

BANNER

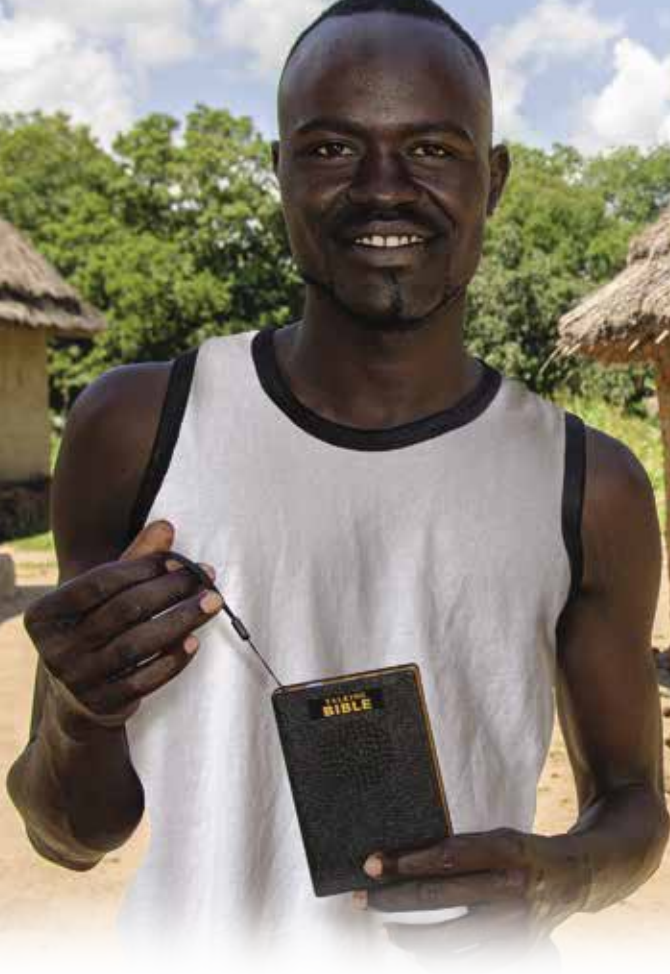
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BANNER

BY THE NUMBERS

Every year, in the July/August issue of *The Banner*, we introduce you to people who have been approved by Synod to serve in ministry—called *candidates for ministry*. There are 31 this year, which is down a bit but not too far from the 40-year average. We asked the CRC’s Candidacy Committee for any notable trends they are seeing compared to 10 years ago.

Candidates for Ministry



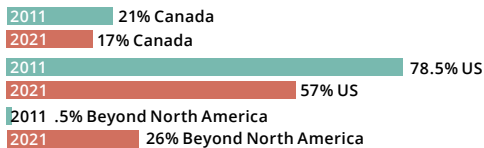
Minority Candidates

Candidates who are not male and/or white.



Already in Ministry

People who were already in full-time ministry before becoming candidates.



Geographical Diversity

Candidates coming from beyond North America.

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.)

- » News: CRCNA Leaders Among Those to Cosign Advocacy Letter by Churches for Middle East Peace
- » News: 'Shot of Love' Campaign Sees Michigan Churches Support Vaccine Registration
- » Streaming: *The Mighty Ducks: Game Changers*
- » Music: *All Things*, by Jaime Jamgochian
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Clarification

We reported in our June 2021 coverage of the Council of Delegates meeting ("Council of Delegates Meeting Included Intense Debate," p. 16) that the Council voted to allow Calvin University to change the process for appointing a president. It was part of several bylaw changes the Council voted to "forward to synod for adoption" (Minutes of the Council of Delegates of the CRCNA, May 5-7, 2021). The new bylaws won't be in effect until synod adopts them.

OUR SHARED MINISTRY

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Director of CRCNA Communications and Marketing



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BANNER

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Intention and Impact

We need to repent from unintended sins and wrongs, whether it's racism or something else.



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.

THIS PAST MAY, Canadians were rocked by the discovery of the remains of 215 children buried in unmarked graves at the site of a residential school for Indigenous children in Kamloops, British Columbia. In June, over 700 unmarked graves were found at another former residential school in Saskatchewan. The residential school system was a network of mandatory boarding schools for Indigenous children funded by the Canadian government and administered by Christian churches. From the 1880s until the mid-1990s, it sought to “civilize” Indigenous children by forcibly separating them from their parents and their cultural language, customs, and heritage. An estimated 150,000 children went through the residential school system, most of them traumatized and abused. Many died or went “missing.” Most survivors suffer from post-traumatic stress, alcoholism, mental illness, suicidal tendencies, and substance abuse. Unsurprisingly, intergenerational trauma occurs, and these social ills plague Indigenous communities even today. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called the schools’ impact “cultural genocide.”

Many things have been and still can be said in relation to this tragedy. For now, let me say this: I doubt the churches’ original intent was to harm Indigenous children. In fact, they probably intended to spiritually “save” them. Nonetheless, the effect was harmful, and they needed to apologize and make amends. This need to repent and repair is true for all of us in other situations too. Even if we did not intend to hurt anyone, if our actions or words did cause hurt, the proper, decent reaction is not to be defensive or to deny, but to apologize and try to right the wrongs done.

I wonder how much of our disagreement around racism hinges on this distinction between intention and

impact. Some Christians define racism mostly as an intentional act, while others define it more by how it affects different peoples, especially people of color. Which is more important, intent or impact? The truth depends on the context. But good intentions alone cannot simply absolve us of the harm we have caused.

In my previous editorial, I talked about our denomination’s spiritual and intellectual pride. I believe most Christians do not intend to be spiritually proud. We probably intend to honor God’s truth by emphasizing correct theology. We want to be effective for God’s kingdom by being orderly and organized, and by structuring things accordingly. I doubt if we ever seek to be unhealthily proud of our theology or our systems to the point of over-relying on these good gifts. But the impact of our habitual actions and choices over decades skews us to pride.

A popular saying claims that “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” Similarly, the Bible says, “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death” (Prov. 14:12). We may have good intentions, seeking to do the right thing, but we could still be causing harm to others and to ourselves. The Heidelberg Catechism recognizes that “even our best works in this life are imperfect and stained with sin” (Q&A 62). All of these observations should humble us.

We need to repent from unintended sins and wrongs, whether it’s racism or something else. The prophet Daniel even repented of corporate sins he did not personally commit (Dan. 9). Repentance is not merely feeling sorry or saying sorry. Repentance requires commitment and action to turn from sin toward righteousness. If we truly seek spiritual revival, repenting from our spiritual pride, we cannot simply continue with “business as usual” in our church and spiritual lives. **B**



Photograph by Eutah Mizushima/Unsplash

Two Brief Interactions

By Jisoo Vis

It was a chilly Sunday morning. As usual, I made my way after the worship service to the church gym for coffee time. As I sipped my black coffee and chatted with a couple of people, I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was an elderly gentleman who complimented me for my “silky black hair,” saying the aide at his nursing home also had black hair. He then put his arms around me and told me to not worry about my black hair because “Jesus’ tent is big enough to cover everyone, including you.”

About a year later, on yet another chilly Sunday morning, I was visiting another church in a nearby city. At the end of the service, the pastor asked

visitors to join everyone for coffee, so I headed to the church gym with the rest of the congregation. As I filled my mug, a lady came up and told me she had “a daughter whose friend has a friend who is Asian.”

If it is not clear from the two stories I just told you, I am of East Asian descent and have black hair. More specifically, I am Korean Canadian. Before moving to Canada, my parents served as missionaries under the Korean Full Gospel Church in mainland China for 11 years. I am married to Douglas, the son of a Christian Reformed pastor.

I joined the CRC as a member about a year ago after attending CRCs with Douglas in different cities for about seven years. Why did it take me that

long to join the CRC? Did it take me that long to agree with the CRC’s policies or teachings, or the general direction in which the denomination appeared to be headed? No, to the contrary—the Reformed worldview has thoroughly permeated my thinking as a young adult, well into my marriage, my work, and now motherhood. The Kuyperian assertion that “there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’”, is in my mind everywhere I go—whether it is at my home, my office, the grocery store, or at church. The CRC’s teachings have benefited me immensely, and I cherish them deeply.

The truth is that I often attended Christian Reformed churches that did not have the most ethnically diverse congregations. Most members of these congregations were of Dutch descent and to varying degrees seemed to associate the CRC with being Dutch.

As a Korean Canadian, I stood out visibly in the congregations in which I mingled. While most of the relationships I formed at these congregations nurtured and supported me, I had a few interactions like the ones described above that prolonged my hesitation to join the CRC.

In those two interactions, the man and woman were being friendly and trying to make a connection, but their attempts backfired, and I felt alienated as a result. The gentleman's comment that I should not worry about my black hair because "Jesus' tent is big enough to cover me" was bizarre, to say the least, because I was born into and raised in the Christian faith—my missionary father had even been captured during an underground mission festival in China and spent a week in prison being interrogated for attempting to spread the gospel. And the gentleman's comment was not only bizarre, but deeply hurtful to me as a young adult volunteering and trying to form relationships in that congregation. I had just finished serving that church community by singing on the worship team that morning, yet after receiving that comment, I began to doubt whether I would ever feel accepted as a member of the congregation.

In those two interactions, the man and woman were being friendly and trying to make a connection, but their attempts backfired, and I felt alienated as a result.

As for the second interaction with the woman who had "a daughter whose friend has a friend who is Asian": if I were white, the woman would most likely have begun her small talk by asking about my job, my family, or why I was visiting that particular city—topics that would have been much more meaningful than "By the way, if I go out two or three connections in my social circle, there is someone who is Asian." These interactions contributed to my feeling like an outsider in the CRC despite the many meaningful relationships I had formed through the denomination.

I believe the man and the woman approached me with good intentions. But these interactions have led me to think about how I can welcome a newcomer at church with whom I feel I have little in common. After moving to Vancouver (one of the most

ethnically diverse cities in Canada) with my husband in 2018, I eventually joined First CRC there. Not only did this church have an ethnically diverse congregation, but the members tried to make newcomers, including some of the most recent immigrants to Canada, feel integrated into the church community.

I wrote this piece after much contemplation about how to portray the two interactions with as much grace and objectivity as possible. I've had numerous other interactions over the years with CRC members who are unable (or maybe unwilling) to move beyond visible racial characteristics, such as my black hair, to engage in more meaningful fellowship with me. Perhaps members who have long associated the CRC with "being Dutch" could learn to engage with attendees of an ethnic minority in conversations that are more conducive to building Christian community. 



Jisoo Vis lives in Vancouver, B.C., with her husband, Douglas, and their son, Jonah. She is a corporate commercial lawyer and a member of the First CRC of Vancouver.

The Blue Tarp

Instead of me
being like Jesus,
was Donna the
one really being
like Jesus? Was
Jesus being
like Donna?



Beth Rinsema lives in Muskegon, Mich., and spends time in Florida during winter. She ended her nursing career as a parish nurse at Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church. She attends Bethany CRC in Muskegon and Peace Presbyterian Church in Florida.

SHE SAT ON A PUBLIC BENCH on busy Cortez Avenue in Bradenton, Fla., surrounded by her earthly possessions, wrapped in a large plastic blue tarp.

One Sunday afternoon, my husband and I walked the short distance from our condo to the person on the bench, carrying some soup and banana bread. Our offer of soup was met with hesitant assent, but when the banana bread was mentioned, her eyes lit up and she eagerly accepted. Her name was Donna Jackson, and she told us she was choosing to live outside, waiting to save enough money from her Social Security checks to travel to New York City. She was easy to talk to and mentioned several places in the U.S. that she had visited. She asked our names and looked us in the eye when we spoke. There was a quiet dignity, stillness, and curiosity about her. She blessed us when we said goodbye.

A few days later, my husband offered her some pizza, but she politely refused. He talked to her briefly and then bid her a good day.

Donna worked her way into our minds. How did she stay warm when the temperature dropped into the 40s at night? How did she stay dry that night of strong winds and driving rains? Where did she go to the bathroom? Where did she shower? Judging by her appearance and odor, it probably didn't happen often. She was in the same thick-knit, long-sleeved black shirt and long skirt every day.

For at least a month, every time we went by she was either sleeping under a blue tarp or sitting on it. If she was gone, the blue tarp covered her possessions in a mound.

Donna was still on our minds. What was motivating her to stay on that bench? How could we help her? Did she need or want help?

On Valentine's Day, realizing she didn't want food or need anything (except maybe a shower), I gathered an old *Smithsonian* magazine and a travel magazine, inserted a Valentine's card, and laid the magazines and the red-enveloped card on top of the blue tarp. We hoped the wind and rain that evening didn't ruin them.

We couldn't get Donna out of our minds. Was she mentally ill? Why did she choose to live like that? How long would the city let her live on the public bench?

And then she was gone. The blue tarp was gone. All her belongings were gone. The bench was gone.

One week later, I drove down Cortez, and there was Donna! She was sitting on another bench, across the street from her old bench. I parked my car and walked over to Donna. She was sitting on her blue tarp in a thick brown shirt and long skirt. I re-introduced myself, and she seemed glad to see me. She told me they took the other bench away: "I don't think they wanted me there anymore." So she moved to this bench directly across the street. She showed me something she was typing on her small device. It was the Lord's Prayer. She was writing each sentence of the Lord's Prayer and describing its meaning. For example: "'Our Father, who art in Heaven'—this gives the location of where God is."

I told her my favorite sentence in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven." We talked about God's kingdom on earth, and she started quoting verses from Matthew 25: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me." She reflected on how we can do that for others. I finally said, "You don't



think of yourself as someone who needs food or drink or is homeless, do you?" And she said, "No."

I was dumbfounded. This was the same chapter that our church had chosen for our Lenten devotions. We were studying *Becoming a Beloved Community: A Matthew 25 Journey to the Cross*. I had been praying for God to open my eyes.

We began talking about cultures and sociology. She had traveled to Africa and was amazed how heterogeneous its nations are. She described the U.S. as being homogenous. I said, "But the U.S. is very heterogeneous—it's a melting pot of all different kinds of people." "Yes," she said, "but in the U.S. we try to make everyone look and think the same rather than encouraging and celebrating our uniqueness." During the course of the conversation, it became obvious that she had studied and worked in several different places throughout the world.

At the close of the conversation, I asked how I could pray for her and if she would pray for me. She asked

for calmness and peace and said she would pray for me.

A week later, we stopped again to chat. She was sitting in the warm sun on her blue tarp in her brown outfit, knitting scarves. She said she buys the yarn at the Hobby Lobby across the street and will either sell them or give them away. Her plan was to "get off this bench" and travel to New York City and Virginia, where she has family. I encouraged her to get off the bench just to get some exercise! She didn't seem to take offense. At this point we were comfortable acquaintances. She talked more about her travels and jobs, and then we said goodbye and went back to our car.

And then Donna was gone. The blue tarp was gone. Her belongings were gone. The bench was still there.

Donna is still on our minds. Where is she? Did she save enough money to travel to New York or Virginia? Could she find transportation? Is she safe from COVID-19?

Then I began thinking about myself. At the beginning of this encounter, I thought of myself as the "hands and feet of Jesus"—someone who is privileged and blessed giving out of my bounty to someone less fortunate. Then I reflected on Matthew 25: "And Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers (and sisters) of mine, you did for me.'" Was Donna ... Jesus? Instead of me being like Jesus, was Donna the one really being like Jesus? Was Jesus being like Donna? Jesus so closely identifies with the sufferer. Who is the sufferer—Donna or me? Who was more blessed—Donna or me?

This is what I know:

- » Donna seemed happy.
- » Donna was unencumbered by possessions.
- » Donna loved Jesus.
- » Donna was a lifetime learner.
- » Donna had dignity.
- » Donna made unorthodox decisions.

This is what I'm learning:

- » You never know unless you ask.
- » Seek to understand before you judge.
- » I am enriched by engaging with "the other."
- » God moves in mysterious ways and shows up in unexpected places.

I wonder how many more Donnas are out there. I'm thankful that God is opening my eyes, and I pray that he will help me to really see. **B**

Summer 2021

BREAKING BARRIERS

everybody belongs ■ everybody serves



Prior to her work with Disability Concerns, Becky Jones was an art therapist, encouraging self expression through the arts. Pictured here are two brothers who were part of a family art therapy group



Singer and Songwriter Cassie Lokker has just released her latest worship song on iTunes. Living with low vision does not limit her creativity!

Cassie's song can be accessed here: <http://bit.ly/quietplacelokker>



Michèle Gyselinc lives with schizophrenia. She is a talented writer and artist. She reminds us to connect with the creative gifts God has given us.



Kyla Hewis lives with anxiety. The creative arts offer her a space to express her feelings in a non-verbal way. Theatre provides room for personal expression.



Doug is a resident of the Brothers and Sisters Homes. He attends the art program offered there as a way to express himself and find joy!

This issue of *Breaking Barriers* celebrates the artistic giftings of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities learn to be agile as we adapt every single day to an ableist world that isn't designed or built with us in mind—and worse, doubts that we have something meaningful to contribute. The acute limitations some of us live with require imagination and creativity that often surprise able-bodied people who make assumptions or have grown accustomed to expecting less from people with disabilities. As this issue demonstrates, some disabled people are gifted with artistry that generates delight when it finds expression.

— Terry DeYoung

More online

This newsletter and the Disability Concerns blog (network.crcna.org/disability), co-published by CRC and RCA Disability Concerns ministries, received three awards from the Associated Church Press recently for work done in 2020.

In addition to this summer issue, find back issues of *Breaking Barriers* and editions in Español and in 한국어, plus a link for electronic subscriptions, at either the CRC website (www.crcna.org/disability) or RCA website (www.rca.org/disability).

To read the full Summer 2021 *Breaking Barriers*, find it at bit.ly/bbsummer2021.

What Should We Do When the Bible Seems to Disagree with Science?

Christians can agree that nature and Scripture each should be taken seriously, and that science and biblical interpretation are both fallible.



Deborah B. Haarsma is President of BioLogos (biologos.org). She and her husband, Loren, are scientists who together wrote the book *Origins* (Faith Alive, 2011). They are members of Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

IN THE EARLY 1600s, Galileo discovered that the earth moves in orbit around the sun, yet Psalm 93:1 says, “The world is established; it cannot be moved” (NET). This tension sparked a debate in Galileo’s day. Today, people ask similar questions of other verses that appear to disagree with scientific findings. Some skeptics use these “tension verses” to reject Christianity, while some Christians use them to reject science.

Yet both nature and Scripture are God’s revelation, giving unique insights into God. We can even think of nature as a second “book” of revelation, as described in Article 2 of the Belgic Confession:

We know God by two means:

First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God. ... Second, God makes himself known to us more clearly by his holy and divine Word, as much as we need in this life, for God’s glory and for our salvation.

The Confession echoes the parallel in passages like Psalm 19: “The heavens declare the glory of God ...” (vs. 1-6) and “The law of the Lord is perfect ...” (vs. 7-11).

We trust that God doesn’t teach contradictory things in two different Bible passages. If it seems as if there is a contradiction, we assume we are misinterpreting one or both passages. We know from church history and our own experience that we misinterpret Scripture sometimes.

In the same way, we trust that God doesn’t teach contradictory things in nature and Scripture. God is the author of nature. Science is an interpretation of nature. At the cutting edges of science, scientific theories are often wrong or only partially correct. But as

scientists gather more evidence and crosscheck each other’s work, a consensus forms. When scientists of many religions and worldviews have worked for years and come to agreement, it is worth taking their findings seriously.

When it looks as if there might be a contradiction, we should dig into science and biblical interpretation. We can ask about the strength of the scientific evidence and whether there is a consensus among scientists. Galileo’s initial discovery was preliminary and debatable, but today it is abundantly confirmed. We can ask about the context of the Bible verse and learn from biblical scholars about the original language and culture. In the case of Psalm 93:1, the context of the next line is a parallel statement that makes the meaning clear: “Your throne was established long ago” (Ps. 93:2). This parallel shows that the intended meaning of “fixed” is secure and enduring, not a lack of physical motion. Some modern translations even render verse 1 as “The world is established, firm and secure” (NIV).

This strategy doesn’t resolve everything. Christians will still disagree about science and about biblical interpretation. But Christians can agree that nature and Scripture each should be taken seriously, and that science and biblical interpretation are both fallible. And Christians can point skeptics to a richer understanding of what Christianity teaches about God, nature, and science.

Don’t be discouraged by the tension. While some of these tension points are tough nuts to crack, our hope is in the God who created the natural world and inspired the Bible. The deep truth of God’s character underlies both. In fact, we can rejoice because these tension points are opportunities to correct and expand our understanding, to learn more truly and deeply all of who God is. **B**

Special Council of Delegates Session Sort of Like a Real Synod

SYNOD NEWS

Council of Delegates Stands In for Synod Once Again

Synod, the Christian Reformed Church's annual leadership gathering, was canceled for the second year in a row due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In its place, the CRC's Council of Delegates met in special session to deal with matters deemed unable to wait until Synod 2022.

The Council is made up of delegates from each of the denomination's 49 classes (regional groups of churches) and a few at-large members. It convened by video conference June 15 and 16. *The Banner's* coverage of the special session, found in the following pages, was prepared by news editor Alissa Vernon and recently retired news editor Gayla Postma.

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news@TheBanner.org.

It wasn't a real synod, but at times it felt a little like one, with many of the same tasks addressed, just with fewer delegates.

The two-day session of the Council of Delegates was streamed on YouTube for people who wanted to watch the proceedings. In 2020, when the Council also met remotely in lieu of synod, that wasn't available. At that time the technical crew was concentrating only on making video connections work for delegates, chair Paul DeVries said of what was expected to be "a one-time, exceptional thing." A year later the technology was familiar enough to add streaming.

Mark Vande Zande (Classis Heartland) led opening devotions, as he would have if Synod 2021 had met as planned at Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa. First CRC in Orange City, Iowa, where Vande Zande is pastor, is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year and had been selected as the host church of Synod 2021.

Colin Watson Sr., executive director of the denomination, gave an address on the state of the church. He pointed to initiatives such as the denomination's new ministry plan, *Our Journey 2025*, as some of the ways the CRC is responding to church and societal trends, giving him confidence to say the church's future is both hopeful and promising.

Delegates welcomed 31 candidates for ministry, though without the level of celebration experienced at a real synod (see "31 Candidates Move Across Threshold from Study to Service," p. 22). They also acknowledged 32 ministers who have retired.

The Council approved next year's budget, which allots ministry shares to the CRC's various ministries and agencies. For the first time the budget is based on income pledged by the churches and classes and not on a specified per-member remittance (see "Pledge-based Budget Sees Income Down, Allocations Changed," June 2021, p. 18).

Meeting on Screens Just Isn't the Same

Prominently missing from the online session were both the camaraderie and the friction that come with gathering for a week with 200 people—sharing coffee and meals, getting a small group together away from the crowd to discuss an agenda item, or going out with other delegates for some laughter and loosening up. Any angst present this year couldn't be mitigated by in-person fellowship. Meeting on a screen is just different from sitting elbow to elbow with other delegates.

And then there's the singing. Anyone who has been to a CRC synod knows that Christian Reformed people love to sing and do it well. Devotions just aren't the same over a Zoom connection. And the repartee between the synod president and other speakers was curtailed.

Weighty Matters

Even though the session wasn't a full, regular synod, the Council took up several weighty matters on Synod 2021's behalf. And just like last year, delegates noted that they felt odd having to approve their own work.

One such instance was determining to leave unchanged the Council's May 2021 decision to remove Bethany Christian Services from the list of organizations recommended to the churches for offerings. That happened because Bethany is now extending its adoption and other services to same-sex couples. (See "Council of Delegates Meeting Included Intense Debate," June 2021, p. 16.) When taking note of that decision on behalf of synod, the Council heard an objection from delegate Paul DeVries (Classis Thornapple Valley). He said he had been moved by letters he received after the Council's May decision, and he wanted the group, this time acting for synod, to have an opportunity to "consider again the objections of those like myself who



think it was a mistake to remove Bethany from the list.” John Lee (Classis Iakota) said that, regardless of the merits of the decision, he was uncomfortable litigating what had already been decided. “In my neck of the woods, there were many who were upset by what Bethany did,” he said. “If it remains on the list, that’s an endorsement. People would just no longer trust the list.” In the end, the Council let its earlier decision stand.

Several classes sent formal requests to synod asking that discipline be imposed on Neland Avenue CRC after it ordained a deacon who is in a same-sex marriage. After discussion, the Council deferred these overtures to Synod 2022, but it did send a communication to that synod, reiterating its grave concern about Neland’s actions (see “Neland Avenue: Council Defers Action, Sends Communication to Synod 2022,” p. 20).

Regarding two overtures asking to stop the process of restructuring the denominational leadership, the Council said that halting the process is impractical and may not even be possible (see “Restructuring: Not Practical to Halt the Process,” p. 19).

The Council also approved actions for preventing abuse of power. Some of those actions had been held over from

First CRC in Orange City, Iowa, is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year and had been selected as the host church of Synod 2021.

last year, including approving a code of conduct for all ministry leaders in the denomination (see “Committee for Preventing Abuse Wraps Up,” p. 21).

Looking Ahead to Synod 2022

Synod 2022 promises to be both full and consequential. Due to the heavy agenda, the Council asked the program committee (the officers from Synod 2019) to explore options including “consultation with a design team consisting of staff and significant participants at synod” to bring a preliminary report to the Council in October. Synod 2022 will be held at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich. Encounter CRC in Kentwood, Mich., will serve as host church.

Held over to 2022 from previous agendas are reports from two task forces, one on ecclesiastical marriage and the other on bivocational ministry; a report on the definition of heresy; a review of the New City Catechism; and several overtures.

Mostly, Synod 2022 will be a defining moment for the relationship between

the Christian Reformed Church and its members who identify as LGBTQ.

Division has been evident in the differing responses to the actions of Neland Avenue CRC. Opinions about Bethany Christian Services are divided mostly along the same fault line.

Synod 2022 will take up a 175-page report on human sexuality. That report asserts that any expression of sexuality outside of a marriage between one man and one woman is contrary to Scripture and that this view already has confessional status in the church.

The report was deferred when Synod 2021 was canceled. The range of overtures already received demonstrate just how fraught the discussion will be, and more are sure to come in the lead-up to June 2022. (See “Sexuality Report Released to Churches,” January 2021, p. 14.)

In a surprising and unusual move, the Council at this meeting on behalf of synod instructed the executive director to develop a mechanism that would allow delegates to the next synod to hear LGBTQ voices in the discussion of the human sexuality report. (See “Synod 2022 Delegates to Hear from Believers Who Are LGBTQ,” p. 22.)

At its May meeting, the Council of Delegates noted a plan to call the church to a year of prayer ahead of June 2022, “recognizing that the past year has been traumatic for CRC congregations as they have navigated COVID-19, calls for racial reconciliation, and the human sexuality report.” Please pray that, despite this divisive time, the executive director’s confidence in a promising and hopeful future for the CRC will bear out.

—Gayla R. Postma

Synod 2022 Delegates to Hear from Believers Who Are LGBTQ

The Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church decided on behalf of Synod 2021 that the views of people from the LGBTQ community need to be heard by the delegates to Synod 2022.

Specifically, the Council instructed executive director Colin Watson Sr. to “develop a mechanism or forum that would allow LGBTQ voices to be heard by the delegates to Synod 2022 with regard to the human sexuality report.”

Lantern Community CRC, a small, urban congregation in Calgary, Alta., asked for the consideration. Its request—Overture 17 in the *Agenda for Synod 2021*—was vaguely worded, but the Council interpreted it as “an intention to create an effective space for LGBTQ believers to share their perspectives on the recommendations that are coming to Synod 2022 as part of the human sexuality report.”

That report’s formal name is the “Report to Synod of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality.” The committee was mandated by Synod 2016 to “provide concise yet clear ethical guidance for what constitutes a holy and healthy Christian sexual life, and in light of this to serve the church with pastoral, ecclesial, and missional guidance that explains how the gospel provides redemptive affirmation and hope for those experiencing sexual questioning, temptation, and sin” (*Acts of Synod 2016*, p. 915). Those appointed to the committee agreed to work within the parameters of a report to Synod 1973 that concluded that being



Melissa Van Dyk (Canadian at-large delegate): “I’m hearing from LGBTQ believers that the stories highlighted in the report do not actually represent their experience.”

same-sex attracted is not sinful, but acting on those attractions is incompatible with Scripture.

In considering Lantern Community’s request, many delegates expressed their opposition to providing a process outside of the normal synodical procedures for church members to be heard.

Tyler Wagenmaker (Classis Zeeland) noted that Synod 2016 turned down a very similar overture asking for the appointment of LGBTQ advisors to synod. “We have no reason, probably not even the authority, to overturn the decision of Synod 2016,” he said.

John Lee (Classis Iakota) said he is in favor of listening, but not in a way that would work against the deliberative process of synod. “Importing outside voices that haven’t been carefully vetted and chosen by churches and classes, that have been



Ralph Wigboldus (Classis Huron): “It’s not synod’s job to have that discussion all over, but to discuss the results of that conversation.”

chosen because of a narrow identity, is going to create the sort of anxiety that’s going to make it hard to listen,” he said. “I would rather trust the Holy Spirit to work through churches and classes to delegate prayerful people who will not come as representatives of the classes, but as brothers and sisters in Christ, perfectly committed together to discern the Spirit’s voice in Scripture.”

Ralph Wigboldus (Classis Huron) said it was the report committee’s job to have done the listening. “They were mandated by synod to have that conversation, and they did have that conversation, and one of the things that impressed me most about the report is how many people they had the conversation with,” he said. “It’s not synod’s job to have that discussion all over, but to discuss the results of that conversation.”

Melissa Van Dyk (Canadian at-large delegate) disagreed. She said what she is hearing from believers who are LGBTQ and their allies is that their theological

beliefs as outlined in the report have been misrepresented, not fully represented, or set up as a straw man, and that the stories selected to be highlighted in the report do not actually represent their experience.

Sam Cooper (Classis Toronto) echoed that. “The least authentic and what often appeared to be the most contrived voices in the report were those of LGBTQ community in the Christian Reformed Church of North America.”

The vote count wasn’t released, but chair Paul DeVries said in the meeting that it was “an obviously close vote” because of “the amount of time it took us to get the exact tally.”

If any delegates feel unable to support a decision the Council takes together, they may choose to register their negative votes in the meeting record. Seventeen delegates did so in this case.

DeVries prayed for the Council before moving on with the agenda, recognizing human sexuality as a “very divisive, very difficult issue for us.”

Watson said he finds himself in the position of being asked to do something on behalf of the Council knowing that there are a number of delegates who oppose it. He welcomed delegates to come to him with suggestions. “If there are some ways in which this could be carried out that would be more in line with creating even more unity within the body,” he said, “I would appreciate that.”

—Gayla R. Postma

Restructuring: Not Practical to Halt the Process

In response to two requests that the denomination’s restructuring process be halted, the Council of Delegates said that in practical terms, “it does not seem possible to halt the process.” With people in two senior positions already working beyond their announced retirement dates, the Council said the current structure is “untenable for much longer.”

In other words, the horse is out of the barn.

At several points over the past months the Council has repeated that its decisions and actions are not final, but must be confirmed by Synod 2022. However, the Council will come to Synod 2022 with new descriptions of and candidates for the senior leadership positions being proposed.

Restructuring the denomination’s governance and senior leadership is intended to solve issues of compliance with Canada Revenue Agency rules for nonprofit organizations. Interim changes were put in place in February 2020.

The Council observed that the two overtures (requests) from Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan and Classis Toronto “contain some inaccurate and/or incomplete information. For example, there has been no attempt to create two denominations.”

The Council also reiterated its belief that it has “acted with the same intent and commitment” as expressed in the overtures—to “emphasize our unity as a binational church.”

In May 2021 the Council recommended to Synod 2022 a structure that would create the Office of the General Secretary, which would comprise two leadership positions—a general secretary and a chief administrative officer for the whole denomination—as well as an executive director-Canada to oversee all CRC ministries in Canada. (See “New Leadership Structure Recommended Amid Much Disagreement,” June 2021, p. 20.)

—Gayla R. Postma

About approving the work of synodical deputies on loaning CRC ministers to other denominations, John Lee (Iakota) said,

“Apparently whenever you loan CRC ministers, there is good ‘interest’—at least in their sermons.”

Neland Avenue CRC: Council Defers Action, Sends Communication to Synod 2022

The Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates deferred any action on requests for discipline of Neland Avenue CRC.

Neland, located in Grand Rapids, Mich., ordained a deacon in 2020 who is in a same-sex marriage. When Neland's action became public, it generated reaction from many congregations and classes (regional groups of churches) because the CRC's position on homosexuality, written in 1973 and upheld by subsequent synods, states that homosexual attraction is not sinful but acting on that attraction is.

The Council sent a letter to Neland grieving Neland's decision. Seven overtures (requests) were also sent to Synod 2021 asking that Neland's council be admonished and subject to disciplinary action, citing previous synods that did impose discipline on a local church.

In a lengthy communication included in the supplement to the *Agenda for Synod 2021*, Neland's church council said it believes its action did not cross any lines of orthodoxy because Synod 1973's statement was delivered as pastoral advice, not as an interpretation of the confessions.

Pastoral guidance adopted by Synod 2016 and added as a supplement to Church Order article 69-c cites same-sex marriage as an example of a marriage considered to be in conflict with the Word of God. The Church Order contains the regulations and parameters that all churches in the denomination have covenanted together to uphold.



Roger Sparks (Classis Minnkota): "We should plead with Neland to cease and desist their covenant breaking."

Neland said in its statement that neither the Council of Delegates nor even synod can impose discipline on a church council. That view was affirmed by Kathy Smith, the CRC's Church Order expert. "In this situation the Council of Delegates cannot discipline a local council," she told the Council. "Synod cannot do this either unless there is an appeal." No one has yet appealed Neland's decision.

Several delegates disagreed. Roger Sparks (Classis Minnkota) said the Council should take action. "We should plead with Neland to cease and desist their covenant breaking." Tyler Wagenmaker (Classis Zeeland) said, "We've pleaded enough. When do we start to enforce the standards of previous synods? If we aren't going to do anything, are we upholding our fiduciary responsibility?"

On the other hand, Elsa Fennema (U.S. delegate at-large) said, "God doesn't stop pleading with us. If God works with us in love, should we not do the same?"

The Council opted to err on the side of not overstepping its authority and deferred all requests asking for discipline of Neland to Synod 2022. Nine delegates registered their negative votes.



Elsa Fennema (U.S. delegate at-large): "If God works with us in love, should we not do the same?"

For Lora Copley (Classis Red Mesa), deferring was not enough. "Real people are affected when God's truths are relativized. I cannot, and our denomination must not, minimize the clear teaching of Scripture," she said. "Just because the Council defers all disciplinary action to Synod 2022, it doesn't mean that we defer our responsibility to, at this juncture, speak into a matter that is affecting and continues to affect our whole denomination."

Michael Ten Haken (Classis Lake Superior) agreed. "This strikes a balance between not overstepping but also our desire to communicate something."

In the end, the Council voted to send a communication to Synod 2022 reaffirming its grave concern about Neland and urging Synod 2022 "to be mindful of the three marks of the true and vital church," noting specifically that it is incumbent on the Council to reaffirm denominational commitments "in hopes of prevention of other churches taking independent action which bypass Church Order." Council did not rescind its October letter to Neland as requested by Classis Grand Rapids East.

—Gayla R. Postma

Committee for Preventing Abuse Wraps Up

An ad hoc committee assigned to work on the prevention of abuse of power in the Christian Reformed Church turned in its last report to the Council of Delegates.

Two years ago Synod 2019 instructed the Council to form the committee and gave it a long list of tasks. Some proposed responses to the assigned tasks were presented in the *Agenda for Synod 2020*. That synod was canceled, and the proposals were deferred to Synod 2021. The Council, acting on behalf of synod, took them up in its special session.

The proposals adopted by the Council include:

- » A code of conduct to be signed by all ministry staff in the denomination that signifies a commitment to truthfulness and respect, financial transparency, appropriate boundaries in all relationships, creating a safe environment for all, and mandatory reporting of all known or suspected cases of abuse or neglect of minors.
- » The formation of a Dignity Team to provide help regarding infractions that hurt people but fall outside the scope of defined systems for addressing harm. The ad hoc committee described the intent of the team as one that would function with moral authority and not as a body of appeal for decisions made in other processes. The team will report to the director of Congregational Services.
- » New criteria developed by the executive director stating that a nondisclosure agreement may be considered only when it's clearly in the best interest of the person harmed.

The Council also noted:

- » Changes to the employee handbooks for both Canada and the U.S. to improve support for complainants, prevent conflicts of interest for those evaluating complaints, and provide options for alternate dispute



Amanda Benckhuysen, Safe Church Ministry director: "I have heard stories from people who haven't felt heard or taken seriously."

resolution such as mediation and restorative justice practices.

- » Contextualized translation of abuse prevention resources for other language groups in the CRC.

Staff of the CRC's Safe Church Ministry and Pastor Church Resources are still working on a process for record keeping to prevent repeat occurrences or the transfer of abusive leaders to other churches.

Pilot Project for Pastor Training

This year's candidates for the ministry were required to complete online training in abuse prevention as part of a pilot project. The training is also required for commissioned pastors and pastors transferring from other denominations.

Amanda Benckhuysen, director of Safe Church Ministry, said this year's candidates took the training individually and self-paced, but in the coming year training will be offered in a cohort model for participants to work through together.

"Ultimately, our hope is that all ministry leaders in the CRC will take this initial training over the next couple of years and then take a refresher course every three to five years following that," Benckhuysen said.

A Gap in the Process?

Five formal requests to synod related to abuse of power were on the Council's agenda. Council, recognizing the good progress of the ad hoc committee, said much of what was requested has been addressed, but it noted a possible gap in the current appeals process and asked the executive director to review it. "In my office, I have heard stories from people who haven't felt heard or taken seriously enough," Benckhuysen said. She hopes the review will ask, "Are we allowing the people who are making decisions to have the information that they need to make just and fair and compassionate decisions?"

—Gayla R. Postma

"Andy, the whole key to being a good chair is doing whatever Dee (Recker, director of synodical services,) tells you to do."

Outgoing Council of Delegates chair Paul DeVries to new chair Andy deRuyter

31 Candidates Move Across Threshold from Study to Service



Standing in for Synod 2021, the Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates received 31 new candidates for ministry with as much fanfare as it could manage across the video-meeting platform.

David Koll, now retired director of the Office of Candidacy, presented the candidates in an online ceremony.

Susan LaClear, the new director of candidacy, Jul Medenblik, president of Calvin Theological Seminary, and Colin Watson Sr., executive director of the CRCNA, also participated in the send-off.

Medenblik called it a "doorway" moment.

"As we anticipate you moving across the threshold from study in a seminary to service in the church, we're here in this doorway moment to pray for you as we anticipate you moving into the ministry that God is preparing for you," Medenblik said.

Council of Delegates chair Paul DeVries (top left) prays for newly received candidates for ministry as CRCNA staff and Council delegates raise their hands in prayer.

Many speakers noted the diversity of candidates for ministry and the role that Koll, as the CRC's first director of candidacy, has played in shepherding the church to this point.

"You were the very voice and the arms of Jesus welcoming candidates, coming from all sorts of different avenues," Council chair Paul DeVries said, telling Koll he was a blessing to the denomination because of his "love for diversity, for the diverse and broad kingdom of God that takes all shapes and forms."

As happened last year for the first class of candidates to be received during the COVID-19 pandemic, Council delegates blessed the prospective ministers with a virtual "laying on of hands," raising their hands to their screens while DeVries prayed a blessing.

"Our prayers and encouragement are going to be with you," Koll told the candidates, "because we are entering into a vast desert when we go into ministry, but God shows up in the desert."

—Alissa Vernon

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Dirk Velthuizen

1930-2021

The wonder of God's grace was a constant theme and reminder throughout Dirk Velthuizen's life. "He was a straight shooter with a very warm heart for the underdog and a fierce opponent of injustice wherever he met it," one colleague and friend said. Velthuizen died April 14.

Born in the Netherlands, the youngest of seven children, Velthuizen immigrated to Canada in 1954 with his new bride. He worked on farms and sold Fuller Brush products before moving the growing family to Grand Rapids, Mich., to attend Calvin College (now University) and Seminary.

After ordination in 1969, Velthuizen served the following Christian Reformed churches: Telkwa (B.C.) Community Church; Vauxhall (Alta.); Brooks (Alta.); Drayton (Ont.); and First Kemptville (Ont.). After retirement in 1995 the Velthuizens lived first in Guelph and then at Holland Christian Homes in Brampton, Ont. Velthuizen remained involved in pastoral work throughout retirement.

Canoe trips in Algonquin Provincial Park, hikes in local conservation areas, neighborhood walks, reading, and singing with the Kitchener-Waterloo Philharmonic Choir brought Velthuizen great joy. He took pride in his homemade solutions to home and car problems.

Velthuizen is survived by his wife, Peta; six children and their spouses; 15 grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. James
William Van Weelden*

1922-2021

A pastor to many over 76 years of active and retired ministry, Jim Van Weelden loved people and loved to tell the story of salvation in Jesus Christ. He died April 18 at McNally House Hospice in Grimsby, Ont.

Born in Oskaloosa, Iowa, the sixth of 14 children, Jim was raised on a farm. At 17 he began a five-year course of studies at the Protestant Reformed Theological School. He served a Protestant Reformed church in Sioux Center, Iowa, for 10 years and then was ordained in the Christian Reformed Church. He went on to pastor First CRC, Sioux City, Iowa; First CRC, Red Deer, Alta.; First CRC, Chatham, Ont.; and Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, Ont.

After retiring from full-time ministry in 1984, he served many churches in the Grimsby area, preaching almost every Sunday well into his 80s and occasionally thereafter. He preached for the last time in November 2019 at age 97.

Jim was predeceased in 2013 by his wife, Adriana, with whom he celebrated almost 70 years of marriage, and by his eldest son and a grandson. He is survived by five children and their spouses, 11 grandchildren, 28 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-granddaughter.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Classis Watch: Late Spring 2021

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 member churches agree together to follow. These are some of the actions taken by classes in the past several months:

Those **welcomed into ministry in the Christian Reformed Church** include candidates Derek Elmi-Buursma, ordination May 2021; and Namju Bae, ordination October 2021 (Church Order Arts. 6 and 10).

Those welcomed into ministry in the CRC **from other denominations** following a satisfactory colloquium doctum (doctrinal conversation) establishing soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life, and knowledge and appreciation of Christian Reformed practice: Rev. John Sideco (Art. 8).

Ministers released from a congregation (Art. 17a): Revs. Doug Van Essen from Crossroads CRC (Madison, Wis.); Mary-Lee Bouma from her call by First CRC of Vancouver, B.C.; Joshua Amaezechi from Comstock CRC (Kalamazoo, Mich., now disbanded); Tim Raakman from Three Rivers (Mich.) CRC (now disbanded); Benjamin McKnight from Grant (Mich.) CRC. Bouma, Amaezechi, and Raakman are all designated by their classes as being **eligible for call**.

Rev. Heather Strooboscher (Classis Grandville) was declared **eligible for call**.

Leaving Ministry in the CRC

Classes may end a pastor's ordained ministry status, guided by Church Order Articles 14 and 17. Designations of release (reflecting the manner and spirit in which the minister acted during the time leading up to and including resignation from office) are honorably released, released, dismissed, or in the status of one deposed (Art. 14).

Allen Kleine Deters and Josiah Bokma were **honorably released**.

Roelof Peereboom was **dismissed**.

Ministers retiring (granted emeritus status):

Revs. Daniel Dykstra, Paul Hansen, Folkert (Frank) de Boer, Sheri Leisman, Fred Witteveen, David Koll, Robert Bolt, David Van Der Wiele (effective Aug.1), Henk Bruinsma (effective Nov. 16), and Guillermo Serrano (Art. 18).

Commissioned Pastors

Approved as **commissioned pastors called to specific roles within their classis** (Art. 23) were Jordan Nickell (Classis Grandville), James Heethuis (Grandville) and Jeremy Rhodes (Georgetown).

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 (Art. 38).

Living Hope Community Church (Classis Quinte) was recognized as **emerging**.

Good News Church (Classis Hudson) **affiliated as an organized congregation** of the CRC.

Hope Community Church in Lawrence, Ind., **disbanded** (effective Jan. 29, 2021).

Classis Chatham, a group of 28 congregations and two campus ministries in southwest Ontario, has **formally changed its name to Classis Ontario Southwest**. Classis said the name change, which went into effect July 1, "would more accurately reflect the diverse area we represent."

First CRC in Orillia, Ont. (Classis Toronto) will be **renamed Living Hope Christian Reformed Church (Orillia)** by the end of 2021.

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

'Rebirth' for a Wisconsin Church

In August 2020 Kenosha (Wis.) Christian Reformed Church was "looking death in the face," Pastor Verlan Van Ee said. But the congregation, at that time about 50 people, celebrated an unexpected rebirth as a satellite campus of First CRC in Oostburg, Wis., in May.

It's a "restart" also happening in other Christian Reformed congregations. Peter Kelder, the Central U.S. regional leader for Resonate Global Mission, said seven churches are currently in some form of restart in his region. Crossroads Discernment Process, a church resource created by Resonate and the CRCNA's Pastor Church Resources, says restarting is one of many ways a struggling congregation may choose to respond to its circumstances.

For Kenosha, that looked like First CRC stepping in and becoming a kind of "Boaz," Van Ee said, providing support in the way the kinsman-redeemer did for widows Ruth and Naomi in the book of Ruth.

Van Ee shared his congregation's struggle at an encouragement lunch for pastors in October 2020, and there Drew Zylstra, pastor of First CRC Oostburg, proposed the partnership that has now come to fruition. In December, Oostburg voted to make a formal partnership proposal to Kenosha CRC. On Jan. 10, the smaller congregation officially affirmed the plan.

Van Ee continues to pastor in a discipleship and evangelism role while pastors from First CRC lead worship services via livestreaming. First CRC also contributes some financial support, as does Classis Wisconsin, the regional group of Christian Reformed congregations to which both churches belong.

Classis approved a \$50,000 grant to Kenosha at its Feb. 23 meeting, recognizing the work as a "restart" through its Classical Home Missions Committee.

Before launching the streaming services in May, Zylstra and another pastor



The dwindling congregation of Kenosha (Wis.) CRC has been able to "rebirth" ministry through a partnership with First CRC in Oostburg, Wis.

from First CRC spent months leading worship in both cities. They'd lead morning worship in Oostburg, drive ninety minutes to Kenosha to worship in person and establish relationships there, and then return to Oostburg for evening worship.

"We felt it necessary to be consistently present in Kenosha for a period of time in order to cast a vision for this new entity and establish relationships that, God willing, will continue to grow as we enter into a new season of fruitful ministry," Zylstra said.

The restarting church is still legally known as Kenosha CRC, but it is working on a new vision statement and a name that will convey its renewed mission, which includes a partnership with the local YMCA's Feeding Families program

started last September. That partnership brought some former members back to the church, excited to have new mission work to attend to, but others left, and regular attendance dropped to about 25. As of May, it was about 40.

Kenosha and First CRCs haven't fully defined their strategy, but Van Ee and Zylstra see promise in the networking.

"I have high hopes for the future of this partnership," Zylstra said. "God has already been at work in our midst, giving us the daily victories that keep us engaged and excited. We are constantly reminded that the ultimate success or failure of this endeavor is in his hands."

—Maia VanderMeer

In January The Banner ran a story looking at what happens when churches close and invited readers' feedback. We learned about the experience of Kenosha CRC after receiving a tip from pastor Verlan Van Ee. Do you have a story of a church coming to grips with closure or transformation? Feel free to let us know at news@thebanner.org.

Growth, Baptisms, and Connecting in Pandemic-Challenged Times

In Christian Reformed congregations across North America, online worship services developed as a way of maintaining contact within pandemic-separated congregations have proven to be a powerful way to attract newcomers to the Christian faith.

The congregation at Middleville (Mich.) CRC was new to online streaming, pastor Robert Van Zanen said, but learning the skill has helped them maintain community connections over the months of disruption. On Easter Sunday 2021, the congregation joyfully witnessed the baptism of two adults—one who started attending worship online during the COVID shutdown and one who came to Middleville Church through Alpha Course evangelism.

Ladner CRC in Delta, B.C., also baptized several newcomers to the faith between Easter and Pentecost this year, with celebrations spaced out over seven weeks because of pandemic gathering limits. Many of the newly baptized believers came to Christ by means of an online class led by associate pastor Nancy Yang. Ladner's council had noticed in recent years that many of the people moving into the region were Mandarin-speaking immigrants from mainland China who had never heard the gospel, and it sensed God leading the church to begin a Mandarin-language ministry.

Yang became Ladner's associate pastor in September 2020. Using Zoom and WeChat, she leads a Sunday morning worship service, a prayer meeting, the gospel class on Wednesday evenings, and a class using the Bible Project video series on Friday evenings. While Yang's ministry focuses on local people attending the online sessions, the Bible Project videos are reaching a wider group. A recent church newsletter said that more than 160 people are following online from addresses across Canada, several European countries, Singapore, China, and Israel.



Photo by Steven Zhou

At Ladner CRC in Delta, B.C., pastor Jason Truell baptized several people between Easter and Pentecost 2021.

Delegates to the May 18 meeting of Classis Quinte (a regional group of churches) heard reports of newly baptized adults from the recently formed Living Hope Community Church in Ajax, Ont. The church plant is led by commissioned pastor Mark Jallim, called by Hebron CRC in Whitby, Ont., and in partnership with Resonate Global Mission and Classis Quinte. He started Living Hope in December 2020 with restricted meeting opportunities due to the pandemic.

Jallim, who also works in information technology for a Canadian bank, used funding support from Resonate to purchase electronic and video equipment to film and upload worship services from the basement of his home in Ajax. With help from Jallim's wife, children, and friends, the online church offers a variety of other outreach programs too.

The response to the online services has been immediate and enthusiastic, Jallim said. Already two newcomers to the faith have been baptized, with the most recent baptism livestreamed from another church's facilities. And the church's outreach is going beyond the local community. Because there has been strong interest among Guyanese people, Jallim said, Living Hope has plans to audio-stream worship services for areas of Guyana with limited internet bandwidth. "Two-thirds of the people who connect with Living Hope have never heard the gospel before," Jallim told Classis Quinte. "They are new to the faith."

—Ron Rupke

Noteworthy

The **Evangelical Press Association** honored *The Banner* with the **Award of Excellence in the denominational category** April 30. In evaluating *The Banner's* submission, the judge gave a score of 49/50 and commented, "A wealth of great articles covering a wide range of topics with individual voices and POVs ... well done!"

The Banner received **another six awards in the Association's Higher Goals categories** including **first place** in the **first-person article** category for **Gayla R. Postma's** feature article "**Death Without a Funeral**" (July 2020).

Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich., celebrated two convocations May 22, recognizing graduates of 2020 and 2021 in **outdoor ceremonies**.

The school **conferred its first bachelor degrees in its Calvin Prison Initiative**, a venture with Calvin Theological Seminary and the Michigan Department of Corrections offering undergraduate degrees in ministry leadership to inmates at the Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Mich. **Michael Duthler, a 2020 Calvin Prison Initiative graduate, was a platform participant at the two ceremonies.**



Photo by Steven Herppich Photography

Rehoboth (N. Mex.) Christian School won the **state championship in varsity boys' 2A basketball** May 7. During a shortened season in a region where families have been "decimated" by COVID-19, coach Kevin Zwiers said, "This year, playing basketball was a way that we got to use our gifts to bring just little bit of hope, just a little bit of joy, a little bit of light to an otherwise really dark time."



Sharing the Land Brings Gifts of Creation to People on the Margins

"I picked that spinach today," a client of The Mustard Seed said proudly to others sharing an evening meal at the Edmonton, Alta., service hub for people experiencing poverty and homelessness. Jeremiah Basuric, the agency's community engagement coordinator, recalled the moment, describing how community agriculture has helped The Mustard Seed in its mission to "build community, grow hope, and support change in and with people living in poverty and homelessness."

"I cannot count the number of times community participants name the peace of God washing over them as they reconnect to God's creation found at Lady Flower Gardens," said Basuric, a commissioned pastor with the Christian Reformed Church.

Lady Flower Gardens is a small farm close to the North Saskatchewan River in northeast Edmonton with shared access to 75 acres of old-growth forest. The land is stewarded by Doug Visser, member of Edmonton's Fellowship CRC, and his partner Kelly Mills, who established Lady Flower Gardens eight years ago as a not-for-profit offshoot of Riverbend Gardens—land originally owned by Visser's parents, Jennie and Clarence Visser. Every year, Visser and Mills grant free access to the land to several Edmonton agencies that support mental health and wellness for people living with disadvantages in the city. The Mustard Seed has been involved since the beginning.

The gardens offer more than an opportunity for these individuals to plant, weed, water, and harvest. At its heart, Lady Flower Gardens is really about community building—forming a connection to the land and to one another while supporting mental and nutritional well-being. In an August 2019 interview with the *Edmonton Journal*, Mills explained, "If you start with the vulnerable and put them in a position where they are valued and their contributions are also honored, you're going to have a healthy community."

Lady Flower Gardens is in part supported by work of student interns from The King's University in Edmonton, especially students in the process of obtaining a Micah Certificate from the CRCNA-affiliated school.

"Clarence and Jennie were huge supporters of The Micah Centre and the type of social justice taught there and practiced at The Mustard Seed," Mills said.

Basuric is a graduate of King's, where he also obtained a Micah Certificate in Justice and Development.

—Janet A. Greidanus



The Mustard Seed in Edmonton, Alta., has been a partner of Lady Flower Gardens since the garden's beginning. The group shared this undated photo of Mustard Seed participants harvesting potatoes.

California Churches Love Their Cities



Volunteers replant in the green spaces along the downtown boulevards of Escalon, Calif.

On Saturday, April 24, volunteers from Escalon (Calif.) Christian Reformed Church joined forces with volunteers from Heritage Church, Trinity Church, and Escalon Kiwanis to serve and love their city. The event was part of a larger day of service in the area in which dozens of churches across multiple cities also participated in various Love Our City events.

Brittany Doornenbal, a member of Escalon CRC and coordinator for Love Escalon, said Love Escalon's projects included planting new plants along downtown boulevards, doing yard work at a local trailer park, and picking up trash and cleaning up at Main Street Park. In all, Doornenbal said, about 100 volunteers participated in the events—a scaling back due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The principle behind Love Our City events is to “live a life of love” based on 2 John 6, Doornenbal said.

“Doing acts of service in the community is a great way to get people to talk to you,” she explained. “The most common question we get is ‘Why are you doing this?’ We love to answer that question.”

—Dan Veeneman

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Gerrit J. Veeneman

1948-2021

After a short struggle with cancer, Gary Veeneman died peacefully at home April 25. “Gary had an infectious personality, a genuine warmth, and a laugh that could illuminate the darkest spaces,” a college friend said.

A graduate of Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, Veeneman was ordained in 1980. He served two Ontario congregations, Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Listowel and Fruitland CRC in Stoney Creek, before moving to Abbotsford, B.C., to pastor Trinity CRC.

Pain and disability from numerous back surgeries led to an early retirement in 1997, but Veeneman still had many opportunities to preach. During several trips to the Philippines he loved preaching at All Nations Church and visiting and supporting the work of Seeds of Dignity and Clean Water International.

A passionate gardener, Veeneman had difficulty walking past any flower bed without picking weeds and deadheading dying flowers. He always carried a small garbage bag on walks. “Let’s help keep God’s earth a little cleaner,” he would say as he picked up litter.

Veeneman will be lovingly remembered by Elizabeth (Liz), his wife of 49 years, his four children, and 13 grandchildren for whom he was a caring and cherished Opa.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Huu Phu Nguyen

1943-2021

With kindness, thoughtfulness, and generosity, pastor Huu Nguyen touched the lives of many, particularly the lives of Vietnamese refugees seeking new beginnings in the U.S.

Born in Vietnam, Nguyen obtained a degree after high school from what was then called the University of Science in Saigon. In 1969 he graduated from Political Warfare College with the rank of first lieutenant and served in the South Vietnamese military. Captured in 1975 after the fall of Saigon, he was a prisoner in a forced labor camp for seven years and was under constant surveillance for another three years. It was during this time that Nguyen found a personal connection to God. He escaped Vietnam in 1987 and began a new life in the U.S. in 1988.

In 1993, while still studying at Calvin Theological Seminary, Nguyen was ordained to serve the growing community of Vietnamese refugees in Wheaton, Ill. He completed his master of divinity degree in 1994 and his doctorate in biblical studies in 1998. For more than 25 years Nguyen pastored what became Vietnamese New Hope Christian Reformed Church in Winfield, Ill.

Nguyen is survived by Nhuyen, his wife of 56 years, three sons and their spouses, and five grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus



Joy: Don't Settle for Less

By Paul Detterman

One warm spring afternoon a few years into my first pastorate, I got word that one of our church members had died. I called the local funeral director, a good friend, and we decided to go out to the house together. Good thing we did, because while we were there we got word another church member had died. This was proving to be a memorable afternoon.

The two men who died and their families could not have been more different. The first was the closest to a “captain of industry” a small Ohio town could tolerate. He was a gruff plant manager of one of the oldest and best-known manufacturers in the region. He loved the good life and had the financial wherewithal to guarantee that he and his wife could live very well. They attended church

largely because, in those days, most people at his level did. The second man was the unassuming patriarch of a large family. He and his wife lived modestly and raised several children in a comfortable little house. Their kids and grandkids all stayed in the area and had established families of their own. In their lives, and in their family, Jesus and our congregation were central.

We arrived at the first house and encountered what can only be described as the Midwest equivalent of a wailing wall. The widow was totally submerged in grief and was surrounded by many of her close friends and golfing buddies, none of whom had much of anything to offer except increasingly loud sobbing and the occasional tongue click. We did what we could and moved on. The second house was filled with singing, laughter, and prayer. Four generations

had gotten the word that Grandpa had died, and it was all hands on deck. Nearly 30 people of all ages were crammed into a bright, cheery living room. We were warmly welcomed and then told, “Paul, Ed, have a seat if you can find one. We’re not ready for you quite yet. We still have more singing to do!”

The difference? Joy. The first couple bought wholesale into the world’s understanding of happiness: “Work hard, and you too will be able to create for yourself the life you’ve always wanted!” That life brought them lots of happiness—until it didn’t. The second family had a deep spiritual grounding and industrial-strength faith. After years of practice and one generation nurturing the next in the reality of God and the truth of Jesus, even the sudden death of someone so deeply loved could not shake their joy or silence their hymns.

What Is This Joy You Speak Of?

Joy (chara) is delight in God for the sheer beauty and worth of who God is. Its opposite is hopelessness or despair, and its counterfeit is an elation that is experiencing blessings, not the Blesser, causing mood swings based on circumstances. —Tim Keller

When we hear the word “joy,” our first instinct might be to make a mental jump to its counterfeit: happiness. After all, in their purest forms, joy and happiness both originate with God—but that’s pretty much where the similarity ends. Biblically defined happiness is the experience of God’s blessings—“Blessed are they who ...” (Matt. 5). The smallest blessing can be a source of happiness, but isn’t it interesting that we feel increasingly happy when God’s blessings seem to line up with our personal hopes and dreams? Problems begin when we start to see happiness as an entitlement, or worse, as something we ourselves have created, or worse yet, as an end in itself. Without even knowing it we can make the gift far more important than the Giver.

Joy is not a gift given by God, but the result of our relationship with God. Joy doesn’t depend on our circumstances. It is a spiritual reality that becomes more real as we grow closer to God. In that relationship, we change and are changed by the Holy Spirit, coming closer to being the people we were designed by God to be—the people our Spirit-renewed hearts want us to be. Because joy in no way depends on us or on our context, there is nothing counterfeit or fleeting about it. It’s as trustworthy as God.

That’s Very Interesting, but ...

As I write this during the season of Easter in 2021, it seems like a one-way ticket to paradox. On one hand, Easter is the season of joy for followers of

Joy is not
a gift given by
God, but the
result of our
relationship
with God.

Jesus—the proof of the Jesus pudding. God in Jesus Christ invaded the world in flesh and bone—not just as a teacher, healer, or human-shaped moral compass, but as our Savior. The resurrection is the core truth of our faith. It marks the triumph of Jesus over sin and death, the divine checkmate to all that is not of God. The message of Easter for those who believe is that our past is forgiven and our future is secured. That alone you’d think would produce enough joy in each of us for several lifetimes.

But we’re human, and it’s 2021. The pandemic rages. New COVID variants are popping up. This past year, cancellation of graduations, weddings, and funerals became completely normal. The ability to sit with sick or dying friends and relatives vanished. Simple family gatherings became unthinkable. Long-anticipated travel plans had to be canceled. Then there was the collapse of businesses, skyrocketing unemployment, and governmental

mismanagement. There have been heightened cases of domestic violence and a dramatic increase in substance abuse and suicides. And there might be longer-term socioeconomic and physiological damage we have yet to imagine. We can also add racial tensions, political polarization, increasing impatience, intolerance, and bitterness, social media-induced snark and meanness—the list goes on. In this past year, I’ve heard more and more people ask, “How are we supposed to have joy when we’re dealing with all this?”

Great Question, Wrong Word

A more legitimate, psychologically relevant question might be, “How are we supposed to have happiness when we’re dealing with all this?”—especially if we forget to thank God for all the other blessings (happiness) he gives each day. When we are successful, or safe, or lucky, we feel happy; our wants are fulfilled as well as our needs. However, this past year has pushed most of us right up to the edge of the happiness cliff, and many have fallen over into deep despair. That’s what can happen when we rely on ourselves and on the world we think we’ve had a hand in creating to keep us going through a season of crises.

Joy, on the other hand, has nothing to do with global, local, or personal challenges. Joy is as much God’s intervention in this world as was the Incarnation itself, only this time it’s the Holy Spirit who’s “moving into the neighborhood” (Eugene Peterson). If we want to understand biblical joy, the best place to go is the apostle Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Paul lists nine virtues that together are the gift of the Holy Spirit and the “fruit” of life in the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Paul's list comes at the end of his teaching on the freedom we can only find in Christ and about what it means to live "in the Spirit." The followers of Jesus in Galatia were a squirrely bunch, not all that different from a lot of us in the 21st century. Paul's letter was a combination of Christ-centered hope and tough love. At one point he wrote, "O you dear idiots of Galatia, who saw Jesus Christ the crucified so plainly, who has been casting a spell over you? ... Has all your painful experience brought you nowhere?" (Gal. 3, PHILLIPS).

Some Bible scholars believe the Galatian Christians were, in fact, on the brink of civil war. False teachers among them had focused on what they must do to be acceptable to God. But the gospel is clear: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. *And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation*" (2 Cor. 5:19, emphasis added).

But What About Today?

What does all this have to do with joy now? Just about everything. Then, as now, the battle between our sinful nature and a life formed and led by the Holy Spirit is no small matter. It's a battle in each human heart, pitting faith in God against faith in the world—growth against decay. Our sinful nature wants us to be our own savior and lord. Although it is not specifically listed in Galatians, the quest for contextual happiness is certainly part of that desire. By contrast, Paul named those nine virtues not as nine steps to personal fulfillment, but as an inseparable, interdependent whole—as the "fruit" of a life centered in God's Spirit.

The lure of our sinful nature is powerful. In our increasingly secular, self-help-obsessed culture, the very concept of biblical joy through a close


relationship with a distant deity has undergone extensive scrutiny and remodeling—so much so that many people, even committed followers of Jesus, don't recognize the difference between joy and counterfeit happiness anymore, nor do we even know what we're missing. We've learned to just deal with life as it comes and, when our do-it-yourself happiness collapses under the weight of reality, all we can do is wonder what just happened and try harder.

It Comes Down to the Verbs

The challenge for followers of Jesus in any circumstance is not how you *have* joy. We've seen that joy is part of the reality of life in God's Spirit. The real question is, how does the fruit of the Spirit, including joy, take root in your heart? How does God produce joy in our lives? The apostle Paul supplies the answers:

- » Focus: We are not our own savior and lord. We belong to Christ. Our relationship with God does not depend on us, but on Jesus and what Jesus has done for us. Not only do we find our joy in Jesus but, because of Jesus, we are free to be honest about the places where, when, and how we are still living in our sinful nature. We can admit when we still confuse God's gift of joy with our own attempts at counterfeit happiness.
- » Patience: Growth in the fruit of the Spirit is gradual and might not always be easy to see, especially in ourselves. That doesn't mean growth isn't happening. Our deepening spiritual joy might reveal itself the next time we face a significant challenge. Then we might think, "A year ago I would have been far more hopeless than I am today." There it is!
- » Keeping in step with the Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the advocatory person

of the triune God. The Spirit rejoices in and shows off the work of Jesus in our lives. The more we can fix our mind and heart on Jesus, worshipping him with the help of the Spirit, the more we will see the difference between counterfeit, context-defined happiness and God's gift of joy. We will more readily realize that the happiness we try to create for ourselves is really only an imitation of what our heart truly desires.

I'll never forget how, on that afternoon years ago, two families so differently faced the reality of death. Nor will I forget the early morning not long after when the widow of the first man met me in the church parking lot asking where she could find a Bible. She was thinking there might be something in there for her. I gave her the one I was carrying and some ideas of where to begin. That right there? That was joy! 



The Rev. Paul Detterman, Ph.D., is an author, composer, musician, and conference speaker currently serving as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of River Forest, Ill. He is a frequent blogger at reformedworship.org.

1. Prior to reading this article, what was your definition of joy?
2. What are some ways we might have confused our pursuit of happiness with God's gift of joy?
3. Have you seen growth in the spiritual fruit of joy in your life? What are some ways we can foster growth in joy?

READ MORE ONLINE

Letting God Love You

I became overwhelmed by all the ways God tries to love us.



Cynthia Evans is a published poet and author living in the greater Atlanta area. She works in an administrative role at a local missions agency and attends a non-denominational Christian church.

IN MY SMALL GROUP, a dear friend shared her prayer request with us: “Please pray that I would feel God’s love. I mean, I know he loves me, but I guess I’m just not feeling it.” My heart went out to her because I had felt that way before, and I really wanted her to feel loved.


Then something stirred in my Spirit, and I remembered the five love languages described by marriage counselor Gary Chapman. I remembered learning that if someone isn’t speaking your love language, they can love you, but you won’t feel it. I felt prompted to share this.

I gently started, “Maybe it is partly a love language thing? I know when my spouse speaks his love language, however true and sincere, I can still feel unloved, which is definitely not the way he wants me to feel.” If her love language is words of affirmation, I suggested, perhaps she could meditate on the loving verses in the Word and let God speak love to her in a way she might best receive. Or if her love language is quality time together, I said, “Maybe just spend time with God and hang out in his presence.”

After small group, I felt God nudging me to think more about his love and how people might best experience it for themselves. For example, if someone’s love language is receiving gifts, the focus could be on all the gifts God has given them—a job, a home, friends, food. If someone’s love language is acts of service, they could meditate on all God has done for them—dying on the cross for them, protecting them, providing for them. Or if someone’s love language is physical touch, they could look for ways God is trying to touch them, perhaps through a gentle breeze, a hug from their spouse, the

feel of a warm cup of coffee in their hands, or the sun on their face.

I became overwhelmed by all the ways God tries to love us! He really is so creative and so all-loving and has wired us each so differently. I pray we all feel God’s love just a little more!

“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (Eph. 3:17-18). 

The five Love Languages, as identified by Gary Chapman:

- » *Words of Affirmation*
- » *Acts of Service*
- » *Quality Time*
- » *Giving Gifts*
- » *Physical Touch*

Go in God's Strength

God holds the church when it's quaking and keeps it from descending into chaos.



Susan LaClear lives in Hudsonville, Mich., and currently serves as the director of candidacy for the Christian Reformed Church. Alive Ministries in Jenison, Mich., is her calling church.

When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm.

—Psalm 75:3

“QUAKING” SEEMS LIKE A GOOD

WORD to describe the world and its people in this season. In Hebrew, this word connotes tumult and commotion—of being helpless, disorganized, agitated, and perplexed.

Many of us have also felt the church “quaking” throughout the pandemic disruptions and racial tensions of these past months. Many congregations and families are grieving losses of life, purpose, and relationship, and they will need a compassionate leader to walk with them in lament and lead them toward healing. Some churches are divided or diminished, looking for leaders to help their tired councils navigate conflict, reimagine ministry, mend, and unite in this ever-changing context.

As we present these candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church this year, it is sobering to envision them entering these kinds of situations, for which no seminary could possibly have trained them.

The very thought of this challenge might make any of us quake! But the Lord steadies our hearts with these words:

“It is I who hold its pillars firm.”

Pillars were the supports that ancient peoples imagined holding up the earth above the chaotic waters below. In God's design for the Old Testament temple, he included two pillars named Boaz and Jachin—names that spoke of strength, stability, and God's promise that he would establish his people. These pillars served as a constant reminder to God's people that it was

God's strength they must rely upon. In the present spiritual temple, built from the “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5) of our own lives, we know that God continues to hold the pillars firm. God holds the church when it's quaking and keeps it from descending into chaos. God promises to establish and uphold our work. And our hope for God's kingdom to come through the church and its leaders is planted firmly in God's strength, not ours.

Even the most gifted and experienced ministers don't have enough strength to hold up under the “quaking” of our times. But as these new pastors, leaders, and chaplains go forward into the work of God's kingdom, we trust that they will go in the strength of the Lord, which will empower them to bring his provision of truth, grace, healing, and leadership to God's people. They are much like Gideon, whom God sent out feeling completely inadequate into the weakened ranks of a quaking Israel with the words, “Go in the strength you have. ... Am I not sending you?” (Judg. 6:14).

The Lord is sending our candidates, and they will go into leadership in the mighty, sustaining strength of the God who holds the earth's pillars firm.

For contact information, biographical information, eligibility status, and testimonies from each candidate, visit the candidacy committee website at crca.org/candidacy. **B**



Maria Bowater



Mark Broadus



Kelly Buist



David Dick



Charles Dillender



Bart Eisen



Josiah Gorter



Joshua Grimes



Tyler Helfers



Mackenzie Jager



Hang (Joshua) Jiang



Timothy Joo



Eunice Kim



Jooheyng (David) Kim



Young-Kwang Kim



Tim Kimbel



HoonJae Lee



Jessica Maddox



Frank Meneses



Daniel Meyers



Seonmok (Paul) Park



Ryan Phan



William Roelofs



Kent Sanders



Dawei (David) Shao



Evan Tinklenberg



Lynette van de Hoef



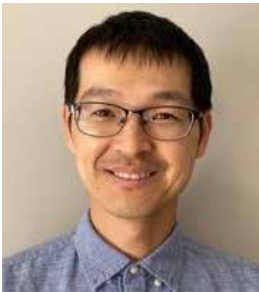
Ryan VanderWees



Ben Wiersma



Lea Wilkening



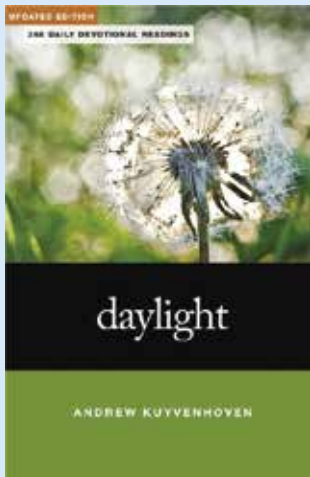
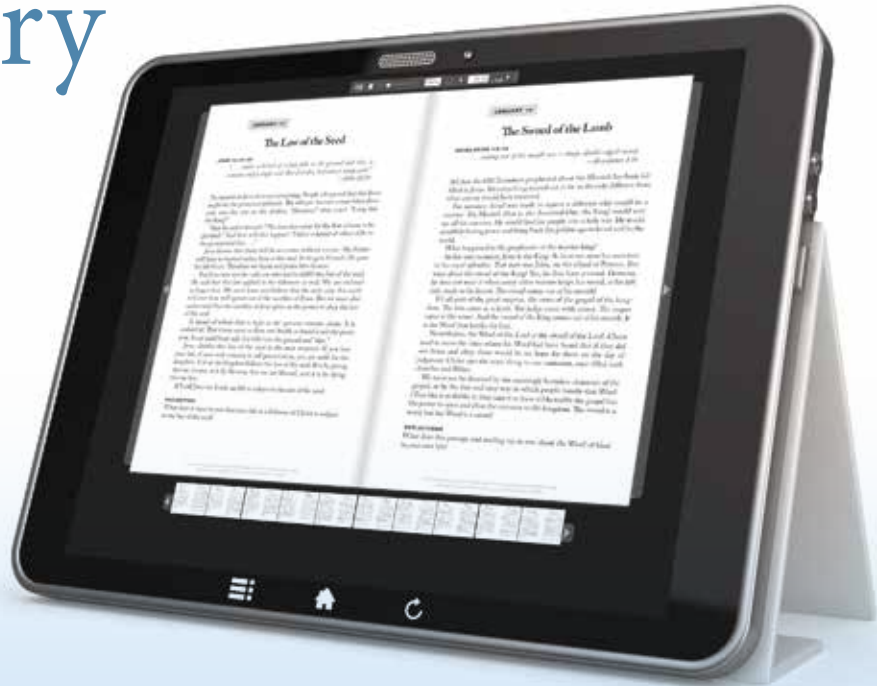
Sunghak (Paul) Yang

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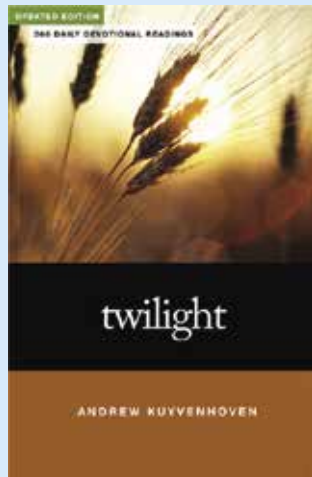
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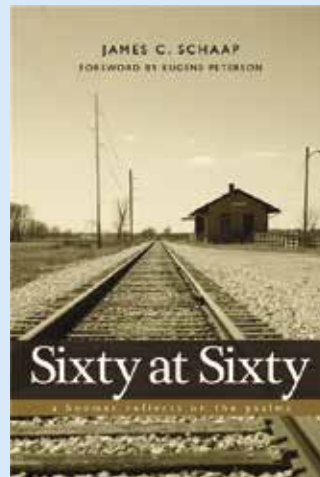
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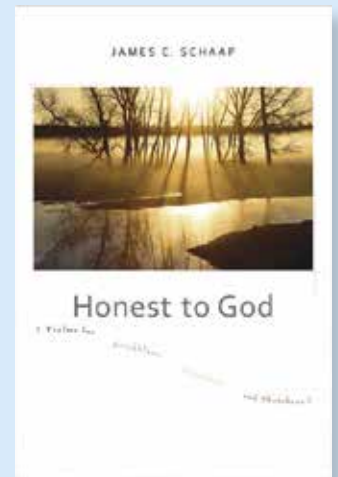
In this classic devotional book, updated with contemporary examples and questions for reflection, Kuyvenhoven uses Scripture to shed light on what it means to live in the presence and promises of God.



This updated companion to the bestselling *Daylight* devotional guide leads readers through an entire year of meaningful moments with God. Each month's meditations follow a book of the Bible or a biblical theme.



At his storytelling best, James Schaap presents a collection of 60 devotional readings based on the psalms. Written especially for his fellow "baby boomers," Schaap's meditations are a blessing for anyone looking for the hand of God in everyday life.



In this devotional guide, James C. Schaap delves deeply into the psalms, leaving space for readers to respond by journaling or drawing. *Honest to God* is an inspiring daily faith exercise—and a thoughtful gift for the creative people in your life.

From Chewable Books to Books on Which to Chew: Tomes for Younger Readers



I'm Going to Give You a Polar Bear Hug!

By Caroline B. Cooney, illustrated by Tim Warnes

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

A vivacious young girl imagines taking all her beloved stuffed animals on an adventurous excursion through an enchanting winter wonderland. In cheerful verses, author Caroline B. Cooney portrays the girl's exuberance as she describes to her companions the hugs she's going to give each one. To her polar bear, she says: "I'm going to give you a polar bear hug. / A wintry, windy, / play in the snow hug. / A shivery, quivery, / forty below hug." Each stuffed animal in turn receives a hug. Author Caroline Cooney's playful rhymes complement illustrator Tim Warnes' exuberant, frolicking artwork in this sequel to their earlier collaboration, *I'm Going to Give You a Bear Hug!* (Zonderkidz)



One Earth

By Eileen Spinelli, illustrated by Rogerio Coelho

Reviewed by Li Ma

Children need to experience the wonder and awe of nature before they desire to love and conserve it. This poetic picture book presents the theme of creation care with carefully crafted counting schemes. Counting up from one to 10, the first pages celebrate the wonders of our natural world: "One wide, sweeping sky. Two honeybees. . . ." Counting down from 10 to one, the book relates our daily life to ways we can bless our natural surroundings by helping care for the earth: "Ten scraps of litter? Toss them in the trash. Nine empty bottles? Turn them in for cash." Through short, lyrical verses, the reader is taken by the earth's manifold beauties. The conclusion reasserts the urgency of creation care: "One Earth so beautiful—only one." (WorthyKids)



Ten Beautiful Things

By Molly Beth Griffin, illustrated by Maribel Lechuga

Reviewed by Jenny deGroot

Lily and Gram are getting ready to drive across Iowa to Gram's house. Lily looks at the X on the far side of the map that marks the spot where Gram lives. It looks so far away. Gram senses Lily's feelings. "Let's try to find ten beautiful things," Gram says as they drive off. Looking out the window Lily does not see anything beautiful. But then the sun bursts over the horizon. "Number one!" cries Lily. As they drive along the endless highway they see beautiful numbers two and three in quick succession. Into the night, when they finally turn off the road and arrive at Gram's house, they have only nine beautiful things. But ten is easy! They have each other. (Charlesbridge)

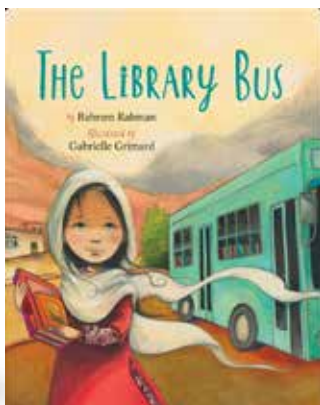


Evelyn Del Rey Is Moving Away

By Meg Medina, illustrated by Sonia Sanchez

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Young Daniela and her friend Evelyn Del Rey live so close together they can call out to each other from their separate apartment building windows. Their apartments are "almost twins," and so are the girls because of their close friendship. But now Daniela is sad because her "mejor amiga" and "numero uno best friend" is moving away. Sonia Sanchez's vibrant illustrations convey the love, laughter, happiness, energy, and sadness of author Meg Medina's young fictional characters. In this children's picture book that subtly celebrates the friendship of two children from different ethnic backgrounds, young readers who have experienced having a friend move away will find a voice for their emotions. (Candlewick)

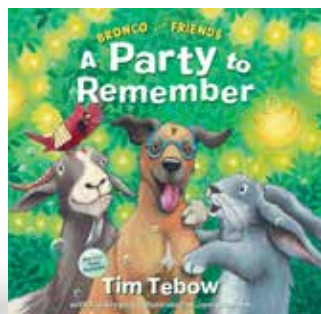


The Library Bus

By Bahram Rahman, illustrated by Gabrielle Grimard

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In Kabul, Afghanistan, young Pari and her mother leave home while it's still dark to travel on the library bus, the only one of its kind in the city. Author Bahram Rahman was born in Afghanistan and grew up during the civil war and the Taliban regime. He wrote this sensitive, informative children's picture book to tell and celebrate the stories of strength and courage displayed by the children of Afghanistan, particularly Afghan girls, and to honor the fearless and creative female teachers who run mobile schools and libraries. Illustrator Gabrielle Grimard's gentle, winsome artwork captures the safety, joy, and comfort of a unique educational setting where teachers take risks to love their students and students respond with enthusiasm and curiosity. (Pajama Press)



Bronco and Friends: A Party to Remember

By Tim Tebow, with A. J. Gregory, illustrated by Jane Chapman

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Bronco, a loveable pup with terrible vision, receives an invitation to a special party. Each animal will bring a special puzzle piece to the event to fit into a big puzzle revealing how each is unique—"made purposefully"—and a necessary guest at the party. Sniffing, turning his ears to the slightest sound, and offering encouragement to other animals facing their own challenges, Bronco arrives at the party, discovers his unique gifts, and places his puzzle piece. Illustrator Jane Chapman's vivacious artwork energizes author Tim Tebow's sweet, encouraging narrative inspired by Ephesians 2:10: "We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (NLT). (WaterBrook)

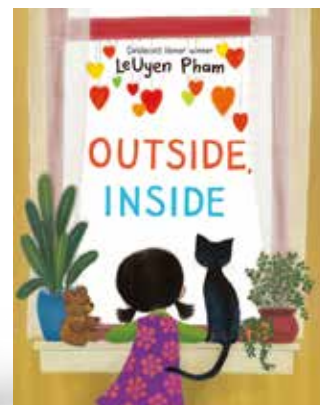


Near

By Sally Lloyd-Jones, illustrated by Jago

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

"God is my Father who made everything. / And I am a little explorer of the wide world. / He is near me / And he protects me. / He sees me / And he knows me. / He is strong / And he looks after me. / He is with me—always!" So begins author Sally Lloyd-Jones's comforting, charming board book inspired by Psalm 139. Illustrator Jago's delightful, energetic depictions of children from various ethnic backgrounds exploring the vastness of God's good creation complement Lloyd-Jones's text. In *Near*, the creators of *The Jesus Storybook Bible* have once again collaborated to craft a unique, biblically based resource. Young children (and their parents and caregivers) will discover in this attractive, easy-to-hold board book that God will never leave them. (Zonderkidz)

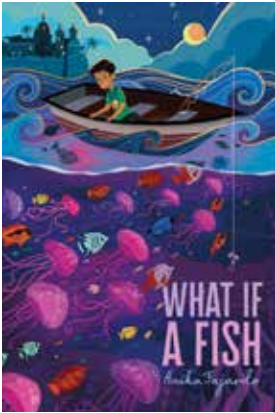


Outside, Inside

By LeUyen Pham

Reviewed by Li Ma

This moving picture book from Caldecott honoree LeUyen Pham celebrates essential workers and communities coming together to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. With poetic language and colorful illustrations, the book describes how the natural world exuberates as human activities decrease: "Outside, the world kept growing." As part of God's ongoing creation, children keep growing too, even when they have been kept inside. Pham transforms the story into one about human solidarity in the midst of a global crisis: "On the outside, we are all different. But on the inside, we are all the same." There is hope in this solidarity as well as in the coming of a new spring when all things become renewed. (Roaring Brook Press)



What If a Fish

By Anika Fajardo

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Little Eddie lives in Minnesota and can't remember much about his Colombian papa, who immigrated to the United States and died when Little Eddie was four years old. But Little Eddie finds comfort in the third-place medal Papa won in the 2nd Annual Arne Hopkins Dock Fishing Tournament. When Little Eddie learns that the 14th annual tournament will take place later that summer, he's filled with a desire to be like Papa and is determined to enter the contest even though he doesn't know how to fish and can't afford the fee. This poignant novel for middle school readers skillfully employs fishing as a metaphor for life and explores issues of ethnic identity and finding one's place in the world. (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers)



Jack vs. the Tornado

By Amanda Cleary Eastep

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In this fast-paced, adventurous, and humorous novel for children ages 8-12, Jack Finch receives "the worst present ever" for his 10th birthday. His family moves out of his grandparents' farmhouse, leaving behind the best hayloft fort in the world and a pet chicken named Henrietta. They relocate to a suburb of Chicago. Though Jack has no intention of making friends or becoming attached to his needy elderly neighbor, he is inexorably drawn into adventure, friendship, and acts of service as the discovery of a mysterious object and events beyond his control carry him along. Amanda Cleary Eastep effectively characterizes a young protagonist in the mid-1990s who is aware of God's presence in his life yet wonders why difficult things happen to him. (Moody Publishers)



Maybe Maybe Marisol Rainey

By Erin

Entrada Kelly

Reviewed by Natalie Hart

Marisol Rainey is an imaginative and daydreamy 8-year-old who loves her cat, her best friend, silent movies, naming inanimate objects, and the nicknames her parents give her. She doesn't love the huge magnolia tree in her back yard. It is perfect for climbing, but Marisol is scared of falling, so her feet stay on the ground. Erin Entrada Kelly explores the complicated feelings and relationships of children in funny and endearing ways. Some of the illustrations cover a full page, but drawings are also used as interjections, as when Marisol admits she hates radishes and a frowning radish with its hands on its sides asks, "What did we ever do to you?" It seems as if more Marisol books will be coming. (Greenwillow Books)



Starfish

By Lisa Fipps

Reviewed by Natalie Hart

Starfish is a middle-grade verse novel. It tells a single story, but each chapter is a one- to four-page poem. The reader has no distractions from the thoughts and feelings of Ellie, a 12-year-old girl who is bullied for her weight at school and at home. It's heartbreaking to read, but it's not all melancholy. Ellie's two best pals are everything you would hope for in a friend, and their families love and appreciate her unconditionally. She has some wonderful teachers who encourage her gifts as a poet. The counselor she doesn't want to see is exceptional (and their exercises together will give readers lots of good ideas for how to process pain). *Starfish* is a book that challenges and changes readers. (Nancy Paulsen Books)

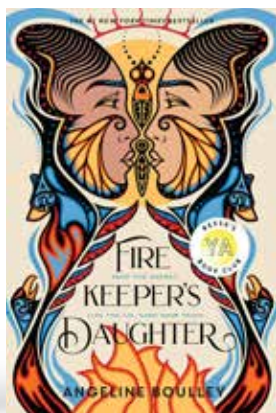


A Place to Hang the Moon

By Kate Albus

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In 1940, the citizens of London face the threat of Hitler's bombs. Orphans William, Edmund, and Anna—12, 11, and 9 years old, respectively—fear for their safety and are distressed about their uncertain future because their cold-hearted grandmother, who was raising them, has recently died. When the children are sent into the countryside as part of the massive wartime evacuation effort, they face one obstacle after another—bullying, hunger, poverty, filth, and rejection—and move from home to home, always searching for a family that will truly love them. Author Kate Albus' skilfully crafted, realistic, and endearing characterizations of William, Edmund, and Anna give middle school readers insight into the challenges faced by children living in a time of war and deprivation. A gratifying, heart-warming read. (Margaret Ferguson Books)

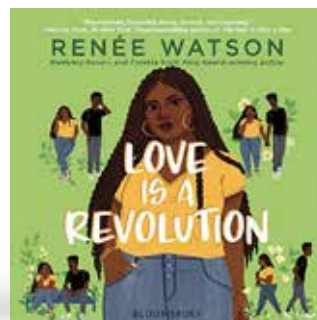


Firekeeper's Daughter

By Angeline Boulley

Reviewed by Natalie Hart

You could describe *Firekeeper's Daughter* as a Native American Nancy Drew story. It's about a high school hockey star and science whiz with one white and one Ojibwe parent. She winds up investigating wrongdoings in her Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., community. More than that, it's a coming-of-age story about a young woman who doesn't feel entirely accepted by or acceptable to either of her families. As a story about contemporary teens, there is a little swearing, some under-aged drinking, and sexual passages. But if those do not prevent you from enjoying a story, I highly recommend *Firekeeper's Daughter*. The characters are richly drawn, the community felt real, the plotting is tight, and it made me stay up way too late on a work night to see how it ended. (Henry Holt & Co.)

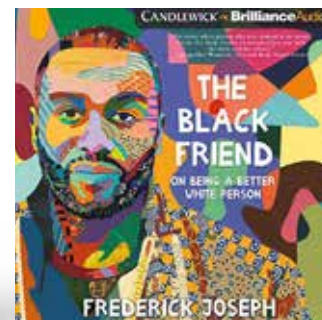


Love Is a Revolution (Audiobook)

By Renee Watson, narrated by Renee Watson

Reviewed by Michelle Loyd-Paige

Nala Robertson is a full-figured African American who lives with her "cousin-sister-friend" and is looking forward to the summer before her senior year of high school. Nala loves the shape of the person she sees in the mirror, and I found it refreshing to listen to her describe her body with admiration and acceptance. But as the story develops, she must come to terms with the difference between being true to herself and creating an illusion of herself. When Nala's summer plans for finding love are realized, she finds a radical and revolutionary kind of love that begins on the inside and radiates to those around her. This is a girl-power, Black-girl-magic kind of book. The author herself narrates, which adds authenticity. (Audible, 6 hrs. 31 min.)



The Black Friend: On Being a Better White Person (Audiobook)

By Frederick Joseph, narrated by Miebaka Yohannes

Reviewed by Michelle Loyd-Paige

Writing from the perspective of a friend, Frederick Joseph offers candid reflections for teens on his own experiences with racism as well as conversations with prominent artists and activists about theirs. Here is a series of stories of how his life has been impacted by racism. The voices of white allies and white racists are woven throughout the book, as are stories of Asian and Latino friends. Joseph speaks as that Black friend who is walking beside and with white people who genuinely want to know how to be an ally (or "accomplice," as Joseph says) in the fight for racial equity. Narrator Miebaka Yohannes sounds like a friend with whom you'd chill and, from time to time, have honest conversations about life. (Brilliance Audio, 5 hrs. 9 min.)



Women Leaders in a Year of Pandemic

By Elaine May and Annie Mas-Smith

It's been 25 years since the Christian Reformed Church in North America declared that all congregations in the denomination may allow women to serve in the office of minister, elder, deacon, or commissioned pastor. While this decision recognized that there are two different perspectives and convictions on this issue, both of which honor the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God, it opened the door for women who had long felt called to serve in these roles (see *Acts of Synod 1995*).

In March of this year, the number of women who have been ordained as either ministers of the Word or commissioned pastors in the CRC passed 200. Their journeys are part of a long history and legacy of women using their God-given gifts and callings in local and global missions. Below are glimpses of how three women serving God through the ministry of the CRC have affected their communities during the past year of pandemic. You can read more about the milestones of other courageous women who have helped to shape this journey at crcna.org/WomensLeadership.

Rev. Kelsi Jones

In October 2020, Rev. Kelsi Jones entered into ordained ministry by accepting a call to serve as pastor of preaching and community connections at two neighboring churches in the Chicago area.

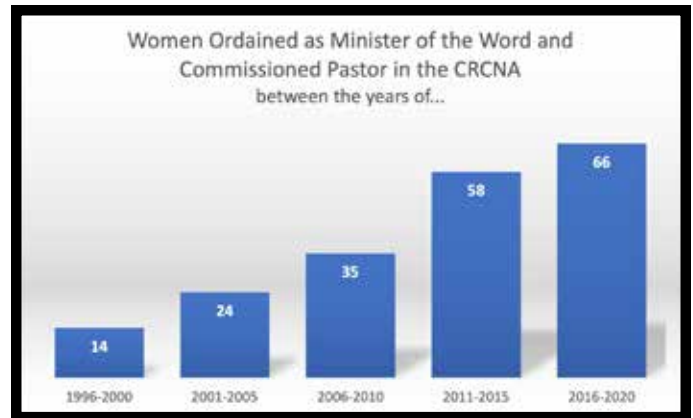
Jacob's Well Church is a young congregation redefining its mission as members seek to serve their community. Grace Community Church's congregation is aging, with many members entering into retirement living centers and unable to attend church in person.

Jones describes leading these congregations during COVID as extremely challenging. "When I came on staff we were meeting online," she said, "so while people could see my face every Sunday on our videos, I felt disconnected from the congregations."

The complexity of ministry was heightened for Jones because she was the first solo female pastor at Jacob's Well and the first Black pastor at both churches during a time when race issues have been politicized. Jones said she approached both congregations with a posture of humility and openness, recognizing that many in the church were thinking about race for the first time in their lives.

Persevering through some hard and painful discussions, Jones wanted to always keep Christ at the center. As a result, the churches have come together to read and discuss Jemar

Rev. Kelsi Jones



Tisby's book *How to Fight Racism* with the goal of both learning and taking action to address racism in their churches, schools, and neighborhoods.

Jones leans on friends and colleagues in ministry as she navigates the challenges of being a new pastor in a new city during a pandemic. Rev. Michael Kooy, her co-pastor at Grace, has helped her process ministry challenges and brainstorm solutions.

Jones said the circumstances have led her and others in the community to adopt a culture of extending grace and embodying the fruit of the Spirit when plans change at the last minute. "We have had the ability to remember it's not how good the music is, how clear the livestream feed is, if there is coffee after church or not, but that we gather to worship God," she said. "We were able to come back to the heart of worship, and I hope and pray that focus remains."

Rev. Mirtha Villafane



Rev. Mirtha M. Villafane serves as the senior pastor of Latin American CRC in Anaheim, Calif. She also serves on the executive team of the CRC's Consejo Latino (Latin Council), communicating a unified vision and developing strategies for coaching and mobilizing new Hispanic pastors serving in or looking to affiliate with the CRC. Within Classis Greater Los

Angeles, Villafane identifies, recruits, and trains multiethnic church planters as the Hispanic Developer and Local Mission Leader with Resonate Global Mission.

For years Villafane led her congregation through a reorganization process to address its steep decline in membership. Their efforts were bearing fruit, but then COVID hit.

The congregation comprises mostly Latino people who are first-generation immigrants. Many of these members experienced financial hardship during the pandemic. They turned to food pantries to feed their families and struggled to pay rent. Many members disconnected from the church and from worship services. Some members left completely. Others joined the congregation's virtual gatherings. Now that in-person worship services have resumed, attendance has been very low. Many people attend through Facebook Live, but Latin American CRC needs to rebuild, both in the congregation and in the community.

"God in his sovereignty changed everything," Villafane said. "We are still praying for God to help us clarify and implement our work. We are hopeful and are developing plans, goals, and activities for a summer of ministering to the community."

This year has taught Villafane to value life—eternal life. Quarantine and social distancing have distanced church members from individuals who desperately need the hope of the gospel. Villafane wants her church to live with a gospel-oriented purpose, totally surrendering to the will of God.

"We cannot love our lives more than we really love Christ," she said. "Without that understanding, we have nothing for those who have not yet experienced his love and grace."

Rev. Christina Brinks Rea



Rev. Christina Brinks Rea is the pastor of the Church of the Savior CRC in South Bend, Ind., a congregation that had about 120 members before the pandemic.

When the world went into lockdown, Church of the Savior prioritized the safety of the most at-risk in the congregation. They adapted to worshipping outdoors with lawn chairs and blan-


kets, and despite some awkwardness, Rea said, the experiment turned out to be a lot of fun. The informal environment allowed children to feel welcome even without a nursery or children's programs.

Rea highlighted how these unusual times made for lasting memories. A shade tree dropped black walnuts on unsuspecting people sitting underneath, for example, and one Sunday the communion goblet broke when the wind blew it over.

When the weather was no longer hospitable to outdoor worship, the church adapted once again as it learned to livestream. "It was extremely hard and exhausting at the beginning," Rea said, "and not everyone was happy with how we chose to do things. I spent a lot of time worrying if we were including everybody, or if there were other things we should be doing. But that time has largely passed, and I have to say, on the whole my congregation was pretty wonderful. People were for the most part ready and eager to do what would keep their fellow congregants safe and healthy, even if it put them out a little bit, and most people were very understanding of our limitations during that time and encouraged the leadership of the church rather than criticizing it."

Rea said praying with two other members of the congregation for an hour twice a week pulled her through this past year. Time typically spent visiting people was an invitation from God to enter more deeply into a life of prayer for the church.

"What could have been a break in activity actually turned out to be an incredibly fruitful time as we dug deep into prayer and into seeking the Holy Spirit's leading," she said. "It eventually led to a prayer training, which we are currently working through with a small group in our church."

Rea hopes her congregation will take this lesson of "prayer, prayer, and more prayer" into the future. "We always need the Spirit's leading, but much of the time we can rely on our own strength and expertise and do well enough," she said. "But when the future was so opaque and unpredictable this last year, we were really forced to turn to prayer and the Holy Spirit in ways we could choose to do or not to do before. I would like us to remember, even when things feel a little more certain and less scary, that we are not in charge, but 'If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that'" (James 4:15). 



joined and held together —Eph 4:16
WOMEN IN ECCLESIASTICAL OFFICE

Leading at All Levels: Liz Tolkamp

I FIRST MET LIZ Tolkamp at the Inspire conference in Windsor, Ont., in 2019. I quickly realized she had a heart for people and further for children, restoration, justice, Jesus, and the church. Though she might not be comfortable with the description, in my opinion she is a model of leadership for the church.

Liz is a Faith Formation Regional Catalyzer in British Columbia, a children's pastor and ministry coordinator at Willoughby (B.C.) Christian Reformed Church, and a member of the Restorative Practice Task Force of Classis British Columbia South East, and she is nearly finished with a Master of Science in Restorative Practices with the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP).

In my conversations with her, I am often reminded that every part of our lives provides an opportunity for restorative leadership. For example, I was on a Zoom call with Liz on Jan. 6, discussing ways we could collaborate on catalyzing restorative practices. Unbeknownst to us, there was an insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. While the world was demonstrating so clearly why restorative practices are necessary, Liz and I were digging into specific ways we as the church could use a restorative approach in our life together. I recall our conversation that day focused on the importance of raising children with honor and dignity and on how discipleship from cradle to grave might include a restorative approach that creates safe spaces for children and adults to form identity




Liz Tolkamp works with her classis to help churches understand and live out restorative practices.

in Christ while strengthening relationships as the covenantal body of the church.

What would our world look like if conflicts were used as opportunities for strengthening relationships? What would leadership look like if we led from a restorative framework?

Restorative practices are ways of being with one another in which conflict is an opportunity to strengthen relationships and create thriving communities. The restorative framework provides

language that helps us see how we affect one another, how we navigate shame, and how we can make right where harm has occurred. (The article "An Overview of Restorative Practices" on The Network (network.crcna.org/biblical-justice/overview-restorative-practices) shares more about the practices' history in the CRC and further defines restorative justice and restorative practices.)

Liz often reminds me that restorative practice is not merely about responding to conflict or harm within a community, but is a way of being together to be proactive in the ways we affect one another. It is evident from my many conversations with her that Liz models a Christ-like leadership that seeks to be with others in ways that look like the restoration Christ brings to all areas of life. I look forward to continuing to learn from and with Liz as we both dive deeper into what it looks like to lead restoratively at all levels of our lives and in the church. 

—Eric Kas,
Safe Church Ministry

The View from Here

Leading Well

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

—Romans 12:6-8

On numerous occasions over the past year, I have reflected on COVID and the other huge events going on in our society. In the midst of these ongoing challenges, the Christian Reformed Church is also having intense debates about human sexuality, the nature of systemic racism, and our denominational structure. These two latter matters were subjects of the Council of Delegates meetings in May.

I won't say that the conversations were easy, but I can report that out of these hard discussions the COD made several recommendations that will help the CRC move forward. These included a recommendation to thoroughly examine and assess our justice ministries while also committing to do better at supporting them in their synodical mandates. The COD also

Difficult times call for focused, steady, and diligent leadership.

considered our two-nation structure and how we can realign senior leadership positions to allow for greater direction and control within Canada while maintaining unity as a denomination.

I thank God for the members of the COD—for their commitment to the denomination, for their energy and determination to find solutions to seemingly intractable issues, and for their courage in embracing solutions that will require some sacrifice on the part of many.

I'm also grateful for the leaders serving beside me in all of the CRCNA ministries. They have had to pivot and adapt multiple times throughout the past year and a half because of the COVID pandemic. As we begin to prepare for reopening our denominational offices, they are adapting once again, finding the best ways to incorporate lessons from the past year into best practices from years before.

In the midst of all of this, we recognize the continued suffering in numerous countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America who do not have adequate

access to vaccines. Even here, I see CRCNA leadership as World Renew responds. Difficult times call for focused, steady, and diligent leadership, and I see that happening all around me.

Please join me in praying for the people called to be leaders in the CRCNA. This includes COD members and agency directors, but also leaders in our classes and local churches, pastors, and volunteers. All of us are called to lead diligently.

And as we lead, may we remember that we must do so according to Christ's example. We are not called to lord it over anyone; as servant-leaders we pray for the Holy Spirit to give us eyes of faith to see others' God-given talents, lifting them up for the good of the kingdom so that through it all we may recognize the reality that we are all part of the same body, and no part can operate without the others.

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. —Romans 12:4-5



Colin P. Watson Sr. is the executive director of the CRCNA. He is a member of Madison Square Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Embraced by Love in a COVID World

IT WAS 3:23 P.M. ON A FRIDAY in May when the phone rang. I paused before answering. After a particularly grueling week helping World Renew spread the news about the latest COVID crisis in India that had claimed so many lives, I wasn't sure I had anything left to give.

The woman on the other end of the line, Jan, was both kind and passionate. An elder from a small Christian Reformed church in West Michigan, Jan had just read the news about the situation in India and had called to request more information about World Renew's response so she could share it with her church and inspire action.

What proceeded was a brief but moving conversation. Like many CRC elders, Jan described a heartfelt desire to help spread Christ's love in what we agreed was a challenging cultural moment.

As we spoke, Jan acknowledged that she had witnessed heated discussions in her faith community about COVID: Masks or no masks? Vaccines or no vaccines? Virtual or in-person church gatherings? Respect for the government? Freedom of expression? What should Christ-followers prioritize, and how?

"I read about India and I feel a deep conviction," Jan said. "Here, folks have the privilege of refusing masks or rejecting the vaccine. But in India, people would give anything for the chance to be vaccinated or to have safe, clean masks. So how do we love our Indian neighbors?"

Jan wondered how she could share the story of India with her congregation in a way that transcended differences. Was there a way for people with



varying opinions to advocate together for equal global access to the vaccine, or to give together to provide hospitals in India with enough oxygen for all the COVID patients who need it? Could Christians feel exasperated with the politics surrounding COVID yet also stand on the front lines of the crisis and respond with compassion?

It was a big ask, but Jan felt determined: "I believe in the power of Jesus Christ, so I don't feel hopeless."

The impact of COVID-19 around the world has erased the illusion of easy answers. From the health crisis to the ensuing economic fallout, people

are suffering. But that day in May, Jan reminded me that Jesus embraces all who feel powerless, forgotten, and hopeless, be they Romans, Zealots, tax collectors, Samaritans, Pharisees, adulterers, or fishermen, not because of their ideology or faith expression, but because Jesus is love. May we experience and share that same embrace.

—Katy Johnson,
World Renew

A Leader of Today

YOUNG ADULTS ARE OFTEN described as “leaders of the future” or “the future of the church.” But in reality, they are not just leaders of the future—they are leaders of the church today.

KJ Pearson is one of those leaders.

This past winter and spring, Pearson participated in Cohort Detroit, a Resonate Global Mission initiative. Cohort is a discipleship opportunity for young adults to serve in a grass-roots ministry, learn in community, and engage in deep spiritual formation while wrestling with challenging conversations about faith, mission, social justice, and more. Cohort is one of the ways Resonate is working to equip young adults for mission and support them in their ministries.

Pearson serves as house supervisor for Hesed Community Church’s ministry house in Detroit’s Morningside neighborhood.

“When we were first exploring the neighborhood,” she said, “we found the house on my birthday two years ago. I thought it was the absolute most beautiful house. It was abandoned. It was empty. It needed work. But God said, ‘Be in this house,’ and I ran with that.”

For the past two years, Pearson has been intentional about praying for the neighborhood, connecting with neighbors, and finding opportunities to minister. Sometimes that looks like comforting a woman who just lost her only son. Sometimes it looks like buying ice cream for young people in the neighborhood. Sometimes it means opening the ministry house so people can do their laundry.



When KJ Pearson hosted a drive-by birthday party for her son, many in the neighborhood celebrated with them.

“If you need prayer, if you need someone to talk to, if you just need a hug, if you just need some candy or toilet paper, that’s what I’m there for,” Pearson said. “I’m that neighbor you can always call or knock on the door.”

“KJ is just an incredibly gracious person in terms of having this capacity to bridge-build and hold a lot of different people, opinions, and perspectives together and come at that with a very non-judgemental presence. She extends a lot of grace to people,” said Nathan Groenewold, director of Cohort Detroit.

While serving at the ministry house, Pearson joined Cohort Detroit to grow and learn more as a ministry leader. In addition to being a house supervisor, she also works full time and is the mother of a three-year-old. She’s busy, but said that Cohort Detroit has

provided a supportive community that encourages her to prioritize spending time with God.

“I consider it almost like a college course or class I go to,” she said. “We look forward to seeing each other every week.”

Since moving into the ministry house in Morningside, Pearson said she has seen the neighborhood “glow up.” She notices people spending more time outside together, and young people in the neighborhood are constantly coming over to the house to spend time with her son.

“This is the heart of God,” she said. “This is what it means to share your life with other people.”

But she knows God’s work in the neighborhood is not finished yet, and neither is her work. “It can always be a little bit brighter,” she said.

—Cassie Westrate,
Resonate Global Missions

Global Coffee Break Conference Reaches People Across the Globe

IN 2016, GRACE PAEK traveled to Australia to train new leaders for what is now called Global Coffee Break, a part of the Christian Reformed Church's Raise Up Global Ministries.

One of the best parts of the trip was being on hand as Rev. Suk Dong Kim, pastor of North Seaside Korean Church, became Global Coffee Break's center director for Australia. Paek watched as pastors gathered around him to bless him and pray for him.

But that's just one highlight from Paek's travels around the world to train Coffee Break leaders in an inductive Bible study program she first learned about in the mid-1990s when a Coffee Break trainer visited Galilee Korean Christian Reformed Church, the church Paek and her husband, Kyu, founded in Albuquerque, N. Mex.

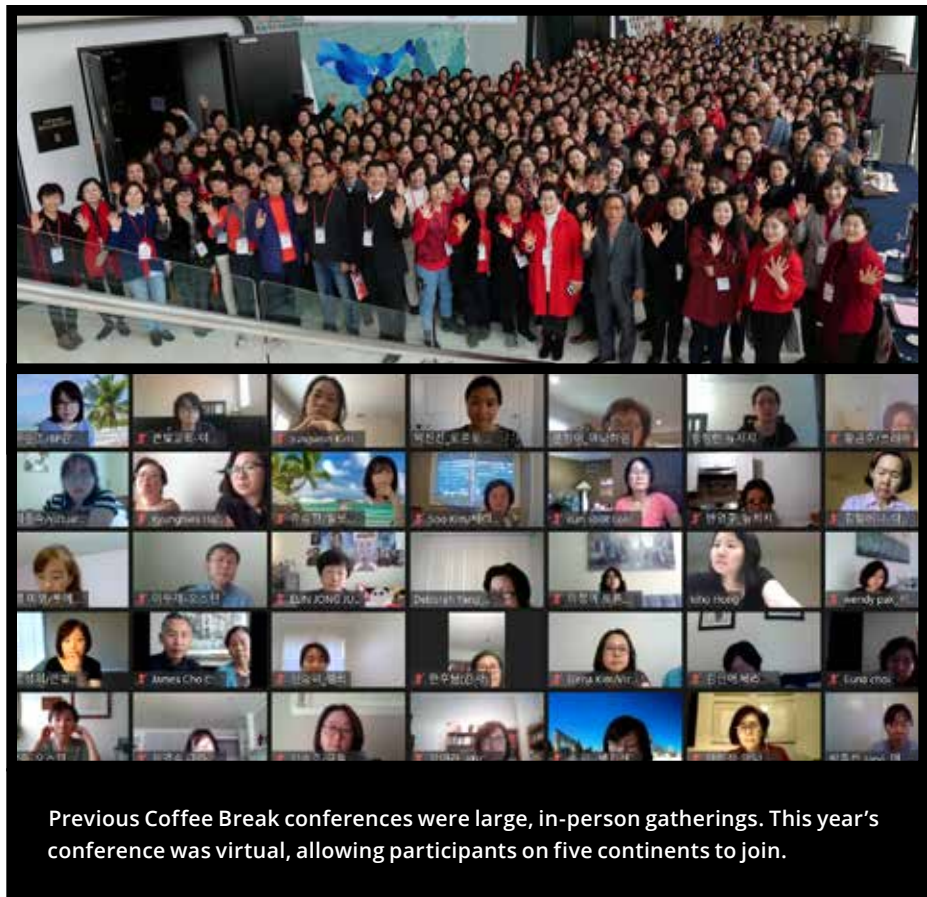
Logging many miles every year, Paek, now the Global Coffee Break coordinator and representative, has visited Japan, South Korea, Brazil, Argentina, the Philippines, Germany, and Italy.

"It has been such a blessing to be part of Coffee Break, a ministry that I know is pleasing to God," she said. "We get together in Coffee Break and open the Bible together, and the leader has questions so we can go deeper to know God."

Paek had planned to be in Orange County, Calif., in late June to speak and conduct training at this year's Global Coffee Break conference. But COVID-19 forced the ministry to hold the conference online. Nonetheless, Paek said she was eager to participate from home.

"Even though this conference happened online, she said, "we were still able to reach out to many people from many countries."

Held June 18-26, the conference was large and diverse, drawing people



Previous Coffee Break conferences were large, in-person gatherings. This year's conference was virtual, allowing participants on five continents to join.

from Uganda, Germany, France, the Czech Republic, Italy, Nepal, India, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Argentina.

"There were people from 180 different churches," Paek said. "In the U.S., many of the attendees were from states such as Hawaii and Alaska. Normally they wouldn't be able to come because it would be so far to travel."

In fact, said Paek, this might have been the largest Global Coffee Break conference ever.

Among the 413 people who signed up for the conference were 40 pastors, nearly 100 pastors' spouses, and 14 missionaries. A number of those were first-time attendees.

The conference included opening and closing services, nine main sessions, six optional sessions, and a range of interactive breakout sessions. More than 60 small groups met several times.

Paek said leaders shared their experiences of starting and growing Coffee Break ministries in their churches, and conferencegoers also learned how missionaries use Coffee Break materials in India, Mexico, and Colombia.

"Evangelism is a very important part of Coffee Break," she said. "It is focused on non-Christians. It is low-key. We become friends with those who attend, and we glorify God together."

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications

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Denominational Announcements

PASTOR ANTHONY MATIAS, pastor of El Buen Pastor (The Good Shepherd) in Prospect Park, NJ, was installed as Minister of the Word on April 25, 2021.

Church Positions Available

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES Caledonia Christian Reformed Church in Caledonia, MI is accepting applications for a part-time Director of Children's Ministries. Please visit www.caledoniacrc.org/employment for more information.

FAITH COMMUNITY CHURCH OF ZILLAH, WA IS SEARCHING FOR A PASTOR. Faith Community Church, a rural congregation in sunny, south-central WA, is seeking a Pastor to lead and equip us as we minister to a diverse community in the Yakima Valley. Please contact Gary at 4seasons24@gmail.com for more information.

FULL-TIME TEACHING PASTOR Hope Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Courtice, Ontario, is actively seeking a full-time Teaching Pastor passionate about preaching God's word within dynamic worship, with a focus on cross-generational shepherding and discipleship and a passion for engaging the next generation. Hope Fellowship embraces and lives out God's redemptive plan by inviting people to believe in Jesus, belong to God's family and bless every neighbour. Send questions and resumes to Search@hopefellowship.ca

LEAD PASTOR - Aylmer CRC in Aylmer, Ontario is seeking a Lead Pastor gifted in the areas of shepherding and teaching. We are prayerfully searching for a self motivated and compassionate Pastor who is devoted to providing Reformed preaching, passionate about nurturing our spiritual growth and equipping us for community outreach. If this is a position you may feel God's calling to, we would love to speak with you. Please contact Lisa at 519-520-1220 or email bruceandlisavk@hotmail.com. Job description and church profile are available on the Portal.

LEAD PASTOR Medicine Hat CRC is actively searching for a full-time lead pastor with gifts in both discipleship (preaching) and pastoral care, to shepherd our congregation and assist the evangelizing of the broader community. Applicants can send their resume, or questions to: dirkvis77@gmail.com

PASTOR - Maitland River Community Church in Wingham, Ontario is seeking a full time

pastor. We are an active growing church that is passionate about reaching the lost and serving those in need. For more information write to pastorsearch@mrcc.ca

PASTOR AT MARANATHA, FARMINGTON, NM Seeking a pastor for congregation in a border city to the Navajo Reservation. Pastor is retiring Dec 2021. Please visit our website at maranathafellowshipcrrc.org or email kaferle65@gmail.com

YOUTH PASTOR - New Life CRC in Abbotsford, BC is inviting applications for the full-time position of Youth Pastor. The Youth Pastor will give leadership in such a way that engages youth in the formation of their faith so that they will become a lifelong disciple of Jesus. This experienced leader loves Jesus, prays for others, is grace filled in relationships and has a God given call for ministry. For more information please visit <https://newlifecrc.ca/employment/>

Birthdays

BIRTHDAY 103 YEARS

LILLIAN (DYKSTRA) DE BOER, 725 Baldwin #271, Jenison, MI 49428, will celebrate her 103rd birthday on July 29. Her 3 children, their spouses, grandchildren, great grandchildren and great, great grandchildren thank God for the blessing she has been in their lives.

BIRTHDAY 99 YEARS

JOHN KOOY, one of the oldest residents in Lynden, Washington and a lifelong member of the Christian Reformed Church, will celebrate his 99th birthday on July 2. John enjoyed 73 years of marriage to his wife Dena, before she died in 2016. Together they had 6 children. He is thankful and proud of his 13 grandchildren and 22 great grandchildren. John feels blessed and gives thanks for all the many years he has lived. He resides at 301 Homestead Blvd, Apt 330, Lynden, Washington 98264

BIRTHDAY 95 YEARS

GORD DAMS celebrates his birthday on July 9th. He resides in Holland, MI. Celebrating God's goodness are his children Kathy & Don Boersen, Pat & Tom VanderLaan, Doug & Rob-in Dams, Barb Lipinski & his grandchildren & great grandchildren.

BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS

GERALDINE WUNDERINK (née Nannenga) has been blessed to celebrate her 90th birthday on July 5. She and her eight children (Hen-

ry, Richard, Andrew, Donald, Robert, Valerie, Steven, and Brenda Dykstra) and their spouses will reunite this summer to celebrate this milestone. Many of her 21 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren (so far) will join in the celebration.

ROSE (KOOPS) NYHOFF celebrates her 90th birthday on July 31. Her family is thankful to God for His many years of faithfulness. Birthday greetings are welcomed and can be sent to 610 E. Ross St., Downs, KS 67437.

Church Anniversary 100 Years

CHURCH 100TH ANNIVERSARY Lord willing, Aetna CRC Falmouth, MI will be celebrating its 100 year anniversary in August. Our church was organized on September 6, 1921. We will celebrate with an open house on the church lawn, on August 14, from 2 to 6. Special music and food is planned. An anniversary service is planned on Sunday, August 15 beginning at 10 AM. Potluck luncheon to follow. Aetna CRC 3459 S. 8 Mile Road. Falmouth, MI. Watch for details on the church's Facebook page, Aetna CRC.

Anniversary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 70 YEARS



BUIKEMA, William and Gertrude (Werkman) give gratitude to God for 70 wonderful years of marriage August 25, 2021. Blessings include 5 children: Bill (Jean Hoffman), Jan (Joe Ehrlich), Rob (Danette Bergsma), Mary (Tom Beltman), Tim (Irene Feyer), 14 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren. 12565 W. Renaissance Circle, Homer Glen, IL, 60491. Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah!

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 65 YEARS

JONGSMA, Rev. Allan and Joyce of 725 Baldwin St. Apt 1063, Jenison, MI 49428 celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on June 16, 2021. Their children Dan and Gloria Jongsma, Scott and Linda Jongsma, Brenda and Jon Holesinger, Lynda and Kevin Kiekoover and their grandchildren and great grandchildren rejoice with them and thank God for many blessings and happy years together.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 60 YEARS

HARMS. We are thankful to God for the 60th wedding anniversary of our parents, Gerald & Marilyn, on June 29. They have been faithful

and steadfast witnesses to God's love throughout their lives together. With love from Andrea & Dan, Dennis & Brenda, Doug & Grace, Lane & Renae, 11 grandkids and their spouses.

WESTENBROEK, Rev. Robert and Jean Westebroek will celebrate 60 years of marriage on July 25. That day also happens to be Jean's 80th birthday. Praising God for His faithfulness through the years. Greetings can be mailed to 6177 Heath Cross Dr., Hudsonville, MI 49426.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 50 YEARS



HOLS, John and Grace. We celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our parents John & Grace Hols (nee Seinen) on July 2. Love, David & Lisa, Ivor, Grayson; Jeff & Jenn, Jake, Emma; Josh & Laura, Ava, Jesse, Gabe. Phil 2:1-11 GNT. Send love via

johnandgrace50th@gmail.com



RITZEMA, Dick and Lois celebrated 50 years of marriage on June 11, 2021. Their children Scott & Jen, Steve & Natalie, Bryon & Erin, Jon & Beth, Jeremy & Heather, and Brad, along with 17 grandchildren praise God for their faithfulness to their Lord and each other. They reside at 12403 85th Ave Milaca, MN 56353.

Obituaries



BRUINIUS, David W., age 72, U.S. Army Veteran, of St. John, IN formerly of Tinley Park, IL, went to be with his Lord on Tuesday, June 8, 2021. Beloved husband of the late Barbara, nee Aardema (1994). Loving father of David (Kristin) Bruinius II,

Daniel (Brooke) Bruinius, James (Ashley) Bruinius and Garrett (Mary) Bruinius. Cherished grandfather of Autumn, Kenley and Deacon; Harper and Augustine; Jayde, Natalie and Gabriella; Madelyn and Randy. Dear brother of Ted (late Eileen) Bruinius, Robert (Carol) Bruinius, Chuck (Rose) Bruinius and the late John (late Eleanor) Bruinius. Fond uncle of many nieces and nephews. Retired from Ozinga after 31 years of service. Memorials to Crown Point Christian School, 10550 Park Place, St. John, IN 46373 are appreciated. Express your thoughts and condolences at colonialchapel.com

DE WIT, Arthur "Al", age 94, passed away on Monday, April 19, 2021. He was devoted to his family and a faithful servant to his Lord and Savior. Al is survived by his son, Dale and Jeanne of Naperville, IL; his daughter, Diane and Vince Bonnema of Grand Rapids, MI; son-in-law, Tom VanDenBosch and his wife Gloria of Sioux Center, IA; 10 grandchildren; 25

great-grandchildren; and his 3 brothers: Don, Floyd and Bernie DeWit. Al was preceded in death by his wife, Ann; daughter, Carol; his parents; 3 brothers: John, Henry and Marv.

FEDDEMA, Tena (Draayer), age 92, passed away April 27, 2021, in Jenison Michigan. She was preceded in death by her husband of 58 years, Charles. She is survived by her only child, Karen (John) DeVries, grandchildren Nathan (Laura) and Ryan DeVries. She lived throughout the country in Washington DC, Fort Collins, Colorado, and Bradenton, Florida and then moved to Jenison later in life to be with her family.



GREYDANUS, Robert John, 79, of Ocean City, New Jersey went to glory with his Lord and Savior on Sunday, April 25, 2021. He was preceded in death by his parents, John S. and Margaret E. Greydanus. Bob was a graduate of Calvin College

(1963) and Calvin Theological Seminary (1967). He loved the Lord and spent a lifetime of service to Jesus Christ in his ministry and teaching careers. His enthusiasm for sharing his faith, offering counsel and connecting with people was exceptional. Bob is also survived by his ex-wife Marsanne to whom he was married for 26 years. He was loved and will be missed by his surviving siblings: Dr. Donald E. (Katherine K.)

Greydanus, Sharon E. (Philip) Mol, Candace (Sid) VanderWoud, Barbara Tagliabue, and Jonathan (Jamie) Greydanus. Bob was also loved by his children: Steven (Suzanne) Greydanus, Lisa (Tito) Palomeque, and Mathew (Amanda) Greydanus. He will be deeply missed by his beloved 17 grandchildren. As Bob said in all matters: To God be the Glory!

GROS, Harry, age 86, of Pine Bush, NY, entered his heavenly home on June 7, 2021. He was preceded in death by his son, Robert (Bob). He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Barbara (Bakker); his children: Jacob (Winnie), Louis (Lynnette), Ann (Robert), Clara (Hans), David (Bobbi Jo), Betty (Stephen), and Ronald; 17 grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren.

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HOLWERDA, Rev. Robert J. of Hudsonville, MI was received into the arms of his Savior on April 30, 2021 at the age of 91. Rev. Holwerda was a servant of his Lord Jesus Christ and served diligently as a pastor in the Christian Reformed Church for 45 years. He will be remembered for his gentle spirit, patience, passion for preaching, and love and commitment to his wife Joyce, and his immediate and extended family. Rev. Holwerda served five churches during his active ministry: Parkersburg, IA; Hardewyk, Holland, MI; Calvary, Pella, IA; Mount Vernon, WA; and Bethel, Sioux Center, IA. He is survived by his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren: Bob & Gayle: Karen, & Mark Guzicki (Morgan, Gavin, Riley); Kris & Wade Eldean (Ryan & Bethany Watkins, Fiancee); Kelli & Dave Slager (Adalyn, Kyra); Kathy & Ken Wall (Jax, Elli, Ava). Dan: Renee & Ben Saarloos (Alex, Jackson, Sammy, Emmy); Karla & Zac Sorensen (Eli, Isaac). Marilyn & George Lanting: Heather & Kelly Kuchera (Jacob); Rebecca & Mike Sales (Michael, Jackson, Colin); Anna & Pete Graham (Noah, Dylan); George & Andrea (Emma, Jordan, Bridgette, Mikayla); Ken & Jill (Ryan, Carson, Ethan); Jennifer & Greg Hoekstra (Carter, Adelyn). Sheryl. Steve & Sheri: Jona-

thon & Paxton (Brixten, Scotlyn); Jason & Marissa; Amanda & Matt Jennings (fiancée). He is also survived by his brothers & sisters in law: Dr. David & Gayla Holwerda and Dr. Harry & Joann Holwerda Preceding him in death were his wife of 71 years, Joyce (Bouma); his parents Rev. Peter & Edith Holwerda; his brothers and sisters-in-law: Rev. George & Evelyn; Peter (WWII), Jack & Pearl; his parents-in-law Gerrit & Anna Bouma; his brothers and sisters-in-law: Clarence & Eileen Bouma, Cornelius (in infancy) and Marilyn & Ed Gort. Memorial donations may be made to the Robert and Joyce Holwerda Scholarship for Married Students at Dordt University.



IPEMA, Martina (Van Stalduinen), age 89, of Grand Rapids, went home to be with her Lord on Wednesday, June 2, 2021. Martina served as a missionary teacher and librarian in Nigeria with CRC World Missions for 30 years. She was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. Peter Ipema, her parents, five siblings, one brother-in-law, and three sisters-in-law. Martina was a loving and devoted wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, sister, aunt and friend, who will be lovingly remembered by all who knew her. Memorial Service to be held at Ray-

brook Chapel, Saturday, August 14 at 11:00. Memorial contributions in memory of Martina may be made to Resonate Global Missions (Christian Reformed Church).



STRONKS, Gloria Goris, July 2, 1936 - April 28, 2021. Gloria Goris was born on a farm outside of Emden, MN and attended Calvin College where she met William Stronks. They married and had two children. Gloria began teaching in Tennessee and Kentucky school systems and later in the Chicago Christian and Roseland Christian school systems. Eventually she obtained her doctorate in education and became a professor at Dordt and Calvin Universities. Gloria is survived by her husband William Stronks, her children, Julia Stronks & Charles Zandbergen and Bill Stronks & Amy Wilson Stronks, and her grandson Matt Zandbergen and Jasmine Emiko Spencer Zandbergen. Gloria was a teacher, an author, a mentor and a friend. She was deeply loved and will be missed by so many. Condolences can be sent to 2611 E. Golden Rd, Spokane, WA 99208 or jkstronks@gmail.com

VEEN, Shirley Jean (Wiersma), 92, widow of John Phillip Veen, died May 21. Her children, all surviving, are Phillip (Brenda) Veen, Mary

VEEN, Shirley Jean (Wiersma), 92, widow of John Phillip Veen, died May 21. Her children, all surviving, are Phillip (Brenda) Veen, Mary



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(Eric) Ferwerda, Valerie Veen, Patricia (Wayne) Langeland, Allan (Sara) Veen, and Richard (Rhonda) Veen. She has 12 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

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CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOK (AGES 2 - 8) Sandy goes to the beach by J.D. Thomas. A gentle and humorous story of a family that brings their dog to the beach. Author will personalize the signature with your child's name. \$10 per copy. Contact J.D. at 201-960-6067.

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Wonder in the Stars

ON WARM SUMMER NIGHTS, and even on cold winter nights, one of my favorite things to do is to stare at the stars. I find them fascinating. They fill me with a sense of wonder. I like to watch the sky as the day fades into darkness and, one by one, tiny lights appear. I like to look for patterns, trace out designs, and let the beauty and immensity of the night sky remind me of God's grace. It fills me with peace.

Stars remind me that God is the Creator and is in control. Throughout the Bible, stars are often used as a reminder of God's awesome power shown through his beautiful and awe-inspiring creation, as in Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Stars are more than just pretty. Along with the moon, stars give the comfort of light in the darkness, and they change position with the seasons, marking the days just as God created them to do in Genesis 1:14. Stars also help us to navigate, or find our way.

The North Star has always been very important for helping people in the Northern Hemisphere find their way, especially before compasses, GPS, and smartphones. Scientists think the stars even help migrating birds find their way! Just as the North Star (or, in the Southern Hemisphere, the Southern Cross) helps us to find our way here on earth, we can use the stars to point us back to God and remind us of God's power, faithfulness, and grace.

Dive Deeper

Romans 1:20 reminds us that God reveals himself to us through creation.

In Psalm 19, David sings about how the skies show him the glory of God. Isaiah 40 and Psalms 8, 33, and 136 all praise the wonder of the night sky. How has creation inspired you today?

Try This

Constellations are groups of stars that together form a picture. The constellations we are most familiar with come from Greek and Roman stories. (The Bible mentions the constellations of Orion, Pleiades, and the Bear in Job 9:9). But other people around the globe named their own constellations. The Indigenous people of Canada formed constellations by making pictures in the stars of things they knew, such as moose, fishers, mountain lions, and loons. Take a moment to look at the stars and create your very own constellations, making sure to remember God the Creator, who made them for all people to enjoy (Deut. 4:19). **B**



Susie Vander Vaart is an environmental educator and ecologist who spends most of her time outside exploring creation.

Healing over Hustle: Embracing the God of Rest

I came to recognize my aversion to silence and stillness for what it was: fear.



Dana Drosdick is a Calvin University graduate and a marketer in Glens Falls, N.Y. Her work, inspired by her Christian Reformed roots, has been previously featured in *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and *TheOdysseyOnline*. Follow her online at [instagram.com/danadrosdick](https://www.instagram.com/danadrosdick).

I NEVER EXPERIENCED the God of rest until my junior year of college. I was sitting alongside the sandy shores of Lake Michigan and trying not to have an anxiety attack for three very good reasons.

One, I had made a commitment to spend the weekend away from my studies, work, and friends to sit in silence and stillness for about 48 hours through a silent retreat advertised at school.

Two, I was already precariously juggling said studies, work, and friends, falling hopelessly behind in my pursuit to be an honors student while maintaining an active social life and working three to five jobs at a time.

And three, I was genuinely terrible at being silent and sitting still.

Rather than listening to the lapping of the waves and the cries of the seagulls that first brisk, autumnal evening, my mind fell into a repetitive loop of all the things I had to do and the crushing guilt of “taking time for myself.”

I tried to pray and meditate, but my prayers fell flat. I am Type A and extroverted by nature. Silence and stillness, I figured, were spiritual gifts meant for others, not for Type A perfectionists like me.

As the first evening progressed, I nestled close to the fireplace, feeling exposed and bare by the lack of clocks and the transient nature of time. I decided to take out my copy of Rachel Held Evans’ “A Year of Biblical Womanhood.” At least reading seemed somewhat productive.

Turning that first page, I immediately saw myself in Evans—the loud-mouthed, opinionated Christian feminist who seemed sassy, challenge-oriented, and rest-evasive.

My smile quickly faded, however, as I read the first chapter on cultivating a gentle and quiet spirit—a chapter that felt eerily similar to my current experience. I could almost feel God laughing

as I followed the story of a woman like myself wrestling with rest and silence.

Flipping to the end, I came to recognize my aversion to silence and stillness for what it was: fear. I was afraid of missing out on opportunities. I was afraid of falling behind. I was afraid that, in the absence of accomplishments and awards, I’d become unloved and unworthy. The hustle and busyness was a mask for the fear and self-doubt I’d tried so well to hide.

And yet, if Evans could tackle stillness and silence, I figured, so could I.

I left the silent retreat committed to overcoming my fear, starting first with meditation and then moving on to practicing the Sabbath and devoting mornings to contemplation.

The more I faced my fear, the less grip it had on me.


As I worked through my insecurities and doubts, I became more confident, more grounded, more self-assured.

As part of Gen Z, I find rest is now an act of resistance. It’s a resistance against the digital age I grew up in, one of fast turnaround times and 24/7 access to texts, tweets, and emails. It’s a resistance against a capitalistic system that turns humans into numbers and workers into timesheets. It’s a resistance against a social-media world that constantly makes me feel that I am not good enough, smart enough, pretty enough, or hard-working enough.

It’s a resistance that allows me to just be.

I am working on resting. I am not there yet. There are days where I get swept up in the hustle and bustle of day-to-day life, jumping from one activity to the next.

But since that silent retreat, I can now see the importance of presence and rest.

In rest, I found healing. In rest, I found God. 

The Kind of World We Live In

The kind of world we live in
is fraught
with where and when the next outbreak
will occur,
which passenger aircraft
the missile will hit,
whether the children will be freed
from their cages
to go find their mothers and fathers, if they can,
and what we'll all do next,
after the last iceberg has melted
into the waters that lap against our e-car doors.

The kind of world we live in
feels as though it's reaching a pitch,
and here I sit,
cinching up the hiking boots
for another 40-day wilderness trek,
another round
of walking over rock,
talking to trees,
and hoping for blessed nothing to happen
while I'm out there alone.

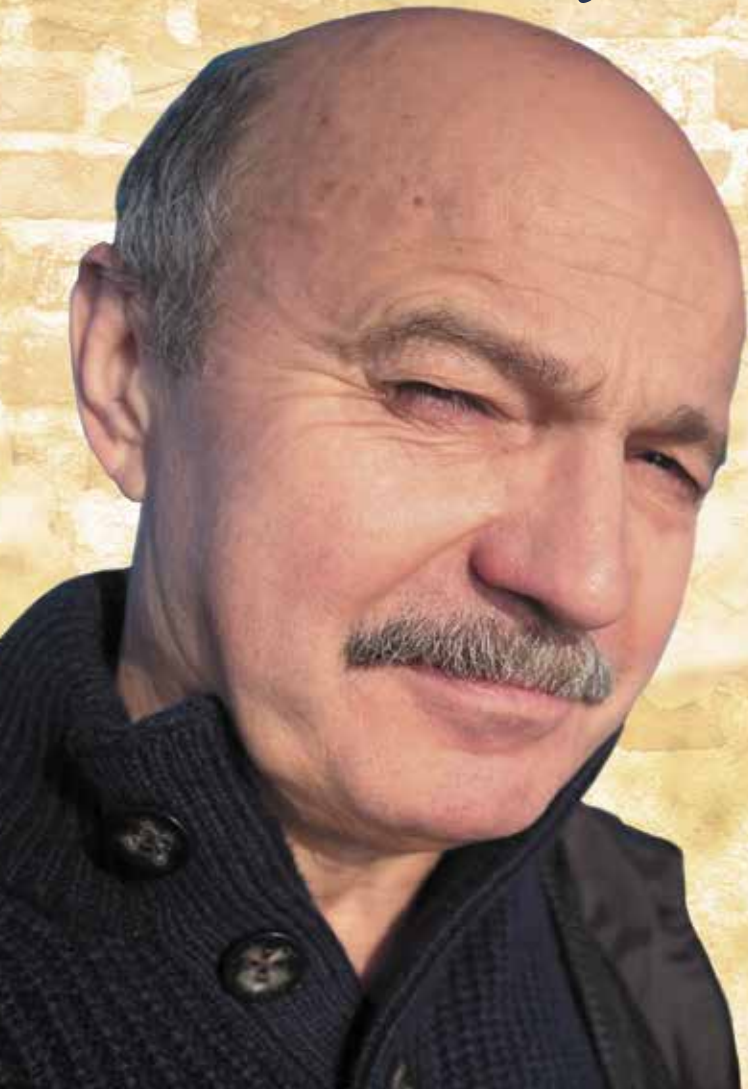
The world is on your shoulders,
it's in your backpack,
which just happens to get lighter and lighter
the farther you go,
the deeper you delve into these woods,
the closer you come
to losing it all
for love
of the kind of world we live in,
fasting on the roots
and berries of a wild hope.

ⓑ



John Terpstra is a Hamilton, Ont., cabinetmaker, woodworker, and poet who also writes prayers and liturgy for St. Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church, which he attends. His website is johnterpstra.com.

To the Ends of the Earth



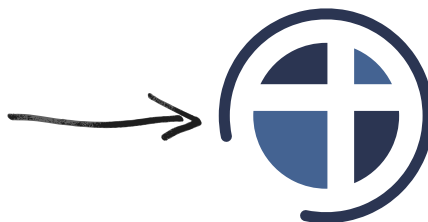
Salim was simply searching online for a way to keep up his language skills when he found ReFrame Ministries' videos on YouTube.

He soon realized that what he had found was so much more than a language-learning tool.

As an enthusiastic leader in his church, Salim shares what he learns about the Bible from ReFrame's programs with members of the Arabic-speaking community in Montreal, Quebec.

"May the Lord bless your ministry," Salim shared. "I listen almost every day. They are very helpful for me in my personal language and in my personal ministry."

The Christian Reformed Church's media ministry may have a new name, but that won't change the way God's story reaches Salim.



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