



2019 Year-End

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# A Bible for Those Who Can't Read



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**India:** "Previously I was worshipping so many gods and giving sacrifices to them," says Sobita. Then she heard the story of Jesus from a Catholic priest. "Gradually, as I listened to the Word of God, I came to know the truth. Why was I offering those sacrifices? They were idols, without truth in them. So that is why I came to Jesus."

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- » Rebuilding, Renewal Part of Michigan Church's 100-Year History
- » Church Worldwide: Violence Against Religious Minorities in India
- » Movie: *The Peanut Butter Falcon*
- » Music: *His Mercy is More* by Matt Boswell and Matt Papa
- » Book: *Little Libraries, Big Heroes*

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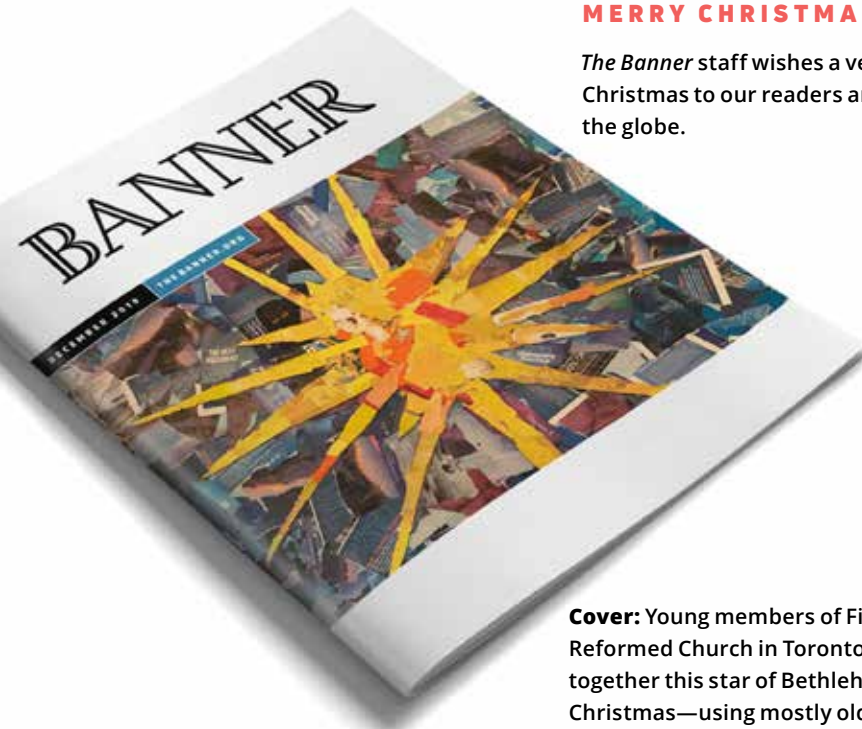
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## MERRY CHRISTMAS!

*The Banner* staff wishes a very blessed Christmas to our readers around the globe.



**Cover:** Young members of First Christian Reformed Church in Toronto pieced together this star of Bethlehem collage last Christmas—using mostly old *Banner* magazines. Thanks to pastor Thyra VanKeeken for sharing the photo. VanKeeken assured, “I promise we read the Banners first. :)”



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**BANNER**

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## The Seven Deadly Sins: Preaching Graciously about Our Glittering Vices

with Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.  
& Scott Hoezee

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# Beyond My Comfort Zone

I have published articles that even I do not fully agree with in order to fulfill our role as a forum for different viewpoints. If I only publish articles I fully agree with, then I would be guilty of turning *The Banner* into my personal megaphone.



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](http://TheBanner.org).

이 기사의 한글번역은 [TheBanner.org/korean](http://TheBanner.org/korean) 에서 보실 수 있습니다.

Este artículo está disponible en español en [TheBanner.org/spanish](http://TheBanner.org/spanish).

**AS OF THE TIME OF WRITING** (October), our fundraising efforts toward our \$450,000 goal have broken the \$400,000 mark for the third year in a row. Thank you all for your generosity. The more money we raise, the less we need to draw from ministry shares. Your strong support shows you understand why our denomination needs a collective forum that fairly represents our diverse viewpoints.

To be a fair forum, however, means we occasionally publish viewpoints that may be unpopular to some. Synod 1998 noted that one of *The Banner's* responsibilities (reaffirmed by Synod 2015) is to present to readers "the issues pertinent to the life of the church in a way that shows the diverse positions held within the church and encourages biblical and Reformed thinking about these issues." To fulfill this responsibility, we are granted the freedom to "permit people of the church to voice their views and reactions even though some of these views may be unacceptable to others in the church" *Acts of Synod 1998, pp. 288-290*.

In fact, I have published articles that even I do not fully agree with in order to fulfill our role as a forum for different viewpoints. If I only publish articles I fully agree with, then I would be guilty of turning *The Banner* into my personal megaphone.

An example of such an article is in this issue. To fulfill our role as a forum, I have taken the risk of publishing an unsolicited article written by a sex offender. I stand in solidarity with survivors. I don't think the voices of offenders are morally equivalent to those of survivors. However, the church is called to offer Christ's reconciliation to all, not just to survivors. As much as the article goes beyond my personal comfort level, I have to fulfill my

responsibilities. Hence, we have made it anonymous to protect those affected.

Please do remember that all our articles are never meant to be the last word on anything. They are instead meant to stimulate thought and discussion.

The Advent season reminds us through Christmas carols and Bible readings that Jesus is the Son of David. Though King David was "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22; 1 Sam. 13:14), he was a murderer and a sexual abuser (as Bathsheba was helpless to refuse a powerful king). It must be noted that David faced serious consequences for his sins even as God showed him grace. But the fact that God did show David grace and even used David's lineage for his salvation purposes means the church cannot simply ignore the offender's need for God's grace. We need to wrestle with how to be ambassadors of Christ's reconciliation without unduly risking people's safety or revictimizing those who have been abused.

Personally, I am very uncomfortable with the author's suggestion of possibly reintegrating those who have offended into a church community. I would want strong assurances that they would not be near persons who are vulnerable. But God's mission does stretch our comfort zones. If Jesus is the physician who calls sinners and not the righteous (Matt. 9:12-13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31-32), then the church is a hospital for sinners, not a club for the righteous. We have to wrestle with how to practically embody that vision while protecting the vulnerable.

I might not have the answers. But it is my duty as the editor to open conversations and ask the necessary questions. **B**



## REPLY ALL

### Extra Blessings

I want to thank you very much for the articles in the September *Banner* about the body of believers helping parents who have higher education costs due to the abilities of their children ("Extra Costs Bring Extra Blessing," Sept. 2019). As we promise parents at baptism, we will help to nurture the faith of their children. We as members of the church should be challenged to work to fulfill that promise and help to make Christian education available to all children at all levels of ability.

» Lauren Leo // Sheboygan, Wisc.

### Twice on Sunday

Perhaps we should find new grounds for worshiping twice on Sunday rather than abandon the practice ("Synod Proposes Dropping the Second Service Requirements," July/Aug. 2019). What I have been suggesting (yes, we are the only CRC in miles to have an evening service), is the first service enables us to come together to receive the grace and mercy of God after a week in the world, while the evening or second service enables us to be empowered by God and propelled by God into the next week. Just a thought.

» Paul Hansen // Artesia, Calif.

### Gambling with Your Faith

In "Gambling with Your Faith" (Oct. 2019), John VanSloten describes a greater problem than many Christians realize, and it's not just with commercial gambling. There are many ways in which people toy with God's providence in the name of entertainment, and regardless of the motives or results, God's will is trivialized. The Bible speaks of providence but not of "luck." VanSloten's insights and

experiences alert all Christians that faith in God is our best assurance for the future.

» Michael DuMez // Oostburg, Wis.

### Country Music and Alcohol

I read Micah Van Dyk's article "Why Country Music is Obsessed with Alcohol" (Sept. 2019). I appreciated his conclusion that Christian music listeners should be careful not to overlook idolatry in the lyrics they hear. However, I believe his article made a few logical leaps. First, I feel it is a large generalization to conclude that country music as a genre has turned alcohol into an idol after referencing only two songs. Also, his claims about artists having alcohol addiction struggles, artists pretending to drink onstage, and country fans feeling pressured to drink heavily to have a good time all come without supporting examples. Surely Christians must be careful about the secular content they consume in any area of life. In my experience, country music is less focused on alcohol than Van Dyk's claims, which misrepresent country music to listeners who are unfamiliar with it.

» Graham Vanderwoerd // Brantford, Ont.

### Revisionism

Thank you for your article "Revisionism" in the Vantage Point section of the October (2019) issue. At the age of 35, I continue to realize that some of the most faithful and spiritual people I know identify as LGBTQ. I also realize these believers are some of the most hurt by the church. I appreciate the author specifically pointing to what the New Testament may or may not say about same-sex relationships. May we let the love of God and the

grace that we receive from him lead us as we continue to examine how best to love and support all of God's people.

» Amy Wigger // Hudsonville, Mich.

As members of the Christian Reformed Church who believe that the Spirit and Word of God continue to shape us more into the likeness of Christ, we agree with the sentiment expressed in "Revisionism" by Rick Kruis that we should be open to reformation. ...

However, we disagree with Kruis when he asserts that an openness to revision will produce a retraction of our current teaching that homosexual activity is sinful. We are convinced that when we search the Scriptures, we'll find the change needed in the CRC is that, in love, we should address all forms of sin with more urgency, including same-sex activity and teaching that promotes it.

In Revelation 2 Jesus addresses the church in Thyatira. He rebukes the believers in that city because they tolerate teaching that leads people into sexual immorality. The Bible is clear that homosexual activity is sin. ... Just as Jesus loved the Thyatiran Christians through his rebuke, we hope our call to repentance is received in love.

» The Council of Almond Valley CRC // Ripon, Calif.

The "Revisionism" article in the October 2019 issue is concerning. Simply put: we should not revise the morals of the Lord. When Jesus was asked about divorce (Matt. 19) he referred back to Genesis. The boundaries are clear: one man leaves his father and mother to unite to his wife (Gen. 2). Throughout the Bible, homosexuality and therefore same-sex relationships are sinful because they are a violation against God's created

## 'The Least of These'

order, and therefore God's morality. I pray that all people will read the Bible and remember that "I the LORD do not change" (Mal. 3:6).

» Anthony Cattoni // Lethbridge, Alta.

Thank you for printing Rick Kruis's thoughtful Vantage Point piece on revisionism in the last issue. I believe it's imperative for *The Banner* to be a space where a range of views on LGBT+ inclusion can be shared as we anticipate the study committee's report in 2021. Please continue to publish stories and articles concerning sexual orientation and gender identity, especially (wherever possible) ones written by LGBT+ members or former members themselves. I pray we as a denomination can listen more to those whose lives, well-being, and relationships with God are most at stake.

» Julia Smith // Grand Rapids, Mich.

READ MORE ONLINE



### As I Was Saying

Find the latest posts from our award-winning blog online at [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org).

- » **Suffering and Missions — God uses suffering to advance the kingdom in mysterious ways.**
- » **On the Flipside of the Pastoral Call — The calling process is not a simple one.**
- » **Who's an Evangelical, and Who Gets to Decide? — The vitriol of recent months has created misunderstandings about evangelicals themselves.**

**SEVERAL YEARS AGO**, while on a visit to my hometown in the Netherlands, my former principal told me how he remembered seeing my mother on more than one occasion walk across town to bring food and clothing to a poor family. Out of her own poverty she reached out to those who were "least."


Since then I have met many people like my mother. They work behind the scenes without wanting any credit. Just recently, I met five people who every week bring a warm meal to residents at a local motel. They knock on every door to invite them. Two couples from another church go to a downtown mission to serve a warm meal. They faithfully reach out to those who are "least."

A recent *Banner* article told of a church (Feb. 2019) that hosts a weekly "community outreach program to help kids succeed in school and help mothers and fathers to become better parents." Another church in the same classis has been transformed into a true community church by opening its doors every day to the down and out, offering a warm meal each week as well as a variety of programs in cooperation with a health care center.

The opportunities and open doors to reach out to those who are "least" are without limit. But some of us prefer to look the other way. Some of us, like the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan, simply pass by on the other side. For seven years, while living in a town that has a beautiful ministry with the homeless, I never once bothered to become involved, nor did I ever ask the congregation I was serving to get involved. I visited once and never went back. Two years ago, while taking someone to a motel,

The opportunities and open doors to reach out to those who are "least" are without limit.

I walked around to talk to some of the residents. One person said, "This place has a bad reputation because of drugs and prostitution. No one wants to come near us." A sad commentary on a city with a church on almost every corner and thousands of confessing Christians, myself included.

Of course it's never too late. We still have the opportunity to reach out to those who are "least." The needs are just as great as they have always been. We can still make a difference. Don't look the other way or pass by on the other side. Go out of your way to find those who are "least" and challenge your church to do the same. And when you do, you'll someday hear our Lord welcome us home with these words: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" 



Art Schoonveld is a retired CRC pastor. He is currently serving as regional pastor for Classis Grandville.



Collaborative art by young members of First CRC in Toronto, Ont.

# Pagans, Puritans, and Putting Christ Back in Christmas

Justin Ariel Bailey

**P**resident Donald Trump has a familiar trope: thanks to his administration, we are saying “Merry Christmas” again instead of “Happy Holidays.” The sentiment plays well with many Christians who have long felt angst over a perceived “war on Christmas” and have endeavored to somehow “put Christ back in Christmas.”

I don’t want to minimize the roots of the anxiety—which I take to be a concern for religious liberty and the lament of living in a post-Christian culture—even if I am disappointed by the way the angst is fueled and monetized by some media outlets.

But Christians have always had a complex relationship with Christmas. There has never been such a thing as a purely Christian celebration of the holiday, and there is no golden age of “biblical” Christmas celebrations to which we can return. (For a more complete history of the holiday, read Joseph F. Kelly’s *The Origins of Christmas* (St. Benedict, 2004).)

Indeed, those seeking a biblical basis for our Christmas customs might find themselves frustrated. Those willing to build on Christian tradition also will find contested narratives. Take, for example, the Christmas tree. Some believe the practice of bringing trees into our homes to celebrate the birth of Christ originated with Boniface in the eighth century; others say it began

with Martin Luther in the 16th century. Still others argue the tree, a symbol of fertility, is as pagan a symbol as we could find. The pagan roots of this and other holiday traditions make many Christians uncomfortable, leading some to discontinue the celebration.

The Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony banned Christmas: “Whosoever shall be found observing any such day as [C]hristmas or the like, either by forbearing labour, feasting, or any other way upon such account as aforesaid, every such person so offending, shall pay for every such offence five shillings as a fine to the county,” reads *The Charters and General Laws of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay*. The theological rationale for the ban was the desire to avoid idolatry and to live each day in disciplined diligence. War on Christmas, indeed!

Regardless of what we make of the roots of Christmas, contemporary celebrations should give us pause. The Christmas season often becomes the inverse of Advent. Rather than being a season marked by anticipation, wonder, and joy, it becomes an end-of-year blowout marked by consumerism, busyness, and sentimentality. If recovering Christmas is mostly a matter of what store clerks are allowed to say, that feels like a hollow victory if we still end the year lonely, exhausted, and deeper in debt. Maybe the Puritans were onto something.

It has been interesting to watch fellow Christian parents wrestle with what to do with the holiday. They want Christmas to be meaningful, but they also want to free it from its secular directions. So they teach their children the real story of St. Nicholas, the fourth-century bishop who served the needy and may or may not have punched Arius at the Council of Nicea. Other parents take their family to serve in soup kitchens, reminding their children, “It’s not *your* birthday.” Other parents limit gifts to three, corresponding to the gifts of the Magi in Matthew’s gospel.

I admire the basic impulse to connect our celebrations to Scripture and Christian tradition. But I suspect that underneath that impulse is a posture that fails to take seriously our cultural embeddedness. Everyday life is composed of innumerable cultural elements, many of which have pre-Christian histories. The Quakers might have tried to rename the fifth day of the week, but most of us are untroubled by the pagan origin of Thursday (Thor's day).

The critical issue is whether we believe that the gospel replaces our cultural stories or fulfills them. Certainly, there are some stories that need to be replaced. The proclamation that Jesus is Lord challenges all cultural idolatries. Consumerism must be confronted. Busyness must be exposed as a false source of validation. Trees should be delighted in and stewarded, but not worshiped.

But no culture is so fallen that all of its stories need to be replaced. The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost is a sign of this. The Spirit made the gospel intelligible in numerous tongues, signifying that the cultural backgrounds of the hearers were being taken up and grafted into the story of Jesus. From the very beginning, Christian mission has endeavored to translate the Scriptures into every language, insisting that the Spirit has something to say to and through these people, too. Every tribe, tongue, and nation will be represented in God's kingdom in the end, and the kings of the earth will carry their cultural treasures into the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:26). The gospel reframes but does not replace all our cultural stories.

That means that in what we might consider pagan traditions, we may find God-planted seeds of religion, misdirected but real longings that can be fulfilled only by the God who came near at Christmas. If the Christmas tree has a pagan origin, it is because Christ really fulfills the human longing to remain evergreen. If the dating of Christmas is due to the winter


What we must  
recover is not  
Christian jargon,  
but Christian joy:  
The joy that the  
truth of the gospel  
is better than our  
wildest dreams.

solstice, it is because Christ is the substance of which the solstice celebration is the shadow. I am speaking rather broadly, and discernment is needed, as in all things. But it is not for nothing that we sing, "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

There is almost nothing like the joy felt by a child on Christmas morning, the magic of knowing there are gifts under the tree that were not there the night before. Santa Claus is, of course, a myth. Why then does the longing to believe in Santa Claus persist in secular culture? Call it nostalgia, call it sentimentality, call it a hunger to return to an enchanted world. As Christians, we can deny and demythologize this longing, casting Santa Claus as Jesus' enemy. Or we can deepen the longing, showing that Santa is a shadow of the joy that finds its substance in Christ.

I was raised to disbelieve in Santa Claus. So I was surprised to find him as a character in C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* under another name: Father Christmas. In Narnia, Father Christmas serves Aslan and blesses the children in Aslan's name. Lewis would later write that his friend J. R. R. Tolkien taught him this: the gospel has not abrogated legends but hallowed them.

What we must recover is not Christian jargon, but Christian joy: The joy that the truth of the gospel is better than our wildest dreams. The shock that God in miraculous grace has become human to reconcile the world to God. The astonishment of the opening of 1 John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched ..." (1 John 1:1-2).

To recover Christmas is to recover our childlike wonder at the story that is still astounding, undaunted by all attempts to secularize it. So we keep singing familiar carols, cutting down trees and lugging them into our homes, and over-gifting our children, all in the hope that we can be surprised by joy again. And maybe Father Christmas can keep serving the Great Lion, not just in Narnia, but in our world as well. 



Justin Ariel Bailey is assistant professor of theology at Dordt University. He, his wife, and their two children are members of Covenant CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa.

1. What are some of your favorite Christmas traditions or practices? Can you find biblical support for those traditions or practices?
2. How do you feel about the fact that Puritans banned the celebration of Christmas?
3. If some of our cultural Christmas practices can be reframed by the gospel, can you identify some other cultural practices where we can reframe with the gospel? ...

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## BIG QUESTIONS

### Church/Bible/Doctrine

**Our council meets only six times a year and just rubber-stamps everything presented to it by the executive committee of four. The consistory and diaconate meet once a month but just follow the lead of these four, thus basically never deciding much of anything together. Is this normal? Is it legal? What's missing here?**

Let's start with "legal." I think you'd have a hard time proving the committee is breaking the rules. Church Order Article 36 says the council "shall ordinarily meet at least once a month." The word "ordinarily" was inserted in 2004 to "reflect current practice" and offer "greater flexibility." What's important is not the exact number of council meetings, but that they are "held regularly according to the needs of the congregation" (*Acts of Synod 1942*, p. 111).

Is it normal? If you mean whether less-frequent meetings are fast becoming the rule rather than the exception, I think that might be the case. But I believe there's a deeper issue that gives rise to your question. There's a certain spirituality that adorned our council rooms in the past, and that's what might be oozing away. Take the matter of mutual censure, also mentioned in Article 36. We're told to do this "at least four times per year," taking time to "assess and encourage each other in the performance of [our] official duties." Perhaps it



Illustration for The Banner by Laurie Sienkowski

still happens, but I suspect it's rarely done any more.

My sense is that a new governance model has taken hold of our council meetings. It's patterned after corporate business practice with a top-down management style. Your executive committee does what is "normal" in our culture; it's like an investment firm's annual ballot offering the opportunity to vote for new strategists. Most people vote by proxy instead. Church councils were never meant to be run that way. The assemblies (council, classis, synod) were designed to feature thorough deliberation: listening to one another and together seeking the will of our Lord in prayerful, Spirit-led decision making.

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

### Vocation/Calling

#### **Can you have a calling if you don't believe in a divine Caller?**

Many of my students ask whether you can have a calling if you do not believe in God. Can there be a calling without a Caller? As more and more secularized students come to the college where I teach, this question becomes more and more urgent. Many students have deep moral convictions. Many want to fight injustice and work for a more humane world. They want to protect and heal the natural environment. They hope

to create beautiful works of art and music. But many do not believe in God, or they have left their religious roots so far behind that these roots are not informing their worldviews.

Because the one who calls is also the Creator whose providence operates in all things, nonbelievers also have callings. It is better to be aware of the true source of one's callings, but even those unaware of the true source of their callings serve the Creator unwittingly. Through God's dynamic ordering of creational spheres, many do the sustaining work of the Creator even though they lack faith. Politicians, businesspeople, laborers, parents, scientists, and artists serve God's purposes. A powerful biblical example is Cyrus, king of Persia, who decreed that the exiled Israelites could return to their homeland and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). Isaiah refers to Cyrus as "his anointed" (Isa. 45:1). This does not mean God approves of all the actions of such people; it does mean God makes use even of sinful people to sustain his creation and advance it according to his providential purposes.

Many people are prompted to make pivotal decisions in light of deeply felt responses to core human experiences. A profound sense of the needs of some aspect of our world can prompt something like a believer's sense of call. Perhaps the greatest secular source of a call is gratitude. Bill Gates once said

he established his multibillion-dollar foundation because he felt incredibly lucky. He was in the right place at the right time to make a fortune. He wanted to “give back” because he had been given so much. He was thankful. Christians perceive the true source every gift: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17). But non-believers indeed do God’s work through their callings even if they do not acknowledge the God who calls them to it.

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

### Stewardship

**My parents have set up bequests to each of their grandchildren in their will. Some grandchildren are very responsible and will use the money wisely, but we’re afraid others will just spend it on wasteful things. Is it smart to give money outright like this to young people with no directions?**

Let me say that it’s as good to ask questions about how to receive an inheritance responsibly as it is to make a bequest responsibly. It’s too easy to treat a gift simply as a windfall that can be spent however one pleases. But if a gift is to have value and represent well the relationship from which it came, then the use of it has to be measured and considerate.

There’s much about this situation that we don’t know. How large are the bequests? How old are the grandchildren? If the gifts are small, there is less concern than if the amounts are larger. So too if the recipients are older, with more life experience.

Perhaps your parents indicated in their will how they intended the money to be used. Perhaps they had

activities or causes which were especially important to them, and that could serve as a guide for using the funds. I know of someone whose love of creation was passed down through the generations, so a bequest from that person was used for travel and to purchase camping equipment.

Or perhaps there were aspects of a grandchild’s life in which the grandparent took particular delight. That would be an exceptional way to honor a grandparent’s generosity. And by all means a portion could be given to a church or to charitable causes with funds from the inheritance. It may be, however, that your parents provided generously for their church and charities in their estate already, and so such gifts are less pressing.

Rolf Bouma is interim pastor at Dearborn Christian Fellowship, Dearborn, Mich., and teaches in the University of Michigan’s Program in the Environment in Ann Arbor.

### Digital Life

**I’ve heard the term *deepfake* applied to video. I would think just *fake* would be bad enough. Why *deepfake*? And why should I care?**

Deepfakes are artificial videos created—often with the help of artificial intelligence—by combining separate elements of audio and video into a new video that was never actually recorded. The results are amazing. And terrifying.

Someone could shoot a video of a person explaining the benefits of your company’s product in English. When the company grows and wants to offer its product to a non-English-speaking market like China, it’s no problem. First the company records someone reading the script in the new language—Mandarin, in this case—so a computer can “learn” the voice. This new audio is added to the English video, but instead of the English speaker’s mouth or face moving out of sync with the new audio, the original video


can be manipulated—again with artificial intelligence—to convincingly match the facial expressions to the new audio.

That’s amazing, but also terrifying, because historical footage can now be revised to show something that never happened. Campaigning politicians could present their rival saying something they never said. Governments can show witnesses describing an event with words the original eyewitnesses didn’t use. And if we’re seeing *and* hearing it, it must be true, right?

Experts can usually tell when something has been manipulated, but what about the rest of us?

Research shows that humans are incredibly gullible—and lazy. We’d rather believe something that supports what we already believe than take the time to wonder anew. To avoid being duped, I suggest we start by checking references (Where am I watching this? Where did it come from?), applying healthy amounts of skepticism (Why would they want me to see this?), and trusting your God-given intuition (This looks too good to be true. Is it?).

If you don’t have time to do the legwork, at least stop the lie from spreading by not sharing it on Facebook.

Dean Heetderks is co-director of Ministry Support Services of the Christian Reformed Church and art director of *The Banner*. Wondering about any part of the digital side of your life? Tell him about it at [dean.heetderks@gmail.com](mailto:dean.heetderks@gmail.com). 

Got a Big Question for any of our panelists? Email it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org) with “Big Questions” in the subject line.

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## 'Christmas with Style' Returns to Edmonton Church

### NEWS

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About 115 women associated with 11 city shelters or women's support agencies experienced a Christmas makeover and a day of showered blessings in Edmonton, Alta., last year.

"Christmas with Style", hosted by Christian Reformed congregation The River Community Church, is being remounted in 2019. Even in the difficult Alberta economy, said coordinator Gordon Bertie, they hope to treat about 80 women this year.

Bertie is grateful for salons who donate hair, nail, and makeup services and for supporters who contribute to the turkey dinner, entertainment, gift bags, flowers, and donated clothing for the guests. Making these often-forgotten women feel special is a large community effort. Congregation members and the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 569 transport guests from the shelters to participating salons and the church and back home again.

Some may ask, don't women living in shelters need more than painted nails and styled hair? "First of all," responded The River's pastor, Bruce Gritter, "this is a chance to bless them at Christmas. So much of what is done at Christmas is done for the children. Almost nothing is done for these women. Secondly, many of them can't afford a makeover like this. What happens, given their circumstances, is that they struggle with low self-esteem, which leads to depression, addiction, and other things. This is a way of helping them feel good about themselves."

Feedback from the women corroborated this. "Yesterday gave me so much more than a day off and a haircut," said one woman last year. "It empowered me to keep pushing for better in my life and my children's lives and reminded me that not every person in the world is as terrible as the ones I've encountered."

—Janet A. Greidanus



A Grace and Peace volunteer, Dec. 8, 2018.

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## Chicago Ministry Offers Affordable Christmas Gift Shop

At Grace and Peace Community Center, a ministry in Chicago, Ill., associated with a Christian Reformed congregation of the same name, parents' limited income doesn't preclude them from selecting and purchasing Christmas gifts for their children.

Once a year on a Saturday in December the center opens its Christmas Gift Shop, stocked with donated goods collected over the preceding months. While their young children play in the Winter Wonderland, parents shop for gifts priced between 25 cents and \$1. A "shopping elf" accompanies each client to carry presents,

take them to the gift-wrapping station, and help them select a food basket.

"It is an ownership thing to say that they bought the gift," said Angelina Zayas, the ministry's executive director, underscoring that this opportunity is empowering for parents.

In 2018, about 50 volunteers helped to serve 100 families, including 293 kids. Lombard (Ill.) CRC has been a partner in the yearly event, providing turkey dinner hampers for the clients.

—Elizabeth Drummond



## Denver Church Hosts Annual Global Bazaar

Photo by Phil Schilling



Globally sourced goods from A-Mark On The World

For the members of First Christian Reformed Church in Denver, Colo., Christmas shopping comes with an international twist. Every year at its Global Bazaar, vendors offer products made by people in economically challenging circumstances whose communities, both domestic and international, receive profit from the sales.

The first Global Bazaar in 2008 hosted 15 vendors and saw sales of about \$4,600. Then the Bazaar grew, and sales have ranged between \$15,000 and \$16,000 since 2010, with 30-35 vendors each year.

Shirley Van Heukelem, the Global Bazaar coordinator at First CRC, said, "It's a good way to mingle with people from our community, to support local and global fair trade (businesses), and to purchase one-of-a-kind gifts."

Thirty church members volunteer to run the event each year, welcoming a few hundred shoppers from First CRC and the Denver community. For the 2019 event on Dec. 7, the church is also supporting mission partner En-Gedi Children's Home in Kenya with profits from the sale of baked goods.

For Phil Schilling, a vendor with A-Mark on the World who has participated in the Global Bazaar almost from the start, the best moments include sharing the stories of the people whose lives are affected by the profit reinvestment.

"Church alternative craft fairs like Global Bazaar reach out to the community and invite them to the event," he said. "This gives faith-based missions and fair trade cooperatives not only an opportunity to showcase their handicrafts, but more importantly an opportunity to share the life-changing work they are experiencing."

—Maia VanderMeer

## Christmas Comfort for Sailors in Port

For nearly 50 years, the Christian Reformed Church's Ministry to Seafarers has been making sure sailors in the port of Vancouver, B.C., receive Christmas hospitality.

In 2018, volunteers from The Tapestry, a CRC in the Vancouver suburb of Richmond, gathered to wrap over 1,500 gifts. They were joined by volunteers from partnering ministries: the Anglican Mission to Seafarers and the Roman Catholic Apostleship of the Sea.

The gifts, donated or purchased with money from supporting churches, include warm clothing and toiletries.

Gary Roosma, who has served as Ministry to Seafarers' chaplain since September 2017, enjoys the annual ritual of distributing the gifts on Christmas Eve.

He understands that gifts and a visit from a chaplain don't replace home, "but we desire to spread the love and joy of Christ's birth and offer something special in the name of Jesus."



A boat on loan from a local harbor company is prepared to deliver gifts to the sailors in port. (Dec. 24. 2017)

## Noteworthy

Photo courtesy of Park Street Church, RNS



Walter Kim

The **National Association of Evangelicals**, an organization of which the Christian Reformed Church is a member, has **named Walter Kim as its next president**. Kim,

who is a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America and of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, will succeed Leith Anderson, NAE's president since 2006. Kim begins work as NAE president Jan. 1.



Students prepare to transfer the scroll to its new case, Oct. 8.

The nonprofit organization **God's Ancient Library** donated a **200-year-old pasul (no-kosher) torah** to **Kuyper College** in Grand Rapids, Mich. Received in April, the scroll is now housed in a custom-made case and kept in Kuyper College's Zondervan Library.

**Trinity Christian College** in Palos Heights, Ill., **recognized 60 years of post-secondary Christian education** in September.

### READ MORE ONLINE

For more details, search for any of these stories on [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).

## Calvin Hosts Global Congress on Sport and Christianity

The Global Congress on Sport and Christianity, which took place Oct. 23-27 at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich., had a stellar list of 11 keynote speakers but offered the 220 attendees from across North America and beyond more than big names.

"We wanted the congress to be an ecumenical gathering and a space for meaningful dialogue regarding what it means to live faithfully in all areas of work and play," said Brian Bolt, a professor at Calvin who was on the advisory group for the first congress (2016 in York, England) and instrumental in bringing the second to Calvin in 2019.

Bolt was a former athlete at Calvin and is now a Calvin coach. He cochaired this congress with Hope College's Chad Carlson.

Attendees heard from Tim Tebow, a Heisman Trophy winner, former NFL player, and missionary kid whose address, "Find Your Purpose," was open to the public and drew 5,000 people to Van Noord Arena on Calvin's campus.

Loretta Claiborne, a Special Olympics athlete who did not walk or talk until four years of age yet once finished among the top 100 women at the Boston Marathon, and Miroslav Volf, Croatian-born theologian and founder of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, were also headliners.

But there also were more than 100 workshops and breakout sessions with everything from "Taking A Knee: Tim Tebow, Colin Kaepernick and A Tale of Two Quarterbacks on Their Knees" to "Playing Straight into God's Hands: A Comparative Study of Hindu and Christian Understandings of Play."

Jeff Offringa, athletic director at Kalamazoo Christian High School, went into the congress hoping to get more excited about how sports could help his athletes become better Christians.



Photo by Phil de Haan

Tim Tebow, one of 11 keynote speakers at the Global Congress, spoke to an audience of about 5,000.

"The conference exceeded my expectations," said the former Calvin cross-country runner. "I was very impressed with the speakers from all over the world. ... I loved the many different sectional speakers and their ideas for integration of faith and athletics."

For Cheryl Westra, former Calvin basketball player, the event provided an amazing array of options, and she was able to relate much to her work as a physical education teacher at Lynden (Wash.) Christian Middle School.

"I loved Tim Tebow's comment in the Q&A that winning has given him a platform (from which to speak) but losing has given him a testimony," said Westra, a member of Lynden's Sonlight Community CRC. "I don't have the same platform as a famous athlete like Tim Tebow ... but this (congress) encouraged me that my platform with fifth- to eighth-graders is pretty awesome."

—Phil de Haan

## Michigan Church Celebrates 150 Years



Members of East Saugatuck Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., marked 150 years of ministry in 2019 with special services and celebrations from February to October.

Formed in 1869, the church was first known as Collendoorn True Dutch Reformed Church, an overflowing of Graafschap CRC, sometimes referred to as the “mother church of the denomination.” The name changed to East Saugatuck Christian Reformed Church in 1902.

Sisters and lifelong members Judy (Prins) Haverdink and Jean Mans served on the nine-member anniversary committee. Haverdink described one of the year-long projects: After they were led to 1 Peter 2:5 as a theme verse, and thinking about descriptions of Jesus as a rock, “one thing led to another and we came up with Living Stones testimonies,” she said.

“Living Stones” are cardboard boxes that represent a person instrumental in the faith life of a member of the congregation, said Pastor Wayne Bakker. Laying these “stones” ever higher throughout the year was a means of giving thanks for 150 years of Jesus as their rock.

The Saugatuck Fire Department assisted in capturing an aerial photo Aug. 18 of church members in the parking lot of East Saugatuck CRC.

Even as they recognized being built up spiritually, church members also recalled physical buildings of the past. Bakker said the original church building coincidentally burned down at the same time as the 1871 Great Chicago Fire and was soon rebuilt. In 1966, another new building was constructed. In 2000, an addition was made.

East Saugatuck CRC was recognized by the denomination with a plaque commemorating its 150 years. This practice was established by Synod 2018. Executive director Steve Timmermans visited the congregation in July to deliver the plaque.

—Eliza Anderson

### IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. James  
Simon Mantel*

1937-2019

Jim Mantel often felt there was too little emphasis in the church on Jesus’ command to love one another. He sought to be sure it shone brightly in his own life and ministry. Mantel died Aug. 16 of heart failure.

In 1949, Mantel’s family emigrated from the Netherlands to Canada and bought a farm near Hamilton, Ont. At age 14, Mantel left school to help on the farm. At age 16, he was selling flowers at Toronto’s Wholesale Market. That same year he attended a Billy Graham rally, an event that significantly affected his faith formation and the direction of his life. He began high school at age 20, finished in two years, and went on to Calvin College and Seminary.

Ordained in 1967, Mantel served the following Christian Reformed congregations: Athens (Ont.); Nobleford (Alta.); Sunnyslope (Salem, Ore.); Kelowna (B.C.); Sonlight (Regina, Sask.); and Neerlandia (Alta.).

After retirement in 2000 at age 61, the Mantels moved to Three Hills, Alta., where he created Jim’s Garden Centre. He worked in his garden until a week before his death.

Mantel is survived by Louise, his wife of 54 years; four children and spouses; and seven grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## October 2019 Council of Delegates Actions

The Council of Delegates met Oct. 9-11 in Grimsby, Ont. (The Council acts on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church's annual synod when it is not in session.) Many of its tasks are assigned by synod. It took action on several issues, including the following:

### Renovating

The Council approved spending up to \$11 million to renovate and repurpose the land and building of the U.S. headquarters in Grand Rapids, Mich. See p. 22.

### How the Church Speaks on Justice Issues

Synod 2019 assigned the Council to come back with a report to Synod 2020 on the history of the institutional church speaking on political and/or justice issues and how to discern what matters are ecclesiastical. See p. 22.

### Council's Right of Comment

The Council adopted a protocol for commenting on synod agenda items. See p. 21.

### Defining Heresy

Synod 2019 asked the Council to "address the proper and ongoing definition and application of the word 'heresy'" *Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 819. The Council received a single-author document by a Calvin Theological Seminary professor that is now being critiqued by faculty in church polity and church history and

by a minister of the Word. A final report is expected next February. (See story "Synod Declares Kinism a Heresy," July/Aug. 2019.)

### Addressing Abuse of Power

The Council approved the composition for the committee responsible for training of staff, study of the complaint mechanism, and conflict of interest issues. Also approved were the mandate, composition, and timeline for a committee to develop a training program on abuse of power and a code of conduct for all employed ministry staff within the CRC. (See *Acts of Synod 2019*, pp. 794-796, and "Synod Takes Steps to See, End, and Prevent Abuse of Power," July/Aug. 2019.)

### Reimagining Ministry Shares

As the denomination considers a plan to change ministry share collection from an assessment process to a pledge process, Synod 2019 assigned the Council to communicate with churches about the proposed changes. Ministry shares are the financial contributions of local churches to support shared ministries. John Bolt, director of finance and operations for the CRC, reported that the presentations at regional classis meetings have been "exceedingly well received." He said the biggest issue he hears is that classes worry about how to deliberate on how their member congregations will pledge: "We don't see this as classis wagging its finger at churches. We see it as prompting a discussion." Bolt is also asking classes to consider including emerging churches. (Emerging churches are those who don't yet have their own council.) Emerging churches are not part of the current ministry share system. Changing to the new system would need to be approved by Synod 2020. (See "Synod 2019 Opens Ministry Share System," July/Aug. 2019.)

### Retirement Plan for Commissioned Pastors, Church Ministry Staff

Bolt outlined a new defined contribution retirement plan, open to U.S. congregations to adopt for ordained and nonordained employees. Each church can determine which staff will be eligible to participate. All setup costs for the plan are being covered by the denomination's Financial Shalom program. It is a U.S.-only plan. Bolt told *The Banner* that "the determination was made that the Canadian churches did not need the help establishing a plan."

### Resources to Assist Churches with Immigration Issues

Synod 2019 asked the executive director "to identify and communicate appropriate legal and financial resources to assist churches" (*Acts of Synod 2019*, p. 778). The Council received two documents, for Canada and the U.S., providing basic information regarding immigration of religious workers. Also available is an extensive list of nonprofit agencies in several U.S. states. The Council noted that referrals to specific attorneys with expertise in faith-based charity law are best provided at a local level. The resources are available from the CRC's Human Resources office. (See "Synod Relies on Existing Resources to Aid with Immigration," July/Aug. 2019.)

—Gayla R. Postma

## When Should COD Comment on Synod Matters?

How and when should the Council of Delegates send comments to an annual synod in response to matters on the synod agenda?

That was a question the Council wrestled with at its October meeting. (The Council acts on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church's annual synod when it is not in session.)

Council president Paul DeVries noted that at the Council meeting in May 2019, there was a confusion "about what to say, how to say it, if we should even say anything. The issues were compounded by a lack of clarity around the process." So the executive committee proposed a protocol to clarify the process.

According to the protocol adopted by the Council at this meeting, communications from the Council in response to items on the synod agenda will come via the Council's publicly available supplement report, the document that comes out after the formal agenda is released.

For submissions too late for the supplement report, communications from any agency, ministry, or institution will be provided to the executive director who will judge the appropriateness of the communication and provide it to the officers of synod. The officers will decide whether it is presented only to the chair and reporter of the synod advisory committee to which the material relates or to all of synod.

Delegate Tyler Wagenmaker, Classis Zeeland, expressed hesitancy about using the right of comment. "If the (Council) gives an opinion, it allows synod to say 'COD wrestled with this, we don't have to.' It almost excuses synod from doing that wrestling. ... Only in rare circumstances should the (Council) comment."

Delegate Susan Hoekema, Classis Northcentral Iowa, disagreed. "I think it is important that (Council) raise its voice and contribute information and insight. ... The (Council) is capable of making decisions on when or when not to comment."

The Council adopted the protocol and will inform Synod 2020 of the decision.

—Gayla R. Postma

### IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Dr. Paul  
H. Redhouse*

1925-2019

Paul Redhouse, who faithfully served among the Navajo people for many decades, died Sept. 5.

Born in Teec Nos Pos, Ariz., Redhouse was introduced to the gospel of Christ during his early boarding school education but also received instruction in Navajo traditional teachings from his father, who was a medicine man. In 1944, while serving with the U.S. Navy during World War II, he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

Returning home, he began interpreting for a missionary who recognized his gifts for ministry. After graduating from Reformed Bible Institute in Grand Rapids, Mich., in 1953, Redhouse did volunteer ministry at Red Valley (Ariz.) CRC. After examination by the CRC in 1963, he was recognized as a minister of the Word. He served Red Valley CRC until 1970, then became pastor at Four Corners CRC in Teec Nos Pos.

Redhouse preached across Navajo land through radio broadcasts, was involved in the publication of the first edition of the Navajo hymnbook and spearheaded the formation of Classis Red Mesa. In 1999, the Flagstaff Indian Bible College conferred upon him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

Redhouse is survived by Edith, his wife of 72 years: five sons: two daughters: 20 grandchildren: and six great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

### IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Dr. Timothy  
Pavitt Palmer*

1951-2019

For 32 years, Tim Palmer served with Christian Reformed World Missions (now Resonate Global Mission) and devoted his life to the people of Nigeria as a seminary professor and scholar. One colleague described him as "an astute researcher, a courageous preacher, a humble and able administrator." Palmer died Aug. 20 at age 68.

A graduate of Calvin College and Seminary, Palmer continued studying at the Free University of Amsterdam from 1976 to 1984, completing his Ph.D. at the University of Aberdeen in 1988. He was ordained that same year.

Meanwhile, in 1985, Palmer had started his life's work at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria. A lasting legacy will be his six books on theology and research written with an eye to making Reformed thinking accessible to modern African students.

Palmer delighted in birds, bridge, chess, biking, history, mountains, Africa, books, politics, walks, Europe, tennis, family, and theology. The Palmers moved to Lincoln, Neb., at the end of 2016. Even after an advanced cancer diagnosis, he took daily walks around Holmes Lake and taught two studies in his local church.

He is survived by his wife, Wilma; two children and their spouses; and six grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## CRCNA's Michigan Headquarters Getting \$11M Overhaul



A plan to give the Christian Reformed Church's U.S. headquarters an \$11 million overhaul got the green light from the CRC's Council of Delegates in early October. (The Council acts on behalf of the CRC's annual synod when it is not in session.) Necessary maintenance that has been deferred makes up about \$3 million of that cost.

John Bolt, the CRC's director of finance and operations, told *The Banner* that the overhaul is to make the building "more appropriate for our ministry into the 21st century, including rightsizing the facility" and making it more compatible with current collaborative ministry practices.

Bolt told the Council the current building has excess space. He said it was put together in five different stages over several decades.

The north section, the oldest part of the existing building, will be demolished. Excess warehouse space will be converted to offices. Deferred maintenance projects such as a new roof, new air handling equipment, and repair and paving of the parking lot will be completed.

To pay for the renovations, part of the 13 acres currently owned by the denomination will be sold. An additional \$3 million will be raised in a capital campaign, and the remaining \$5.6 million will be borrowed.

Delegate Wendell Davelaar from Classis Northcentral Iowa supported the plan. "You don't see farmers use the old combine," he said. "They reach the point where they spend for a new combine. They do what they have to do to do the job."

—Gayla R. Postma

## When Should the Church Speak?

After being asked by Synod 2019 to review historical instances of the denomination speaking and to define what is an "ecclesiastical matter," the Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates is recommending the next synod appoint a study committee. (The Council acts on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church's annual synod when it is not in session.)

Synod 2019 noted that opposing overtures (requests to synod) both cited *Church Order* Article 28-a as support. That article states that the assemblies of the church "shall transact ecclesiastical matters only, and shall deal with them in an ecclesiastical manner." It isn't the first time synods have faced differing political understandings of justice, including questions about what matters are ecclesiastical.

So Synod 2019 instructed the Council to do historical research about the rationale for synodical decisions in the past dealing with political and/or justice matters. In addition to historical research, synod wanted the Council to give key consideration to "What is an ecclesiastical matter, and what is the rationale for determining it?" It asked the Council to report back to Synod 2020 (*Acts of Synod 2019*, Article 77, Recommendation 2, p. 821).

The Council completed the first part of the instruction, receiving historical research done by staff, noting when various synods spoke on political events over the past 100 years. In the early part of the 20th century, various synods wrote to the president of the United States about issues such as use of profanity in the armed forces (1943, 1953), sale of liquor near military training schools (1942), observing the Lord's Day on military bases (1942), and support during war and difficult times (1918, 1960).

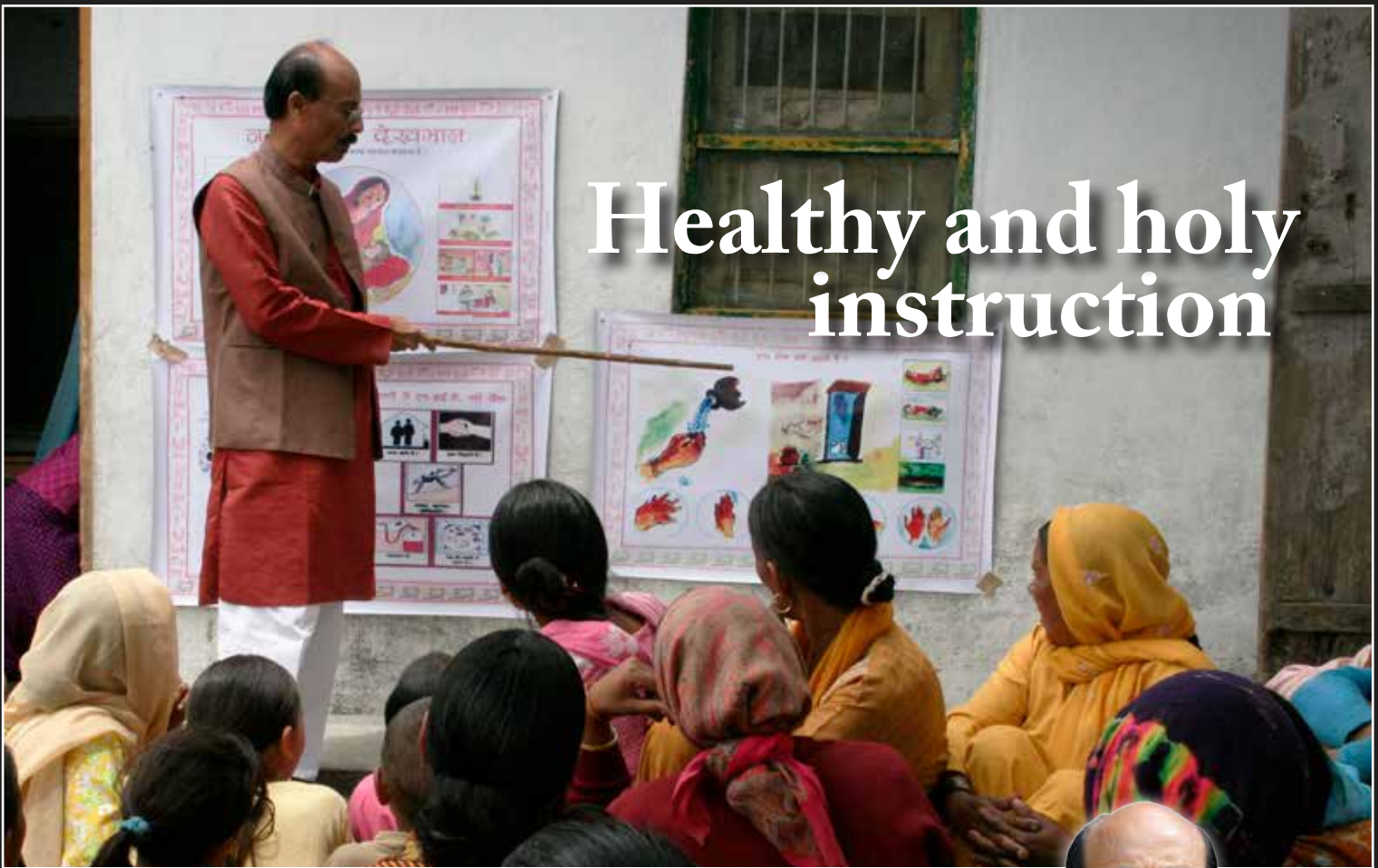
In the latter part of the century and into the 21st century, synods called on denominational members, congregations, assemblies and agencies to advocate regarding abortion legislation (1976, 1988, 2010), assisted suicide legislation (2010), immigration reform (2010), and climate change (2012).

Rather than try to define "ecclesiastical matter," the Council is recommending that synod itself appoint a study committee to discern that and to develop a definition moving forward. Its rationale is that these issues are of great gravity and complexity in today's world.

"If we need a task force, it should come from synod," said delegate Susan Hoekema, Classis Northwest Iowa.

—Gayla R. Postma

# Healthy and holy instruction



*“The basics of the community health ministry of the Luke Society Odisha are teaching, preaching and healing, through which we use ourselves for the Lord’s kingdom. We eliminate the gap of unhygienic habits of villagers to promote healthy, happy living. Through our 20 years of holistic ministry in Odisha’s tribal villages, there have been remarkable changes in the physical and spiritual lives of these villagers.*”



**REV. PREM ROUT**  
ODISHA, INDIA

**The Luke Society is a Christian international medical ministry which partners with indigenous health professionals and uses medicine as a tool to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world.**

Encouraging healthy lifestyles happens as much outside a clinic as inside with directors supporting education efforts on healthy habits and choices.

Training health promoters with basic medical skills increases the ministry’s impact exponentially as they return to serve in their remote villages.

Community health education instruction includes topics such as hygiene, disease prevention, clean water and sexual health.



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**Living in the  
'Not Yet'**



By Matt Hubers, Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

Every day, God is at work in the lives of billions of people around the world. Within the Christian Reformed Church, many pastors, missionaries, volunteers, and laypeople are blessed to be able to witness God's work in people's lives. We celebrate moments when someone gives their life to Christ, goes into ministry, or finds an opportunity to share the gospel. We witness God's miracles and celebrate the success stories.

But until those successful moments, ministry can be hard. Often we respond faithfully to God's call, but the issues we strive to address remain unresolved. We find ourselves constantly in the middle of our own and other people's stories.

"You have to be able to release control over that ending," explained Sarah Roelofs, director of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. Because the nature of their ministry of providing care at moments of need, being "in between" is common for chaplains.

"It takes a deep level of trust that the Holy Spirit will not only work through our ministry, but that someone will come after me to continue the journey toward spiritual healing and renewal," Roelofs said. "It twists your heart to do it. We care so much about someone's well-being, and we want transformation to happen. We wait, we pray, and we hope—that hearts will heal, that our ministry will have meaning for someone, and that God will bring about life-changing moments, even if we don't get to see them."

However one is involved in ministry, it is important to recognize these "not yet" moments and encourage each other along the journey. Here are two stories of hope within unresolved ministry:

### God, I'm Waiting

In 2018, Beverly Weeks renewed her candidacy to become a minister of the Word. It was the fifth time she had renewed it. It had been 11 years since she first began her Master of Divinity program, and five years since she had been eligible for a call with a church. The waiting weighed heavily on her soul.

Weeks remembered when she first became a candidate in 2013. Her fellow students assured her that she would be among the first to receive a call.

Five years and more than 120 applications later, no church had extended a call to her. Waiting was frustrating, but Weeks still strongly felt God's call to ordained ministry. She found herself wondering, "God, I'm waiting, desiring to serve you. What are you doing?"

One of the hardest parts for Weeks was knowing what to do while she waited. Weeks' own church did not allow women to preach, so she participated in worship ministry and supported GEMS (the church's club for girls). She took opportunities to preach at other churches and continued to learn and to hone her pastoral skills. Three different times, Weeks served as an interim pastor: twice in Rochester, N.Y., and once in Rockford, Mich. She served faithfully and strove to be a blessing to her husband and family, all while waiting for God to open the door.



Beverly Weeks

While waiting for a permanent call, Weeks said she saw God's encouragement in her life. He opened her eyes, for example, to the many people in Scripture who waited—Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Moses, Hannah, Zachariah and Elizabeth, the apostle Paul, the Israelites, and many more.

Weeks also recalled what one of her seminary professors had told her: "Do not be afraid of the desert. There's life there. God is there."

In 2015, Weeks took a life-changing trip to Israel. "I'll forever be blessed," she said, "by the sight of a shepherd girl and her small flock of sheep out in a field. That was a gift from God, reminding me of his call for me to be one of his undershepherd girls."

Others in the CRCNA noticed Weeks' perseverance. In 2017, Beverly connected with the denomination's Office of Leadership Diversity, a new initiative created to develop leadership among those currently underrepresented in churches and denominational leadership, such as women and people from various ethnic groups.

Denise Posie is the director of Leadership Diversity. She encouraged Weeks to help her plan a 2018 gathering of women in leadership.

"She stayed connected and involved with God's work," said Posie. "In waiting, we trust God's guidance in opening doors for service. Waiting can be hard. What I appreciated most about Beverly is that she remained hopeful."

Not every candidate for ministry receives a call. Some may renew a couple of times before a church calls them. Others may choose a different path. But Weeks continued to feel God calling her to ministry. Finally, in 2018, she received a call to serve as a part-time pastor of visitation at Blythefield CRC in Rockford, Mich. She had waited five and a half years. She attributes her new ministry, and her perseverance, to the grace of God.

“God continued to nudge my heart toward ordained ministry throughout all those years,” she said. “It seemed that he was always whispering, ‘Don’t give up.’”

Weeks’ years of waiting remind her that her ministry is always unresolved. God is constantly preparing the way for her to serve God and God’s people, though she may not know exactly how.

“Will this always be the place where I serve? I have no idea,” Weeks said. “But throughout these past 11 years of training and waiting, I’ve learned to trust that God knows what he is doing.”

#### Clouds and Mountains

Brandon is a 34-year-old Navajo man. For years he has struggled with uncontrolled diabetes and long-term alcohol abuse, and he ends up in the hospital frequently for both diseases. Many of his family members have died because of alcohol addiction. Brandon has no job, limited access to his children, and no permanent home. He relies on family members and friends for money to buy alcohol. The doctors, nurses, and social workers who have treated Brandon describe him as one of the most intractable addicts they have seen, and they see very little chance that he will ever stop drinking.

Rev. Kris Pikaart is a chaplain at Rehoboth McKinley Christian Hospital in Gallup, N.M., where she has seen Brandon intermittently for years. She describes him as “forthcoming and engaged, always very clean with a good haircut, and usually well-dressed.”

He seems to care genuinely what she thinks of him, Pikaart added, and he often asks her, “Are you disappointed in me? Have I let you down?” Every time Pikaart sees Brandon, he says he is “going to quit for real this time,” but refuses counseling and rehab. He is usually back at the hospital within a week.

Over the years, Pikaart has clocked more hours with Brandon than any other patient she can recall. Every time he comes in, he shares a little more about his story. He tells her how his father drank from the time he was a boy, and would often be violent or completely absent. How his uncle gave him his first beer when he was 11 years old. How he lost so many people—his dad, uncles, aunts, and brother—to alcohol.

Brandon’s girlfriend told him he was smart and encouraged him to go to school. She died six years ago in an alcohol-related accident. He had her name—Hope—tattooed on his arm. It took a year of visits before he would share that story.

“He often asks me, humiliated, if I have seen him drunk on the street,” Pikaart said. “I have. He calls me sometimes, drunk. Usually from the mall, where he spends most of his days. He finds my card in his backpack and asks me for money or sometimes a ride. He is sorry later when he sobers up at the hospital.”

One day in August, Pikaart got a call from Brandon. She had not heard from him in nine months and was worried he had died. He said, “Nope, I’ve been in rehab. I’ve been sober for nine months now. I wanted to tell you. I thought you might be glad to hear.”

“Oh, and there is one other reason I called you. I have been wearing the same clothes for a while now and I need some new T-shirts. Can you wire me 20 bucks to go to Walmart to buy me some nice new T-shirts?”

Pikaart declined to do so. After she hung up, Pikaart laughed and sobbed alone in her office. She had hoped for so long. She wanted to think Brandon was really sober, that he had gotten better, but she had no way of knowing.

“You just don’t get slam dunks in this world,” she said. “Not when you are working with humans. I can’t believe how badly I want one—a hole-in-one, a flawless run, the big kahuna. I so want to believe that we still get to see miracles. But the miracles are always cloudy.”

Pikaart has learned ministry is, by nature, always unresolved. For every success story, there are thousands more still in progress. There is always more work, more learning, and more waiting. In these times, when we can’t see the fruits of our labor, we rely on hope: for peace, for healing, and for precious glimpses of God moving in the world.

“Eighteen years of this work, and I am still never quite sure what I am looking at,” said Pikaart. “It’s like the cloud/mountain I saw on the way to work. My eyes couldn’t tell which it was for a bit—a billowing collection of water molecules, or timeless rock and dirt. I can’t see what is miracle and what is just hope or wishful thinking. And maybe it doesn’t matter so much in the end, since we are only asked to be faithful, not right. They are both beautiful, after all, clouds and mountains.” **B**



Kris Pikaart

# Unresolved Tensions in West Africa

**THE FIRST TIME BAHATI\*** heard biblical radio messages at her home in Niger, she was intrigued. She began listening as often as she could, but always in secret. Then one day, her father caught her.

Hearing the words from the radio, Bahati's father began questioning her. She knew she couldn't hide it any longer, so she told her father that she had left Islam behind to become a Christian.

That changed Bahati's life forever.

Bahati's father kicked her and her 3-year-old daughter out of the house. He also told all the people who had employed her that she had become a Christian. They fired her, leaving her homeless and without an income.

"Bahati had made her living cleaning houses and gone home at night after work," said Rev. Marc Nabie, the French ministry leader in West Africa for Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI). "But now, because of her belief in Jesus, she and her daughter were forced to sleep under a tree."

## Messages of Peace

Bahati's situation is similar to what many of BTGMI's French ministry listeners are facing throughout West Africa. Growing tensions between Christians and some Islamic sects are resulting in horrific violence.

"A priest and 16 of his church's members have already been killed. Another priest (was) kidnapped and is still missing," reported Nabie.

In response, BTGMI's French ministry team is developing a series of messages sharing biblical views on peace, justice, tolerance, unity, and



Bahati and her daughter are among many Christians in West Africa who have had to flee their homeland out of fear (representative photo for their safety).

reconciliation. The series also will provide churches with security advice and provide material and psychological assistance to affected Christians.

"We hope to bring a message of peace and to be salt and light in the darkness," Nabie added.

## Finding Help

Eventually, Bahati decided to make her way to the offices in Niger where BTGMI and Words of Hope—the media ministry associated with the Reformed Church in America—partner to broadcast messages like the ones Bahati heard.

"We connected Bahati and her daughter to a local church where she now worships and is receiving help as she

gets back on her feet," shares a BTGMI ministry partner in Niger.

In spite of all she's lost, Bahati is thankful for being part of God's family and for the radio messages she heard.

Tensions between Muslims and Christians in Burkina Faso are getting worse. Pray the new radio messages will contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the region. As more people seek help, pray for ministry staff and churches as they discern the best way to help.

\*name changed for safety

—Brian Clark,  
Back to God Ministries International

## The View from Here

## Waiting and Hope

**EVERY SO OFTEN** we find ourselves waiting without any idea of how long we will wait or what the outcome will be. Perhaps your adult son or daughter is estranged from you. While you pray continually, you don't know when or how that relationship will be reconciled. Maybe you are waiting for medical test results. The hours turn into days, and you yearn for a good outcome.

We are not the only ones waiting. Recently I had dinner with my youngest son's college friend Emmanuel. Emmanuel's parents had fled their native Rwanda due to the 1994 genocide, and he was born in Tanzania. He, his brother, and his parents waited there in a refugee camp for resolution. They were like millions of other refugees in our world today, waiting and depending upon decision makers far away to determine their future. In Emmanuel's case, after many years of waiting, the family ended up in Boise, Idaho. From there, Emmanuel found Trinity Christian College.

More than 20 years ago, Paul Caldwell and Sean Ivory composed a choral piece titled "Hope for Resolution" (you can find it on YouTube). It begins with a splendid arrangement of the centuries-old hymn "Of the Father's Love Begotten" and weaves in the South African song "Thula Sizwe (Nation, Do Not Cry)." The result is a compelling piece of music that expresses the longing of an oppressed people as they wait for resolution in the context of God's abiding love.

Old Testament Israel also waited. In their waiting for a savior, they often-times misconstrued the promises they had been given and even forsook God for the idols of their neighbors. That's our challenge as well. The Savior has



Fekadu Timmermans (left) with his friend Emmanuel.

come and is coming again. In our foolishness, as we wait for this return, we often put our sights on the material idols of our day.

Whether oppressed or tempted, whether waiting for a homecoming or for test results, we need instead to put ourselves in the hands of God's abiding love. Today, as we enter the time of Advent—the time of waiting—let's encourage each other to put ourselves, our concerns and hurts, and our unresolved hopes and dreams into God's hands and experience the love that makes the wounded whole.

One last thought: what a beautiful reminder of God's abiding love it is to know that parents waiting in a refugee camp knew God's love so intimately that they named their son Emmanuel—God with us!



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

## Espera y Esperanza

**DE VEZ EN CUANDO NOS** encontramos esperando sin tener idea de cuánto tiempo vamos a esperar ni cuál será el resultado. Tal vez su hija o hijo adulto está distanciado de usted. Aunque usted ora continuamente, no sabe cuándo o cómo se reconciliará esa relación. Tal vez esté esperando los resultados de unas pruebas médicas. Las horas se convierten en días, y usted anhela un buen resultado.

No somos los únicos esperando. Hace poco cené con Emmanuel, un amigo universitario de mi hijo menor. Los padres de Emmanuel tuvieron que huir de su tierra, Rwanda, debido al genocidio de 1994, y él nació en Tanzania. Allí, él, su hermano y sus padres esperaron una resolución en un campo de refugiados. Ellos, como millones de otros refugiados en nuestro mundo hoy, estaban esperando la determinación de su futuro a manos de las decisiones tomadas por encargados lejanos. En el caso de Emmanuel, después de muchos años de espera, la familia terminó en Boise, Idaho. Desde allí, Emmanuel encontró *Trinity Christian College*.

Hace más de 20 años, Paul Caldwell y Sean Ivory compusieron una pieza coral titulada "Esperanza por una resolución" (se puede encontrar en YouTube como "Hope for Resolution"). Comienza con un arreglo espléndido del himno centenario "Of the Father's Love Begotten" (Del amor del Padre nacido) y entretiene la canción sudafricana "Thula Sizwe" (Nación, no llores). El resultado es una pieza musical cautivadora que expresa el anhelo de un pueblo oprimido en espera de una resolución dentro del contexto del amor eterno de Dios.

El Israel del Antiguo Testamento también esperó. En su espera de un salvador, a menudo malinterpretaban

## 기다림과 소망



Fekadu Timmermans (izquierda) con su amigo Emmanuel.

las promesas que les habían sido dadas e incluso abandonaban a Dios por los ídolos de sus vecinos. Ese también es nuestro desafío. El Salvador ha venido y vendrá de nuevo. En nuestra necesidad, al esperar este regreso, a menudo ponemos nuestra mirada en los ídolos materiales de nuestros tiempos.

Cualquiera que sea el caso, seamos oprimidos o tentados, esperemos un reencuentro o los resultados de unas pruebas, necesitamos más bien ponernos en las manos del amor eterno de Dios. Hoy, al entrar en el tiempo de Adviento —el tiempo de espera— animémonos unos a otros a poner en manos de Dios nuestras propias vidas, nuestras preocupaciones y heridas, y nuestras esperanzas y sueños no resueltos, y experimentemos el amor que hace que los heridos se sientan sanados.

Un último pensamiento: ¡qué hermoso recordatorio del amor perdurable de Dios es saber que unos padres en espera en un campo de refugiados conocían tan íntimamente el amor de Dios que nombraron a su hijo Emmanuel—Dios con nosotros!

우리는 얼마나 오래 기다려야 하는지, 또 어떤 결과가 나올지 모르는 채 기다려야 할 때가 많습니다. 어쩌면 성인이 된 자녀와의 사이가 소원해졌을 수도 있습니다. 끊임없이 기도를 하면서도 언제 어떻게 그 관계가 회복될지 알 수 없습니다. 어떤 사람은 건강검진 결과를 기다릴지도 모르겠습니다. 몇 시간이 몇 날이 되도록 좋은 결과를 기다릴 것입니다.

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20여년 전에, 폴 코드웰과 셀 아이보리는 “해결을 위한 소망”이라는 성가곡을 작곡했습니다. (유튜브에서 찾을 수 있습니다.) “아버지의 사랑때문에”라는 수 백년된 오랜 찬송을 멋지게 편곡하여 “민족이여, 울지 마세요.”라는 남아프리카 노래와 어우러지게 만들었습니다. 그 결과 하나님의 변함없는 사랑 안에서 문제가 해결되기를 기다리는 억압받는 자들의 소망을 표현한 강렬한 곡이 탄생했습니다.

구약의 이스라엘 백성들도 기다렸습니다. 구세주를 기다리는 동안, 그들은 종종 받은 약속을 잘못 오해하고, 이방의 우상을 섬기려고 심지어 하나님을 버리기도 했습니다. 우리도 동일한 어려움을 겪습니다. 구세주는 이미 오셨고, 다시 오실 것입니다. 어리석은 우리는 예수님의 재림을 기다리면서도 이 시대의 눈에 보이는 우상에 시선을 빼앗기곤 합니다.

억압을 받든지 유혹을 받든지 자녀가 집에 돌아오기를 기다리든지 건강검진 결과를 기다리든지 간에 우리는 하나님의 변함없는 사랑의 손길에 우리를 맡겨야 합니다. 오늘, 우리가 기다리는 시간인 대림절에 들어설 때, 우리 자신과 우리의 염려, 상처, 해결되지 않은



페카두 팀머만스 (좌) 와 그의 친구 임마누엘

바램과 꿈을 하나님의 손에 맡겨드리자고 서로 격려하십시오. 그리고 우리 상처를 치유하는 그 사랑을 경험하십시오.

끝으로 임마누엘과 그 부모님의 이야기는 우리에게 하나님의 변함없는 사랑을 아름답게 상기시켜줍니다. 난민 캠프의 기다림 속에서 그 부모가 하나님의 사랑을 얼마나 친밀하게 느꼈으면 자녀의 이름을 임마누엘이라고 지었겠습니까? 하나님이 우리와 함께 하십니다!

## ‘Much Left to Do’ Among the Fulani

**RESONATE GLOBAL MISSION** missionaries Dawn and Gene Michelson recently retired from the field after serving among the Fulani in West Africa for 30 years. Through their work and that of others, they saw nearly 100 people come to Christ. But with an estimated 40 million Fulani in the region, the Michelsons said there is still much work left to do.

The Fulani are one of the largest people groups in West Africa, and many are devout Muslims. Even for those who are apathetic toward faith, Islamic traditions and beliefs are woven into daily life. Resonate missionaries who have served among the Fulani often have said, “To be Fulani is to be Muslim.” The decision for a Fulani person to follow Christ means turning away from a lifestyle.

“Muslims are famously unlikely to convert,” said Dawn. “We knew from the beginning that it would be God’s Holy Spirit at work if we saw anyone at all follow Jesus.”

Despite how slowly the Holy Spirit seemed to move, God was at work.

After they arrived in West Africa and learned Pulaar, the Fulani language, Dawn and Gene heard from a development agency about a village chief who had learned to read. He was reading the gospel of Matthew but was unfamiliar with Christianity. He asked the agency whether there was anyone who could help him understand.

Dawn and Gene packed their bags and moved into the village. The chief told them Jesus had “grabbed” him. He loved to read the Bible out loud. Male leaders from the village would gather in the chief’s hut, and Gene joined them. Gene said the leader liked to read slowly, as if to soak in every word.



Resonate missionaries Dawn and Gene Michelson recently retired from sharing the gospel with the Fulani people in West Africa.

He would often pause and exclaim: “Isn’t that incredible?” He’d ask the men what they thought about the passage and what they thought about Jesus. Gene was always given time to speak.

Over the next 10 years, the chief and four other people gave their lives to Christ.

“It was inspiring to see how the believers dug into God’s word and how they shared about Jesus with their neighbors—and especially the travelers who came through their village,” Dawn said.

Dawn and Gene moved on to share the gospel with people in other villages. “All (evangelism) really means is giving people an opportunity to hear about Jesus,” said Gene. “How you do that varies from place to place.”

The Michelsons taught English classes, distributed books written in Pulaar, and taught people how to read and write in Pulaar. Most importantly, they said, they tried to be good friends and neighbors. When they left the field in March 2019, they said goodbye to many Fulani friends who had become followers of Christ.



“We did our best, but there is so much left to do,” said Dawn. “Our work is unfinished because of the millions of Fulani (people) who have never had the chance to respond to Jesus in their own language and culture.”

There are still people who haven’t heard about Jesus. Even as Dawn and Gene retire from the field, ministry among the Fulani people must continue. Your support of Resonate through ministry shares helps make this ministry possible.

—Cassie Westrate,  
Resonate Global Mission

# Looking Ahead to January Series 2020

**THE 2020 EDITION** of Calvin University's January Series begins Jan. 8. This award-winning series starts at noon each weekday and will feature a wide range of experts who are leading some of the world's most pivotal and timely conversations. Among the presenters are White House journalist Ann Compton, *Tuesdays with Morrie* author Mitch Albom, and family piano quintet The 5 Browns. The series can be heard on Calvin's campus and all over the world via livestream and at more than 50 remote webcast locations.

Kristi Potter, January Series director since 2008, reflects on the series' mission and looks ahead to the 2020 lineup:

## 1. Why does the January Series exist?

To promote continued learning. We bring in speakers from around the world, dive into important topics of the day, hold good discussions, and are challenged to think deeply about a lot of timely and important matters. We can't make a difference in the world if we don't understand what's happening in the world. So this learning opportunity really equips us to be better global citizens.

## 2. How does the January Series help people navigate today's complex issues?

It provides us with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of a number of issues, and it also challenges us to consider viewpoints that may be different than the ones we hold. By doing this, we can have more informed conversations and also develop a greater empathy for those with whom we disagree. We want to be better for the world, be able to have civil discourse with our neighbors, co-workers, friends,



and family, and I see the January Series being a model for how this can be done.

## 3. What topic or speaker in the 2020 lineup are you especially excited about?

I'm excited about Cathy O'Neil's talk about algorithms. When I was reading her book, I learned so much about what's happening behind the scenes when we click on the computer, and I was amazed by how much we're being controlled by that—all the different ways these algorithms are making biased decisions. I think it's a really important issue that we need to be aware of, and it is important that we know there is hope for doing it differently.

We need to raise up computer science students who know about these issues and can be better programmers. We need to have common citizens stand up and say

we aren't going to allow these things to happen. And, we need business owners to look at their own algorithms to make sure that they are fair before they use them for various purposes.

This is why I love the January Series: we all come from various backgrounds, and each one of us can be shaped by these ideas so that we can promote flourishing in all areas of culture, all over the world.

To view this year's lineup or to find a remote location near you, visit [calvin.edu/january-series](http://calvin.edu/january-series).

—Matt Kucinski,  
Calvin University



You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,  
and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the  
ends of the earth. -Acts 1:8

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# Christmas Traditions Around the World

**THINK FOR A MINUTE:** do you know someone who comes from another country? Maybe you have family living in a different country. If you know someone like that, ask them how they celebrate Christmas! Not everyone celebrates Christmas the same way we do here in Canada or the United States.

## Did You Know?

Some families in a country called **Norway** hide their brooms at Christmastime. Wouldn't it be nice to skip sweeping for a few days?

Every Christmas in Caracas, **Venezuela**, families head to church in the early morning. That's not so different, but for reasons no one seems to remember, they go to church on roller skates! How do you get to church? By car? Walking? Riding your bike?

In **Iceland**, 13 troll-like characters called Yule Lads come out to play. The Yule Lads visit children across the country for the 13 days leading up to Christmas. Each night of Yuletide, children place their best shoes by the window. And each night a different Yule Lad leaves gifts in the shoes of children who have been nice and rotting potatoes in the shoes of those who have been naughty. Hopefully you won't get any potatoes!

People in the **Philippines** host a Giant Lantern Festival on the Saturday before Christmas Eve. The festival takes place in San Fernando, known as "The Christmas Capital of the Philippines."

## What's the Reason for the Season?

We know that Christmas trees, presents, and spending time with family and friends are all wonderful things

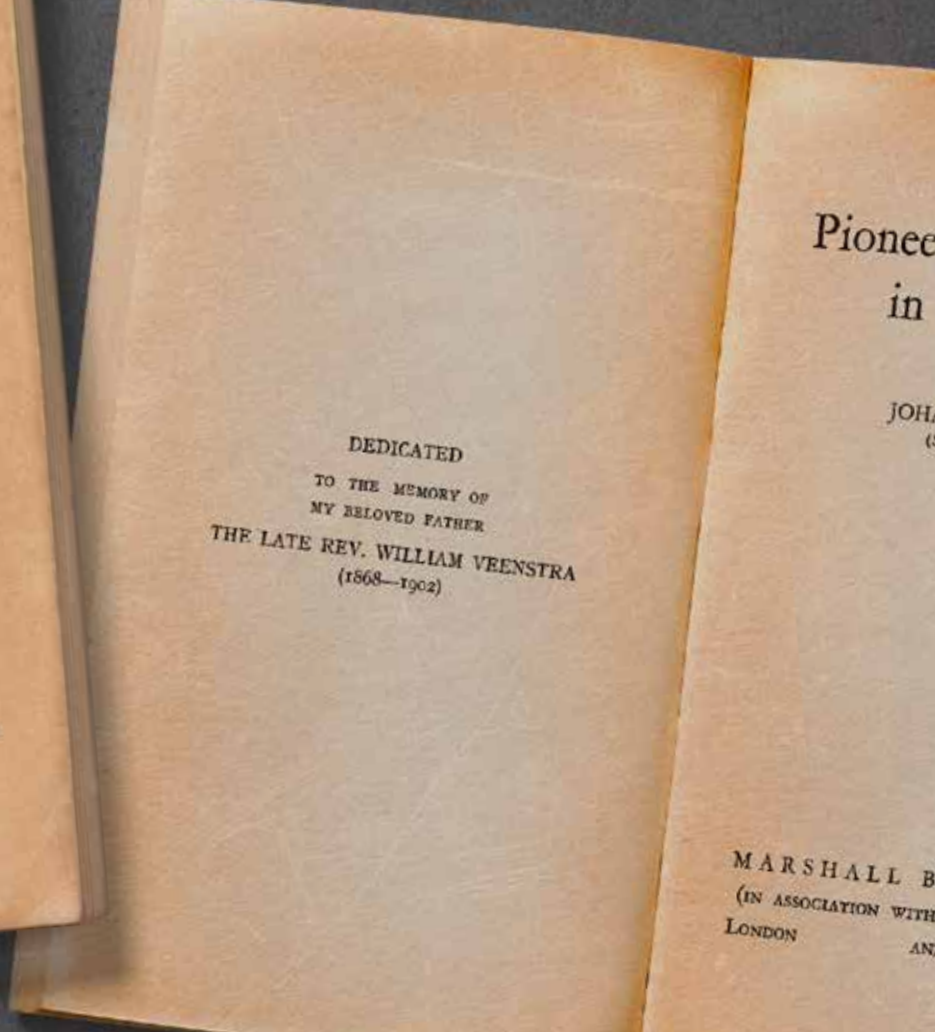
during the holidays. But why do we do all these things? Always remember that Jesus is the reason for the season. On Christmas Day, Christians all around the world celebrate that Jesus was born. God sent his one and only son to take away our sins and bring us new life. When Jesus was born as a little baby to his human parents, Mary and Joseph, he was already the most important King on earth.

## Here's How to Make a Paper Lantern

Want to make a paper lantern? Visit this website to find out how: [wikihow.com/Make-a-Paper-Lantern](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Paper-Lantern). **B**



Liz Brown teaches at Aquinas College in the School of Education and loves helping students develop new ideas within curriculum.



# The True Courage of Johanna Veenstra

By John Medendorp

**I**t is good to celebrate our accomplishments as a church, especially in the areas where God has blessed our work. This is one of the vital duties of the church: to recognize where God has used the saints to spread the gospel and further his kingdom message on the earth.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Johanna Veenstra's mission to Nigeria. Veenstra was the first international missionary from the Christian Reformed Church, and our denominational agencies are rightfully making a big deal about this. Veenstra's courage and tenacity in the face of adversity marked the beginning of a revival.

Today, the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria boasts more than 200,000

members. Reformed Christians of various denominations across Nigeria total over a million members. Veenstra's legacy of mission speaks for itself. The Lord undoubtedly established the work of her hands, and it is right for us to celebrate and laud her as a daughter of our denomination and a model from whom we have much to learn.

However, there is a crucial element missing from the retelling of her story in most of the literature I have seen thus far. Although articles and pamphlets refer to her "wrestling with her call" and "facing adversity," nothing I have read explicitly names the greatest obstacle she faced in her preparation for mission: the institutional opposition of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

## Departing in Trust

In the early 1900s, a missional fervor was sweeping the evangelical world. The World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1910, is considered by many historians to be the advent of the modern Protestant missionary movement, inaugurating a century-long global explosion of the gospel.

The Christian Reformed Church was part of that missionary effort. From 1910 to 1920, the synod of the CRCNA received numerous overtures from classes to expand denominational missionary endeavors overseas. Synod 1918 finally established a committee to explore two possible mission fields: Central and Southern Africa (including

a large region known as Sudan) and China.

In those days, Synod met only every other year, so when Johanna Veenstra followed God's call to Nigeria in 1919, she left her home with support from her denomination still under review. When the denomination reconvened for Synod 1920, the committee recommended official support for missionary efforts in China rather than in Africa, leaving Veenstra without official denominational support.

### **A Racist Decision**

Synod's decision to support mission efforts in China rather than Nigeria included the following grounds:

*The inhabitants of the Sudan belong to the type of people from whom little can be expected for the kingdom of God.*

and

*The conservative, intellectual spirit of the Chinese harmonizes more with the nature of our people than the emotional nature of the Africans* (Acts of Synod 1920, p. 50).

Following the adoption of this recommendation with its stated grounds, one delegate attempted to get synod to clarify its decision by making the motion that "Synod declare that the above named decision be interpreted to mean that we first of all ... attempt to begin our new foreign mission program ... in China." This motion was defeated, making clear the CRC's stance at the time: the people of Africa are not a people who we can expect to contribute to the kingdom of God in any meaningful way. Better to focus our mission efforts elsewhere, among more "conservative" and "intellectual" people—people more like us.

The CRC not only left Johanna Veenstra without support, but in its grounds and actions, it dismissed an entire continent of people based on their cultures and races. Veenstra proved the church's assumptions wrong, of course, but it was not until 1937, four years after Veenstra had died, that

Part of recognizing our history also means reckoning with our historic and entrenched sinful attitudes, including the stain of racism and prejudice that continues to mar our witness as followers of Jesus Christ.

the CRCNA began the process of taking ownership of the (by then very successful) mission field in Nigeria, a process not formalized until 1940.

### **Owning Our Mistakes**


In his 2019 book *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, Jemar Tisby, an African American historian and pastor in the Reformed tradition, points out an unsettling truth. In our retelling of the history of race and racism in America, we tend to tell a story of heroes and villains. Heroes are people like Martin Luther King Jr., people who stood up for what was right in the face of enormous pressure and opposition. Villains tend to be unnamed and faceless, like "the Ku Klux Klan," "lynch mobs," and "slave owners." The

story that goes untold is the story of the majority of white Christians who remained silent in their complicit acceptance of the status quo.

I fear we have done exactly that in our retelling of Johanna Veenstra's story. Although the CRC did repent of its past decision at Synod 2007, we are now using her legacy like a mascot when the reality is that we abandoned her because of entrenched cultural racism that our church had neither the courage to fight nor the prophetic insight to see. Part of recognizing our history also means reckoning with our historic and entrenched sinful attitudes, including the stain of racism and prejudice that continues to mar our witness as followers of Jesus Christ.

It is good and right to celebrate saints like Veenstra who follow God's call despite opposition and adversity. But claiming her as a mascot for CRC missions does a grave injustice to her legacy. Veenstra followed God's call when her denomination would not, and God established the work of her hands. Veenstra brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Nigeria when the Synod of the CRCNA said they belonged "to the type of people from whom little can be expected for the kingdom of God." Veenstra continued to follow God's call on her heart in spite of her denomination's complicit acceptance of an ideology of white supremacy.

Veenstra's legacy is that she did what was right even when her church told her it was wrong.

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9). 



John Medendorp is a pastor at Community Christian Reformed Church in Kitchener, Ont.

# Predicting the Future: No Crystal Ball Required

Here's the potentially uncomfortable yet comforting truth: the "you" you're going to be someday hinges on the "you" you decide to be *this* day.



Corey Van Huizen is the pastor of The Gathering, a church plant in Caledonia, Mich. He and his wife, Alanna, love all things on, in, or near water.

**I THINK HUMAN BEINGS** have always been interested in being able to predict the future. Whether it's through crystal balls, reading palms or cards, or simply cracking a tasteless cookie in search of a good fortune, people have always looked for ways to reassure themselves about the unknowns ahead. On the first day of a new class, a new school, a new job, a new relationship, a new responsibility, or a new living situation, the unknown is unnerving. If you're like me, you've thought to yourself, "Wouldn't it be nice if I could see what my work, my school, my classes, my career, and my relationships will be like—even what *I* will be like?"

I can distinctly remember being in the eighth grade daydreaming about the kind of guy I would be when I was 25. I'd be married, working, and somehow a different person. But when I got there, I realized, "Oh wait—I'm still me."

I don't know if you've ever thought that someday you'd be someone else.

And then that someday comes—and you're still you.

Every day you're you.

And here's the potentially uncomfortable yet comforting truth: the "you" you're going to be someday hinges on the "you" you decide to be *this* day.

The best predictor of what you'll be like in any future situation is your current behavioral pattern.

This is not my idea, by the way. It comes from the ancient wisdom produced and curated by Solomon, one of Israel's ancient kings. Solomon was responsible for collecting, compiling, and contributing to a book in the Bible we know of today as Proverbs.

Scholars refer to Proverbs as wisdom literature. Interestingly, there is no definition of wisdom in Proverbs, just instruction for where to start: with fearing the Lord (Prov. 9:10). That's not the narrow meaning of fear, like being afraid of God, though that is part of it. It's the kind of fear that gives preference, honor, and obedience to the Lord, living in ways God designed for human beings to flourish. One dictionary definition of wisdom is "good sense." The definition I would give is "living today in a way that will help you thrive tomorrow," which is a description I first heard from leadership guru Carey Nieuwhof. That's just good sense.

At the risk of insulting the intelligence of his student, Solomon calls him a " sluggard " and tells him to go learn how to live wisely from an insect (Prov. 6:6-11):

Go to the ant, you sluggard;  
consider its ways and be wise!  
It has no commander,  
no overseer or  
ruler, ...



The ant doesn't need anyone to tell it what to do. It needs no one to motivate it. It doesn't need anyone to yell like my mom used to yell, "Get your butt in gear!" The ant is proactive. It knows its own need and gets to work. It needs no outside overlord.

... yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

The ant can evaluate its own environment, see the changing seasons, and determine when it's time to collect food. There's a lot in life that's not predictable, it's true, but there is so much more that is. The ant predicts the predictable, then plans the work and works the plan. It's interesting that the word translated here as "stores" is the Hebrew word for "establish"—it refers to setting in place a logical plan and following through.

Not only does the ant recognize the predictable seasons, but it establishes a plan to prosper. It collects and gathers food at the appropriate time in order to be sustained



into the future. The ant "makes hay while the sun shines." The ant lives today in a way that will let it thrive tomorrow.

Solomon then turns his attention back to the listener:

How long will you lie there, you sluggard?  
 When will you get up from your sleep?  
 A little sleep, a little slumber,  
 a little folding of the hands to rest—  
 and poverty will come on you like a thief  
 and scarcity like an armed man.

These last verses are an explanation of what happens if you don't live wisely. The best prediction is your behavioral pattern. If you make a pattern of putting things off, saying "I'll get to it later," or as we say in our house, "That is future-Corey's problem," Solomon predicts poverty. He's not necessarily saying financial poverty, although it doesn't exclude that. He's talking about:

The poverty of dignity that would come from self-sufficiency.

The poverty of generosity that would come from having margin.

The poverty of relationship that would come from living honorably.

The poverty of character that would come from diligence over the long haul.

So Solomon says to be wise. Live today in a way that will allow you to thrive tomorrow.

Make a pattern of being proactive, predicting the predictable, planning the work, and working the plan.

Now, I'm not calling anyone a slug or instructing you to go looking for bugs. But taking the same risk Solomon took of insulting your intelligence as you read this, I think it's worth asking, are you wise?

Are you living in a way today that will help you thrive tomorrow? Or have you made a pattern of putting things off, thinking that someday you will be someone else?

Someone who saves money?

Someone successful in their career?

Someone with a great marriage?

Someone with a generous spirit?

Someone who volunteers, listens well to friends, and is cherished by those closest to them?

It's actually not that hard to predict the future. Look at your current pattern of behavior. Start making decisions today that will help you thrive tomorrow.

Someone wise once said that you will be the same person you are today in 10 years, except for the people you meet and the books you read.

So maybe start with Proverbs. **B**

1. How would you define wisdom? How is it different from intelligence?
2. What is your favorite verse in the book of Proverbs? Why?
3. What other forms of poverty might you suffer in addition to the ones identified by the author if you don't live wisely now? ...

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

# Shunned: A Call to Restorative Grace

I was supposed to be an instrument of God's grace, but instead I left a victim and so many others devastated by my actions.

*Editor's note: In the wake of horrific revelations of sexual abuse in society and in the church, we stand in solidarity with those whose lives have been forever harmed by abuse. At the same time, churches are wrestling with how to be Christ-like to those who have abused others. As part of that conversation, we offer this perspective from a member of our denomination. We are withholding the author's identity in order to protect those who were affected by the crime. This article does not necessarily reflect The Banner's view but fulfills our role as a forum of diverse perspectives.*

**WHEN THE BALL DROPPED** in Times Square ushering in the year 2009, my life was a picture of success. I had a good family, was a partner in a successful business, and volunteered in my community. I was an upstanding member of my local church, serving each week as an usher and as a leader in my church's youth group. Three months later, I was sitting in the county jail facing prison time. Eventually, I was sentenced to 17 to 45 years in prison for a crime that shocked my community and rocked my church to its core.

I knew my crime had left my church community and my circle of friends wondering what went wrong. For months I sat in jail awaiting either a trial or an acceptable plea deal. I thought that members of my men's study group, my small group, or my fellow youth group leaders would contact me to find out what had happened. Surely the pastors, at least, would care about the unmistakably

fractured state of my spiritual life and attend to my spiritual condition. I had violated the trust of my community, leaving the church to make space for healing for those I'd harmed. I was supposed to be an instrument of God's grace, but instead I left a victim and so many others devastated by my actions. I was not the man of God I had portrayed; instead, I was in need of restoration and healing grace.

For seven months, I sat in the county jail, reading my Bible, praying, and seeking God's guidance on where I had gone so wrong in my life that I would harm someone and be facing such serious charges. At a time when I deserved grace the least but needed it the most, only one man from my 800-member church, a man I hardly knew, came to check on me. He visited once and stayed just a few minutes. My pastors also visited once to pressure me to take a plea deal; I don't remember them praying with me. Before long I found my heart growing cold to the idea of belonging to a local fellowship of believers. After all, in my moment of greatest need, my church family had abandoned me.

More than nine years later, I still have not heard from a single member of my former church. Nevertheless, the compassion and grace shown by outside members of my Christian prison fellowship has softened my heart toward the idea of belonging to a church community again. They have lived out the grace of Jesus to me even though I do not deserve it. As a result, I have slowly recognized that I too need to show grace to my former church community. They were ill-equipped to know how to respond when one of their members fell from grace so drastically.

I began to ask myself, How *should* a church body respond when one of its members commits a scandalous sin, whether it is a crime or otherwise? How should a church respond when a member's offense becomes suddenly, shockingly public? For that matter, how should I, as a believer, respond when another believer is caught in sin?

Although it is often necessary to “put out” a member of the church to protect the faith community morally, spiritually, and legally, members of the body of Christ ought to have restoration as their ultimate goal. Never should people be defined by the worst choices they have made in their life. But neither should those choices be blindly overlooked. Rather, members of the church ought to be concerned with the wayward member's spiritual well-being as well as the victim's well-being. Even when the apostle Paul called for the Corinthian church to put out a sexually immoral member, it was in order that his spirit would be saved (1 Cor. 5:5). Later, after his apparent repentance, Paul urged the Corinthians to forgive and console him and to reaffirm their love for him (2 Cor. 2:7-8).

It is important to pray for offending members, but it is equally important to communicate love and concern to them. Rarely is anyone open to correction or discipleship in the moments surrounding discovery of their sin. Instead, the church ought to have a long-range focus when pursuing restoration. Addressing the offender's spiritual needs, healing the offender's brokenness, and, if possible, bringing the offender back into fellowship with the community takes time.

As I sat in jail, I was too scared to talk with anyone about what I had done

as I awaited trial or a plea agreement (which I eventually accepted). After my sentencing, though, I longed for help in processing the direction my life had taken. I desperately needed spiritual guidance and discipleship at this critical time in my life. I was broken, and I needed the help of people who cared about the condition of my spirit to help guide me in the process of healing. My church failed to meet that need, but God did not leave me helpless. He brought unlikely people—other prisoners—into my life to help me, to disciple me, and pray with me. At a time when I had proven wholly unfaithful to God, God never abandoned me.

Today, as I watch my pastor and outside members of my prison fellowship minister to prisoners, many of whom have committed awful crimes, I am learning more about God's radical grace. I have hope because God “chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things.” It is only because of Jesus that any of us is called righteous, holy, and redeemed (1 Cor. 1:28, 30). Demonstrating divine grace is never easy, but as co-heirs with Christ, people of the church are called to be “faithful stewards of God's grace” (1 Pet. 4:10). This faithful stewardship includes being conduits of God's grace to those who have deeply disappointed us, who have violated our trust, who have harmed others, and who, in human terms, are the least deserving of grace. That is exactly how a church ought to respond to an offending member: with the same divine grace—restorative grace—that Jesus showed us when we were in our own sin. **B**

### **More Resources**

- » Abuse of Power: [bit.ly/2VQtrXI](http://bit.ly/2VQtrXI)
- » #MeToo and Becoming a Safer Church: [bit.ly/35CH7dD](http://bit.ly/35CH7dD)
- » Synod 2018 Confronts Abuse: [bit.ly/33EcW3N](http://bit.ly/33EcW3N)
- » Synod Takes Steps to See, End, and Prevent Abuse of Power: [bit.ly/2MIUYGo](http://bit.ly/2MIUYGo)
- » Get the full list here: [thebanner.org/free-resources](http://thebanner.org/free-resources)

# 'Tante Corrie' ten Boom is a Heroine for the Ages

**CAN A BOOK BE** one's spiritual companion throughout the years? *The Hiding Place* has been a companion and a candle for me almost my whole life. First published in 1971 by Revell, *The Hiding Place* is the story of Corrie ten Boom, a middle-aged watchmaker who became a heroine of the Dutch resistance and a survivor of Hitler's death camps. I think of ten Boom as "Tante Corrie," though she is not my aunt except through the family of God.

My first memory of Tante Corrie takes me time-traveling to my dad's Christian bookstore in downtown Winnipeg. I'm about 7 years old. With my little brother nearby, I cuddle up in a sleeping bag on the floor between the bookshelves after hours, reading the "comic book" version of *The Hiding Place*. (I see now that those books illustrating such Christian classics as *The Cross and the Switchblade* and *God's Smuggler* were early graphic novels.)

In later years, I would read and reread *The Hiding Place* and even work for Revell for a few years. But my last reread was different. For one thing, I listened to the 2009 audiobook with warm and engaging narration by Bernadette Dunne. Listening brought the story to life in a new way. I "saw" in vivid scenes Tante Corrie and her beloved family risking everything to hide Jews and underground workers from the Nazis. Listening also evoked mental snapshots of the comic book in a way reading didn't.

I remembered the yellow triangle in the window of Papa ten Boom's watch shop. I saw the miniature note hidden behind a stamp on a letter to Tante Corrie in prison: "The watches are safe," code for the news that the six Jews hidden in the family's secret room were alive. I replayed the

wrenching yet grace-filled goodbye between Corrie and her papa. Those scenes filled me again with wonder and fresh courage.

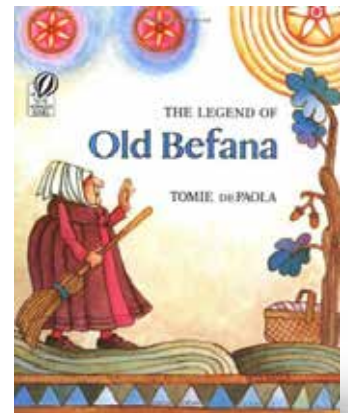
I am not alone. For nearly 50 years, millions of readers have seen that there is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still, and that Jewish people are the apple of God's eye. Because of Casper ten Boom, we understand now that "when a train goes through a tunnel, and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer."

Revisiting this classic refreshes for me Psalm 32:7: "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."

At the end of 2019, I listen again to Tante Corrie's story and I orbit from the Netherlands during World War II to Manitoba in 1975 and the bookstore's smell of paper, ink, and binding glue, to the here and now. I am thankful anew for a book companion that has comforted, formed, challenged, and awakened me like none other. **B**



Lorilee Craker is the author of 15 books, including *Anne of Green Gables*, *My Daughter, and Me*, and is the Mixed Media editor of *The Banner*. Find her at [Lorileecraker.com](http://Lorileecraker.com) or on Instagram (@thebooksellersdaughter).



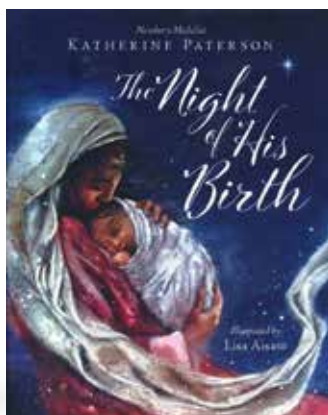
## The Legend of Old Befana: An Italian Christmas Story

By Tomie dePaola

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Grumpy and inhospitable Old Befana lives in a small house on the outskirts of a village in Italy. Life is predictable and humdrum. But one night, Old Befana sees a brilliant star in the eastern sky. The next day, a caravan including three kings stops by her house and tells her of "the child." She decides to follow the caravan after baking cookies and cakes as a gift for the child. When she falters in her pursuit, Old Befana receives unexpected help. Based on some elements of the biblical Christmas story, dePaola's version of the Old Befana legend portrays a miserable, selfish woman transformed into a joyful, gift-giving person. (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers)





## The Night of His Birth

By Katherine Paterson, illustrated by Lisa Aisato

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Katherine Paterson's retelling of Christ's birth story sings out the wonder and mystery of that history-altering event. In Paterson's rendering, the shepherds adore the Christ child and beg to touch him. Mary welcomes them into the miracle of his birth: "How could I say no? God is the host of this strange celebration at which I am also a guest."

Lisa Aisato's warm, gentle, and worshipful paintings complement the tender, peaceful, and reverent tone of Paterson's narrative. This gorgeous, meaningful picture book for children can be enjoyed again and again as families celebrate the wonder of Jesus' birth and what it meant for humanity and the world. (Flyaway Books)



## Overcomer

Reviewed by Trevor Denning

John Harrison (Alex Kendrick) is the basketball coach at a Christian high school until the factory that supports their small town moves out, taking the local families with it. When the school principal recruits him to coach the cross-country team, Harrison reluctantly agrees to help its one runner, asthmatic Hannah Scott.

*Overcomer* is the Kendrick brothers' most complex film to date, with impressive camera work and multiple plot threads weaving together into a unified whole. Sometimes the brothers stumble—at times the movie feels like a two-part TV episode stitched together. But like Hannah, the filmmakers eventually find their pace, cross the finish line, and achieve their goals. (Provident)



## Yesterday

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

With the feel of a modern fairy tale, this comedic fantasy kicks off by introducing us to musician Jack Malik (Himesh Patel), who dreams of warming up this cold world with some well-crafted songs sung to appreciative audiences. But Jack routinely faces half-empty venues and finds no opportunity to get his music out into the world. Is it time to give up his dream?

When Jack is hit by a bus, he awakens to discover he is the only person alive (he thinks) who remembers The Beatles. He haltingly begins to pretend he wrote all their songs, but at what cost? Jack wrestles with his conscience as he grapples with authentic love and true identity. (Universal Pictures)

## The Lowdown

**Christmas Chuckles:** Best read with a cup of cocoa in hand, *Christmas at the Vinyl Cafe* is a Yuletide collection of stories from the late Canadian radio host Stuart McLean. (Penguin Random House)

**Meg, Jo, Amy, and Beth Redux:** The cherished classic *Little Women* is revisited by director Greta Gerwig (Dec. 25). (Focus Features)

**Sugar, Butter, Chocolate:** A new crop of bakers is judged by experts Paul Hollywood and Prue Leith on *The Great British Baking Show: Holidays* (Season 2). (Netflix)

**From Iraq with Love:** *Love Anyway* reveals what Preemptive Love founder Jeremy Courtney learned about Jesus when he moved his family to the Middle East. (Zondervan)

# Is Belief in God Similar to Belief in Santa?

People are willing to die for their faith in God. People are not willing to die for their faith in Santa Claus.



Cornelius (Neal) Plantinga was formerly president of Calvin Theological Seminary. He is now a senior research fellow in the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

**YEARS AGO**, the 7-year-old son of our Roman Catholic neighbors found out Santa Claus was a myth. He was shaken. He confronted his parents: “Is there anybody else we believe in who isn’t real?”

Periodically, unbelievers will claim that belief in God is like belief in Santa Claus. Both figures are taught to children. Neither can be seen or heard. Both have helpers. Both have songs sung about them. Both have many names in many cultures.

But the similarities are superficial and vastly outweighed by the differences. Mainly, of course, Santa Claus in his current incarnation is only a mythical figure (though based on the real, historical person of St. Nicholas), while God is an actual being. Unbelievers dispute this claim, but that has no bearing on its truth. God’s existence is attested by the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, by Scripture, by the life and teachings of Christ, and by the testimony of saints and martyrs who have sung and prayed while their enemies set them on fire.

Think about this last fact: people are willing to die for their faith in God. People are not willing to die for their faith in Santa Claus.

To cite a sheerly empirical fact, billions believe in God. Besides children, probably only a few thousand believe in Santa Claus. And, of course, people believe far more about God than that God exists. The big story about God stretches across millennia, encompassing God’s great acts of creation, redemption, and new creation. In creation, God generously made room in the universe for other kinds of beings and then filled the room he had made. Expending unimaginable resources of ingenuity, power, and love, God filled the universe with

billions of galaxies, each a stupendous bonfire of as many as a hundred billion stars. God created more than 750,000 species of insects and more than 250,000 species of plants. And then God created human beings in God’s own likeness, with righteousness like God’s own, and with a calling to superintend the earth and to live in harmony with each other.

When God’s human creatures tried to find happiness apart from God, when they started the long slide into corruption and grief, God showed them justice and grace. God chose a particular people to lead the way in reconciliation and promised them a Messiah to inaugurate a new age of God’s redeeming grace. In the fullness of time, God incarnated God’s own eternal son to be the Savior for the world. Jesus Christ lived and taught among us, suffered for our sins, and was resurrected by God in the central event of the Christian religion and of all human history.

The first message of the gospel from then on, a message with power to straighten the spine of every believer, became simply: “Christ is risen.” This is the platform of everything the Christian faith has to offer the world. Every Christian hospital, college, orphanage, media ministry, counseling service, political party, relief agency, and AIDS clinic builds on this platform. Christian hope builds on this platform because Christians see in Christ’s resurrection that God cannot be defeated, not even by death itself. In fact, Christians believe that in the end, God will reestablish shalom in the earth, drying every tear and making all things new.

The fictitious Santa Claus is only a small story of toys for kids. God has an immense, true story of universal creation and redemption, the biggest story ever told. **B**

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

**Down**

- 1. Port city where sailors are remembered at Christmas
- 2. CRC expects to spend \$11 million on this
- 3. "My first memory of Tante Corrie takes me time-traveling to my dad's Christian bookstore in downtown \_\_\_\_\_"
- 7. Venezuelans use these to get to church on Christmas
- 8. Part of song title: "\_\_\_\_\_ for Resolution"
- 10. Beyond my \_\_\_\_\_ zone
- 11. Fried \_\_\_\_\_ soup made one woman feel like a part of a church family
- 13. One of 11 keynote speakers at Congress on Sport & Christianity
- 15. Artificial videos created with artificial intelligence
- 16. A missionary with little support

**Across**

- 4. "Living today in a way that will help you thrive tomorrow"
- 5. Calvin University's award-winning series
- 6. First name of new National Association of Evangelicals president
- 9. Title of the Kendrick brothers' most complex film yet
- 12. Director of the new "Little Women" movie
- 14. "The \_\_\_\_\_ of these"
- 17. The Council of Delegates wants a study on what matters qualify as this
- 18. Puritans banned celebrating this

Answers to the November 2019 puzzle

1. PORTLAND  
 2. \$11 MILLION  
 3. DOWNTOWN  
 4. "LIVING TODAY IN A WAY THAT WILL HELP YOU THRIVE TOMORROW"  
 5. CALVIN UNIVERSITY'S AWARD-WINNING SERIES  
 6. FIRST NAME OF NEW NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS PRESIDENT  
 7. VENEZUELANA  
 8. PART OF SONG TITLE: "\_\_\_\_\_ FOR RESOLUTION"  
 9. TITLE OF THE KENDRICK BROTHERS' MOST COMPLEX FILM YET  
 10. BEYOND MY \_\_\_\_\_ ZONE  
 11. FRIED \_\_\_\_\_ SOUP MADE ONE WOMAN FEEL LIKE A PART OF A CHURCH FAMILY  
 12. DIRECTOR OF THE NEW "LITTLE WOMEN" MOVIE  
 13. ONE OF 11 KEYNOTE SPEAKERS AT CONGRESS ON SPORT & CHRISTIANITY  
 14. "THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF THESE"  
 15. ARTIFICIAL VIDEOS CREATED WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE  
 16. A MISSIONARY WITH LITTLE SUPPORT  
 17. THE COUNCIL OF DELEGATES WANTS A STUDY ON WHAT MATTERS QUALIFY AS THIS  
 18. PURITANS BANNED CELEBRATING THIS

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**Denominational Announcements**

**MEETINGS OF CLASSIS**

**CLASSIS ZEELAND** will meet on Thursday, February 6, 2020, 4PM, in the Oakland CRC. Agenda deadline is December 24. Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S.C.

**CHURCH ANNIVERSARY 20 YEARS**

**THE JOURNEY OF LONGMONT CO** will celebrate our 20th anniversary on January 26, 2020 @ our 10:07 am service. You're invited to join us if you've ever been a journeyer or just want another party to attend!

**CALLS ACCEPTED**

**PASTOR ZACK DEBRUYNE** - Called by Classis Niagara as the Brock University Campus Chaplain. Ordained on July 21, 2019

**DAVID SCHOLMAN** - called to a half-time Commissioned Pastor position as Youth Pastor at Covenant CRC, St.Catharines. Ordained on Sept. 29, 2019

**PASTOR JANET RYZEBOL** - called to an 80% FTE position as Pastor of Community at Covenant CRC. Ordained on October 20, 2019

**Financial Aid**

**CLASSIS HEARTLAND - FINANCIAL AID** Students preparing for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church from Classis Heartland may apply for aid to assist them in their study for the 2020-2021 academic year by contacting Rev. Loren Kotman; 1111 5th Street, Hull, IA 51239; (712) 439-1123; [pastor@hull1stcrc.com](mailto:pastor@hull1stcrc.com). The deadline is February 1, 2020.

**Church Positions Available**

**PASTOR** Come do Ministry with us! We are Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in Grimsby, ON, Canada. If you would like to explore whether this is a good fit for you, please contact our Search Committee Secretary, Karen Antonides at [searchcmte@mountainview-crc.org](mailto:searchcmte@mountainview-crc.org). All inquiries are confidential.

**PASTOR** Wolf Creek Community Church is located in beautiful Lacombe, Alberta. We are seeking a pastor who will join us in our mission to reach out and enfold people for Jesus. Visit [wolfcreekchurch.ca](http://wolfcreekchurch.ca) or Email [searchteamwccc@gmail.com](mailto:searchteamwccc@gmail.com)

**PASTOR OF FAITH FORMATION** Hope Christian Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario is seeking a Pastor of Faith Formation and Discipleship. The successful candidate will be part of our team ministry with a focus on intergenerational faith development. We are a large vibrant congregation in a growing community in southwestern Ontario. For more information, please contact Nancy @ [info@hopeccr.ca](mailto:info@hopeccr.ca)

**LEAD PASTOR - RIVER COMMUNITY CHURCH** Edmonton, AB, Canada - Seeking a passionate & engaging full-time pastor. Looking for a leader to embrace & expand vision, while collaborating with other ministry directors. For further inquiries, please visit [www.rivercommunity.ca](http://www.rivercommunity.ca)

**LEAD PASTOR** Holland Heights CRC in Holland, MI is seeking an Ordained Minister of the Word to be our next full-time Lead Pastor. For more information, visit [vanderbloemen.com](http://vanderbloemen.com)

**LEAD PASTOR** Immanuel CRC in Langley BC eagerly calls an inspiring lead pastor, rooted in and excited to preach the Word of God in this challenging culture. We yearn for substance, dynamic deliverance and are eager to listen and be taught the full Gospel. Email Pim Schon [ISCimmanuel@licrc.ca](mailto:ISCimmanuel@licrc.ca)

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR** Come and join us in prison ministry at Cornerstone Prison Church in Sioux Falls, SD. Contact [office@cornerstonepcsd.org](mailto:office@cornerstonepcsd.org) for more information.

**LEAD PASTOR** River Rock Church of Rockford, MI believes that God is calling us to be Radical in Love, Real in Life, and Rooted in Christ. We are seeking a full-time Lead Pastor to guide us and partner with us in that ministry. If you are interested in and/or would like to learn more about the Lead Pastor position, please email [searchteam@riverrockcommunity.com](mailto:searchteam@riverrockcommunity.com).

**LEAD PASTOR** First Christian Reformed Church of Crown Point, located in Northwest Indiana, is seeking an experienced pastor to lead its multigenerational congregation alongside its Associate Pastor and staff. For more information and to apply, please visit the website at [cprc.org](http://cprc.org).



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**LEAD PASTOR** Crossroads CRC in beautiful North San Diego County is seeking applications for a full-time lead pastor. We are looking for candidates who are collaborative leaders with a passion for worship, discipleship, and outreach. If you are interested in knowing more about our church we'd love to hear from you. Please email us at [searchteam@crossroadsarc.com](mailto:searchteam@crossroadsarc.com)

### Congregational Announcements

**WINTERING AT YOUR 2ND FLORIDA HOME?** Make Bradenton CRC, your first church choice! Bask in the Sunshine with our church diverse in ages and interests but united in passionate service to our Savior. Sunday services 10am & 5pm with an 8:30am added Jan-Mar; weekly Bible studies and events. Let our weather, worship and music lift your spirit! [www.bradentoncrc.org](http://www.bradentoncrc.org).

**WORSHIP IN CENTRAL FLORIDA** You are invited to worship with us at Lake Alfred Ministry, a church of Reformed persuasion in Central Florida, meeting from Nov. 17-April 12. Services: 10AM - 5:50 PM. Pastors: Rev. Jim Admiraal Nov.17-Dec.15, Rev. Jim VanderRoest Dec.22, Rev. Herman VanNiejenhuis Dec.29-Jan.26, Rev. Ed Tamminga Feb.2-23, Rev. Ron Noorman March1-April12. Address:140 Mallard, Lake Alfred, FL. Directions: [lakealfredministry.org](http://lakealfredministry.org) or call 269-720-6413.

### Birthday

#### BIRTHDAY 100 YEARS



**JENNIE DECKINGA LANING** of Saratoga Grove in Downers Grove, IL, will celebrate her 100th birthday on December 28, 2019. Jennie was married to Clarence Laning for 21 years. She has three living stepchildren: Nelva (Jim) Heinking, Ken (Trudy) Laning and David Laning. Jennie also has 19 step grandchildren, 44 step great grandchildren, and 12 step great-grandchildren. Jennie has four living siblings; Ida Boss, Marilyn (Bill) Van Howe, Art (Lorraine) Deckinga and Dirk (Jan) Deckinga. We are thankful for her love and faithfulness to God all these years.

#### BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS



**SYLVIA (WESTENDORP) STUIT** of 5201 Roma NE Apt. 629, Albuquerque NM 87108, will celebrate her 90th birthday on December 31. Family and friends celebrate God's grace and goodness in her life.

### Anniversary 50 Years


**BECKSVOORT**, Roger and Patricia Becksvoort will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on December 18, 2019. Roger and Pat were married in the Graafschap Christian Reformed Church, and are both retired teachers

from the Holland Christian Schools. As children and grandchildren, we are blessed by their spiritual guidance and love for each other and all of us. Bob and Jen Becksvoort (Austin and Dylan), Tim and Michelle Becksvoort (Caleb, Josiah and Abby), Dave and Kathryn Becksvoort (Jack, Clara, Louise and Cecilia).

### Obituaries

**VANHALSEMA**, Faith Janice, age 70, of Grand Rapids MI, passed away Sunday, Sept. 22, 2019. She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Thea and John Brophy; her grandsons, Rhys and Harrison Brophy; her brother and sister-in-law, N. Kenneth and Judy LaFleur; and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

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Apr 2 – 14 | *Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima*

**THE DUTCH: EMIGRATION TO NORTH AMERICA**  
Apr 29 – May 11  
*Henk Aay & Mary Risseeuw*

**ITALIA: TREASURES OF SOUTHERN ITALY & SICILY**  
May 5 – 18 | *Bruce & Judy Buursma*

**ITALY: FLORENCE THROUGH THE EYES OF DANTE**  
May 15 – 28 | *Dr. Jennifer Holberg*

**EUROPEAN HIGHLIGHTS feat. Oberammergau Passion Play**  
Jul 11 – 24 | *John Witte*

**ALASKA & DENALI**  
Sep 5 – 17 | *Ken & Laurel Bratt*

**FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS: ISRAEL & JORDAN**  
Oct 8 – 20 | *Dr. Jeffrey A. D. Weima*

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**OOSTENDORP**, Carole, age 77, of Grand Rapids MI, went to be with the Lord on October 2, 2019. She was preceded in death by her parents, Rev. Lubbertus and Evelyn Oostendorp, and her sister Anne Oostendorp. She is survived by her brothers, Derk and Nancy Oostendorp and Leon and Cindy Oostendorp, 7 nieces and nephews, 11 grand nieces and nephews and 7 great grand nieces and nephews. She was a member of LaGrave Ave. Christian Reformed Church.

**HOOKE**, Marvin J., age 88, loving husband for 68 years to Geraldine, nee Swart. Father of Vicki (the late Steven) Jager, Sandra (Thomas) Post, Gary (Kim) Hooker, James (Lisa) Hooker, Mary (Peter) Boonstra, Carol Decker, Robert (Christine) Hooker and the late Marvin James

Hooker, Jr. Grandfather of 20. Great-grandfather of 15. Brother of Louis Hooker, Lester Hooker, Corrine Burt, Dale Hooker, Barbara Witte, Lloyd Hooker and the late Virginia Sneller and the late Harley Hooker. Uncle of many nieces and nephews. Retired principal and teacher for Roseland Christian School with over 40 years of service. Bus driver for Roseland Christian School and Southwest Chicago Christian Schools for 60 years.

**EMMELKAMP**, Truman (age 76), Manhattan, MT, entered his heavenly home on Sat., Oct. 5, 2019. While on his daily walk he was struck & killed by a car. Truman is survived by his wife, Vivian (Veltkamp), of nearly 54 years; son Kevin (Lori) Emmelkamp; daughter

Kim (Curt) DeVries; 7 grandchildren & 1 great-granddaughter; his siblings Eldean (Len) Kamp, Larry (Helen) Emmelkamp, Keith (Karen) Emmelkamp, Ken (Ardene) Emmelkamp, & Cor Pool; sisters-in-law Gladys (Jack) Thonus, Cindy Brooks; brother-in-law Jim E. (Jean) Veltkamp, & many nieces & nephews.



**HUIZENGA**, Genevieve "Gen", age 99, of Zeeland, a faithful servant of her Lord and Savior, was called home on Friday, October 18, 2019, just a few days before her 100th birthday. She was a loving and kindhearted mother and "Grammie" who cherished and supported her family in everything they did. Over the years, she served her Lord with her time and talents in many ways both in her church and community. Gen was a pillar of strength and a faithful prayer warrior for her family. Her legacy of faith and contentment in life was evident to all who knew her. She was preceded in death by her husband of 52 years, Cleo Huizenga. She will be lovingly remembered and dearly missed by her children, Elayne and Arlan Matthyse, Mary and David Weeber, Bob and Anita Huizenga, Rick and Deb Huizenga; and her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. II Timothy 4:7.

**WIGBOLDY**, Betty Lou (DeVries) of Lynden, WA, went home to be with her Savior, October 21. She is survived by her husband Homer, of 66 years, her children: Carol & Todd Goyt, Brenda & Lee Fennema, Ken & Paula (Tuinstra), Shirley & John Steigenga, Linda



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—Jill, Hospice Nurse Practitioner

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[www.dordt.edu](http://www.dordt.edu) — About Dordt — Job Openings

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& Bryan Kamps, Nancy & Vic Wolffis, Susan & Harmen DeJong, 21 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. Praising God for using her on this earth to love and bless so many!

## Employment

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## News



### DENOMINATION Denominational Survey Opens

The annual survey for the CRCNA is now open. One survey respondent shares his experience.

[Learn More](#)

### WORSHIP

#### A Catch of Fish

During the Calvin Symposium on Worship, John August Swanson spoke of how Luke 5's miraculous catch has inspired his art and helped him through some hard times.

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### INSPIRE 2019

#### Windsor Welcomes You to Inspire

Ambassador Community CRC in Windsor, Ont., invites you to attend Inspire 2019 in their city. Registration is now open!

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## Christmas Books

Looking for a new approach to learning about and celebrating Christmas this year? These Christmas books contain everything you need for a two-week time of discovery and celebration for all levels of your Sunday school. **Each book contains**

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## The Promise Keeper

Christmas is a time to remember that God is a promise keeper of the highest order; God kept his promise to send Jesus, his son, to the world as Savior, Redeemer, and Friend. This unit focuses on God's promises: promises made in the past, promises fulfilled, and promises for which we are still awaiting fulfillment.

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**8** Wednesday

**AMBER WARNERS**  
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**9** Thursday

**TODD CHARLES WOOD & DARREL R. FALK**  
Moving Beyond Labels to a Christian Dialogue about Creation and Evolution  
*Underwritten by*  
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**10** Friday

**SANDRA POSTEL**  
Replenish: The Virtuous Cycle of Water and Prosperity  
*Underwritten by*  
World Renew and The Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics

**13** Monday

**JONATHAN HAIDT**  
The Coddling of the American Mind  
*Underwritten by*  
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**14** Tuesday

**CATHY O'NEIL**  
Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy  
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**15** Wednesday

**DEBORAH & JAMES FALLOWS**  
Our Towns: A 100,000 Mile Journey into the Heart of America  
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**16** Thursday

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**17** Friday

**BOB FU**  
When Caesar Demands to be God: Religious Freedom in China  
*Underwritten by*  
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**20** Monday

**ALICE MARIE JOHNSON IN CELEBRATION OF MLK DAY**  
After Life: My Journey from Incarceration to Freedom  
*Underwritten by*  
Larry and Mary Gerbens

**21** Tuesday

**MITCH ALBOM**  
A Little Girl, an Earthquake, and the Making of a Family  
*Underwritten by*  
Samaritas and Barnes & Thornburg, LLP

**22** Wednesday

**ANN COMPTON**  
Up Close and Very Personal: My 41 Years in the White House Press Corps  
*Underwritten by*  
The Peter C. and Emajeon Cook Foundation

**23** Thursday

**JEREMY EVERETT**  
Solving America's Hunger Crisis  
*Underwritten by*  
Holland Home

**24** Friday

**JOHAN NORBERG**  
Progress: 10 Reasons to Look Forward to the Future  
*Underwritten by*  
GMB Architects + Engineering and Calvin Center for Innovation in Business

**27** Monday


**KAREN GONZÁLEZ**  
The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong  
*Underwritten by*  
Howard Miller



**28** Tuesday

**NAJLA KASSAB**  
The Reformed Church in the Middle East: Hopes and Challenges  
*Underwritten by*  
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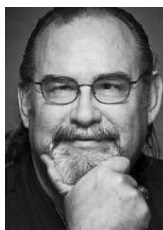
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# Fried Cauliflower Soup

“Eating that soup—it was as if God was inviting me to be part of the family.”



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

**I'D BEEN ASKED** to pursue a position that would take me away from the church I had helped start and decided it was only right to submit the decision to the leadership of our church. We gathered together and spent an extended period of time in prayer seeking God's will. At the end of the prayer time I asked what people believed they had heard from God. Various leaders shared their thoughts, concerns, and love. It seemed as though there was a consensus building.

Tamaki started to weep and said, “I think you need to apply for the job, but I don't want you to leave us. I also know that God sometimes moves us far away. That makes me sad. But if God does ask you to leave us, before you go you will have to give me your recipe for fried cauliflower soup. That's what I clearly heard from God.” It brought smiles to all our faces.

Tamaki is a Japanese citizen who met and married Ron while a student in Tucson. She came to faith among us and is known as a passionate woman of prayer. “I'm serious,” she said. “God told me that I need that recipe. It's so good!” There was more laughter.

I'm known as a fairly decent amateur cook. Cooking is a creative outlet for me. I don't usually pay much attention to recipes; mostly I throw things together and try to create food my family will enjoy. The church always eats together after our worship services. Each year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, The Village Church holds our annual Thanksgiving Soup Supper. It's our most popular event. People are invited to bring soup, bread, or dessert, and we spend the evening recounting the beauty of what God has done in the

past year while enjoying all the deliciousness. At the very first gathering 20 years ago, I looked around in my refrigerator to find something to turn into soup and noticed a couple heads of cauliflower. I chopped them up, fried the pieces in olive oil until browned, made a vegetable broth by blending leftover carrots, bell peppers, yellow squash, and onions, then threw in some cream and cheddar cheese and the beautifully browned cauliflower and called it done. People liked it a lot and asked me to make it again the next year—and every year since.

Tamaki insisted that she needed the recipe. She explained, “The very first time I came to church here was for the Thanksgiving Soup Supper. Ron had invited me and I was nervous and uncomfortable meeting strangers. When I went through the serving line the very first soup I saw was your fried cauliflower soup. I took some of it and was amazed at how delicious it was. In my family and in my culture, you would never serve such good soup to strangers. Soup like that would be reserved for family and close friends. Eating that soup—it was as if God was inviting me to be part of the family.”

We were quiet then. Tamaki said, “So before you leave, I need that recipe so that someone else like me will come to church and know they are part of a family.”

I didn't get the job. I did share the recipe. **B**

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