about a planned addition; the homeowners host loads of people who stay with them when they are in from mission trips. Shame on me. In a few hours we have added wonderful elements implementing her pins, ideabooks from Houzz, and the HGTV ideas she's gathered.

I have always been interested in living spaces. The Bible includes hundreds of references to such spaces. "Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness. . . . He says, 'I will build myself a great palace with spacious upper rooms'" (Jer. 22:13-14). I read that more like, "I will build myself a great Parade of Homes house with five bedrooms and baths, large windows

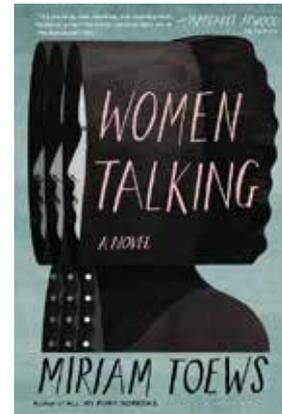
and sliding doors, shiplap, and greige paint." Is that wrong? What's so bad about creating and dreaming with digital tools? Or TV shows with ideas for wonderful spaces? But where do we stop? When is enough enough?

The word "home" is mentioned 186 times in the Bible. Home is where we rest our weary heads, throw off our shoes, and hang out with the ones we love. It should hold within its walls security not just from thunderstorms but from the storms of life. Ruth Graham Bell said, "Make home a happy place they look forward to coming back to." I think of the architect Frank Lloyd Wright's comment: "If you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life." Invest in beauty—the beauty of a home that has Christ in the open kitchen plan or in the tiny galley kitchen.

We can't deny that God gave some of us creativity we can't suppress. So pull out those techy tools, stir up some beautiful colors of paint, or get that new countertop if the budget allows. But let Christ be the designer. Make sure your "mansion" is the one Jesus talked about in John 14:2: "My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?" First and foremost, Jesus needs to be the firm foundation your house is built on. 



Cheryl Challah is a design consultant in Grand Rapids, Mich., where she is a member of Brookside CRC.



Women Talking

by Miriam Toews

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

For two days in 2009, eight women in a Mennonite colony hold a clandestine meeting to make a perilous decision. Over four years, hundreds of girls and women have been sexually assaulted. Eight men have been arrested, and now the other men have gone to the city to bring the men home. The women's heart-rending discussion reveals that their lives hang in the balance. They must decide: Will they stay and fight, or will they leave? Based on true events, this novel for adults is a powerful testament to the yearning for justice evident in those who are oppressed. Though the subject matter is painful and harrowing, Toews doesn't include graphic details. The book concludes on a surprising, authentically grace-filled note. (Knopf Canada; available in the U.S. in April.)



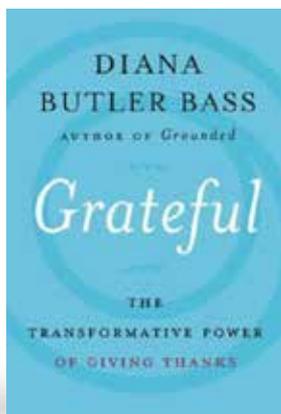
Reader-Submitted Review: Hallelujah Here Below

by *Elevation Worship*

reviewed by Andrew Hung of Richmond, B.C.

Elevation Worship's album is a musical offering of honest and raw praise. The band drew inspiration for the title track from Exodus 20:25, where God commands the Israelites to build an altar from imperfect stones. "We can offer a broken hallelujah, [and] it doesn't need to be a perfect or cleaned-up hallelujah," the band said on *The RELEVANT Podcast* (Ep. 644). The album also expresses a confident realization of God's presence in times past and present. "The Lord is in this place," Jacob's epiphany in Genesis 28, is a line in "Here Again" and is a theme that anchors the album. Listeners are reminded of God's rescuing hand in seasons of fire ("Faithful") and his sovereignty in all eras of history ("Still God"). (Elevation Worship Records)

Note: You, too, can submit a review at thebanner.org!

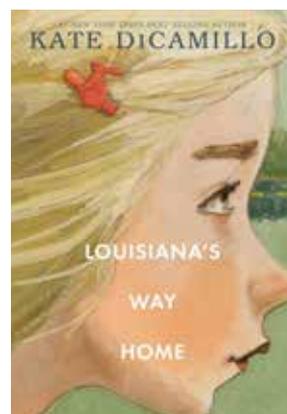


Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks

by *Diana Butler Bass*

reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Diana Butler Bass delves into the cultures and learned practices of gratitude, unpacking how gratefulness is closely connected to emotions, particularly feelings of kindness and love. There is also a communal factor that comes to expression when we give thanks, celebrate, and feast together, affirming and encouraging our gratefulness. Ending with the upside-down blessings of the Beatitudes and the story of Zacchaeus, Bass wonders in what circumstances—and for whom—Jesus might pronounce those blessings today. A good choice for small groups. (HarperCollins)



Louisiana's Way Home

by *Kate DiCamillo*

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

It's nothing new when 12-year-old Louisiana's granny wakes her in the middle of the night and tells her they have to leave home immediately. However, when it becomes obvious that Granny has no intention of returning home, Louisiana feels cast adrift. Even as her life is spinning out of control, she meets loving, generous, helpful people who show her that no one can go it alone. In this sequel to her previous novel, *Raymie Nightingale*, DiCamillo peels away layers to reveal Louisiana's story and presents readers with a heartbreakingly tender, wise, humorous, and resilient protagonist. Ages 10 and up. (Candlewick)

The Lowdown

Wonderful: Nicholas Wolterstorff's new book, *In This World of Wonders: Memoirs of a Life in Learning*, is due in bookstores on Jan. 16. (Eerdmans)

Show and Tell: N.T. Wright and Michael Bird will lead your small group on a tour with *The New Testament You Never Knew* study guide and DVD, with eight sessions that teach from the actual sites of the Bible. (Zondervan)

All Together: Worship and gospel singer Casey J offers her sophomore album, *The Gathering*, on Jan. 25. (Integrity)

Joy in Whoville: The eleventh season of *Doctor Who*, the first to feature a female Doctor, will be available on disc Jan. 29. (BBC)

Is It Arrogant for Christians to Claim the Truth?

The church doesn't own truth as much as it witnesses to truth—above all, the truth revealed in Jesus Christ.

WE CHRISTIANS HAVE A SERIOUS image problem, with arrogance touted as one of our ugliest features. After all, the church does make audacious claims—nothing less than a special message and mandate from God's very self: "The church is sent with the gospel of the kingdom to call everyone to know and follow Christ" (Our World Belongs to God, 41).

It's as if we know something others don't and possess something others lack. Can we dare claim such a thing when inclusion, respect, equality, and openness are dominant cultural values? No wonder some denominations have backed away from exclusive claims about the gospel for fear of sounding arrogant, and many Christians are timid about sharing their faith.

Often we are arrogant in defending our faith. A student proudly told me how he had stormed out of a class because his professor had criticized Christianity. While I admired his passion, I questioned his attitude. Do we want to be perceived as the sort of people who write off others' objections to our beliefs? Does the Spirit have nothing to teach us through criticism? Doesn't another person—no matter how much we disagree with her—deserve the respect of being listened to? Too often, Christians use "God says" to shut down discussion. This is arrogance, plain and simple.

At the same time, God has chosen us for a purpose. Now is no moment for the church to be timid. How should we be faithful to God's urgent purpose without coming across as arrogant?

We need to consider how we as Christians relate to God's truth before we can meaningfully relate that truth

in our pluralistic context. This is of first importance: We are God's. God is not ours. While we're known fully by God, God is only known in part by us. God calls us to seek him; we are reminded to pray for the conversion of our hearts and minds so we may grow into the fullness of the truth revealed in Scripture (Eph. 4:13). The church doesn't own truth as much as it witnesses to truth—above all, the truth revealed in Jesus Christ. One contemporary Reformed confession puts it this way: "In the spirit of humility, as beggars telling others where food is to be found, we point to life in Christ" (Living Faith, PCC., 9.2.1). What would happen if we were to think of ourselves less as sitting on the truth and more as pointing to it? We'd invite nonbelievers to join us as learners of the way of Jesus, journeying deeper into God's truth. This is a humble stance from which to share our faith with others. We'd talk and listen to them with Christlike traits of empathy, patience, and kindness, all the while open to the Spirit's challenge that in the encounter, we too may have something to learn.

It's not as if we're the first generation of Christians to be thought arrogant. Not only did Christians in the early church share with Jews belief in one God to the exclusion of the empire's many gods, but the church claimed Jesus Christ as Lord to the exclusion of any other. It's no wonder, then, that New Testament writings unapologetic about the church's confession of Christ in a pluralistic world are also deeply concerned with how we make our testimony: "Be compassionate and humble. . . . Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you. . . . But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:8,15).^B



Todd Statham is the Christian Reformed campus minister at the Okanagan campus of the University of British Columbia.

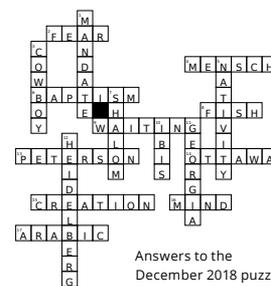
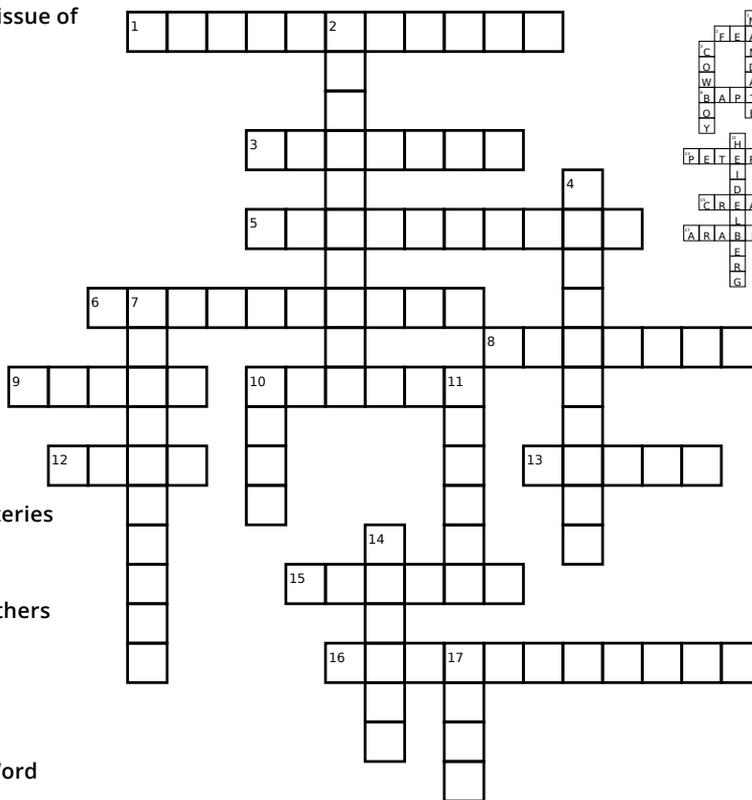
Find clues to this crossword puzzle in this issue of *The Banner*. See the answers next month!

Down:

- 2. What Jesus faced in the wilderness
- 4. This season is a gift
- 7. The South Pole is located here
- 10. Home improvement network
- 11. _____ Nightingale by Kate DiCamillo
- 14. Received a medal for volunteerism
- 17. What Indwell cooked up in October

Across:

- 1. It is key to ministry
- 3. One of the sacraments
- 5. Jesus' "upside-down" blessings
- 6. A time for pastors to recharge their batteries
- 8. Dorothy Fischer's colorful crocheted contribution
- 9. We can't hide it, hold it inside, or beat others over the head with it
- 10. An apple a day keeps it away
- 12. It is its 400th anniversary
- 13. The Legend of _____
- 15. Young adult group that 'grows' in the Word
- 16. Where "Mary's House" was built



Answers to the December 2018 puzzle.

Think you can change the world from an office?

We do.

CHANGE can be big, like multi-national big. Or it can be small, like the garage of a start-up 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.

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General

Final Celebration: After 64 years of ministry, Millbrook CRC (Grand Rapids, MI) will be celebrating its final worship service with a legacy gathering on Sunday, January 6, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. Anyone with connections to our church family are welcome to attend. All glory to God!

Retirement

REV. DIRK MIEDEMA RETIRES Aylmer Christian Reformed Church ON Canada congratulates Rev. Dirk Miedema, together with his wife Grace, as they celebrate his retirement from congregational ministry. We thank God for more than seven years of faithful ministry with us, and for a total of 37 years serving congregations in Dresden, Acton, Clinton, Ingersoll, Woodstock Maranatha, and Aylmer in addition to classis and denominational service. You are welcome to join us for Rev. Miedema's farewell worship service on Sunday Jan.27/19 DV @ 10:00 AM @ Aylmer CRC -110 Caverly Rd. All friends are also invited to join us for an evening of celebration on Friday Feb. 1/19 DV @ 7:00 PM @ Immanuel Christian School (75 Caverly

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.

Rd. Aylmer ON) For more information, or to RSVP contact church office Administrator @ aylmercrc@amtelecom.net or 519-773-3025

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS HEARTLAND will meet in regular session March 2, 2019, 8:00 AM, at Hope CRC, Hull, Iowa. Submit agenda items by January 19, 2019, to the stated clerk, Rev. R. Drenten, 1405 Albany Ave NE, Orange City, IA 51041.

CLASSIS ZEELAND will meet on Thursday, February 21, at 4PM, at the North Blendon CRC. Agenda deadline is January 9. Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C.

Birthdays

100TH BIRTHDAY



Ann Woltjer (Jager) will celebrate her 100th birthday on January 31. Wife of John and Mother of Roger (both deceased). Celebrating this milestone are her children: Lou and Julie of Three Rivers, CA. Shirley and John Wind of Mexico, Carl and Opal of Broken Arrow, OK, Larry and Bev of Escalon and Donna and Craig Hartwig of Homeland. Her 17 grandchildren, great grandchildren, step grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren join in thanking the Lord for her joyful and positive example. Birthday greetings to 368 S. Wilma Ripon, CA 95366

90TH BIRTHDAY

Gary De Haan of 3079 Regency Pkwy. Zeeland, MI 49464 will be celebrating his 90th Birthday with an Open House at North Street CRC (20 E Main) in Zeeland on January 5, 2019 from 3-5 PM. Thankful to God for His abundant blessings, family and friends are invited to share in this event. No presents, please. Soli Deo Gloria

Herman Oordt celebrates his 90th birthday on January 17. His family and friends are thankful for a life lived in service to the Lord. Greetings can be sent to 915 Heather Circle Apt 5, Mt Vernon, WA 98273

Dr. Louis Van Dyke, currently of Grand Rapids, MI, long-time resident of Sioux Center, IA, retired professor of history at Dordt College, celebrated his 90th birthday on December 12, with his wife of nearly 67 years, Tina (Buys), children Steve and Vonnice, Alan and Cyndie, Terry and Joan Crull, Mike and Lillian and Wayne, 9 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren. We thank God for his many blessings over the years, and for the example of faithful discipleship of our father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

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.

Anniversary

65TH ANNIVERSARY

Tamminga George and Henrietta of 344 Manor Hill Court Lombard, IL 60148 celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Nov. 28. Grateful to God for them and with them are children Cindy Tamminga, Kristy (Dan) Bootsma, and Scott (Denise) Tamminga, and six grandchildren.

60TH ANNIVERSARY

HEERSINK Adolf & Florence, of 813 E. LaDeney, Ontario, CA., celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Dec. 26. Celebrating God's Faithfulness and Provision are the families of their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Psalm 145:2 "Every day I will praise You."

50TH ANNIVERSARY

Happy 50th Anniversary With gratitude and joy, the children and grandchildren of David and Joanne Tigchelaar (nee Vriend), celebrate 50 years of committed love in marriage. We wish you God blessings for many years to come. Love all of us who call ourselves Tiggy's.

Obituaries

Davies Olive, died October 22, 2018, aged 96, after faithfully serving her Lord and Saviour, her late husband Arthur, and her family and community with grace and a servant's heart. She blessed her children with loving devotion: Mark & Judy Davies, Penny Farms, FL; Jane Lise, Wingham, ON; Calvin & Jan Davies, London, ON; Paul & Nancy Davies, Shelbyville, MI. She gave generous care and attention to her 14 grandchildren and 35 great grandchildren and served her church and community unceasingly. She was predeceased by her son in law Jim Lise and four siblings in Wisconsin. A Thanksgiving Service honouring her life and death in Christ was held on December 8, 2018 in the Faith CRC in Holland MI, Rev. T Louwerse officiating. Memorials may be made to the Institute for Christian Studies, 59 St. George St, Toronto, ON, Canada M5S2E6 or to the Holland (MI) Free Health Clinic.



Feenstra, Roger E. of Allendale, MI passed away of Alzheimer's disease on 11/2/2018. He is survived by his wife Grace (Hutt) Feenstra and children Brian (Judy) David (Sue) Lisa (Victor Vandertol). Grandchildren are Zachary, Jacob, Sara, Kelly, Abbey, Jenny, Nicholas, Valerie, and Sam. He was a structural geologist and worked in the oil industry until 1992. At that time, he started teaching and taught at Covenant Christian Academy in Collyville, TX and at Unity Christian High School in Hudsonville, MI as well as adjunct geology professor at Calvin College.



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Geurkink Patricia E., 81, of Carol Stream, IL, died peacefully on Sept. 17, 2018. She is survived by Vern, her husband of 60 years, and by her 2 sons, Brett (Brenda), and Eric (Marly), plus six grandchildren. She was an outstanding student and excelled in her career in clinical nursing and healthcare management. Her 15 years in Coffee Break leadership ended with the onslaught of dementia. Death came with serenity after 4 years of valiant struggle.

LICH Nellaine (Slager), age 83, of Schererville, IN, formerly of Lansing, IL, passed away unexpectedly and went to her heavenly home on October 22, 2018. She is survived by her husband of 62 1/2 years, Vernon Lich. Loving mother of Lois (Jeff) Fennema, Janet (Larry) Boomsma and the late Vernon (Beverly) Lich, Jr., 7 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren.

Meier, Hermine, age 96 of Holland, Michigan, went to be with her Lord and Savior on October 4, 2018. She is survived by her husband of 62 years, John Meier and children Bea Meier, Darlene and Jeff DeVries, Gladys and Dan Pell, 8 grandchildren as well as several relatives in Germany.

ROELOFS Marv, age 77, of Sioux Falls, SD, (formerly of Chicago), passed away July 25, 2018. Surviving are his wife, Lois (Hoitenga), of 56 years; children, Jon and Sheri Roelofs, Kathleen and Michael Ridder; and 7 grandchildren. We thank God for Marv's long-term advocacy for children's access to healthcare and ministry of caring for "the least of these."

Schutt Louise, age 95 of Hudsonville, formerly of Sayner, WI, went to be with her Lord and Savior on Wednesday, November 14, 2018. She is survived by her husband of 69 years, Herman Schutt; children, Muriel and Philip Bouman, Lenore and Michael Klunder, Nicholas and Deborah Schutt; grandchildren, Matthew and Shawn Bouman, Sarah and Kevin Edwards, Brent and Kara Bouman, Katherine Klunder, Clayton and Kara Klunder, Connor Klunder, Rebecca Schutt; 8 great grandchildren; sister-in-law, Celia DeBoer; brother-in-law, John Cook. She was preceded in death by her six siblings and their spouses and many brothers and sisters-in-law. Louise and Herman were owners of the Ace-Hi Bottled Gas Company Inc. for many years. In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to Spectrum Health Hospice.

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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 mvanzeeelt2004@yahoo.com or 630-792-1754

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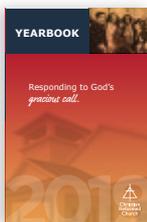
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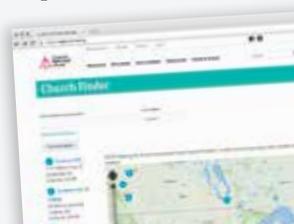
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Lead Pastor Fairway CRC in Jenison, MI is searching for a lead pastor. If you've ever wanted to make a difference in your community by partnering with a church that is committed to making a difference, you've found it. We are excited about our future. Check us out! www.fairwaycrc.org/churchprofile or contact Rick Bouwkamp at rickbouwkamp@gmail.com

Worship and Community Life: Fairway CRC in Jenison, MI is seeking God's direction to fill this full time position. Our new director of worship will also lead our Education and Outreach teams in efforts to serve our local and greater community and to seek and grow disciples of Jesus Christ. For a full description of the position visit www.fairwaycrc.org or to apply email cover letter and resume to our search committee at skdb94@gmail.com

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Visit justice.crcna.org/refugees for advocacy opportunities, worship materials, and information about the refugee resettlement process.

Visit crcna.org/race for resources like workshops that will help your congregation build relationships with refugees from different cultures.



Actually, It /s a Toy

Our kids were too young to read the words “Dean’s Life,” which my wife had written clearly on top of the box. But they had heard us talk enough about the contents to be curious.



Dean Heetderks is co-director of Ministry Support Services of the Christian Reformed Church. He attends Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

IT SITS PROMINENTLY way up on the third shelf to the left of our fireplace. It’s a robin’s-egg-blue 1961 Chevy pickup truck and trailer with white trim made by Tonka at 1/18th scale. In the trailer is a plastic Black Angus steer with one horn slightly chipped. The box the toy came in is long gone, but I remember it clearly: it was printed in matching white and blue and black and had plastic windows allowing a peek at the glory inside.

The truck was a birthday present from my parents. I was turning maybe 6 or 7 years old. At our house, a present not already owned or played with by someone else was rare. This was special. It was a very happy birthday.

Years later, after my siblings and I were all grown up and had kids of our own, my mom, in purge mode, boxed up each of our childhoods and called us to pick up our packages. In my box were report cards, vaccination records, clay finger pots, letters from camp, and all manner of stuff given to (or taken away) by my parents. Resting on top was the robin’s-egg-blue 1961 Chevy pickup truck. I took my box home.

After a few days of the box sitting on our kitchen counter, my wife set it down near the stairs to be taken to the attic.

Our kids were too young to read the words “Dean’s Life,” which my wife had written clearly on top of the box. But they had heard us talk enough about the contents to be curious. Together, when they were alone, they opened the box and took out the truck. As the truck made its first trip around the living room, my wife and I walked in on the little merrymakers.



Without thinking, I yelled—screamed, more like—“Put that back! That is not a toy!” Alarmed, my wide-eyed kids fell away from the truck, more from shock than obedience, I’m afraid. My wife, less shocked, raised an eyebrow and gave me one of those *Oh, really?* looks.

I think of this truck whenever I’m involved in a long-range planning or strategy event. And I wonder if too often our approach to churches or organizations is handled the way I handled my 1961 Chevy pickup—as if they belong only to us or are too precious or sentimental a thing to be taken off the shelf and played with. To be enjoyed. Or maybe even to have a little fun with now and again. **B**

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9 Wednesday

MARIELA SHAKER

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4 Friday

ARTHUR C. BROOKS

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10 Thursday

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11 Friday

CRAIG DETWEILER

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14 Monday

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15 Tuesday

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16 Wednesday

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