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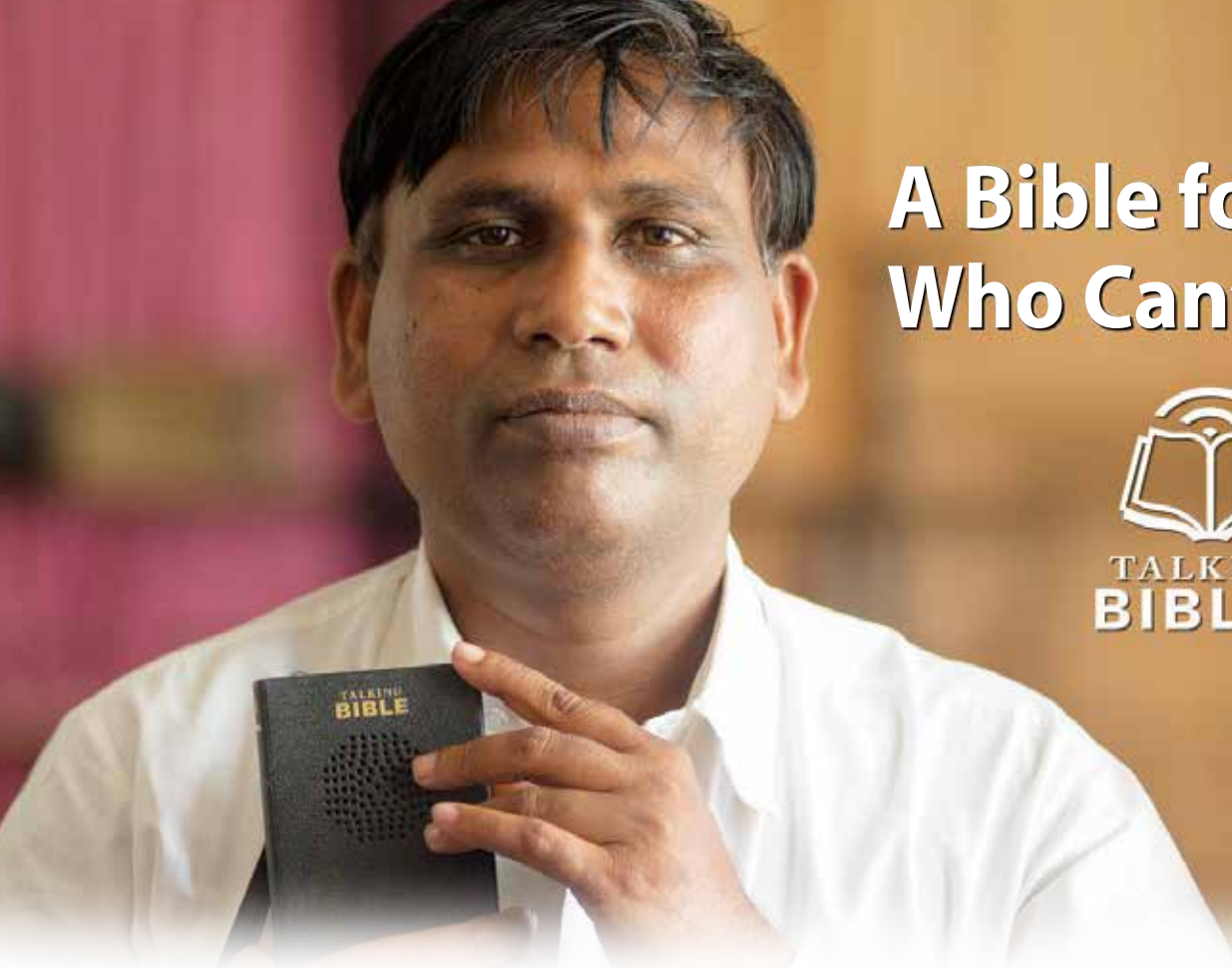
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Without
a Funeral

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BREAKING BARRIERS

everybody belongs  everybody serves

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Finding Hope Among Despair!

by **Enrico Di Giandomenico**

St. Francis Xavier Church, Stoney Creek ON

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) may be the leading cause of developmental delay in children and adults. Individuals with this lifelong disability likely will require support throughout their entire lives. This disability happens along a spectrum, sometimes being so mild that it is never recognized and sometimes resulting in behavioral, cognitive, and developmental delays. Because this disability has no cure, changes need to come from the supporting environment rather than from the individuals themselves.

I have found three areas to be most important for caregivers to pay attention to. The first is the difference between the individual's chronological age vs. their developmental functioning. Typically, the individual with FASD functions at half of their chronological age until the age of 18, at which point they level off and remain consistent. As we set our expectations of them, we need to keep this in mind.

The second common feature is a delay in the speed with which they process information. Once we ask them to complete a task, we need to give them 10 to 30 seconds to process that request so that they can more effectively complete it.

The third common feature are the delays in their executive functioning and daily adaptive living skills. While studies have shown that individuals with FASD are able to learn throughout their lifetime, they may struggle in taking that learning and using it to help them in their day-to-day living.

From research and my work in training and supporting caregivers who look after children, adolescents, and adults with this disability, I have found that caregivers, either family or professional, need these four things:

Training, training, and more training to really understand this disability and to stay on top of all the latest developments.



Enrico Di Giandomenico, Private Consultant-FASD

Support and coaching by someone who understands the disability to provide caregivers with reminders that this is part of the disability and to give best practice ideas.

Respite and/or relief. To be successful, individuals with FASD need a stable and supportive living situation. To provide that, caregivers require a few hours regularly to clear themselves of the daily stress and, at times, a weekend break to regenerate themselves for the day-to-day living requirements.

Grief and loss counseling. Caregivers have dreams and desires for our children. As we come to understand this disability and learn of the limitations for our children, we may need support in accepting and

adjusting our desires for the children and adults that we care for.

In closing, I want to encourage, reassure, and give hope to caregivers and those who are supporting individuals with this disability. While the road is long, difficult, and lonely at times, there is great opportunity for success for our loved ones with FASD. Given the proper environment and supports from their team, they can grow to have full, happy, and successfully interdependent lives. To all of the caregivers and support people, thank you for all the hard work that you do in supporting individuals with FASD.

More online

Find a link to the rest of our summer edition, back issues of *Breaking Barriers*, editions in Español and in 한국어, and a link for electronic subscription at our website (www.crcna.org/disability).

Thanks for reading this excerpt from the summer 2020 *Breaking Barriers*. This newsletter and the Disability Concerns blog (network.crcna.org/disability), co-published by CRC and Reformed Church in American Disability Concerns Ministries, received two awards from the Associated Church Press this year: Best in Class, Award of Merit for *Breaking Barriers* and for the blog.

BANNER

BY THE NUMBERS

The 2020 ministerial candidates (p. 46) are the most diverse yet—at least since 2008 when demographic data was first collected. Figures below represent ethnic minorities and women as a percentage of the total number of candidates.

Progress Toward Diversity

2020	53%
2010-2019	38%
2008-2009	17%



WHAT'S ONLINE

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

- » Ontario Church's Community Food Drive Sparked by the Spirit
- » Michigan Residents Worship from Their Balconies on Ascension Day
- » Churches Differ on Celebrating Communion Online
- » Book: *Cross Shadow* by Andrew Huff
- » Audiobook: *As Bright As Heaven* by Susan Meissner
- » TV: *Sweet Magnolias* (Netflix)

Hope for the Politically Hopeless

The Banner has teamed up with the Centre for Public Justice to release a series of articles online exploring the divisiveness of our times. Look for the articles online at *TheBanner.org/political-home*.

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Editor Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,
Director of CRCNA Communications and Marketing



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Speak Out Against Racism

I join
that chorus
in support of
black and
Indigenous
lives.



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

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

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

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

MY WIFE AND I were still newlyweds when we were in downtown Hamilton, Ont. As we were filing into a crowded elevator, a white man pushed me and said, “Out of my way, Chink!” Later, as I reached forward to press the button for my floor, saying, “Excuse me,” he said: “There’s no excuse for you, Chink!” My wife, who is white, was stunned. I didn’t know what to do. I had never experienced such blatant racism before. Sure, I had experienced the occasional drive-by “Go home” before, but never so in-my-face. All the way up the ride, I wondered if I should say something. I was afraid to confront the man. I also didn’t want to be the angry minority person. My Chinese upbringing emphasized peace, harmony, and self-effacement. Everyone hurriedly streamed out of the elevator when the doors opened, ending an excruciatingly silent ride.

That overall silence from everyone else made me, the only person of color in that elevator ride, feel alone and added to my self-doubts. I wonder now if the silence to his first racial slur only emboldened the man to make his second one. In hindsight, I probably should have said something, firmly but politely. But I was young, inexperienced, and unprepared.

In his article, “Combating Anti-Semitism,” Doug Bratt writes about how silence in the face of anti-Semitism is dangerous because silence protects and enables hatred and violence to flourish (p. 10). Bratt urges Christians to speak out against anti-Semitic racism. Indeed, out of love for God and neighbor, we have a duty to speak out against any form of racism.

In the wake of senseless deaths of black Americans—George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor—and the global wave of protests for

black lives, and in Canada Indigenous lives too, many are speaking up against racism, including the CRC (p. 20). And I join that chorus in support of black and Indigenous lives.

Black and Indigenous people are made in God’s image and deserve justice and equal treatment from individuals and institutions. The CRC’s 1996 Synodical Report, God’s Diverse and Unified Family, states that racism is a sin and “may manifest itself interpersonally as well as institutionally.”

Yet there are counter-voices among Christians who deny systemic racism; or who counter “black lives matter” with “all lives matter.” These Christians may be well-meaning, but I want them to know these actions are hurtful to most people of color, especially to black and Indigenous folks.

I don’t have space here to argue for systemic racism or fully explain why saying “all lives matter” in response is misguided. But can you imagine if I had spoken out in that elevator many years ago, and, instead of support, the others started denying, “Oh, I didn’t hear a racial slur”? Or if they said, “You should be careful not to hurt his feelings; his feelings are important too”? I would have been re-traumatized by the bystanders. And I believe that is what many black and Indigenous people experience when they encounter such responses and denials to their cries for justice and equality. This happens every time they cry out.

People of color experience racial trauma from generations, or at least a lifetime, of racism. Such denials are re-traumatizing many of them.

So, for Christ’s sake, please give a care. 🙏

Who Is My Neighbor?

Time after time,
Jesus converses
with those
different from him
and breaks down
political, ethnic,
cultural, and
religious barriers
using care, praise,
and conversation.



Thomas Beck is a middle school teacher in Michigan and is a member of the Christian Reformed Church.

THIS YEAR, I taught in a sixth-grade classroom that started the beginning of the year divided. Some of my students had spent the past few years in the same classrooms and the same schools, and some were new to the school or even the district. Immediately the conflict was felt in our learning community. It felt as though every few hours I was hosting discussions between groups of students, or even the whole class, about the conflict that was occurring. More often than not, when we got to the root of the problem it was, “They don’t know me; they aren’t one of us.”

It would be an understatement to say the Jewish people and the Samaritan people in Jesus’ time had a contentious relationship. Going back to the divisions of the tribes of Israel, geopolitical differences divided the two peoples—this despite the fact that both came from the same people that wandered the desert together, claimed the same God as their Father, and were all children of Israel. Long after the Israelites had settled in the promised land, Assyria conquered most of the northern kingdom and proceeded to bring in people from other nations. This resulted in intermarrying and children of mixed descent who would become the Samaritan people. Shortly after this, the Jewish people were exiled from Judea courtesy of Nebuchadnezzar II. Upon returning to rebuild Jerusalem, an “Us vs. Them” mentality took hold for a variety of reasons. Sprinkle in some temple destruction and desecration, and you have yourself a full-blown feud. So when Jesus tells the “expert in the law” that a Samaritan is his neighbor to be loved as himself, it shakes his whole worldview.

The word “neighbor” had specific connotations for Jewish people. When the expert in the law brings it up as an answer to how to receive eternal life (Luke 10:25-27), he is referencing a law from Leviticus 19:18: “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.” The Hebrew word used for “neighbor” in this verse is *rea*, which many at the time interpreted to mean a neighbor that looks like you—more of a friend or someone you know than a stranger or someone just geographically close. It came to be interpreted that your *rea* was your fellow Israelite, not that guy you wave to when you take the trash out and have no other interaction with. The young lawyer would have assumed this definition when he asked Jesus who his neighbor was, and we can see that when the verse says “but he wanted to justify himself” at the beginning of his question. The lawyer had probably followed the letter of the law by treating his fellow Israelites well his whole life. The expert in the law assumed all he needed to do was treat well those who look like him, talk like him, and act like him in order to follow the law and therefore achieve salvation.

In one little parable, Jesus informs the lawyer and us that our neighbor, our *rea*, is not only one who is like us. The hatred between Jews and Samaritans was deep, even to the point of complete non-association (John 4:9). Jesus is sending a clear message by having an injured Jew on the road and a Samaritan there to help him physically and financially without question of repayment. He is making it clear that no division can get in the way of loving your neighbor as yourself.

I think it is safe to say that in today's world this parable is just as applicable as it was 2,000 years ago. Whether between Republicans and Democrats or Vikings and Packers fans, there is so much division nowadays it seems like a never-ending culture war is raging in the hearts and minds of most of our society. People draw lines concerning who they support and who they despise quickly and without reservation. A single trip to a comment section on Facebook regarding anything political makes you feel as though you are wandering through a virtual battleground. Many times it breaks my heart to see Christians engaging in hostile rhetoric as though their lives depend on it.

The fact of the matter is that Jesus aggressively challenged those within the church far more than those outside of it. He flipped tables in temples (Matt. 21:12) and confronted religious leaders (Luke 11:37-54, Matt. 23:1-39) when he saw those of faith doing what was antithetical to his word. Meanwhile, those who did not look like him, did not believe what he did, or were historically enemies of his nationality were treated gently. He has a conversation with a Samaritan woman at a well (John 4) and heals a Roman centurion's servant (Luke 7) and lepers (Luke 17). He heals a Canaanite woman's daughter (Matt. 15), doesn't condemn a woman about to be stoned (John 8), and so much more. Time after time, Jesus converses with those different from him and breaks down political, ethnic, cultural, and religious barriers using care, praise, and conversation. He does not condemn and rebuke those who have sinned, does not throw Scripture at those who do not share his faith, and does not hate those who are different.


He consistently meets people where they are and works on relationships peacefully, calmly, and with love.

Now, it might be easy to say, "Of course we would assist a bruised and bleeding man on the side of the road regardless of their political or religious beliefs." Maybe I am being naive, but I believe most people would call an ambulance, wait with that person, and do what they could to keep them alive. Oddly enough, it might be harder for most of us to have a calm discussion about a variety of topics than to assist someone dying on the side of the road.

I am just as guilty as the next person of choosing to love my neighbor, my *rea*, conditionally, choosing instead to throw stones at those across the divide from me on a given issue. Jesus, however, sets a clear example of what is expected. He builds bridges with the stones that might have been thrown, connects as people and not as enemies, and creates healthy and productive dialogue.

At the end of the day, it is not Donald Trump or Joe Biden to whom you are loyal. It is not a political party, a sports team, or a church building that defines how you treat others. It is Christ, who willingly got up on a cross for people who did not believe in him, for people who, when given the choice between

freeing a murderer or the Son of God, let the hate in their hearts demand that the greatest act of evil in human history should take place. Let us look toward the example of the bloody, beaten man carrying a cross up a hill to die, and not to the crowd demanding malice and retribution toward that which challenged their beliefs and comfort.

Love your neighbor, your *rea*. Love everyone you come in contact with as Jesus would have loved them. 



Combating Anti-Semitism

By Doug Bratt

I remember little about my visit as a 12-year-old to Germany's Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site. But I will never forget the silence of my parents and grandfather who visited it with my sister and me. That silence stretched out for what felt to me like hours.

I have observed similar silence during subsequent visits to Holocaust sites such as Germany's Buchenwald Memorial and Ukraine's monument to Jews massacred in Babi Yar outside Kiev. I have also heard silence settle over visitors to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Such silence in the face of the Holocaust's horrors is appropriate. However, silence in the face of the anti-Semitism that triggered that genocide is inexcusable and persistent. Such silence is, in fact, dangerous given that under its protection both hatred and violence, products of anti-Semitism, flourish.

While I was on sabbatical leave, I reviewed the sermons of 12 American Protestant pastors who preached

between 1935 and 1946. I wished to learn whether they had preached about the Holocaust as it was unfolding. I hoped to discover that those ministers had publicly preached against its atrocities.

After all, prominent newspapers and radio broadcasts were not silent about the Holocaust. They repeatedly wrote about the Nazis' persecution of Jews. Even some Christian magazines and newspapers shared reports of the horrors Europe's Jews were experiencing.

However, very few of the nearly 200 American Protestant sermons I reviewed even mentioned the Holocaust. While a few preachers wrote about that suffering, they said virtually nothing about it in their sermons. This admittedly tiny sample size suggests that American Protestant preachers were largely silent in the face of Jewish persecution.

Of course, it would be an exercise in fantasy to imagine that preachers' sermons could have stemmed the tide of anti-Semitism that characterized so much of the mid-20th century United

States. Many powerful voices clamored to limit the admittance of Jews fleeing Europe, and those voices would have undoubtedly drowned out any that called for love and acceptance of their Jewish neighbors.

But faithfulness to the gospel requires that Christians speak out against all forms of injustice and unrighteousness—even if others ignore or drown out those voices. The Washington Metro Area Transit Authority has for some time run a campaign with the slogan "If you see something, say something." It is a call to riders to be vigilant about both real and potential threats to other riders' well-being.

Those who would combat anti-Semitism might adopt the same slogan: "If you see something, say something." After all, love for both God and our neighbors compels God's people to speak up and out when others are harming, threatening, or even attempting to intimidate those neighbors.

Nearly all of us have seen, heard, or read about recent acts of anti-Semitic violence. In the past year attackers

have murdered Jews in Pennsylvania and New Jersey simply because they were Jewish. While those attacks have been reported, silence sometimes hangs over other acts of anti-Semitic violence and harassment, such as the use of racial slurs and expressions of racial stereotypes.

Christians can begin to combat such anti-Semitism by keeping ourselves aware of its manifestations. We must pay close attention to media reports of acts of anti-Semitism and not allow ourselves to become desensitized to casual anti-Semitic racism. Not only must Christians maintain awareness of anti-Semitism, we also have the duty to speak out when we read about, hear of, and especially witness it.

We must speak out against those acts with our family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors. Pastors and other church leaders also are obligated to seek ways to publicly condemn such acts.

At the same time, Christians ought to actively look for ways to cultivate relationships with Jewish people. While we differ on some extremely important tenets of our faith, Jews and Christians share both a conviction of our creation in God's image and a commitment to the Old Testament's testimony to God's covenantal faithfulness.

Of course, while Jewish people are Christians' neighbors, some of them are not our nearby neighbors. Some Christians don't live, work, or shop near Jewish people. Even when Christians and Jews are neighbors, we don't always have much contact with each other.

However, Christians who do have nearby Jewish neighbors can combat anti-Semitism by developing closer relationships with them. I live, work, and worship in a neighborhood in which many Jewish people live and worship. In fact, Jewish people walk past our church and our home on their way to various activities in their synagogues.

Faithfulness
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requires
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Yet Jews and Christians sometimes silently walk past each other, so a local rabbi's outreach to me as a pastor was a marvelous grace. We have for a few years periodically met to talk about many things. While standing near his son's playpen in his study in their synagogue, we discussed challenges busy clergy face in trying to be good spouses and parents.

The rabbi treated me to my first delicious breakfast of a bagel with smoked salmon and cream cheese. He invited me to a screening of a film about the Holocaust where he proudly introduced me as his friend to members of his synagogue. We have also promised to pray for each other.


Of course, any interfaith activity is always fraught with hazards. The elephant in the room with most of our Jewish neighbors is our radically different understanding of the person and role of Jesus Christ. Since we long for God to make room for our Jewish neighbors in the new creation, we also long for them to receive God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Yet, as we wait and pray for their salvation, we treat Jewish people and their faith with respect. As we cultivate relationships with them, we deliberately view them as people God creates in God's image. We seek to learn more about their faith and its nuances. We pray and work for Jewish people's well-being.

Luke's account of Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan may help to shape our relationships with our Jewish neighbors and fight anti-Semitism. One of Jesus' contemporaries wishes to identify the neighbors whom God calls him to love. Jesus instead teaches him how to *be* a neighbor.

In the parable we learn a great deal about Jesus through the Good Samaritan's sacrificial care for the assaulted traveler representing each of us. Jesus also teaches his followers much about our own care for our "traveling" neighbors. For centuries people have brutalized and left for dead countless "travelers" who are Jewish. Christians have found many reasons to pass them by on the other side of the road.

But Jesus summons his followers to respond to God's amazing grace not by passing by, but by ministering to them. God invites Christians to respond to anti-Semitism by actively and even self-sacrificially caring for our Jewish neighbors, who have been the victims of so much violence.

Jesus' followers long for our Jewish neighbors to share space with us not only in the body of Christ, but in the new creation. Until that day, we must faithfully respond to God's call us to love them the way God loves us. 



Rev. Doug Bratt is a pastor of the Silver Spring Christian Reformed Church in Silver Spring, Md. He has been an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church for nearly 33 years.

Baptisms and Birthdays

As the church,
we are the
intergenerational
family of God—all
ages, in one place,
doing life together.

A Birthday

It was my oldest son's 16th birthday, and I was having all kinds of emotions about it. Not only was Brody another year older—and another foot taller, it seemed—but he was getting his driver's license that week. He had his first girlfriend. His shoulders were starting to look like full-grown man shoulders, and he had started shaving. He was growing at lightning speed, and my mom-heart couldn't keep up.

It was also a Sunday morning. As we sat in church waiting for the worship service to begin, Brody passed a nudge down the pew through his siblings to get my attention. He was pointing at something in the bulletin. I scanned the pages of my own bulletin, and I knew it when I saw it: we were baptizing a little boy named Brody during the service. I gave my Brody a nod and a smile as my mind started whirling with memories of his baptism 15 years earlier.

A Baptism

We planned Brody's baptism for when he was 8 months old so my family could all be there. My parents came, as did my three sisters with their families. One of my sisters, an ordained pastor, would baptize Brody, and another sister would sing a special song I had found. It was going to be a very special day for our family. And then the stomach flu hit. One by one, the cousins and in-laws all got sick.

By the time Sunday morning rolled around, there weren't very many family members who could make it to the service. But as my husband and I stood in front of the church and made our promises and then listened to the promises of the congregation, I realized Brody's blood family might not

have all been there, but his family by the blood of Christ was, and it felt like every one of them stood in line after the service waiting to welcome Brody into their church family.

As I thought about that weekend, I thought about all the relationships Brody enjoyed with the people who stood in that line. Images flooded my mind—images of dropping Brody off in the nursery, of his Sunday school teachers and his Cadet leaders. Images of people buying Brody's pizzas for school fundraisers, of congregation members watching him in the school play, helping him with his animals at the county fair, cheering for him at football games, bringing meals for him and his dad when his little brothers and sister were born. These were also the same people who stood in line to congratulate him when he made profession of faith. Each of those relationships has affected his outlook on life and what it means to live out his faith.

Our Promises Are the 'Why'

Families are, by definition, intergenerational. And as the church, we are the intergenerational family of God—all ages, in one place, doing life together. Most churches are quite diligent to make sure people of all ages have a place within their congregation. Just think about all the programs churches put together for children, youth, and adults. We want people to feel like they have a place in the church. We want them to stay with us, be a part of God's family, grow in their faith, and bless others.

But there's intergenerational ministry and there's an intergenerational mindset. Both need to be present for the church to thrive.



Trudy Ash is a regional catalyzer for Faith Formation Ministries. She lives in Milaca, Minn., with her husband and four kids. They attend Pease CRC in Pease, Minn.



Photo by Yoann Boyer/Unsplash

Intergenerational ministry is about the programs and procedures we implement in our churches to help every generation grow in faith and service. An intergenerational mindset is a way of doing life with other generations that just comes naturally and happens with or without an event or program.

As I sat in church watching the baptism of another Brody, I saw an intergenerational mindset being promised to this little boy through the congregation's baptism promises:

"We promise to love, encourage, and support these brothers and sisters by teaching the gospel of God's love, by being an example of Christian faith and character, and by giving the strong support of God's family in fellowship, prayer, and service."

Those promises are the "why" behind each church program we organize and each event we put together. More importantly, they're the "why" behind each story of care and support that happens outside of our programs.

A Place to Belong

On the Sunday morning of baby Brody's baptism and my Brody's 16th birthday, I stood up with my church family, people of all generations, and promised to love, encourage, and support someone else's little Brody

and his family. As I looked around the room, the tears came as I saw many of the same faces who had promised to love my Brody now promising to love this new little Brody as they had promised to so many other of God's children over the years.

What a picture of belonging! And these people were not just doing lip service. They were promising to get to know these families in personal and supportive ways. I doubt they refer to it as having an intergenerational mindset—they just call it love. But it is very clear to me that Brody's church family knows him. And my Brody knows them, too. He is at home in this building, with these people. He feels safe. He feels accepted. He knows he belongs and he knows he is loved.

It hit me that I had spent the past 16 years watching God work out his promises to Brody within and through this beautiful family we call our church, and it wouldn't end now that he was 16. This family of God will continue to shape who Brody is and how he views the church for the rest of his life. People of all generations have poured themselves into his life, and he will be stronger in his faith and his commitment to Christ because of it.

An Intergenerational Mindset

There are beautiful stories of generations doing life together all over our

denomination. The question I believe every church should be asking is this: Are these relationships happening because of an intergenerational program, or because our congregation operates out of an intergenerational mindset? Are we living out of the baptism promises we make, or are we just going through the motions of programs and events?

Both the ministry and the mindset are needed. Programs and events are what bring generations together and give opportunity for relationships to start and grow. But the mindset is what sustains the relationships between the events and what encourages care and support outside the church building.

Later that week, Brody passed his driver's test, and he didn't leave home forever. He went on his first official date with his girlfriend, and he came home afterward. That is what we want for our kids. We want them to be part of a family where they feel they belong so they come back home even when they have the freedom to leave. Thank you, Pease Christian Reformed Church, for giving my Brody a place to belong. 🙏



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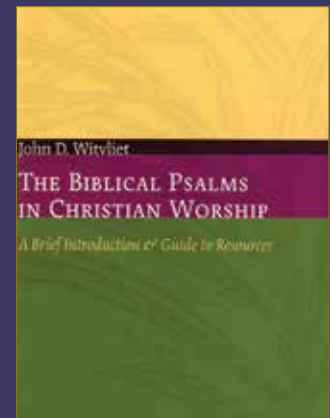
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Are Ancient Bible Stories Still Relevant?

He read Genesis 1—for the first time in his life—and when he finished there were tears streaming down his face.



Mike Wagenman is the Christian Reformed campus minister and a professor of theology at Western University in London, Ont., and a part-time New Testament instructor at Redeemer University College. He attends Forest City Community Church.

ONE DAY A BIOLOGY PROFESSOR at my university emailed me to ask if I was familiar with Genesis. “That’s odd,” I thought. I replied that I was, and I’d be happy to talk about it with him.

I remember our first meeting vividly. We chatted over coffee about what gave rise to his interest in Genesis. He explained that each year he has Christian students who challenge him with their understanding of Genesis. He explained that he’d never read Genesis, and as an atheist he was reluctant to do so. But he didn’t feel he could engage in those discussions because of his lack of personal engagement with Genesis.

I gave him a Bible and told him we could read it together and discuss it if he wanted. He read Genesis 1—for the first time in his life—and when he finished there were tears streaming down his face. “That’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever read,” he said.

Can we still read the oldest stories in the Bible today? Of course we can! But we need to read them as they were intended to be read. The oldest stories in the Bible were not written from a scientific perspective, and when we force them to operate that way they become dull, flat, and simplistic. But if we read them as ancient wisdom that probes the deepest metaphysical questions of existence, they come alive with dynamic and imaginative power that opens up all kinds of conversations.

Since the dawn of the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution, Christians have mistakenly felt that the only way to retain the authority of Scripture is to make Scripture fit into a scientific paradigm of what counts as truth. But in my experience of bearing witness to the gospel on a public university campus, contemporary people (atheists, agnostics, and

theists/believers) are profoundly interested in these ancient biblical stories even if we don’t share the same view of Scripture’s authority or inspiration.

Especially so with the most ancient stories, the Bible invites us into a (pre-scientific) world that is multilayered, richly textured, and existentially impactful. When we allow Scripture to dig deep into our imaginations, it can reveal things about ourselves, about our world, and about life that we would never encounter by more didactic or rational means.

The more secular voices in society today seem to be under the impression that the Bible is on its way to obscurity in the modern world. It’s almost as if some believe the Bible is outdated and superstitious, while science gives us a more solid way of thinking.

But one of the greatest cultural phenomena over the past couple of years has been a relatively unknown Canadian university professor reflecting on the psychological significance of the ancient biblical stories. Those videos have been viewed many millions of times and have sparked a general interest in the persistent relevance of the Bible for life today.

The reason for the surprisingly high level of curiosity among unbelievers is the same as that of the biology professor who emailed me out of the blue one day. That email turned into a yearlong series of weekly meetings of reading and discussing together the opening 11 chapters of Genesis—words he’d never read before.

When we finished with Genesis, we moved on to Mark’s gospel. In the end, it was the oldest stories in the Bible that opened the door to this biology professor’s conversion to faith in Jesus. **B**

2020: The Synod That Wasn't

SYNOD 2020 NEWS

Meeting on behalf of Synod 2020 to conduct the business of the church deemed necessary before Synod 2021 convenes, the Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates gathered via Zoom video conferencing June 12-17. Stories on the following pages highlight the actions taken.

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For the first time in its 163-year history, the Christian Reformed Church canceled its annual synod due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (See "Most of Synod 2020 Agenda Deferred to 2021," June 2020, p. 17.)

Normally synod lasts a week, each day including enthusiastic worship, times of camaraderie in committees and over meals, and times of prayer.

But little is normal in this pandemic. Instead of a rousing synod with almost 200 delegates and all its ups and downs, the Council of Delegates met over four half days, looking at each others' faces in boxes on a screen.

Conducting the business of the church that the officers of Synod 2019 decided could not wait, the meeting was marked by celebration, lament and mourning, a businesslike atmosphere, and most of all by the oddness of it all.

An Odd and Strange Experience

As president of the Council, Paul De Vries, synod veteran from Classis Thornapple Valley, chaired the meeting. It felt odd, he said, because it has never happened before and there was no plan or precedent to follow.

William Koopmans, another synod veteran from Classis Hamilton, missed the celebratory aspects that are part of synod: the celebration of new candidates for ministry, commemorating the services of pastors who are retiring (30 this year), and launching a significant vision for the ministry of the denomination with *Our Journey 2025*.

To recognize the candidates (p.18), Council made the best of it, having an on-screen ceremony that included a modified laying on of hands.

"Though meeting by Zoom in a special session is not nearly as personal, the disadvantages were mitigated in part by the fact that the (Council) members already know each other quite well," said Koopmans. "The conversations were typically direct and gracious."

Not a Rubber Stamp

For much of the meeting, the Council was approving aspects of its own work that would ordinarily be presented to synod. But that didn't mean it all passed easily.

Roger Sparks, delegate from Classis Minnkota and also a synod veteran, said delegates were conscious of the dynamic of not being synod. "We were careful

not to rubber-stamp previous (Council) decisions," he said. "We discussed and carefully weighed each item of business, taking into consideration overtures and communications that we received from classes and individuals."

A case in point was the plan for recognizing the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women in the CRC (p. 19). The plan was initially proposed back in February and recommended by the Council to Synod 2020. However, the plan was scaled down significantly when Council was acting on behalf of Synod 2020, in order to be sensitive to people who hold a different biblical interpretation of the role of women in the church.

De Vries said changing the Council's own proposal isn't as strange as it might seem. "When synod meets, it almost always tweaks and adjusts the recommendations of the Council of Delegates." That is how the system is supposed to work, he said, whether synod meets or not.

On the other hand, Sheila Holmes, Classis Hackensack, yet another synod veteran, was not in favor of some of the actions the Council took. "There were things (for which) I felt the church needed to hear from a much broader voice than the (Council)," she said.

Ministry Shares

The Council approved immediate implementation of the Reimagining Ministry Shares program that will see churches pledging support for shared denominational ministries instead of being assessed a specific ministry share amount per member after denominational budgets are already created (p. 21). Although it was adopted in principle by Synod 2019, several delegates advised holding off for a year, noting that many classis meetings (regional groups of churches) that would have considered the report were canceled due to COVID-19.

Governance

The Council decided to continue moving ahead with restructuring the governance of the CRC along U.S. and Canadian lines despite a protest from two Ontario churches (p. 21). "It certainly would have been good to have synod speak into the vexing and complicated process of restructuring," De Vries said. "But that wasn't to be this year."

The Council also continued the work of previous synods in identifying and preventing abuse of power by leaders. It approved a mandatory training program for all those entering vocational ministry in the CRC, candidates, pastors from other denominations, and commissioned pastors (p. 22).

Holmes felt the Council overstepped its boundaries in including commissioned pastors, noting that commissioned pastors are in the purview of classes.

Other Matters

The Council confirmed the appointment of Colin Watson as interim executive director for the coming year. Watson was appointed acting executive director after the abrupt resignation of former executive director Steven Timmermans. Timmermans was granted emeritation as executive director.

The Council approved Back To God Ministries International's request to change its name to ReFrame Ministries: God's Story, Today's Media.

Struggling with Racism

The struggle with racism going on all over North America and around the world also came to the Council. Delegates took part in a time of lament over what is happening, hearing challenging words from two delegates who are black. "It's time to



Emmett Harrison: It's time to lament, repent, and repair."

lament, repent, and repair," said Emmett Harrison. "If we only mourn, we go nowhere," said Sheila Holmes (p. 21).

Several CRC leaders had issued a statement online June 4. The Council issued its own resolution, but only after fractious debate (p. 20).

Hoping for a Return to Normal

All the delegates who spoke with *The Banner* are hoping for a return to a normal synod next year.

Sparks said it is much better to meet in person with four-person delegations from each classis. "The fellowship and conversations among delegates at 'normal' synods are important for bridge-building between agencies/ministries and the classes of the CRC," he said.

Koopmans said the special meeting of the Council went very well. "But I dare say it left most of us longing for a return to the broader and more public venue of business as usual at synod!"

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

CRC Candidates for Ministry Get Virtual Send-off

With Synod 2020 canceled, candidates approved for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church did not get the usual send-off ceremony, traditionally a highlight of the annual synod.

Instead, the Council of Delegates, acting on behalf of Synod 2020, approved their candidacy and hosted a special presentation June 17 via Zoom. David Koll, Candidacy Committee director, and Jul Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, were among those who spoke words of encouragement to the candidates.

A PowerPoint presentation showed the photo and name of each candidate as each name was read. Many of the candidates joined the Zoom call. A recording of the ceremony was subsequently provided for candidates, their families and friends.

There are 36 candidates this year. Eight are women and 15 are persons of color. Koll noted that for the first time ever, women and persons of color outnumber the white male candidates (p. 32).

One of the candidates this year is Christopher Tibben. "Things were much different than any of us expected," he said. "We all understand why it has to be this way. The joys of being graduated, confirmed, and officially a candidate is great no matter what form it comes in! I know this is the sentiment of my fellow students as well."

Koll said, "I'm hoping this event, in the context of the virus limitations, will stay in their memory and their heart as a point of encouragement as they move into ministry."

Following the presentation, the delegates raised their hands to their screens to pray over the candidates.

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor



Delegates raised their hands to their screens to pray a blessing over the candidates.

CRC Governance Restructure Continues

At its special June meeting, the Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates decided to continue the work of governance restructuring despite a protest from two Ontario congregations.

Restructuring along American and Canadian lines was announced in February after legal counsel advised that direction and control of Canadian resources had to be handled by Canadian delegates to the Council (known collectively as Canada Corporation) to be in compliance with Canadian tax law. Initial steps included identifying distinct leadership and budgets for each ministry in each country. (See "Restructuring Gives CRC in Canada More Ministry Control," April 2020, p. 18.)

The Council made additional recommendations at its May meeting, including what it called a "skeleton plan" for how the restructuring might look. It proposed that each country appoint an independent executive director who would work collaboratively with his or her counterpart on the other side of the border. Additionally, an ecclesiastical officer would be appointed to "help shepherd the denomination forward in a way that fosters unity across the border, emphasizes our shared faith, synodical positions, and ecclesiastical polity, and advances the denomination's global ecclesiastical goals."

The church councils of Community CRC in Kitchener, Ont., and First CRC in Owen Sound, Ont., protested the changes being made. In a letter (see bit.ly/Communication5), they said they had requested access to documents regarding the changes but were denied. They wrote that the realignment "effectively split the denomination into two national churches" and, further, that there has been "an egregious lack of transparency in the process and decisions made."

Andy DeRuyter, president of the Canada Corporation, told *The Banner* that they had not been formally approached by either of the two congregations prior to the letter being sent to the full Council. He noted that in implementing the restructure changes they had drawn extensively on the experience of World Renew and how it navigates cross-border issues. World Renew, the global development ministry of the CRC with its own governance structure, has a co-director in each country and two national boards that together form the Joint Ministry Council. He also noted Canada Corporation had consulted with three lawyers and the staff from the Canadian Council of Christian Charities.

The Council of Delegates, on behalf of Synod 2020, reaffirmed its desire for unity during a difficult process.

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

Recognition of 25th Anniversary of Women's Ordination to be Scaled Back

The 25th anniversary of women's ordination in the Christian Reformed Church will be recognized denominationally in the summer of 2021, starting with 30 minutes at the annual synod in June and wrapping up at the CRC's Inspire 2021 conference two months later.

The plan for recognizing the anniversary was considerably scaled back from what had been proposed by Denise Posie, recently retired CRC director of leadership diversity, and also recommended in February to Synod 2020 by the Council of Delegates.

The proposal included a series of events that would start in September 2020 and last for 15 months.

However, in its June meeting to address synod matters that couldn't wait until Synod 2021, the Council of Delegates decided to scale back the plan out of sensitivity for those who do not believe women should hold ecclesiastical office.

The CRC currently states that views opposing women's ordination and those affirming it are equally valid biblical positions. (See crcna.org, position statements.)

Because of that, Classis Minnkota (a regional group of churches) had asked the Council, on behalf of Synod 2020, *not* to endorse the original proposal, stating that it "celebrates a view that is opposed by many in the denomination" (*Agenda for Synod 2020*, p. 314).

A small advisory committee considered the staff proposal and the Minnkota request and recommended that the Council approve a scaled-back recognition. Michelle Kool, a pastor from Classis Alberta North, chaired that advisory committee. She said the initial proposal of 15 months of celebrating opportunities is difficult for the churches who hold the biblical view that does not support women's ordination. "To be faithful to our two denominational position statements,



Nine female pastors delegated to Synod 2015.

sensitive to both positions and in the spirit of love, unity, mutual submission, and cooperation, we have limited the celebrating opportunities to a smaller 'official' time frame."

Neither side was fully satisfied with the decision.

Elsa Fennema, an at-large delegate, was disappointed that the time frame had been reduced. "It's been an uphill climb all the way. This doesn't seem to spend much time recognizing the ordination of women. It seems a pittance to me."

On the other hand, Tyler Wagenmaker, Classis Zeeland, wanted to add recognition of women's ministry that is unordained. "This has been a divisive issue in the past," he said. "This is an opportunity to move past some of that divisiveness and use staff and resources to help congregations on both sides."

Kool noted that the language from the committee's proposal was specifically agreed on with a representative from the church in Minnkota that wrote the overture (request). "What you see here is

what Classis Minnkota was also in agreement with."

Roger Sparks, the Council delegate from Classis Minnkota, thanked the committee for its wording. "I want to say personally I appreciate what I'm hearing in the discussion," he said.

Although the time frame was shortened, denominational staff will still provide resources to churches and classes that want to celebrate as they choose, including outside of that two-month period.

After the decision, Posie told *The Banner* that she appreciates the women who serve as pastors, commissioned pastors, or chaplains, as well as women in so many other roles, ordained and non-ordained. "Above all, my heart's desire is for every woman to be affirmed in their calling and use of gifts," she said. "That is so important because God has placed us in ministry to graciously and powerfully impact the world for God's glory."

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

CRC Struggles to Respond to Racism Following Death of George Floyd

Most Christian Reformed Church ministry leaders signed their names to a June 4 statement about the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. Director of Diversity Reginald Smith declined to sign it. And the CRC's Council of Delegates wrote its own resolution, adopted after significant debate.

The statement from the ministry leaders said that "while these incidents create moments of crisis in the lives of non-black people, they actually expose centuries-long patterns of racism and prejudice in the United States that are lived every day by people of color." (See network.crcna.org/racial-reconciliation.)

"These high profile cases are not anomalies," the statement reads. "Instead, they underline the systemic nature of racism and its pervasiveness in our culture."

The 19 leaders who signed the statement invited church members to join them in moving beyond "thoughts and prayers," noting that pursuing change is costly and will require sacrifice, especially for white members of the community. "We believe that such sacrifice is not only necessary; it also reflects the type of sacrificial love Jesus showed most gloriously on the cross," the statement reads.

Council of Delegates Statement

At a special meeting, the CRC's Council of Delegates supported the leaders with a resolution of its own.

It reads, "By this resolution, the Council of Delegates, acting on behalf of Synod, declares its abhorrence regarding the sin of systemic racism; declares its support of our denominational leaders who signed the statement about the death of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor; and declares its hope that in the midst of our struggle against racism the power of the gospel of justice and grace in Jesus Christ can be displayed."



Debate took place over the line supporting the denominational leaders and their statement.

Elsa Fennema, an at-large delegate, spoke in favor of it. "It is important that we say something, even if we don't agree with every jot and tittle."

Tyler Wagenmaker, Classis Zeeland, was not in favor. "There are some significant statements here that are problematic," he said. "We haven't discussed the term 'systemic racism.' That's a loaded term." He also expressed concern about some of the links posted at the end of the leaders' statement, calling them very troubling.

Colin Watson, interim executive director of the CRC, pointed out the note at the end of the statement that says the leaders "do not necessarily endorse every link or every statement on their websites."

Bruce DeKam, Classis Northern Michigan, also voted against the Council's resolution because he didn't like the statement written by the denominational leaders.

In the end, the Council's resolution passed 31 to 8. DeKam, Wagenmaker, Ralph Wigboldus of Classis Huron, George Young of Classis Hudson, Roger Sparks of

Classis Minnkota, and Tony Lara of Classis Arizona registered their negative votes.

Statements Do Not Change Hearts and Minds

Absent from the signatories to the June 4 statement was Reginald Smith, the CRC's director of diversity where, he says, he gets to work with the fastest-growing segment of the CRC: ethnic and multiracial congregations.

"I am really wary of statements," he told *The Banner*.

He said statements do not change hearts and minds. "I know our denomination has a tough time dealing with race," he said. "We deny its history, feel sorry about it, and find an office to take responsibility, and we move on to our culture wars. I have seen this routine too many times."

He said another statement is a total waste of time if hearts and minds are not pricked by something greater or profound. "I know our church knows what to do," he said. "It just isn't going to do it. Statements will not change this dilemma."

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

Council of Delegates Laments Racism

At its special meeting on behalf of Synod 2020, the Council of Delegates conducted a short service June 17 lamenting the racism being experienced by so many.

Recently retired pastor Emmett Harrison, Classis Grand Rapids East, called racism a pandemic within a pandemic. "COVID-19 kills black people at three times the rate of white people," he said. "It takes a higher toll with those with underlying health issues, which are more prevalent among black, brown, and Indigenous people. In the middle of this unprecedented crisis, we witnessed murder of another black man. We are confronted with callous disregard for black bodies. Enough is enough. Before we can move on, we must lament, repent, and repair."

Delegates were led in a reading of "A Litany for Those Not Ready for Healing," by Yolanda Pierce of Princeton University, followed by a message from Sheila Holmes.

Holmes, a longtime pastor from Classis Hackensack, has been on the Council of Delegates since its inception and before that sat on the Board of Trustees. She has been a delegate to and an officer of the CRC's annual synod.

She told delegates that she has watched the CRC struggle with racism for 50 years. "We've gone from setting up programs and institutions, to synodical committees, to multiethnic conferences, to diversity in leadership programs. We continue to talk, and we may even continue to lament," she said. "We take a moment. I believe the moment is sincere. But until our lives connect with one another and we are willing to ask the Holy Spirit to change our hearts and attitudes, nothing changes."

Holmes told delegates, "I'm not an angry black woman, but I'm a hurt black woman. Even in the church I have not been seen as an equal. I've seen black pastors become discouraged."

"This is not about programs," she continued, "but about relationships, about trust and respect."

She ended by telling delegates there is a time to lament and mourn, but also a time for action. "If we only mourn, we go nowhere."



Rev. Sheila Holmes

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

Ministry Share Changes to Begin in 2022

For fiscal year 2022, the denominational budget will be based on and funded by the amount of giving pledged by churches and their classes (regions of churches). (See "Synod 2019 Upends Ministry Share System," July/August, 2019.) The new method is called Ministry Shares Reimagined (*Agenda for Synod 2019*, p. 110).

That means that later this year, each church council will be asked to prayerfully consider how much its congregation can and will give for their ministry shares. Each classis will evaluate the collective commitments and report to the denominational offices how much it will pledge by Feb. 1, 2021.

The denominational agencies and educational institutions will then, for the first time, develop budgets based on that pledged amount. Until now they have established budgets first and then asked for the money to meet them.

The denomination has used the ministry share process since the mid-19th century, collecting what were then called assessments. It worked well for decades. However, in recent years, the amount actually remitted by the churches has steadily dropped, regardless of what amount was asked for. In 2016, only 58% of what was requested was actually received.

Synod 2019 approved the Ministry Shares Reimagined process in principle, recommending that Synod 2020 implement it. The Council of Delegates took up the matter in its special June meeting convened in the absence of synod. One church in southern Ontario sent a communication requesting that implementation be held off for a year, stating that it is too weighty a matter to be decided independently of synod (*Agenda for Synod 2020 Supplement*, p. 64).

Several Canadian delegates also wanted implementation delayed until Synod 2021. Ralph Wigboldus, Classis Huron, noted that changes in the governance structure have left a number of things in flux, and COVID-19 has caused so much disruption that many churches are on hold.

Aaltje van Grootheest, a Canadian delegate at large, agreed. "We're too early trying to do this. We need the year coming up to get everything organized."

Most delegates were not convinced to delay implementation, saying the concept had already been approved by Synod 2019 in principle.

The Council voted 28-15 to move ahead with implementation. Wigboldus, van Grootheest, and Mark Vande Zande, Classis Heartland, registered negative votes.

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

Pastor Training for Preventing Abuse of Power Approved

The Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates, acting on behalf of Synod 2020 at a special meeting, approved a training program for pastors to help them recognize and prevent abuse of power.

The training will be mandatory for all candidates for ministry in the CRC, all pastors transferring in from other denominations, and all those entering vocational ministry as a commissioned pastor.

A task force appointed by Synod 2019 created the program to further the denomination's work on preventing abuse of power at all leadership levels. Task force members included representatives from Calvin University, Calvin Theological Seminary, CRC Human Resources, Pastor Church Resources, Safe Church Ministry, and the Candidacy Committee.

The program consists of four one-hour online modules and might be adapted in the future for use in other contexts. The training modules will be finalized and made available in an online learning platform by the end of 2020. It will be included in the requirements for all 2021 candidates for ministry. After it is launched in English, it will be translated into Korean and Spanish.

Some delegates argued that synod cannot tell classes (regional groups of churches) what to do in the case of commissioned pastors because those pastors are approved for a role only within a classis. Kathy Smith, a CRC Church Order expert, said that while the office of commissioned pastor is local in scope, the position being filled is one approved denominationally by way of synodical deputies representing synod.

George Young, Classis Hudson, wanted to know how a training program will prevent someone from abusing power. Sam Sutter, Classis Atlantic Northeast, said that no amount of training can completely prevent abuse. "But there is a lot we can learn about abuse, about how to recognize it. We want to help people have some idea about what this looks like," Sutter said.

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

Indiana Church Celebrates 150 Years

Munster Church, historically the first church in Munster, Ind., will celebrate 150 years of ministry this August.

Trees will have a lot to do with the commemoration. Pastor Jim Hollendonner is preparing a sermon series, "Rooted," acknowledging the legacy of the Lord at Munster Church.

"We are like a family tree," said Jill Wiltjer, co-leader of the planning committee. "So many churches have branched off from Munster."

Wiltjer and her co-leader, Lisa Schutt, are creating a metal tree display with plaques listing the names of Munster's church plants hanging from the branches. At a celebratory dinner planned for September, guests will receive their own commemorative ornaments.

Hollendonner is eager to celebrate the past 150 years but said the church should also look forward to the next 150 years.

"The only way you can (continue to) be here is by recognizing God's sovereignty and being in tune with the community," he said.

One of the church's longest-serving pastors, Johan Monsma, pastored the church from 1926 to 1948. During World War II, Monsma was known for writing letters to 25 soldiers who were members or attendants of the church every month they were at war. The group came to be called "Jo's Boys."

Lugene A. Bazuin, who pastored the church from 1963 to 1992, hosted a radio show called "Munster Christian Reformed Church's Evening Service." That period was considered the church's heyday due to the hundreds of people reached through the radio program.

"Over the years, the pastors have kept the same vision: to be a lighthouse for wayward ships," Hollendonner said. While that vision might be carried out differently today—using Facebook and YouTube and a downloadable app instead of the radio—"Loving God, Loving People" has been the mission of the church throughout.

—Callie Feyen



A tree is a recurring symbol for Munster Church's 150th anniversary celebrations.

Lament, Prayer, Future Change: Talking to Pastors After George Floyd's Death

On May 25, George Floyd, a black man, died in Minneapolis, Minn., after a white police officer knelt on the back of his neck for nearly nine minutes while arresting him. That officer faces a charge of second-degree murder and two other charges. Three other officers were charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder. All four were fired from the police force. Protests, vandalism, and clashes with law enforcement erupted in many cities across the U.S. following the incident.

On June 1, a week after Floyd died, three Christian Reformed pastors in churches near Minneapolis, spoke to *The Banner* about ministering in their congregations and their city at this time.

Calvary CRC in Edina, Minn., is right on the town's border with Minneapolis. Pastor Nick Van Beek said his congregation includes people living or working in the city whose "world has been turned inside out," and it also includes those within the affluent suburb of Edina who are more removed and reluctant to engage, "content to just let the city handle it and we'll see what happens."

Van Beek said that parishioners in a Zoom (online video platform) conversation on Sunday night acknowledged that they're "struggling to know what to do with our sadness and our anger and our indifference."

Van Beek said he's trying to listen to his parishioners. His email inbox has been flooded with dozens of ideas about how the church should be responding with short-term relief and longer-term community transformation.

"Relief is a start," he said, "but I think it's clear to many in my congregation that the role of the church goes beyond relief, especially when something so dramatic and tragic happens in our city."

Asked by one of his parishioners to help the church start with lament, Van Beek



A member of Calvary CRC reads Psalm 6 in a service of lament shared on YouTube June 1.

put together a 25-minute video service, posted on YouTube June 1, that included three church members reading psalms and praying.

Arlan Koppendrayer, pastor of the emerging Christian Reformed congregation Trinity Hill Church in Chanhassen, Minn., said a number of people are very shaken by the rioting, and pastorally he's ministering to people who "are at the end of their nerves." He said it's all the more difficult to counsel them in a time when entering separate households is against public health rules to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

While his congregation is conducting services on Facebook Live, members try to cultivate more personal connections in Sunday-evening Zoom meetings.

"We really encourage people to take part in that," Koppendrayer said, noting that the unstructured time of sharing is always followed by prayer. This past Sunday "they wanted to pray for Minneapolis, they wanted to pray for the Twin Cities, they wanted to pray for people that they know in the cities, and

it was just a very intentional, desired prayer time. ... It was quite something."

Koppendrayer said there will be conversations at Trinity Hill about what it means to live in a multiracial society: "We just have to talk about the fact that to be white in America is different than being black in America, and let's not pretend that it's not."

Pastor Perrin Werner of Grace CRC in Inver Grove Heights, Minn., said he ministers in "the most diverse church that I have been a part of—academically, racially, financially, even politically—and it's also the most tight-knit."

He made phone calls to people he knew would be especially affected by the events because of where they lived or worked, and he encountered raw feelings.

To many, the events feel "personal, impactful, infuriating, and scary, and there's a fair amount of powerlessness in what we can do," Werner said. "It's a fluid environment, and we're trying to figure out how best we can minister to the different contexts."

One family who lives within the city worked to clean up the streets on several mornings. Werner gathered help from some other pastors to put together a care package for soldiers deployed to Minneapolis.

"It's tough," Werner said. "The protesters need a voice—they absolutely need a voice—and it's hard because the voice, I think, is being obscured by the riots. So how do we allow peaceful protests and hear what that community has to say, (while) at the same time we're bringing in extra law enforcement and the National Guard, and it just feels like an escalation in some ways."

"Nothing is easy about this," Werner said.

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

Pandemic Posts

Through the months of March, April, May, and June, ministries of Christian Reformed congregations in North America adapted to public health recommendations made to help slow the spread of COVID-19. *The Banner* highlighted several of these innovative approaches, gestures of support, and creative projects on its Facebook page.

Here are some of the stories we shared:

B On April 15, about a month after pastors of First CRC in Demotte, Ind., began preaching to an empty sanctuary while recording the weekly service, they got a surprise. Church administrators Shannon and Deb had printed life-sized photos of several church members to make the pews seem less empty.



B Members of Community CRC of Meadowvale in Mississauga, Ont., shared love with their neighbors with notes, window messages, and flower deliveries. "While the church building may be closed to all regular activity," Pastor Sam Cooper said, "we wanted the community to know we are still here and they are not alone."



B John VanHemert, a retired CRC pastor, and his wife, Jean, visited family members on Mother's Day across the ditch border between the state of Washington and the province of British Columbia near the VanHemerts' home in Lynden, Wash. The border was closed to nonessential travel at the time. The VanHemerts are members of First CRC in Lynden and have four adult children and many grandchildren who live in British Columbia. The VanHemert children are members of Duncan (B.C.) CRC and of Immanuel CRC and Willoughby CRC in Langley, B.C.



B New Westminster CRC in Burnaby, B.C., created a supportive effort they called "Triple Blessing," collecting donations to purchase meals from local restaurants to then share with health care workers. The church's office administrator, Jenny Eastwood, said on May 22 that they had completed their fifth "mission" delivering meals to different care centers.



B Pastor Peter Jonker taught children (and other viewers) how to wash their hands while singing the doxology “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow.” LaGrave Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., posted this video as part of their online service March 15.



B Bethel CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, ran its first livestream-only service Sunday, March 15. Renee Wielenga shared a photo of her 2-year-old daughter in front of the screen while Pastor John Lee preached.



B Westview CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., provided a prayer box for neighbors to share concerns with Pastor Pete Byma, who said in early April he had picked up a handful of handwritten prayer requests.



B Social media channels were full of posts from people completing creative projects this spring. A post from Greenwood Studio, a woodworking shop owned by Sherman Street (Grand Rapids, Mich.) CRC member Marc Wiegers, showed a hanging light fixture made from a cache of World Renew’s iconic “Peter Fish” coin banks.



B Hannah Keen, children’s ministries coordinator at Bellevue (Wash.) CRC, shared a photo of a collaborative project that members of her church worked on together while separated. Forty-five separately colored paper “tiles” made up “A Portrait of Jesus,” an image from Illustrated Ministries. “It was a fun, fairly straightforward way of including the whole congregation in part of our worship service even when we are sheltering in place and feeling pretty isolated at times,” Keen said.



For more stories of ministry during COVID-19, including a **New Mexico CRC serving as a food distribution hub** in Classis Red Mesa; an **update from Holland Christian Homes’ Grace Manor in Brampton, Ont.**, one of five long-term care homes in the province cited in a harsh report about conditions in the facilities but not subject to the government appointment of temporary management; and **local ministry grants helping churches respond to community COVID-19 needs**, please see thebanner.org/tags/covid-19.

Classis Watch: Spring 2020

Two or three times each year, Christian Reformed churches send representatives to their classis, a regional group of churches. Many of the actions taken by classes are governed by the CRC's Church Order, the rules that govern denominational life. Here are some of the actions by classes in the past few months:

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many classes to change their meeting format or cancel meetings. Classis Alberta North, meeting in mid-March, reduced its meeting from two days to one. Classes Chatham, Huron, Red Mesa, and Hamilton canceled their May meetings. Classes Grand Rapids East, Niagara, Toronto, and Quinte met in May via Zoom video conferencing.

Those **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church** include seminary graduates Shawn Richardson, Dan Crapo, Cris Harper, and Terence Schilstra (Church Order Articles 6 and 10). Welcomed into ministry in the CRC **from another denomination** following a satisfactory colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) establishing soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life, and knowledge and appreciation of Christian Reformed practice was Rev. Eunsang Hwang (Church Order Art. 8, p. 23).

Ministers released from a congregation: Rev. Chelsey Harmon from Christ Community Church in Nanaimo, B.C.; Rev. Stephen Moerman from Peace CRC, Menno, S.D.; Rev. Tom van Milligen from Georgetown (Ont.) CRC (Church Order Art. 17a, p. 34).

Leaving ministry in the CRC

Churches and classes make a declaration reflecting a resigned minister's status that is appropriate to the way and spirit in which the minister acted during the time leading up to and including resignation from office. Those designations are honorably released; released; dismissed; and in the status of one deposed (Church Order Art. 14).



Photo by Wendy de Jong

Classis Niagara conducted the classis exam of Terence Schilstra via Zoom online conferencing.

Joella Ranaivason and Erin Stout were **honorably released**.

Michael Dadson was released in the status of one **deposed**.

Ministers granted emeritus status (retired): Revs. Peter Stellingwerff, Andrew Vanden Akker, Yoon Whan Kim, David Weemhoff, Cecil van Niejenhuis, and Tom Van Engen (Church Order Art. 18).

Commissioned Pastors

Commissioned pastors are called to specific roles within their classis. **Honorably released** were Khary Bridgewater (Grand Rapids East) and Nola Visser (Alberta North).

Steven Timmermans (Grand Rapids East) was granted **commissioned pastor emeritus status**.

New Ministries and Ministry Changes

An emerging (unorganized) church does not have its own council and is under the care of a council of a neighboring CRC. An organized church has its own council (Church Order Art. 38).

Dream Church, Buena Park, Calif., **changed its name** to Springing Fountain CRC.

Cascade of Hope CRC, Denver, Colo.; Fox Valley CRC, Crystal Lake, Ill.; and Comstock (Mich.) CRC **closed**.

Synod 2020

Synod 2020 was canceled due to COVID-19. However, all communications and overtures are still received. Some were dealt with by a special meeting of the Council of Delegates (see pp. 16-22). The rest will be deferred to Synod 2021.

Classis Minnkota requested that Synod 2020 **not adopt the proposal to recognize the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women**, asking that synod redouble its efforts to respect the convictions of and seek feedback from people with different views on women in office before making such proposals (see "Recognition of 25th Anniversary of Women's Ordination Scaled Back," p. 19).

Classis Minnkota sent a communication to Synod 2020 noting that even though Synod 1995 declared that both complementarian and egalitarian views are faithful interpretations of the Word of God, **synodical practice since that time has become markedly egalitarian, making it difficult for complementarians to participate in good conscience**.

Classis Minnkota sent a communication to Synod 2020 **supporting the use of the Great Lakes Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality**.

Classis B.C. North-West appointed a team to consider if a **realignment of Christian Reformed congregations and congregations of the Reformed Church in America might be a way forward for our two denominations through the divisive issues of marriage and human sexuality**. A communication about this was sent to Synod 2020.

—Gayla R. Postma, news editor

Noteworthy

Churches for Middle East Peace, a coalition that actively promotes a comprehensive resolution to conflicts in the Middle East, **released a letter to Congress** on June 2 **“opposing unilateral annexation of the Occupied West Bank.”** The Christian Reformed Church is a member of CMEP. Colin P. Watson Sr., acting executive director of the CRCNA, signed the letter along with 26 other Christian leaders.

Watson also signed a May 11 letter, organized by the Christian social justice organization Sojourners, that carried signatures of 23 Christian leaders **asking for American coronavirus economic stimulus legislation to include measures to ensure “an inclusive and fair voting process”** this fall.



Readers of *The Banner* in the 1980s and '90s might remember reading about the **Atlantic Stewardship Bank**, a northern New Jersey-based bank founded by members of Midland CRC on the principle of tithing a tenth of its profits to charities. Having operated that way since 1985, the bank **merged with New Jersey-based Columbia Bank earlier this year.** Pictured here is Paul Van Ostenbridge (center), the bank's CEO for its 35-year run, with Bill Hanse (left) and John Steen, two Midland CRC members who still served on the bank's board of directors when it decided to sell.



Christian evangelist and apologist **Ravi Zacharias**, founder of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, **died May 19.** He had been diagnosed with cancer a few months earlier.

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IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Dick C. Los

1923-2020

A compassionate man with a pastoral heart, Dick Los was appreciated for his humility, wisdom, calm demeanor, sense of humor, and ability to meet people where they were. Los died May 13 at age 97.

Born in Sassenheim, the Netherlands, the son of a bulb grower, Los knew from a young age that he wanted to be a pastor. He studied at the seminary in Kampen and from home during World War II.

Ordained in 1950, Los began ministry in Stellendam, the Netherlands, and moved to Ferwert before accepting a call to Canada in 1959. He then served six churches in Ontario: Georgetown CRC; Mountainview CRC (Grimsby); Ebenezer CRC (Jarvis); Cephas CRC (Peterborough); Covenant CRC (Woodstock); and First CRC (Kemptville). Los also served the denomination in other ways. In 1973 he was on the first synodical study committee about women in ecclesiastical office.

Los' main hobby was vegetable gardening. After retirement in 1988, he got into woodworking. He worked part time as pastor to seniors and preached monthly until he was 78.

Survived by six children and their spouses, 24 grandchildren, and 48 great-grandchildren, Los was predeceased in 2009 by Alice, his wife for almost 59 years.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Roger A. Kok

1938-2020

Pastor Rog Kok died May 12 after 31 years of serving Christian Reformed congregations in the U.S. He was 82. Everywhere he served, Kok cared deeply about people inside and outside the church walls. He is remembered for innovative worship services and insightful and inspirational sermons delivered with a booming voice. He loved to sing.

Following ordination in 1969, Kok pastored Palo Alto (Calif.) CRC; Pease (Minn.) CRC; Rogers Heights CRC, Wyoming, Mich.; Holland Heights CRC, Holland, Mich.; and Shawnee Park CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich. He retired in 2000.

Kok's favorite hobby was golf. Every year, he and three friends went to Myrtle Beach, S.C., where they played 36 holes a day for a week. He loved golf for the sport and for the fellowship. He liked to tease, and he laughed a lot. "Dad was a really fun grandpa," one of his children said. "He didn't sit on the sidelines watching the grandkids have fun; he joined right in with them."

Kok is survived by Joyce, his wife of 62 years; four daughters and their spouses; 10 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by grandson Curtis.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Calvin University Announces Changes to Faculty Expectations

Calvin University announced revisions to its faculty handbook this spring that expand the expectations of trustees, administrators, and faculty members. Members of Calvin's board of trustees and faculty senate unanimously affirmed the changes, communicating that they represent a deepening of Calvin's commitment to Reformed teaching and the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Two specific changes mark a significant break from past policy. Faculty are now encouraged to send their children to Christian schools but are no longer required to do so, and church membership must no longer be only in a Christian Reformed congregation or a church in ecclesiastical fellowship with the CRC, but may be in a Calvin-supporting Protestant congregation.

Calvin representatives say through the new evaluative category of "Reformed Christian Commitment," faculty will be expected to show evidence of their beliefs and not mere compliance. "The intent is to make explicit an expectation that has always been implicit and to provide resources to help the faculty meet that expectation," said Craig Lubben, chair of Calvin's board of trustees.

Kevin den Dulk, associate provost, said "a very rigorous program of faculty development" supports the expanded requirements. Every new faculty member takes a one-month seminar through Calvin's Kuyper Institute for Global Faculty Development and continues to access the Institute's resources and mentorship throughout their career at Calvin. The goal is to equip faculty with "a Christian world-and-life view grounded in a Reformed understanding of faith and cultural engagement," as described in Calvin's announcement about the founding of the Institute in 2018.

Given that the stated purpose of Calvin University remains the same—to provide students with courses that "are of a positively Reformed character entirely in accord with the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Church of North America"—Lubben said Calvin is now asking, "How do we adapt to the changing culture so as to achieve the mission?" The handbook revisions make room for faculty who come from diverse backgrounds while assuring their commitment to Reformed Christianity.

The board has discussed changes to the faculty handbook for many years. President Michael Le Roy asked the board to consider specific revisions in October 2019. The board asked for recommendations that came in February, and after a roundtable discussion and conversations with faculty and administration, the board confirmed the changes May 8.

Calvin's Covenant for Faculty Members, established in 2012 by the CRC's synod (the annual general assembly), has not changed.

—Maia VanderMeer

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World Renew Remembers Past Director John DeHaan



Photo by Gary Nederveid

John DeHaan was remembered by his family May 9 in a small, physically distanced, outdoor gathering at Calvin University.

John DeHaan, former executive director of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (now known as World Renew), died May 7.

DeHaan led the organization for 20 years, until 1998, just before the transition into geographically based organizational teams. Current World Renew co-director (U.S.) Carol Bremer-Bennett said, "John was a much-loved leader and change agent at World Renew, and it is because of him we are making and measuring such a huge impact in the world today."

Andrew Ryskamp, who retired from World Renew in 2015, followed DeHaan as director of CRWRC-USA and had worked under DeHaan's leadership as director of Diaconal Ministries for 13 years. "John was first of all a mentor to me," Ryskamp said. "He challenged me intellectually in areas such as organizational theory and always modeled Christ-centered servant leadership. He reminded us always to keep learning, growing, and (to) innovate into the ever-changing context of our church and world."

Ida Kaastra Mutoigo, co-director (Canada) of World Renew, shared a reflection with *The Banner* that she said she also shared with DeHaan's family: "John was deeply loved and appreciated; he was a faithful and very active follower of Christ. His legacy in World Renew continues to live on with the many values he cultivated in our culture and hearts."

—Alissa Vernon, news editor



A Death Without a Funeral

By Gayla Postma

On March 25, 1987, we lost our youngest child. Gone forever was the 2-year-old, blond-haired, blue-eyed joy named Steven Richard. We prayed, our community prayed, our family prayed that God would heal him, but that didn't happen.

We didn't have a funeral. Instead we all just kept praying that God would bring back the little boy we knew and loved. Perhaps we would get a Lazarus miracle.

It didn't happen.

Eventually, we just stopped praying for that miracle. Steven was no longer on the weekly prayer list in the church bulletin. Everyone's lives but ours seemed to go back to normal. All the hopes and dreams we once held for

a wonderful boy had died. We had a death without a funeral.

You see, Steven is still with us. He's 35 years old, a hulk of a good-looking man with the cognitive level of a 16-month-old. He doesn't speak, wears diapers, and must be supervised every minute of his waking hours.

But *our* Steven, the one I had given birth to, is gone. At age 2, he suffered what are called status seizures. They went on in his brain for more than 18 hours, long after doctors had put him in a comatose state to relieve his body of the physical trauma. Five days later, he emerged from the coma, changed forever. No cause was ever determined.

Do we love the Steven we still have in our lives? Yes! Does he bring joy to those who love him? Of course! But anyone who has met him after 1987

has not experienced the profound loss that those of us who knew him from birth live with.

What do we do with that loss? You can't really have a funeral for someone who is still living. Yet a loss like this is in fact a death in the family.

Ambiguous Loss

I recently came across two books that told me what we have experienced has a name: ambiguous loss. It's a loss that has no finite end short of actual physical death, a loss not unlike what many people experience when caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease, or one who has had a stroke, or one like Steven who has had a traumatic brain injury.

The first book is *Hit Hard: Our Family's Journey of Letting Go of What*

Was—and Learning to Live Well with What Is, by Pat and Tammy McLeod, chaplains at Harvard University. They wrote the book after their 18-year-old son received a devastating brain injury on the football field. Through that book I found *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*, by Pauline Boss, who spent decades researching and talking with people who have experienced ambiguous loss. Boss calls such ambiguous loss the most difficult of all losses because there is no closure.

Boss also noted that “if uncertainty continues, families often respond with absolutes, either acting as if the person is completely gone or denying that anything has changed.” That was evident in the McLeods’ story, and it certainly resonated in our family. For several years, my husband, Gary, and I couldn’t seem to get on the same page.

For the next six years, I was Steven’s champion. I attended endless doctors’ appointments. I drove him to physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, sensory integration therapy. When Steven came out of his coma, he couldn’t sit, stand, see, hear, speak. Over a few months, he sat, stood, walked, and eventually ran. He regained sight and hearing. Obviously he was making progress, so it was only a matter of time before he regained speech and cognitive understanding.

Except that he didn’t.

As I navigated the medical systems, determined by sheer force of will that this *would* get better, Gary withdrew further and further into loss and sadness. For a person with a visceral need for calm and predictability, living with chaos on two ever-growing legs was devastating. He did everything he could to help and to cope. But sadness enveloped him. He had lost his son.

It didn’t help that every new therapy we tried would give us hope but then plummet us back to hopelessness when it didn’t work. Facilitated communication would surely unlock



Steven is flanked by his brothers at a wedding celebration.

Steven’s brain and allow him to communicate with us. But it didn’t. Picture communication symbols: ditto. Signing: double ditto.

And then there were Steven’s older brothers, one five years older than Steven, the other two years older. No carefree childhood for them. Theirs became a life of vigilance. Leaving a front door or a back gate ajar was not just an annoyance. It was a threat to Steven’s safety. Having friends over much was difficult—it’s hard to explain to a friend why your brother just threw his orange juice across the table. As parents, we were available to them only through a haze of emotions and worries dominated by their brother.

Begging for Help

Then we moved to a different part of the province. The support of our beloved caregiver, who helped us more than she was ever paid for, was gone. Our supportive church community and friends were no longer close by. Steven required one-to-one supervision every waking hour. The people in our new community did what they could, but Steven’s needs were so overwhelming that even paid workers worked only a shift or two before quitting. We would hang on by our fingernails till the appointed hour when a

worker would come and give us three hours off, and then the worker would call an hour beforehand and say, “Sorry, I just can’t do this.”

Teachers and aides at his school had a stretch where they wore helmets for their own protection. Attempts to force Steven to do something he didn’t want, like have a diaper change, could be met with kicking, biting, and pinching. A boy who could give me a black eye was not the boy I had given birth to.

We pleaded with our social services caseworker for more money to hire more help. All we could get was enough to pay for 10 hours a week of help at minimum wage when what we needed was more like 70 hours a week.

When Steven was 8 years old, I knew I was headed for a crisis. We had managed to find a respite bed in a nearby city for one week so we could travel to Michigan to take Steven’s brothers to visit my parents. As we drove the 10 hours home, I dreaded picking up Steven more and more the closer we got. I finally knew we had reached the end. Living with that level of stress was simply unsustainable. It was like a slow-motion breakdown for me.

We begged the Children’s Aid Society (similar to Child and Family Services) to take him, to find a placement—anything. They refused, saying they could not take in a well-cared-for child. So we did the unthinkable. We abandoned him. We orchestrated the event by having a friend bring him to the CAS office while we left town. We were unreachable. It took all day, but finally the CAS took him. After a few days, reassured we would not be arrested for child abandonment, we returned home.

Steven was placed in a series of respite locations and a few weeks later was placed with a good foster family who looked after only him. When the first family retired, he received another good placement. They have workers who were paid to look after him for several hours almost every day. Finally

he had the support we were not able to obtain.

But it came at a price, another ambiguous loss perhaps even worse than the first. Steven was still our son, but now others were acting as his parents. Was I still his mother? Good mothers do not abandon their children.

Never a Right Answer

The tables turned in our marriage. The loss of Steven from our home made Gary long to see him, to have him stay at our house every weekend so we wouldn't lose touch with him, to hear his infectious laugh. And every time I saw him, it was like ripping off the scab of a still very raw wound. In my reading, I discovered that this changing of roles and still being on different pages is not uncommon.

Eventually I was hospitalized with severe depression brought on by trauma. Boss describes such trauma as similar to post-traumatic stress disorder except "it is not post-anything." The trauma doesn't end.

With help from doctors, Gary and I came to an agreement on how much I would see Steven. Sometimes that meant Gary would go see him alone. Other times it meant Steven would come to our house, but I would go stay with a friend for the weekend. Later on we started having Steven visit once every three weeks, but only for one night instead of the whole weekend.

That continued until about three years ago when Gary, due to a serious illness, could no longer provide primary care that included strenuous tasks such as corralling a grown man who didn't want to be corralled just to put him in the car. Steven had long since grown too strong to be physically contained by one person. And when we did have to take him on together with physical force, we were once again emotionally devastated.

Although we no longer regularly have Steven in our home, Gary continues to spend time with him throughout the year. They'll take long, slow drives

in the countryside. I see Steven very little except in the summer, when his worker brings him to our house most afternoons to let him enjoy our pool and the freedom to run in a completely enclosed backyard. Sometimes I choose to be outside to enjoy his presence. Sometimes I don't.

Some might question my choices. For now, this is what works for us. "It's not a question of having the right answer," wrote Boss. We must keep creating "the best possible answer for the moment, and know that process will not stop as long as we live."

We still grieve. His birthdays especially are a time of ambiguity. We want to celebrate him, but we will never get over the loss of him.

Not All Loss

It isn't all loss. I have learned a lot about what it means to be a child of God regardless of what gifts or skills one brings to the table. By worldly standards, Steven brings nothing to the table, yet he is every bit as much a child of God as the rest of us. He has the capacity to bring joy to people just by being who he is, not by what he can do. He is an image bearer simply by being who he is. That's a tough lesson for a results-oriented person like me.


Our marriage has survived and even thrived, though statistics tell us that 85% of marriages end in the face of the death or traumatic illness of a child. We can now mostly find our way to the same page of our loss and grief.

I don't know how Steven's brothers feel about what happened in our family. We don't really talk about it. But I know they have become adults with incredible empathy for people who are marginalized, whether socially or mentally or physically or emotionally. One son gives special care to the people he sees every day who live on the street. Steven's other brother is actively involved in his church's Friendship Group and brings his oldest daughter, age 9, so she will learn to be a friend and mentor. Both

brothers insisted that Steven be present at their weddings, knowing he could end up being very disruptive. Both of them traveled from a distance to see Steven's graduation ceremony when he aged out of the special needs school at 21.

Our three grandchildren see their uncle Steven a lot in the summer and simply accept him as he is. Ever excited and eager to have pool fun with Uncle Steven, they can also sense when he needs to be left alone. After bringing up children in a household so fraught with emotional chaos, the grandchildren are a balm to my Steven-scarred soul.

The healing we prayed for did not come in the form we had hoped for. Healing will never be complete on this side of heaven. But healing has come to each of us in different ways.

It's an ambiguous healing, just as it is an ambiguous loss. It isn't perfect or "right." But for now, for today, it is enough. 



Gayla Postma is news editor for *The Banner*. She and her husband Gary are members of Williamsburg (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church.

1. Have you experienced an ambiguous loss or known someone who has? Describe the experience.
2. How do we show grace and compassion to families, marriages, or relationships torn by difficult crises?
3. How can the local church community be a support for and minister to families or individuals facing such crises in their lives?

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What Really Counts?

This year, 2020, is the first year in our history where over 50% of our candidates are “minority” by previous definitions.



Rev. David Koll is director of candidacy for the Candidacy Committee of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

IN ACTS 2, as the Pentecost story concludes, we’re told that “about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41). And in Acts 11:24, speaking of the diverse church in Antioch, we’re told “a great number of people were brought to the Lord.”


In between these verses are stories of conflict and strife, much of it having to do with elitism, ethnic pride, and an unwillingness to live into authenticity. The early church had a hard time truly buying into God’s plan for diversity. Recall Peter’s speech of confession in Acts 10: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation people who fear him and do what is right” (Acts 10:34-35). Recall the difficulty the first church council in Jerusalem had in understanding God’s design (Acts 15).

What does this have to do with us and with our 2020 candidates? Well, let’s note that our denomination began as a monolithic group of people, immigrants from one country. As recently as 40 years ago, our *Acts of Synod* noted that 1% of the Christian Reformed Church in North America was ethnic minority (*Acts of Synod 1980*, p. 374). This statement was offered in a tone of rejoicing in progress made. In the year 2000, just 20 years ago, synod approved 34 candidates, 27 of whom were white males, the vast majority having Dutch surnames. Of the other seven, three were female and four were people of color.

This year, 2020, is the first year in our history where over 50% of our candidates are “minority” by previous definitions. The minority has become the majority. The following pages picture 15 people of color (four of whom are female) and four other females

outnumbering the 17 white males, a number of whom do not have Dutch surnames. This makes 36 people approved this year to serve the church in ordained pastoral ministry. Each of them counts and is precious in the sight of God. Yet their diversity as a group is noteworthy.

They face a context with struggles similar to those faced by the church in Acts. In a diverse world, the church is still learning how to deal with diversity. In our North American setting, prophetic calls for justice and righteousness are so easily politicized. The tasks of ministry these 36 people will face are as diverse as they are. These candidates are gifts of God to facilitate our call to live into the diverse and unified kingdom of God.

I invite you to rejoice in these candidates and to pray for them. And I invite you to give yourself fully to the vision of Revelation 7, where we behold “a great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9). 

For contact information, biographical information, eligibility status, and testimonies from each candidate, visit the Candidacy Committee website at crcna.org/candidacy.

CANDIDATES



Namju Bae



Maria Beversluis



David Bouma



Richard Britton III



Andrea Bult



Jaebok Choi



Erik deLange



Derek Ellens



Derek Elmi-Buursma



Eric D. Freeman



Cary Gephart



Noelle Meggie Jacobs



Travis Jamieson



Kelsi Jones



Kennedy Muli Kailiti



Hyung Jun Kim



Jinsol Kim



Jiyong Kim



Seongjun Kim



Jeff M. Liou



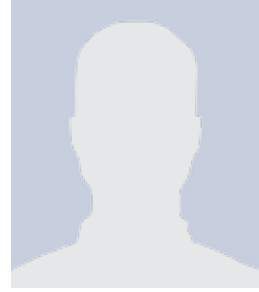
Bryzon Wanjala Masiboh



Loice Mueni Minito



Jeremy Oosterhouse



K. O.



Ahnna Ellie Cho Park



Jennifer Rozema



Hannah G Saxton



Nathaniel A Schmidt



Jeremy Scripps



Mike Slofstra



Lynn Song



Joshua Stammers



Christopher Tibben



Steven Vandyk



Nathan Voss



Cory B. Willson

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News



DENOMINATION Denominational Survey Opens

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

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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.

[Read Story](#)



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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Grand Rapids, Michigan

Breathe

ALTHOUGH YOU ARE PROBABLY NOT thinking about it, you are breathing right now. We can control our breathing, but we don't need to worry about making ourselves do it. Even if we forget, our brain will keep it going—which is good, because we need to breathe to live! The cells that make up our bodies use oxygen from the air to work.

When we take a breath, our lungs fill with air. Lungs are made up of tubes that act as airways plus tiny sacs called alveoli. Alveoli are so tiny that there are hundreds of millions of them in your lungs. Oxygen moves out of these alveoli into the blood to be transported all over the body.


All animals need oxygen to live, but not all animals have lungs. Animals breathe in many different ways. Insects breathe through holes along the sides of their bodies, fish have gills that take oxygen out of the water, and frogs can breathe through their skin!

Whales and dolphins cannot breathe underwater like fish can. They have to come up to the surface. But they only have to expose the tops of their heads. Why? Because that is where their nostrils are! These are called blowholes. Some whales have two blowholes, but dolphins and beluga whales have just one. Blowholes are covered by flaps that keep water out. When whales surface, the flap opens, and the creatures exhale hard, blowing away all the water from the opening. Then they inhale fresh air, and the flap closes again. Dolphins can hold their breath for around 10 minutes, but some whales can stay underwater for up to two hours!

Some birds seem to sing without a break for a long time. Are they holding

their breath? No! Researchers found that birds do stop their songs to breathe, but these mini-breaths are so fast that we do not notice.

Lungfish have gills to breathe underwater and lungs to breathe air. Because they live in places where their watery home can dry up, they can burrow into the mud and go into a sort of hibernation to survive the dry season.

Our God is an incredible designer, and God's amazing creation points us to God. Psalm 150:6 says, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." So take a big, deep breath and sing or shout your praise to God! 



Rachel Lancashire is a freelance writer with an educational background in wildlife. She grew up in the Christian Reformed Church and currently attends Gilmour Memorial Baptist Church in Selwyn, Ont.

Tech Less and Talk More: A Review of The Rank Game

“We wanted to create something that appeals to a person’s sense of fun and sense of belonging.”



Ann Byle is a freelance writer for local and national publications and the author or coauthor of several books. She and her family live in Grand Rapids, Mich.

FAMILIES AND FRIENDS looking to build connections and have fun in the process need look no further than The Rank Game, a new game created by Chip and Dana Brown. The West Michigan couple’s motto of “tech less and talk more” is brought to life in this entertaining game.

The Rank Game features cards listing four items to be ranked in order of preference by a Ranker. Guessers use a score sheet to record their guesses as to the Ranker’s order, getting a point for each correct answer. For example, one card says Bugs Bunny, Flintstones, Road Runner, and Sylvester & Tweety, so the Ranker ranks from most to least which classic cartoon he or she likes, with Guessers trying to predict correctly. A new Ranker ranks for the next round, through ten rounds.


“We wanted to create something that appeals to a person’s sense of fun and sense of belonging,” said Chip Brown. “Within a few rounds, you find that you are building relationships.”

The idea for the game came two decades ago as the Browns stood in line waiting for a museum to open. To pass the time, they asked their friends to rank their four favorite classic rock bands. From there the lists of things to rank grew, until the Browns began to think about a game. Each of them worked at one time for Disney, with experiences that affected the design and the interactive strength of the game.

“We put structure around those questions, created a wide variety of categories, play-tested it extensively, and the result is a game that takes little to no instruction and is something everyone can enjoy today,” Chip Brown said.



The main game includes cards on a variety of topics, scoring sheets, and several blank cards to create specialized lists. There are 11 expansion packs on topics such as Culture Vulture, The Faith Pack, Relationship Goals, and Sports & Outdoors. The main game costs \$30; expansion packs are \$15 apiece.

The Rank Game, available for purchase at therankgame.com, was a great way to get the people at my house talking, debating, and laughing. It offered my family hours of good fun and great discussion, and it truly prompted “tech less and talk more.” 

Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem, and Madness

If nothing else, the series underscores the fact that people are depraved and in need of a Savior.



Otto Selles teaches French at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich., and attends Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids.

IT'S TIME TO TAKE A STEP BACK and reflect on what happened at the end of March 2020. I'm talking about *Tiger King*, the Netflix documentary that became a streaming sensation.

Tiger King attracted 19 million viewers during the 10 days following its release March 20. By April 22, 64 million Netflix subscribers had watched the series. Many journalists noted ironically how a series on tigers in captivity benefited from the captive audience of viewers sheltering in their homes to avoid catching COVID-19.

If you don't know what *Tiger King* is about and don't care, congratulations to you. You have probably spent six hours of your life on more worthy pursuits. At the beginning of April, I'll admit I succumbed to the social media buzz and watched two episodes of *Tiger King* before I gave up. Despite various explanations and justifications, the show's interest somehow escaped me.

I just watched the entire series to see if my initial reaction had changed. There's no denying that Joseph Schreibvogel, otherwise known as Joe Exotic, the Tiger King, makes for eye-catching TV. In the genre of true-crime investigations, the documentary sets out to explain how Exotic, a self-described gun-toting, gay redneck with a mullet, went from being the king of his own Oklahoma animal park to being a federal prisoner, charged with a murder-for-hire plot directed at Carole Baskin, the owner of an animal sanctuary in Tampa, Fla.

Going back in time, we see Exotic at his flamboyant prime, a showman in the mold of P. T. Barnum, milking the public for hundreds of dollars apiece to pet baby tigers. When Baskin uses

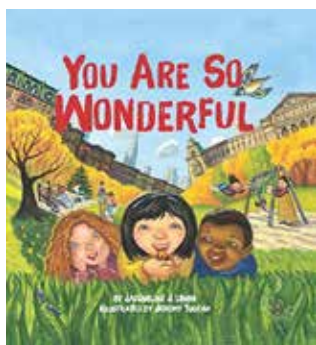
her network of animal rights supporters to shut down his lucrative business, Exotic descends tragically into paranoia while grasping for money and notoriety.

During my second viewing, the shameless profiteering from glorious animals created by God but housed in substandard conditions remained hard to take. It also was difficult to watch cult-like leaders of private zoos exploit their hapless employees. *Tiger King* revels in displaying a sleazy society where even the seemingly upright, such as Baskin, live under a cloud of criminal suspicion. If nothing else, the series underscores the fact that people are depraved and in need of a Savior.

By *Tiger King's* seventh and final episode, I understood better from an artistic standpoint what bothered me about the series. While it claims to be a documentary investigating a crime, *Tiger King* is closer to reality TV, in which the plot is carefully scripted to bring out the maximum number of twists and turns over the maximum number of episodes. By episode four, I realized I had stopped taking notes. I was profoundly bored; the entire story could easily have been told in under two hours.

Like ventilators, N95 masks, and social distancing, *Tiger King* will be tied nonetheless to our collective memory of the COVID-19 pandemic. But remember too that a show about tigers should be anything but crass and boring. (Netflix, Rated TV-MA for language, smoking, and animal harm) **B**

Stories for the Youngest Booklovers: Good Reads That Transcend Age



You Are So Wonderful

By Jacqueline J. Lewis, illustrated by Jeremy Tugeau

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

This updated edition of the 2003 children's picture book *You Are So Wonderful* begins with the words of Psalm 139:13-14 (Contemporary English Version): "You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body, and I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me." With a focus on God's creativity and boundless love for creation, author Jacqueline Lewis' exuberant text and illustrator Jeremy Tugeau's joyful artwork celebrate the diversity of God's people as they enjoy life in a city park. Children of all ages, ethnic groups, and abilities run, swing, laugh, play, eat, smile, enjoy ice cream, and more as loving parents and caregivers keep watch over each of them, each a gift from God. (Beaming Books)

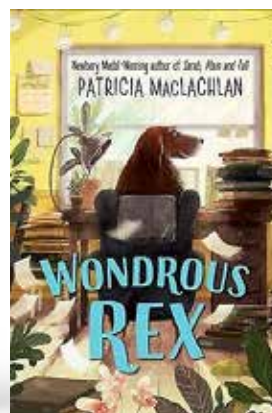


We Dream of Space

By Erin Entrada Kelly

Reviewed by Natalie Hart

It is January 1986, and 12-year-old twins Bird and Fitch and their big brother, Charlie, are all in the seventh grade (Charlie for the second time) studying the Space Shuttle Challenger mission. Bird feels excited and purposeful: she wants to be a space shuttle commander. Fitch can't manage his feelings, and he lashes out at everyone. Charlie feels as if he's not good at anything. It's heartbreaking to see how disconnected their family is and how casually cruel their friendships are, but the Challenger explosion (which Bird watches live in her school auditorium) is a turning point, and the novel ends on a hopeful note. A great book for adults and children to read together, this one will surely start conversations.



Wondrous Rex

By Patricia MacLachlan

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

When 7-year-old Grace and her writer aunt, Lily, try to write a story, both are stymied by the writing process. So Aunt Lily advertises her need for an assistant "for inspiration and some magic!" Lily and Grace are amazed when a man wearing a top hat brings a Labrador retriever to Lily's house and says, "I have brought you magic." So begins the unveiling of wondrous Rex's surprising gifts and the enchanting role he plays in Lily's and Grace's attempts to write.

In this short chapter book for children ages 8 and older, Patricia MacLachlan, renowned author of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, narrates a magical tale in her characteristic gentle, sweet manner. (Katherine Tegen Books)

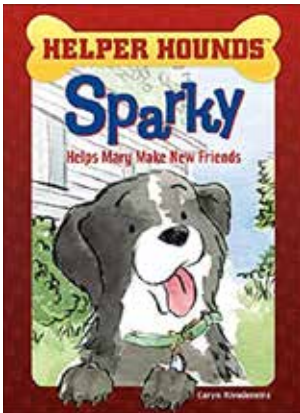


Stretchy McHandsome

By Judy Schachner

Reviewed by Jenny deGroot

The McHandsome are a big kitty clan. There are nine of them, and they live together in a box "with no one in charge." But Stretchy is different in so many ways. There comes a day when Stretchy decides to leave his overcrowded home and find adventure in the city. It is exciting, scary, and challenging all at once. But then he sets his eyes on a young lass named Beanie McBride, and there is an instant connection. Author Judy Schachner loves cats and is well known for creating the Skippyjon Jones series about an unstoppable Siamese cat. This delightful and funny offering is the perfect picture book for any child who loves animals, especially cats. (Penguin Random House)

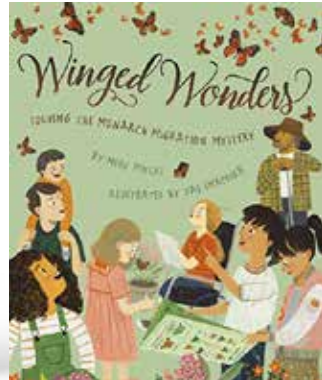


Sparky Helps Mary Make New Friends

By Caryn Rivadeneira

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

Young readers will adore Sparky, a lively, loving mix of border collie and Bernese mountain dog, and they'll cheer him on as he finds a new home with Tasha, a trainer of "Helper Hounds" (also the name of this book series). Exuberant Sparky just wants to help, and after graduating from obedience school with top marks, he gets his chance. Enter Mary, a shy girl facing her first day of school in a new state. Sparky models how to "settle," listen, trust, and be yourself, even when things are hard, as Sparky's encounter with Mary's cat proved to be. Sweet, engaging, and packed with tidbits about dog behavior, *Sparky* is a book worth barking over. Perfect for dog lovers ages 6-9. (Red Chair Press)



Winged Wonders: Solving the Monarch Migration Mystery

By Meeg Pincus, illustrated by Yas Imamura

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In this vividly and energetically illustrated children's picture book, young readers learn about the Great Monarch Migration, a mystery that for centuries puzzled North American common folk and scientists alike until 1976, when the butterflies' roosting place was discovered high in Mexico's Sierra Madre mountains.

Pincus ends her book with a challenge: "Today, there's a new burning monarch question: How will they survive? Who can keep them alive?" Her answer is simple: each of us can play a part to ensure the monarchs' survival.

Winged Wonders includes informative notes and is an excellent resource for Christian parents and caregivers to point children to God's majestic creation and the mandate for us to care for it. (Sleeping Bear Press)



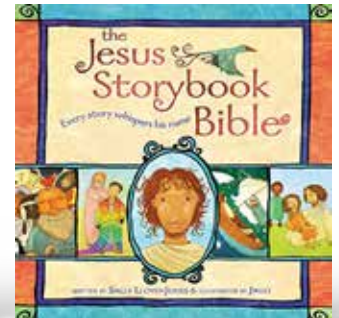
When Charley Met Emma

By Amy Webb, illustrated by Merrilee Liddiard

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

When Charley goes with his mother to the park, they encounter a girl with no hands who is sitting in a wheelchair. Charley blurts out, "Why does she look so weird, Mommy?" His mother gently admonishes him and urges him to introduce himself to the girl.

Charley meets Emma and learns that Emma was born with limb differences and that she drives her own wheelchair. Illustrator Merrilee Liddiard's winsome portraits of Charley and Emma and author Amy Webb's simple story teach children to see that differences are to be celebrated. Christian parents and caregivers might want to use this book's end notes to help them take steps to encourage children to establish friendships with kids of different abilities. (Beaming Books)

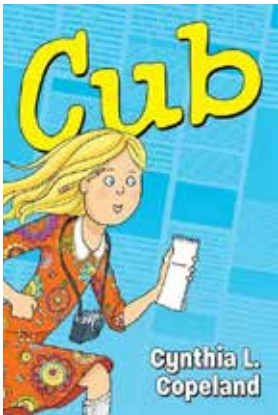


The Jesus Storybook Bible (Audiobook)

By Sally Lloyd-Jones

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

Eleven years ago, my new neighbor told me she was using the *The Jesus Storybook Bible* for her personal devotions. "I just feel so loved by God," she said. Author Sally Lloyd-Jones wrote this children's Bible as a sweeping story of God's "never ending, never giving up, unbreakable, always and forever love." Into each story she masterfully weaves progressive revelation, the idea that God reveals himself in Scripture to humanity over time, from Genesis through the New Testament. Written to be read aloud, this audiobook, narrated gently and winsomely by British actor David Suchet, gives a panoramic view of the Bible in three hours. Perfect for family road trips or for listening at bedtime, this audiobook is one to savor again and again. (Zondervan)

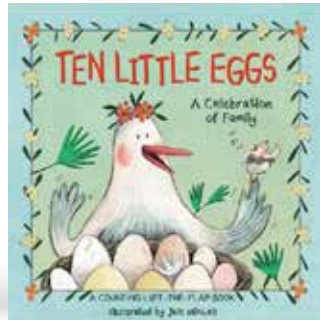


Cub

By Cynthia Copeland

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

Set in 1972-73, this book is a graphic memoir of author Cynthia Copeland's seventh-grade year, when she navigated bullies, friendship tangles, a first crush, and her burgeoning desire to be a journalist. Her dad, while loving, continually encourages Cindy's younger brothers in their future careers but doesn't seem to see Cindy as someone who might excel at a career someday. But when a bold, young female journalist takes her under her wing, Cindy shows her family, her town, and even the mean girls at school how brave journalism can change a neighborhood—or a nation. Though designed for readers 8-12, *Cub* is perfect for any budding writer, graphic artist, or photographer who longs to make a difference with words and pictures. (Algonquin Young Readers)



Ten Little Eggs: A Celebration of Family

By Mary Hassinger, illustrated by Jess Mikhail

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In this amusing, whimsical picture book for very young children, a serene mama bird cradles her precious nest and studies the 10 eggs of differing colors and sizes crowded inside. She is filled with questions about what each egg will be.

Through rhyming verse, readers count down to discover the mystery of each egg's occupant. One by one, the eggs crack open. A bluebird is joined by a brave-looking eaglet, a leggy flamingo, a colorful toucan, a confused platypus, and a friendly (thankfully) alligator. In the crowded nest that night, the mama bird adoringly gathers the newborns under her protective wings. Illustrator Jess Mikhail's comical artwork enhances Mary Hassinger's joyful narrative that celebrates families—no matter their makeup. (Zonderkidz)



Mañanaland

By Pam Muñoz Ryan

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Eleven-year-old Maximiliano Cordoba (Max) lives with Papa and Buelo, his grandfather, "somewhere in the Americas." His homeland, Santa Maria, borders a nation characterized by oppression and political unrest whose citizens often flee through Santa Maria to safer havens.

An unexpected visitor presents Max with a challenge he never could have imagined. So begins Max's dangerous journey for a cause he is only beginning to understand, one that will stretch his courage to the breaking point and force him to sacrifice like never before. This stirring novel for middle-grade readers, by the author of the beloved modern classic *Esperanza Rising*, is emotionally rich and relevant to the current worldwide realities of refugees and migrants. (Scholastic)



The Blackbird Girls

By Anne Blankman

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

On April 26, 1986, in Pripyat, Ukraine, Soviet Union, 11-year-old Valentina Kaplan notices unnaturally colored smoke churning up from the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, where her father is finishing his shift. Soon Valentina and her neighbors, including her bullying classmate, Oksana, are being evacuated even as the communist government pretends nothing is drastically wrong. In this riveting historical novel, author Anne Blankman skillfully weaves together in alternating perspectives the stories of Valentina and Oksana in 1986 and Rifka, Valentina's grandmother, in 1941 Ukraine. Though the book is recommended for ages 9 and older, it is better suited for mature readers ages 12 and older because it deals with the harsh and painful realities of abuse and war. (Viking Books for Young Readers)



Why Church Matters

Photo by Resonate missionaries Ben and Amy Meyer

By Cassie Westrate, Resonate Global Mission

The church in North America is shrinking. People who were once faithful attendees of Sunday worship are no longer showing up. More and more people are self-identifying as religious “nones” on surveys. And across the country, church doors are permanently closing.

But as we learned during the COVID-19 crisis, church matters. The community that church can provide makes a difference within and without the four walls of a building.

“Church is a living illustration or picture of an alternative life—one that is focused on following Jesus and his ways,” said Kevin DeRaaf, who directs ministry in North America for Resonate Global Mission.

Resonate, the mission agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, is an extension of each CRC congregation in Canada and the United States. Together with you, it plants, strengthens, and equips the global church to follow Jesus in local communities. Here’s a glimpse of why church matters to communities throughout the world.

Church Matters When People Are Learning the Truth of the Gospel

“The church matters because it is the community of faith where God’s story is read, interpreted, and believed,” said Ben Meyer, a Resonate missionary in Mexico.

Ben and his wife, Amy, are working to plant and establish New Life Church in Guadalajara. They’ve seen firsthand how New Life’s faith community has been a place where people can wrestle with doubts.

About 10 years ago, for example, Guadalupe’s husband was kidnapped. She and her two young sons never heard from him again. With no family in the area to lean on, they felt alone in their grief and confusion. Guadalupe believed in God but had trouble understanding how God could let something like this happen.

“In the midst of the current COVID crisis, or any crisis, the shocking immediacy of our present reality can cause us to experience temporary amnesia with regard to the gospel,” said Meyer. “Does God love us? Did Christ redeem us? Is the Spirit making all things new?”

A year ago, Guadalupe and her children started worshiping with New Life Church and found the supportive community

Sharing resources and gifts has become a hallmark of Hased Community Church, a CRC church plant in Detroit, Mich.

they needed. Guadalupe’s sons completed a profession of faith class and have decided to be baptized.

“Although they still have doubts and question why God would allow (their father to be kidnapped) ... the gospel they hear preached at New Life Church is like an anchor in their lives,” Meyer said.

Church Matters in Creating Communities Where People Belong

“We all want to belong,” said Larry Spalink, a Resonate missionary who works with churches in Japan, a country where less than 2% of the population identifies as Christian.

Spalink works with local pastors in Japan to strengthen churches. He said it’s human nature to want to belong, but in Japan, the sense of belonging is a little different than in a more individualistic culture like North America’s. Being part of a community is an important part of someone’s identity, and the church has the opportunity to provide that space for people.

One day, while Spalink was practicing with the choir at a church, he noticed a woman sitting in a pew listening to them. The woman was baptized in a church several years ago, but when members of her church had a falling out, it confused and hurt her. She left her church community and drifted around.

The woman had visited the church a few times, but one morning something changed for her. As she was listening to the choir sing, Spalink went to her and said, “Why don’t you join?”

She did, and shortly after that, she recommitted her life to Christ and became an engaged member of that church. The woman reported that what really drew her in was being invited to join the choir.

“I find many who visit and become part of the church are those who have failed to find a place elsewhere to be accepted as they are and to belong, and even be welcomed to participate,” Spalink said.

Church Matters Because People Are Caring for One Another

“Church matters because it is the community where we discover our brokenness and our giftedness, our needs and our talents. It is where we are shaped into the character of Christ and formed into who God created us to be,” said Mark Van Anandel, co-pastor of Hased Community Church, a Resonate partner in Detroit, Mich.

Hased serves local neighborhoods through ministry houses that provide discipleship opportunities as well as food and

other resources. Van Andel has seen God at work in Hesus through the way the church engages its community. In January, for example, a woman attempting to escape a difficult situation moved across the street from one of the ministry houses with her children.

“Our faith community immediately enfolded her,” said Van Andel. They offered her food and other resources, and when the coronavirus pandemic hit, she saw how the community worked together to care for one another. Without being asked, she began to cook for her neighbors. She and her children started caring for the community garden, where they weeded and planted spring vegetables.

“This type of sharing resources and gifts has become a hallmark of our faith community,” Van Andel said.

Church Matters Because Believers are Sharing the Gospel

“(Church) matters in bringing the message of hope and salvation to a helpless and broken world,” said Resonate missionary Istifanus Bahago, who works with the CRC in Sierra Leone.

When Bahago and his colleagues visited the village of Yirah Filaya Badela a few years ago, the people didn’t have access to clean drinking water or a school for their children. As a predominantly Muslim village, the people had also never heard the hope of the gospel.

In partnership with World Renew, the CRC in Sierra Leone worked with the community to start a school and provide clean water. The people were baffled: why would strangers help them?

“The people wanted to know who we were and why we showed them such love,” said Bahago. “We told them the story of salvation: how God sent Jesus to redeem mankind, and his love is for all who accept him.”

People had a lot of questions about Jesus. The CRC in Sierra Leone sent an evangelist to live in the community and be



A church plant in the village of Yirah Filaya Badela in Sierra Leone.

Photo by Resonate missionary Istifanus Bahago

available to answer these questions as they came up. Over time, many people accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. Today, the village now has clean drinking water, a school for children, and a church that continues to grow.

Church Matters Because Believers Are Loving their Neighbors

“I sense we’re learning through COVID-19 restrictions that the church is not limited to a church building and what goes on in that facility,” said Karen Wilk, pastor of Neighborhood Life in Alberta and a Resonate Go Local catalyst.

“Church looks like God’s people hanging out in their neighborhood, with their neighbors, as neighbors ... discerning and joining in what the Spirit is already doing there—and in so doing, learning what it means to love God and their neighbors.”

That expression of church is what Resonate’s Go Local initiative is all about, Wilk said. When Jander and Tiffany Talen joined the Go Local cohort at Maranatha CRC in Calgary, Alta., they started paying closer attention to how the Holy Spirit was working in their neighborhood.

One day, the Talens were walking in their neighborhood when they noticed apples piling up on the ground around a tree in someone’s yard. The couple decided to ask the homeowner if they could use some of the apples that had fallen. When they knocked on the door, an older gentleman answered. He was happy to give them some apples. In exchange, the Talens later brought over an apple cake for him as a way to say thank you. Since then, the relationship between the Talens and these neighbors has grown.

“We appreciate Go Local because it made us think about being better neighbors,” said Jander Talen. “Tiffany and I are taking the approach that these people around us need to be loved, just like us.”

Church Matters Because People Are Growing

“(Church) is an experience of community where people are learning that life is not about themselves, and (they) are learning to grow in their love for God and for others in tangible ways,” DeRaaf said.

The church in North America might be shrinking, but Resonate ministry leaders throughout the world still witness God at work every day. In some countries, such as Sierra Leone, the church is growing rapidly in the number of people who are coming to Christ. In others, the growth of the church might be slower, but people are still finding love, hope, and grace in the gospel.

And no matter where Resonate is working, ministry leaders are seeing believers grow in their identity as children of God, in their gifts and callings, and in their love for neighbors.

“It isn’t perfect, and that’s exactly the point,” said DeRaaf. “Church matters most when people are growing in their capacity to love, serve, and forgive.” **B**

Small Things Done with Great Love

MY CHURCH IN TRURO, N.S., is small. It has fewer than 100 members and fewer than 50 regular attendees. We're also located outside of Truro's downtown core. Like many congregations across North America, this past spring was hard on my community. Really hard. Our small church wanted to help.

As a diaconal coach for Diaconal Ministries Canada, I often hear stories of big churches doing amazing community ministry, especially in times of crisis. It is easy for deacons in my church to feel discouraged about our smallness. Yet we know we have a faithful congregation that loves to work together.

Our church has worked through the "Discover Your Gifts" workshops, so everyone is aware of the areas of giftedness they can contribute. We also know the value of collaboration. While we can't be all things to all people, we can partner with and support other local organizations doing great work. During the COVID-19 crisis, our church leaned into both of these to love and serve our community.

Several church members with gifts of service and hospitality had extra time on their hands for cooking. The deacons worked with them to arrange weekly meals for seniors, families with young kids, members' friends who had fallen on hard times, and anyone else who wanted or needed meals. We thank God for those with gifts of administration who made this possible!

We also used our gifts to reach out to families with young children. Some of our church's teachers donated books, games, and homemade toys and made care packages for these families. Another former deacon, an



Karla Winham helped deliver muffins to a local organization as part of John Calvin Christian Reformed Church's COVID-19 response in Truro, N.S.

early-childhood educator, posted a children's story time each week, inviting each child of our congregation by name to watch and listen.

After all the local parks had closed down, families in the neighborhood began using the church parking lot to get outside, socially distancing as they played hopscotch, biked, or drew with chalk.

While our diaconate always has funds and groceries for anyone requiring assistance, they don't always have ways to reach those most in need—or even know who they are. Our deacons asked some local organizations how we could join in their work. We donated grocery gift cards to the local homeless shelter and to a new refugee family. We gave financial support to a Christian counseling service. Those in our congregation who have baking skills launched a "Ministry of Muffins" for the local family resource center.

We thank God for these organizations that spread love to people in our town and the opportunity to connect with our neighbors through them.

Yes, we are a small church, but we serve a mighty God who gives us gifts and abilities and who multiplies our work when it's done for God's glory. Though we can't launch big, flashy responses in times of need, we continue to find ways to use our gifts to do a whole bunch of little things, both to uphold and encourage one another and to reach out to our community.

Small things done with great love can make a big difference!

—Karla Winham,
Diaconal Ministries Canada

The View from Here

Church Matters

OUR WORLD CHANGED a few months ago. Mid-March was the start of a new, forced adventure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, I must confess that I expected a few weeks of discomfort as I sheltered at home and then a fairly rapid return to our previous definition of normalcy. How wrong I was.

At the time of writing this, there were 1.5 million COVID-19 cases in the U.S. and more than 92,000 deaths. Though the case numbers in Canada are significantly lower, the conditions are no less serious for those in impacted locations. We've been physically distancing for months, the Council of Delegates meeting in May took place entirely online, and Synod 2020 was canceled. Yet in the midst of all of this change and societal chaos, the church is standing tall.

To be sure, there have been significant adjustments that churches have had to make. Most of the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, for example, have adapted well to creating an online presence. I am greatly impressed with the creativity and determination of pastors and leaders and their support teams as they diligently work to ensure that the message of the gospel continues to reach people.

I also love the fact that best practices and experiences are being shared at an accelerated rate. Ministries and congregations are listening to and

We are the church.
We are called to
love and honor
God and to show
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our neighbors.

sharpening each other so we can all be even better at ministering to our congregations and communities. In many cases, this has included an increase in congregational care for those who are not members of our churches but are experiencing critical needs at this time.

We are the church. We are called to love and honor God and to show that love to all of our neighbors. I believe that God is pleased with how the CRCNA has been living out this calling in this time.

At the same time, we know that navigating this pandemic has not been easy. The CRCNA has a significant number of smaller and emerging churches who have suffered significant financial hardship during this crisis. Yet even these financial struggles have been an opportunity for the entire church to coalesce around serving each other.

The CRCNA established the COVID-19 Church Engagement Fund (U.S. only) as a way to supplement the various governmental financial support programs available to churches and other organizations. We are pleased

that this fund has been able to help several churches as they try to offer resources to their economically deprived communities. We would invite every U.S. congregation that has not been critically affected to consider donating to the fund so that others might be blessed. This could be our Acts 2 moment—churches coming together to help congregations in need as they serve their communities well.

I am grateful for how God has gifted each of you for such a time as this. May God strengthen you greatly as you continue to minister in these difficult, different times. And may communities who have never heard of the Christian Reformed Church before this crisis be able to say to their children and future generations, "We saw God at work through an organization called the Christian Reformed Church in North America during the greatest crisis of our time."



Colin P. Watson Sr. is acting executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

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

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

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

Making Church Home in Japan

FOR SAGI, ATTENDING CHURCH often feels like a burden.

“On Sundays, after a long, stressful week, it’s hard to find the motivation to go to church,” Sagi said. “It’s not that I don’t like church or don’t believe in God, but work and day-to-day life make it hard.”

Sagi lives in Japan, so her “day-to-day life” includes living in a place where less than 2% of the population openly professes Christianity. One of the reasons it’s so rare is that being a Christian and attending church is often seen as shameful and dishonoring your family, friends, and co-workers.

“That shame is such a burden that some believers even wait for their parents to pass away before attending church for the first time,” says Rev. Masao Yamashita.

As the Japanese ministry leader for Back to God Ministries International, Yamashita wants to help people like Sagi. He knows the importance of building connections with other believers.

Working closely with Reformed Church in Japan congregations across the country, Yamashita helps pastors and church members create videos introducing the church to people in their area. The video series, *The Church in My Town*, gives people interested in church a glimpse into the building and the people who make up the church.

Such videos, along with radio programs and online devotionals, create an easy, relatable, and safe entry point into the Christian faith.



Videos from BTGMI’s Japanese ministry team show what being part of a church community entails, from games to worship to shared meals.

The typical barriers that keep people like Sagi from attending church begin to break down.

But the barriers don’t end with one visit to church.

Yamashita remembers a period in his life when he wasn’t attending church regularly. When he did attend, people would usually comment on his lack of attendance.

Yamashita strives to make church feel more like going home.

“You don’t need a reason to go home,” Yamashita said. “It should be the same with the church. God is always there, saying, ‘Welcome home.’”

For Sagi, Yamashita’s advice was to find small reasons to motivate her to attend church. He also encouraged her to start viewing her church as her second home, where she is always welcome.

With most churches in Japan closed because of COVID-19, Yamashita and BTGMI’s Japanese ministry team recognize that there will be even more people like Sagi once churches reopen. Please pray for these people who faithfully follow BTGMI’s programs each week but need encouragement to take the next step in their faith.

—Brian Clark,
Back to God Ministries International

Varying Views on *The New City Catechism*

PASTOR JOE GROENEVELD was at a conference in 2017 when he came across a copy of the just-published *The New City Catechism*.

Edited by Collin Hansen and put together with help from Pastor Tim Keller, *The New City Catechism* is based on John Calvin's *Geneva Catechism*, the *Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechism*, and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Intended for all ages, it contains 52 questions and answers. Each question is followed by a Bible verse, commentary, and a prayer.

"I appreciated that it has short, simple questions and answers, and it struck me that it was on a level younger people and people just coming to the faith might be able to learn from," Groeneveld said. "I thought it could be a document that might fit into being a contemporary testimony for the church."

A special category created by the synod of the Christian Reformed Church of North America, contemporary testimonies are defined on the denominational website as "statements of faith that serve the CRCNA—its congregations and members—and speak to essential matters in a given time period." Currently, the denomination has two contemporary testimonies: *Our World Belongs to God* and *The Belhar Confession*.

With the backing of his church council at Williamsburg CRC in Williamsburg, Ont., Groeneveld wrote an overture to Synod 2019 asking synod to consider making *The New City Catechism* a contemporary testimony.

He wrote in the overture: "*The New City Catechism* is a great resource for the CRCNA that will assist in the instruction of its members, especially children and youth. ... (It) speaks to essential matters in our society and will be useful for study, faith formation, teaching, and worship."

Synod decided not to make it a contemporary testimony and referred it to Faith Formation Ministries for curriculum review and potential use by churches.

That review was completed and a report sent to the Council of Delegates in May. In addition to offering an overall assessment of the catechism's strengths and weaknesses, FFM asked the COD to send the catechism to churches to review, with their reactions then compiled and sent to synod.

"The place in which we landed was not a 'yes' or a 'no,'" said Chris Schoon, director of Faith Formation Ministries. "We looked at how we can engage with it and asked that churches help to enter into a conversation about it."

In its report, FFM saw strength in the catechism's teacher resource, which "provides an outline and suggestions that help teachers develop a predictable and accessible pattern for the lesson plans."

But there are concerns. The language used in *The New City Catechism* is far too complex for upper-elementary students, FFM said, and its content "assumes that participants have a Christian faith background, understand terms like 'worship' and 'forgiveness' and are familiar with the basic narrative arc of Scripture. ... There also are no accommodations suggested for those with intellectual or physical disabilities."



Pastor Joe Groeneveld sees *The New City Catechism* as a helpful faith-building resource for a variety of ages.

"The catechism could be used in youth ministry, but that might depend on the group. Also, we don't see it as being a main discipleship tool," Schoon said.

Faith Formation Ministries makes some good points, Groeneveld said, and he remains open to them because he doesn't see the catechism as a perfect document.

"To some extent, it seems the FFM's report gives more critique than praise," he said. "I know (the catechism) has flaws, but it is solid. ... Every so often we use it in my church. We use it as a supplement in worship and (for) working with the youth when we see it fits."

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

Love in Action

FOR CAROL VAN ESS-DYKEMA, the work of World Renew is quite simple: loving the world through more than just words. In Van Ess-Dykema's estimation, that work has always hinged upon partnership with church deacons, both in North America and throughout the world: "Not everyone in the church is called to be a preacher or to be an elder," she said. "World Renew gives opportunities to people called to be the hands and feet of Christ."

Daughter of Lou Van Ess, World Renew's first director, Van Ess-Dykema remembers World Renew from its early beginnings in 1962 as the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. Over the years, she recalls World Renew's active love coming in all shapes and sizes, and she remembers longing to join in that work.

Upon earning her master's degree at the University of Michigan during the 1970s, Van Ess-Dykema eagerly accepted a World Renew assignment in Honduras. Based in Tegucigalpa, Van Ess-Dykema worked to respond to Hurricane Fifi and grow local literacy initiatives. During her three-year stint, she also discovered the power of ecumenical cooperation between the Christian Reformed, Moravian, and Presbyterian missionaries in Honduras.

Together, deacons from the local churches worked with World Renew to meet the immediate disaster needs of the Honduran people. Over time, the deacons helped World Renew transition from disaster relief work to community development programs so local families could find opportunity through farming, small business development, education, health, and, most importantly, their faith. Except



Carol Van Ess-Dykema (center, in red) is pictured with the group of Global Volunteer Program participants with whom she journeyed to Honduras to learn about sustainable urban development in the country and the ongoing work of World Renew.

for a brief time during the 1980s to collect data for her doctoral dissertation for Georgetown University, Van Ess-Dykema didn't return to Honduras until February 2020, this time as a member of World Renew's Global Volunteer Program. She hoped the trip would help her discover how the country had changed and what the work of World Renew there now entailed. She wasn't disappointed.

"I saw the realities that Honduras is currently facing," she said. "We learned about unemployment, migration out of the country, and about the gangs who are destabilizing communities where World Renew is trying to work. But World Renew continues to have an impact because it still leverages partner relationships with churches. It still prioritizes the local people's expertise and knowledge."

Van Ess-Dykema's trip reminded her that World Renew has endured because of a commitment to the local church and God's people. Through the church's faith and support, communities around the world have found real hope by embracing a love in action that runs deeper than words.

—Katy Johnson,
World Renew

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Church Positions Available

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PASTORAL OPPORTUNITY at Second Church in the small but quickly growing town of Allendale, Michigan. We are searching and praying for our next Senior Pastor. We invite you to access our Church Profile for details of who we are as a church family at secondchurchallendale.org or to email Nels Johnston at nj9138@gmail.com with more questions or to submit a resume. We look forward to hearing from you!

SENIOR PASTOR Prairie Edge CRC of Portage, Michigan is seeking a Senior Pastor, passionate in preaching God's Word and equipping us to live and reflect the Word of God in our lives. We seek to connect people with Jesus and His Kingdom. If you have an interest in serving Prairie Edge, please contact us at: search@pecrc.org

SENIOR PASTOR Ivanrest Christian Reformed Church in Grandville, MI is seeking an experienced Senior Pastor to guide and nurture our congregation while equipping us to be servant leaders and witnesses to the community and beyond. This position will also lead a staff of 10. For more information on this opportunity, please visit www.ivanrest.org and click on Pastor Search.

Birthday

BIRTHDAY 100 YEARS

CHRISTINE BEEZHOLD (Vander Laan) of Evergreen Park, IL celebrates her 100th birthday on July 25. Wife of late Christian Beezhold for 62 years. Happy Birthday w/love from your children Chris & Christine, Jan & Bob, Rudy & Karen, Bob & Betty and your 8 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren!

GERALDINE (JERRI) VANDERWERP PRINS of 2354 Edington Ct. SE Grand Rapids, MI formerly of Holland, MI celebrates her 100th birthday on July 8, 2020. Wife of the late John Prins and mother of Joan (Ed) Stuursma and Rosemary Prins. God is good. "Her children rise up and call her blessed". Prov. 31:28

GERTRUDE HEKMAN (VAN TILL) 2565 - 44th St. S. E. Grand Rapids, MI 49512 will celebrate her 100th birthday on July 16, 2020. Her 7 children and spouses, 17 grandchildren (5 in heaven) and 31 1/2 great grandchildren celebrate with her. We love you, Mom!

BIRTHDAY 95 YEARS

ROBERT WASSENER, 11020 Raleigh, Westchester, IL 60154, celebrates his 95th birthday on July 13. His wife Jean and children Sharon and Jack Eriks, Sandra and Andy Kranenborg, Ronald and Cathy, Linda and Verle Norris; along with 11 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren thank God for his life. We love you!

BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS

BERNICE J. BOSMA (11016 New Mexico Ct. Orland Park, IL, 60467) celebrates her 90th birthday on July 4! It is with grateful hearts that we, her family, praise God for the blessing she is to so many. "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." Romans 12:12.

CORNELIA GERARDA VAN BERKEL-MÖHLE celebrated her 90th birthday on May 20. Corrie and her husband Adriaan enjoyed the special occasion online with family. Congratulations may be sent to 35 Victoria Ave. E., Apt. 726, Brandon MB R7A 1Y7

JACK BLOEM celebrated his 90th birthday on July 5. Praising God with him for God's faithfulness are his children Russ & Jackie Bloem, Ken and Stephanie Bloem, Phil and Mary Ellen Bloem, Kathy and Brad De Boer, 10 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

THELMA ELGERSMA (nee Schultz), 610 N. Eastern Street, Sanborn IA 51248, plans to celebrate her 90th birthday on July 18. Married to the late Wes Elgersma and mom to Doug, Tim, Starla, Gloria, Barry and Fred, she is also blessed with 13 grandchildren, 31 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren. Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow!

WILLIAM K. STOB celebrates his 90th birthday on July 29. His life has been blessed with his wife of 68 years, Delores (DeWitt), and his three daughters: Deanne Dyk (Dean), Tamora Kooy (John), and Carlin Rykse (Russ). He is the grandfather to 9 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. Congratulations Dad! We are grateful for your leadership and love all these years. 8378 SE Sanctuary Dr. Hobe Sound, FL 33455. bdstob@gmail.com.

Anniversary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 70 YEARS

SCHOOLLAND, John and Helen will celebrate 70 yrs. of marriage on Aug. 8. John will be 95 on Aug. 17. They have been blessed with 4 children, Judy Postma (Pete deceased), Jerry (deceased), Gary(Gail), Renee (Ted) Viss. They have 13 grandchildren and will have 33 great grandchildren by the end of Aug. Praise be to God for the blessing of God-fearing parents!

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 68 YEARS

AN DER WIELE, Sam & Mary Van Der Wiele will celebrate their 68th wedding anniversary on August 21. The family is grateful for God's faithfulness and love which fills their marriage and shapes our family.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 65 YEARS



GENZINK, Jerry and Leona (Busscher) are celebrating their 65 th wedding anniversary. They were married on June 7, 1955 at Graafschap Christian Reformed Church. God has blessed them with four children: Roger and Sharon Sneller, Larry and Marcia Genzink, Steve and Pam Genzink and Bob and Jane Genzink. They also have been blessed with 16 grandchildren and 22 great grandchildren. Their children and their spouses are so grateful for the excellent example of Christian love and marriage they demonstrate every day. The family recognized this significant event with a celebratory dinner.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 60 YEARS



ZUIDERVEEN, Henry and Verla will celebrate their 60th anniversary on August 26, 2020. Congratulations and love from your family: Mark and Julie, Marc and Sharon, Scott and Pam, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Praising God for his faithfulness!

VAN MANEN, Jack and Johanna celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on June 24. God blessed them with 4 children: Jeff & Deanna Van Manen, Julie & Jon Kuyers, Joy & Joel Rusticus, Jill & Chris Larsen, 12 grandchildren, and 1 great grandson. Thank you for your constant love and prayers. Praise God for his faithfulness!

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 50 YEARS

SYTSMA, William and Jenny (Diekjakobs) of Holland, Michigan celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on August 8 with gratitude for God's faithfulness. A time of joyful celebration is planned with their children and grandchildren: Jim Sytsma, Amy Drown (husband Daron, five children), and Mark Sytsma (wife Katie, four children).

Obituaries

BOLTHUIS, Francis E., age 88, of Grand Rapids, went home to be with his Lord on Friday, May 22, 2020 of natural causes. He is lovingly remembered by his wife, children, stepchildren, grandchildren, great grandchildren and brother. "Mr. B" taught hundreds of school children as a music educator for 45 years. Fran was a founding member of the Grand Rapids Symphonic Band and a church choir director.



COOKE, Annette (Minne-
ma) passed away on May 15, 2020 at age 90 after a full life filled with love for her Lord and her family. Annette was born in 1929 in Grand Rapids, MI to John & Pearl Minnema. She at-

tended Grand Rapids Christian High School, Calvin College, and was a graduate of Blodgett nursing program. At Calvin she met and married Edward Cooke who graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary. Together they served diverse ministries within the Christian Reformed denomination, including churches in Tracy, IA; Holland, MI; Rehoboth, NM; West Sayville, NY; DeMotte, IN; Bellflower, CA; and Kalamazoo, MI. Annette loved music (giving piano lessons to many students over the years) and frequently played the organ for church, sang soprano in choir, and led women's groups alongside the ministry of her husband, while also raising a family and continuing to work part-time as a nurse in each of the states where they lived. Moving around so much during a lifetime of pastoral service, she remarked it was important to "Bloom where you are transplanted!"

Annette was widowed in 1990, eventually retired from nursing, and returned to her hometown of Grand Rapids where she maintained activity within her home church, Brookside CRC. She enjoyed knitting for babies and sewing doll clothes for her grandkids, as well as traveling the world and staying in touch with extended family across the country. For two decades of her widowhood, the extended Cooke family was especially appreciative of Annette's annual tradition of hosting everyone at lakeshore lodges in West Michigan during the Christmas season, which always assured an energetic and noisy time with the ever-expanding collection of Cooke grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

After two decades of widowhood, Annette was surprised by joy with marriage on her 81st birthday to widowed pastor Ralph Bronkema, bringing a new lease on each of their lives until Ralph passed away in 2018. Annette's brother Harold Minnema also preceded her in death; she is survived by a sister, Carol (Charlie) Scheuermann, as well as in-law siblings Barb Minnema, Miriam Schaafsma, and David (Kay) Cooke. Annette leaves behind 6 children and their spouses (Bruce & Lisa, Holland, MI; Steve & Merly, Philippines; Kathy & Dave Dykstra, Hudsonville, MI; Dan & Theona, Grand Rapids, MI; Jim & Beth, Grand Haven, MI; and Gwen & Tom DeHorn, Granger, IN) 17 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren, as well as a rich legacy of love for God and her family.

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DE JONG, Sam (Sybolt) entered into eternity with his Savior, Jesus Christ, on March 30, 2020. Sam was born March 8, 1934, in Poppingawier, Friesland, the Netherlands to Folkert and Grietje de Jong. At the age of 20, Sam immigrated to Southern California to find greater opportunities and there he met his wife, Anna Raap. They were married on August 26, 1958 in Bellflower, California. In 1962 they moved with their 2 sons to Marysville, Washington, where they operated a dairy farm and were blessed with 4 more children. Sam lived on that farm until 3 years

before his death. Sam is survived by his wife, Anna, who provided him with loving care in the final years of his life. He is also survived by his children: (Heidi) with children Jared (Krista), Vanessa, Nick (Hannah), Marc (Kathleen), and Kevin (Marissa); Albert with children Shannon, Alicia (Kyle), Sofia, and Natanya; Theresa (Gene) Roosendaal with children Lora, Tim (Marisa), Katy, and Hannah; Grace (Greg) Mallett with Anneke (Kyle); Harmen (Sue) with children Amanda and Katie; Stephen (Lani) with children Peter, Jesse and Alex; along with 5 great-grandchildren and 5 siblings in the Netherlands. Sam was preceded in death by his son, Frank, plus parents and 2 siblings in the Netherlands.



DERUITER, Evelyn L., nee Kok, age 89, of Crestwood, IL formerly of New Holland, SD, went to be with her Lord on Sunday morning May 31, 2020. Loving mother of Benjamin DeRuiter, Debra (Dwayne) Kuiper, and the late Daniel DeRuiter. Cherished grandmother of Dan Carbray, Chris Muller, Shannon, Austin, Jadyn Kuiper, and Josie DeRuiter. Evelyn was preceded in death by her parents and six siblings. Dear aunt of many nieces and nephews.

DEVRIES, Neva, of Minneapolis, MN went to be with her Lord and Savior on June 4, one day before her 93rd birthday. Missionary midwife in Nigeria 1954 to 1976. Predeceased by brother, Richard. Survived by brothers John (Marilyn) and Kenneth and nieces and nephews. Memorials preferred to Resonate Global Mission.

MARTIN, Kenneth "Ken", age 85 of Newton, NJ went to be with his Lord and Savior May 24, 2020 due to complications from Parkinson's Disease. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Alice Devries Martin, and six children: Stephen (Sue) Martin, Kevin (Wilma) Martin, Daniel (Susan) Martin, Kathy Martin, Sandra (Jean-Mark) Lenze and Christy (Charles) Blend. Ken was thankful for his eleven grandchildren and his great-grandson. Ken was an active member of his church and served on many boards and committees. His great work ethic, generous giving of himself, and the wisdom he imparted will be greatly missed.

NAGELKERK, John Jacob, age 94, of Grand Rapids, MI, passed away May 28, 2020. He was preceded in death by his wife, Evelyn, and is survived by his children, Bill and Harriett Nagelkerk, Bob Nagelkerk, Tom and Jean Nagelkerk, Jack Nagelkerk, and Tim and Kathy Nagelkerk; 22 grandchildren; and 14 great grandchildren.

VERMEULEN, James, passed away peacefully at home on Easter Sunday morning, April 12, 2020, in Plymouth, MI. Loving husband of Sylvia (De Lange) for 67 years. Preceded in death by his daughter, Debra Hoksbergen (2016) and her husband, Stan (2017). Loving father of Krista (Tim) Schaafsma, Jim (Nancy) Vermeulen and Ken (Shelly) Vermeulen. His 11 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren were blessed by him and will truly miss him. Jim worshiped his Savior, Jesus Christ, cherished his family and generously served his community throughout his 88 years of life. He embraced life enthusiastically and encouraged those around him.



ZINKAND, Mary, age 92, died on Feb 27, 2020 in Rochester NY. Preceded in death by husband of 65 years, John, and daughter, Jeanie. Survived by children Laurie (John) Selles, Dan (Elizabeth), Heidi (Dave Dill), Kathy (Chris) Kaporis, son-in-law



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—Jill, Hospice Nurse Practitioner

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Jack deKlerk, 7 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Mary baked, quilted, developed many friendships and served her Lord wherever she found herself, including many years in Sioux Center, IA, in Nigeria with CRWM, and in Holland, MI. Her family praises God for her example of faith and love. Memorial donations to Wings of Mercy (www.wingsofmercy.org)

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Too Loud

She sat in the far corner of the Cozy Corner Cafe, her grinding voice echoing in every nook and cranny of the restaurant.



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

SHE HELD THE PHONE in front of her face and yelled into it, “The windshield wiper motor is done gone bad and they want \$300 to replace it and to fix up some other stuff. I ain’t got no \$300 to spend on my car. I guess I’ll just hafta stop drivin’ in the rain.”

The phone was on speaker, so we all got to hear a bit of her friend’s attempts to console her. The consolation included exclamations of sorrow, some commiserations regarding her situation, and a scathing rebuke of the auto repair industry.

“I don’t need no sympathy!” our fellow diner loudly retorted. “I can take care of my business. I ain’t no charity case.”

The friend’s response got lost in the clatter of dishes and the clang of clean silverware being dumped in a container at a nearby server station.

“I don’t need you all up in my bizness,” she roared into the phone. “You just need to keep yer nose on yer face.”

Of course, we were all up in her business. We couldn’t help but be. Everyone within 50 yards was all up in her business. She sat in the far corner of the Cozy Corner Cafe, her grinding voice echoing in every nook and cranny of the restaurant.

Despite being upset at her friend’s nosiness, the conversation raged on. The auto industry was bad. The government was pure evil. The church, since Pastor Bill had gone, was not doing well either. Friends and family members were worthless in times of trouble. “Ain’t nobody gives a hoot ‘bout no poor old lady.” She shouted, and we heard it all.

A couple in the next booth complained to our server about the noise. The server shrugged her shoulders and went and whispered something to the manager,

who grimaced and made the trek over to our loud friend. She whispered softly to the woman. I couldn’t make out what she said. “Wait a minute!” the woman hollered into her phone. “The waitress is tryin’ to tell me somethin’ ...”

The owner repeated what she’d said. The woman responded, “Yer gonna hafta speak up, darlin’, I’m deaf as a stump!”


The third repetition was louder and firmer. “Would you please turn down the volume. You’re being so loud it’s disturbing our other customers.”

“They’re tellin’ me I’m bein’ too loud,” she bellowed into the phone. “I gotta go.” She scanned her phone, searching for which button to hit. She finally found it and hit it with a vengeance. She looked up, glaring at us, slowly going table by table around the room. Lots of eyes were suddenly looking at the floor.

“Sorry, everybody!” she shouted to nobody in particular. “Didn’t mean no harm.” She sopped a slice of sourdough toast into the runny, sunny-side-up eggs and devoured it in two large bites. She sat in silence. We all did.

The folks who had complained about her noise waved our server over and asked to pay her bill. The server looked confused, but eventually produced the check. “Please don’t tell her it was us,” the man said. “Just tell her it’s a gift from a stranger.”

Fifteen minutes later, her plate cleaned, she called out for her check. The server quietly said something and the lady looked up at her sharply. “Ya mean somebody just paid it outta kindness? Hmm. Maybe people ain’t so bad after all.”

She gathered up a large cloth bag and her oversized black purse and tottered to the door. She turned back and waved, “Thank y’all. Have a good day now.” 

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