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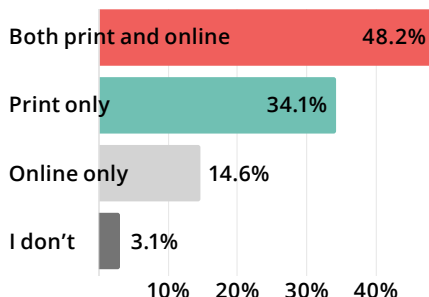
BANNER

BY THE NUMBERS

It's important to know, of course, if anyone is reading the magazine we put our hearts and souls into, so our survey last year included the question "Do you currently read *The Banner*?" We also wanted to know where people were reading it. Here's how 769 of you responded:



How Do You Take Your *Banner*?



The survey was conducted in January and February 2020 by the Calvin University Center for Social Research. A total of 769 participants completed the survey.



Cover: In Psalm 85 and elsewhere in the Bible, God promises shalom to his people. See how some are finding it. // Photo courtesy World Renew

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: New CRCNA Leadership Structure: What Is It?
- » Book: *Dirt: Growing Strong Roots in What Makes the Broken Beautiful*, by Mary Marantz
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The story, "CRC in Canada Parts Ways with Canadian Ministries Director" (September 2021, p. 16), should have said Darren Roorda pastored two Christian Reformed congregations, one in Ontario and one in Washington.

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Editor Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,
Director of CRCNA Communications and Marketing



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Editor Shiao Chong

Associate Editor Sarah Delia Heth

News Editor Alissa Vernon

Mixed Media Editor Lorilee Craker

Art Director Dean R. Heetderks

Designer Pete Euwema

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

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

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Marks of Spiritual Revival

Spiritual revival is not merely a private, “Jesus and me” affair.



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

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

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

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

I SENSED, AFTER PUBLISHING a recent editorial on spiritual revival, that some Christians harbor stereotyped ideas about revival. Some think it is only about emotional fervor. Others think it is only about narrowly defined spiritual (and private) matters and has no connection to societal issues. For me, Christian spirituality is holistic because biblical truth and a biblical worldview are holistic. Therefore, spiritual revival is also holistic.

Best-selling author and pastor Timothy Keller has identified ten marks of genuine spiritual revival (“Ten Marks of Revival”). First, there are three instrumental means the Holy Spirit tends to use for revival: recovery of the gospel of grace, creativity, and corporate prayer. By recovering the radical nature of God’s grace, Christians will repent from either liberal or conservative self-righteous distortions. By creativity, Keller means there have always been new, creative methods of presenting the gospel to each generation and cultural moment that have sparked spiritual revivals. And every past revival has been accompanied by fervent corporate prayer.

There are usually three parts to a spiritual revival, Keller says. First, nominal church members are converted into true disciples. To me, this goes hand in hand with the recovery of the gospel of grace. Second, many Christians will experience God’s love and presence more directly. One consequence of this is genuine repentance from any idols they have clung to. Another is that Christians, having experienced God’s love and grace deeply, will more readily reach out to their communities in love. Third, large numbers of nonbelievers will be attracted to the Christian community, often as a result of these changes among believers.

The next four marks or results of revival I believe are unique to Keller’s

description of revival. First, lamentably, there always will be an “excessive fringe” to the revival. Genuine spiritual revivals will humble Christians. But some, ironically, might be puffed up with spiritual pride instead. Feelings of spiritual superiority might arise. Some Christian leaders might get too powerful and popular for their own good. People might idolize spiritual experiences and ignore biblical truth. Charlatans might take advantage of people’s spiritual fervor for their own gains.

As a consequence, there will be mainstream cultural backlash to the spiritual revival. People, Christians or otherwise, often will point to the “excessive fringe” as proof of the dangers of the revival movement. Furthermore, Keller says, “some conservative, traditional church leaders” will join the attack on the spiritual revival for the same reasons. Some might even criticize the growing movement out of jealousy. These are the second and third results of revival.

I find the fourth result of past spiritual revivals fascinating. If the revival is deep and broad enough, it often leads to positive social reforms. Past revivals, Keller says, resulted in “the repeal of child labor laws, the abolition of slavery, a decrease in crime, improvements in the institution of marriage, and many other benefits.” In other words, spiritual revival is not merely a private, “Jesus and me” affair. Genuine revival will drive Christians to show God’s love holistically, combining God’s Word with good deeds to help heal a social wound or eradicate a social evil.

Genuine spiritual revival is holistic. It means recovering God’s truth, experiencing God’s grace, and embodying God’s love and justice in a fallen world. Ultimately, only God can bring revival. But we should earnestly seek it as faithfully as we can. **B**



REPLY ALL

To send letters to the editor, please see our guidelines at thebanner.org/letters.

Christians and Guns

We as people of faith are called to defend our families and extended families at our worship facilities ("Big Questions," May 2021). I see this as a biblical call from the Lord. For reference, I find my Bible provides the proper justification: Exodus 22:2 and Luke 22:35-38. ... America's Second Amendment did not come from nowhere. It started back in 1791 as a part of our absolute and principal rights of personal security, liberty, and private property.

» Wayne Mokma // Holland, MI

My Bible in all four gospels says that the apostle Peter and others carried a sword (Matt. 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:36; and John 18:10). Our nation would not be here if we were defenseless.

» Bernard Luurtsema // Holland, Mich.

Spiritual Pride

I read Shiao Chong's editorial "Revival and Spiritual Pride" (June 2021) and said "yes, he has it correct" over and over again. I was asked a few months ago ... what is the matter with the Christian Reformed people of the area, and my response was "pride." I think this pride is of a spiritual nature and a country of origin nature. ... I am asking that the CRC look closely at itself and realize the pride and tendency to put down other faithful churches is not kingdom-building behavior.

» Pam Adams // Sioux Center, Iowa

I always appreciate editor Shiao Chong's writings. He has an amazing sense of (the) heart of the matter and a clear way of articulating it. I especially appreciated his most recent editorial titled "Revival and

Spiritual Pride." That particularly resonated with me because my husband and I have left the denomination for some of those same reasons. My four siblings and (their) families have also left the denomination, and we all attend elsewhere. What is ironic to me (is that) on the very next page there is an article titled, "Vigilance Is Needed." It is a call to return to the former standards, to circle the wagons, to watch out for slippage. Hmm. The two seem to be at odds with each other.

» Gerda Van Stralen // Battle Creek, Mich.

I agree that our denomination needs revival and that spiritual pride is a barrier to that revival, but is the solution immersing ourselves in Scripture, even with humble hearts? Our collective pride comes from emphasizing precision theology. Parsing Scripture more intensely will only feed that pride. What if instead we took the truth we already know and just practiced it? In my own experience, following Jesus outside of the church and into the community, loving and accepting those who would never enter our church building, and showing compassion and kindness to those who reject our faith is humbling and opens me up to a more vibrant, growing, and humble faith in Jesus.

» Rob Jansons // Monroe, Wash.

Science and the Bible

I can agree with the thrust of the article ("What Should We Do When the Bible Seems to Disagree with Science?," July/August 2021), except the article doesn't go far enough in answering what we should do when science and Scripture do come into conflict. Sometimes the answer is clear, as with the longstanding conflict between Scripture's account of how God

created and the answers science is so desperately trying to prove. On the whole, the scientific community is secular, refusing to believe what Scripture says about the matter. Therefore in such cases of conflict between the two, as believers we have to reject that there is a conflict, because the only alternative then is to start rewriting Scripture. We ought not to rely on science to prove or disprove the authority of Scripture.

» Ed Grootenboer // Kitchener, Ont.

Intention and Impact

The statement by the editor that "We need to repent from unintended sins and wrongs" merits challenging ("Intention and Impact," July/August 2021). Notwithstanding the trauma surrounding the issue of residential schools there appears to be an element of "virtue signaling" with respect to who the "we" is that the article is addressing. Suggesting that members of the CRC in Canada need to repent for something that predates their immigration in the 1950s would require them to appropriate guilt that does not properly belong to them. It undermines the process of reconciliation.

» Lubbert van der Laan //
online comment

The disconnect between intent and outcomes is one dimension of the problem. When I ask what beliefs and analysis led me to act on my intent (or values) in the way I did, it leads to deeper insights and more beneficial change. For the CRC community, revisiting the way we dealt with the Doctrine of Discovery report in 2016 could be a helpful step on the road to genuine reconciliation. It is unfinished business in the CRC.

» Kathy Vandergrift // online comment

Listening to LGBTQ Believers

Thank you for this article ("Synod 2022 Delegates to Hear from LGBTQ Believers," July/August 2021). I was one of the signatories of a recent overture to Synod

The Weight of Body Shaming

regarding the human sexuality report signed by over 25 students from 10 post-secondary institutions (*Overture 20, Agenda for Synod 2021*). In our overture, we suggested some ideas for a “plan of action to continue careful deliberation of the complex issues around human sexuality (particularly gender identity, same-sex orientation, and same-sex marriage).” The highest priority task we suggested was to “create a safe listening space for LGBTQIA+ people associated with the CRCNA to submit their concerns and stories of experiences in the church without fear of repercussion.” Although I have concerns about how Synod 2022 might hear from LGBTQ+ people in a safe and welcoming way, I have hope that this Council of Delegates decision will invite a more generous dialogue in a posture of Christlike unity.

» Jess Andrews // online comment

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I WEIGHED 120 POUNDS when I graduated from college at age 22. Just two years later, I topped the scale at 200 pounds and gave birth to a little blond boy—who weighed in at 4 pounds and 15 ounces! For the past 24 years, those 80 pounds have been one of my greatest struggles.

I’ve had moments when I believed I had conquered the weight issue and moments when I knew the weight issue had conquered me. I’ve tried SlimFast and keto and Plexus and low-carb and Weight Watchers, and even, when they were popular in the 1990s, diet pills and fat blockers and vitamin B12.

I’ve stood before a mirror and cried at my reflection, embarrassed of the woman I’d become. I’ve hidden my body behind sweaters and jackets and squeezed into Spanx and camis and, all the while, wanted only to feel comfortable in my own skin.

Some of you, I think, are like me. Together, we’ve bought lies. We’ve bought the lie that weight equals worth, and we’ve stood empty-handed, void of confidence and value. We’ve fallen into the trap of comparison and stared green-eyed at friends whose thinner bodies made us feel somehow ashamed. We’ve believed wholeheartedly that weight was a matter of will, we’ve made vows and resolutions, and we’ve started and failed plan after plan.


And all the while, the Lord has waited for us to come to him, to lay this issue at his feet—to go to his Word for truth. Romans 12:1 tells us—clearly tells us—that we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

Our bodies, then, are made to worship. So we need to ask ourselves: Are we seeking to use our bodies for worship, or are we seeking worship for our

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bodies? Because if we’re not careful, we’ll make an idol of people’s praise. We’ll find our confidence in Facebook likes and compliments and forgo finding our worth in the person of Jesus Christ.

Because, you see, God looked at us and counted us worthy of the sacrifice of his Son, worthy of redemption, worthy of grace. But the praise of people? It’s fleeting, a cheap substitute for the acceptance of the living God.

So let’s be people who glorify God with our bodies, people who seek his approval alone. Let’s be people who refuse to fall for the world’s definition of beauty and instead concern ourselves with matters of the heart. Let’s be people who eat and drink to the glory of the Lord, people with the spiritual fruit of self-control. Let’s be people who edify one another, who build up instead of tear down. Let’s be filled with thanksgiving for a God who has so richly blessed us and loves us with an unfailing love. 



Sindy Fields is a wife and mother of four children. She resides in Pennington Gap, Va., where she teaches English and attends the First Baptist Church of Pennington Gap.



Mistakes Can Be Corrected

By Jake Terpstra

My friend Michael Elliot has been in prison for 27 years. He tells me that prisoners with mental illness sometimes cause life to be difficult for their fellow prisoners. Whenever a mentally ill prisoner “bugs out” or exhibits behavior triggered by the illness, especially physical violence, it’s also a traumatic experience for anyone around them.

“Recently a prisoner sitting next to me in the prison law library quietly stood up, raised his metal chair over his head, walked across the room, and hit another prisoner with it,” Elliot said. The victim of the chair strike was facing the opposite direction and did not see the attack coming. Afterward, the injured man told Elliot that he did not know or speak to the aggressor.

On another occasion, as Elliot was on his way back from the yard to his cell,

he noticed another prisoner giving him a strange look before walking over and saying, “I know you want to kill me!” My friend did not know the other prisoner, but afterward he felt the need to keep an eye on him—and on everyone he did not know. Being locked up away from family and friends and unable to pursue a career or live a “normal” life was hard enough, he explained. He was not prepared to live among people who were mentally unstable.

“Living in close quarters with mentally ill individuals doesn’t allow one to adjust, much less learn to adapt to a normal social environment,” Elliot said. Sometimes, he added, people with mental illness scream throughout the night, making it difficult for everyone to sleep. Of course not all mentally ill people are violent or dangerous, but clearly the prison experience is far worse for people who do not have a mental illness when they are housed with people who do.

With the advent of the war on drugs, the U.S. prison population has risen to 2.3 million, or 698 people per 100,000—more than all other countries put together. (In Canada the number is 139 prisoners per 100,000 people.) A substantial proportion of these inmates are mentally ill and are held with little or no access to treatment. In recent years prisons have added some clinical staff to provide treatment, but caseloads are high and clinicians are not available in all prisons. Housing prisoners who do not live with mental illness with those who do was a decision made by high-level administrators and politicians who failed to study the consequences. This situation has now been going on for over four decades.

Most reports I have read indicate that 30 to 40 percent of people in prison are mentally ill. Elliot estimates the number to be at least 80 percent.

Is there a solution to this brutal situation? While none of the following ideas will solve all the problems by itself, cumulatively they can eliminate most of the problems.

1. Develop inpatient and outpatient mental health services in communities. These programs would cost less than the annual per-person cost of prison incarceration (about \$36,000). (Jail costs are even higher, and some

With the advent of the war on drugs, the U.S. prison population has risen to 2.3 million, or 698 people per 100,000—more than all other countries put together.

- local jails have the inhumane practice of charging room and board to the people they hold.) These programs would have to be implemented by mental health agencies using both state or provincial and federal funds. Churches could develop programs to help former prisoners adjust to society while being exposed to Christian values.


2. Increase in-service training for prison staff to deal more effectively with specific needs of incarcerated people who are mentally ill.

3. Reduce the number of people sent to prison. Increase restorative justice programs and increase the age at which young people are considered adults. Examine sentencing patterns for extremely long sentences. In Sweden, the legal maximum is 20 years.

(Reducing some sentences seems appropriate, but maybe not for pedophiles. Many believe that their tendencies are permanent. They need confinement or close supervision throughout their lives.)

4. Increase the number of activities that reduce recidivism. In Texas, for example, introducing Toastmasters clubs in prisons reduced recidivism by 50 percent. Colleges teaching four-year degree programs in prisons (such as those offered by Hope College and Calvin University in Michigan) reduced recidivism to 4 percent. Fifty years ago, Gerrit Hynes was the administrator of the Michigan Department of Corrections. He introduced prison industries that made furniture for public agencies and enriched the prison atmosphere in other ways. During his tenure, recidivism rates sharply decreased.

These suggestions would have to be implemented by elected and appointed officials. But what could ordinary Christians do? In Matthew 25:36, Jesus said, “I was in prison, and you came to visit me.”

This may be the time for Canada and the United States to try to address the needs of prisoners who are mentally ill and to mitigate the dangers to the whole prison population posed by lack of treatment. Then all prisoners might feel more as if they belong to their human community. 



Jake Terpstra is a retired social worker and the author of *Because Kids Are Worth It*. He was formerly the director of three child welfare agencies in Michigan and was a child welfare specialist in the U.S. Children’s Bureau from 1977 to 1997. He lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

BIG QUESTIONS

Digital Life

As a boomer (born between 1946 and 1964), perhaps I'm a lost cause when it comes to changing my bad habits online, but what about our kids and grandkids? Is there anything we can do?

First off, you're not a lost cause. You learned to treat the tabloids screaming at you from the racks in the grocery checkout line as gossip and half-truths, and you can do the same for social media.

But our kids and grandkids? Let's give them a head start.

Automobiles went into production in the late 1800s, but it took more than 30 years before we had laws requiring training for new drivers. Until then, what we now call driver's education was done by salespeople, family and friends, and organizations such as the YMCA.

When it comes to social media, I think we're in the same in-between time. We bought the car but don't know exactly how all the parts work. We've not yet learned the rules of the road to keep ourselves and others safe. And we certainly don't know how to turn the thing off.

Requiring a license to travel the winding—and sometimes dark—roads of the internet might be tough to pull off, but a short course on media literacy at home and in schools could go a long way.

According to the Center for Media Literacy (medialit.org), media literacy is



Illustration for The Banner by Gisela Bohórquez

defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms.” Media literacy resources abound and include tools to find out who is behind the message, how different people might experience the same message differently, what values are embedded in the message, and reminders that most media messages are set up to make money or gain power.

Once we know what's behind the message, all of us, at any age, can use the internet to take us where we want to go—and no further.

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

Vocation

Isn't getting a job enough? Do I really need to have a career or a vocation?

In the Reformed tradition we talk a lot about vocation and the idea that God has a specific way for us to use our gifts to address the needs of the world. There is something good and holy about believing that God has given us a purpose and that we can participate in what God is doing to restore the world.

It is easy to assume that career and vocation are the same, especially when some people stay in the same job all their lives. Yet few people entering

the workforce today will keep the same job their whole lives. Does this mean our understanding of vocation should change?

We should be careful not to define vocation too narrowly. Instead, it is better to look at all the parts of your life—work, studies, hobbies, participation in church, connection to family and friends, use of money—and then ask: How do you honor God in every one of these areas? And how can you give glory to God not just in the future but also right now, in whatever life stage or situation you're in? Our primary vocation is to love God and our neighbor, and that's hard to do if we focus only on the future and ignore the people who surround us now.

Perhaps for now a job is indeed enough, especially if a specific job allows you to live out the call to serve God faithfully in all of your life. Preparing for a career is also good: God delights in our investment of time and effort to develop skills and knowledge to better serve God and others. At the same time, if you're considering a change in job or career, you do not need to worry that you're abandoning your vocation or even that you understood your vocation wrongly. Vocation is not something you figure out once; it is instead something you keep asking God about as you continue your journey and as your experiences in life shift.

Brenda Kronemeijer-Heyink is the Christian Reformed chaplain at the University of Toronto.

Church/Bible/Doctrine**Should political issues be expounded on from the pulpit?**

First of all, the Word of God should be expounded on from the pulpit! But that Word sometimes addresses issues that listeners hear as political. For example, God's Word promotes the sanctity of human life, welcoming strangers, fighting injustice that makes the rich richer at the expense of the poor, and caring for the earth—all of which are also considered political issues today. Should ministers preach about them? Issues some people regard as political to prevent the church from engaging them are what others regard as core kingdom-of-God issues that must be engaged. Perhaps the question should be "How does one preach the full gospel, with all its prophetic applications to our lives, while avoiding partisan politics?"

The Christian Reformed Church Order doesn't address this in its section about worship, but it does say in Article 28 that the assemblies (councils, classes, and synod) should deal with "ecclesiastical matters only." Like pastors, sometimes assemblies are accused of being too political. Synod has adopted positions on several issues (crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements) that many would consider political—abortion, capital punishment, creation care, euthanasia, homosexuality, immigration, race relations, war, and so on. Many of these issues could be considered political by today's standards but also are core kingdom-of-God matters.

Again, it might be more helpful to use the word "partisan" instead of "political" in discerning what is appropriate for preaching. Avoiding partisan politics would include declining to endorse candidates from the pulpit. In fact, churches should take great care not to violate the requirements of their

tax-exempt status as a nonprofit organization by endorsing any political candidates.

Neither the Church Order nor synod has ever listed non-ecclesiastical or political issues that the church should not address. Article 28 mirrors the Church Order adopted at the Synod of Dort in 1619, and in all the years since, the church has discerned the Spirit's guidance as it deliberates and decides matters. That is the work of the church—discerning how the Word of God speaks in every age. Doing so is bound to involve issues considered political by some from time to time.

Rev. Kathy Smith is senior associate director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, adjunct professor of church polity at Calvin Theological Seminary, and adjunct professor of congregational and ministry studies at Calvin University. She is a member of First CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Stewardship**1 Corinthians 4 says that we are "stewards of the mysteries of God." What did the apostle Paul mean by that phrase? How can one "steward a mystery"?**

The phrase "stewards of the mysteries of God" touches something deep within us, but its exact meaning can prove elusive when we think about it more specifically.

First, some background: In this passage Paul has been talking about leadership in the starting and nurturing of new communities of faith. His point is that it is not first and foremost about who is the local leader, evangelist, or pastor. These are secondary to Christ, who is first and foremost as the one who is preached.

Church leaders, Paul says, are servants and stewards. In that day, these terms

would be known from specific roles within households. Servants served their masters and mistresses; stewards had a duty to oversee faithfully the management of the household. Paul uses this common household arrangement to identify the proper status and role of leaders in the church.

Remember, you are not masters or mistresses, but servants and stewards—servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Stewards must be trustworthy, taking good care in their management responsibilities. Here the service and the stewardship are connected. The mysteries of God are those things that were hidden from time immemorial but have now been revealed with the coming of Christ. God in Christ reconciled the world to God, and leaders must be faithful in tending to that mystery as it is being revealed to the world.

In the ancient world, there was a lot of fascination with "mysteries"—secret, strange knowledge known only to a few insiders. The world of the early church had its own conspiracists. Paul wants to pull the Corinthian Christians (and us) out of any conspiracy worlds and back to the one fundamental mystery at the heart of the Christian faith: that God's grace and goodness is available to all through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Rolf Bouma is an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church who teaches religion, ethics, and ecology in the Program in the Environment at the University of Michigan.



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Delayed by the Pandemic, New Mexico Church Hosts Multimemorial Service

NEWS

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Got a news tip?

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Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Albuquerque, N.M., hosted a celebration of remembrance Sunday, Aug. 8, to mark the lives of seven congregation members who died since March 2020. COVID-19 restrictions on gathering prevented the church from hosting individual funerals or memorial services earlier, so Pastor John Dykhuis decided to host a communal celebration once the church was able to come together in person again.

“It was important to mark the lives of the people that passed,” Dykhuis said.

During the memorial service the church displayed photos of those who had died: James Skeets (died March 8, 2020, at age 57), Sue Guilford (died April 2, 2020), Win Veltkamp (died May 10, 2020, at age 92) Emerson Skeets (died Aug. 13, 2020, at age 102), Linda Van Klompenberg (died Sept. 21, 2020, at age 84), Hank Nowak (died Oct. 27, 2020), and George Peterson (died March 18, 2021, at age 96). Following the service, congregation members shared lunch, and bereaved family members shared stories of their loved ones. Sue Guilford’s husband, Dick, said what he’ll always remember about his wife is that she was his “conscience, better half, and inspiration.”



Photo by Mark Harberts

The congregation of Fellowship CRC in Albuquerque, N.M., shared a luncheon Aug. 8 as part of their celebration of the lives of members who had died over the previous 18 months.

Fellowship CRC is a small congregation of about 50 people. Forty people attended the memorial and lunch. Member Joyce Schripsema said she was “happy to see fresh, colorful flowers at each table.”

While the church was also prevented from having in-person worship between March 2020 and June 2021, Fellowship CRC hosted worship services online.

—DeAndra Valdez

Noteworthy



Lucas Van Berkel, who calls West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alta., his home congregation, **competed in the Tokyo Olympic Games as a member of Canada’s men’s volleyball team**. Van Berkel, 29, grew up in Edmonton and lives in Europe with his wife and baby son while playing volleyball professionally in Germany. Canada finished fifth in the men’s volleyball competition.

Supporters cheered on Team Canada’s volleyball team from the Van Berkel family back yard in Edmonton, Alta., on July 31.

Churches Celebrate Anniversaries

Bell Tolls 150 Times for Iowa Church

First Christian Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa, celebrated its 150th anniversary this summer. Pastor Mark Vande Zande said, "150 years as a community means that God has been faithful to our church through the good times and the not-so-good times. He has led us through faithful preaching, faithful leadership, and faithful members. We are blessed to celebrate his faithfulness throughout the generations."

Congregation members rang the church bell at First CRC 150 times July 14 to commemorate the occasion. The church has the only active working church bell in Orange City.

Between July 4 and Aug. 1 the congregation welcomed a series of guest preachers, hearing the Word of the Lord from former pastors and five men who had grown up in the congregation and are now pastors. On Aug. 8, the church hosted a concluding celebration service, inviting congregations it had helped plant and other community churches to join its members in worship.

First CRC was scheduled to be the convening church of Synod 2021 before synod was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2018 synod began a tradition of presenting plaques to member congregations that have celebrated 150 years. With no synod, First CRC in Orange City received its plaque through the mail.



Photo by Mark Vande Zande

Henry and Joyce Dykstra were two of the congregation members who helped ring the church bell a total of 150 times July 14.

—Kyle Hoogendoorn

100-year-old Michigan Church Says 'God Is Good'

Aetna Christian Reformed Church in Falmouth, Mich., marked 100 years of ministry Aug. 14 and 15. Victoria Hiddinga, one of the anniversary committee members, said the church was formally organized in 1921, but the effort to start the English-speaking congregation began a few years earlier.

"Through the efforts of a Community Ladies Aid who recognized the need to minister to the English speaking community, the nucleus for a future congregation was formed," Hiddinga said. At that time services at nearby Prosper CRC were only in Dutch.

Hiddinga said the Sunday celebrations included "an enormous potluck luncheon and lots of smiles, hugs, handshakes, and 'remember when' stories."

About 225 people attended the events, including many former members who had moved away. A local gospel group, Pictures of Grace, gave a concert Saturday. On Sunday, interim pastor Dave Adams shared the pulpit with Garth Pauley, who served the church as a summer ministry intern in 2016.

"It was an honor to help lead such a committed group of Christians in worship on Aug. 15 as they celebrated the church's 100th anniversary and looked forward to many more years of serving the Lord joyfully," Pauley said.

Hiddinga said, "The weather could not have been better, and those of us on the committees were often heard saying, 'God is good.'"

—Alissa Vernon

Ontario Church Family Cooks for a Crowd

For the second year in a row, the annual Thanksgiving dinner at Community Church, a Christian Reformed congregation in Richmond Hill, Ont., is likely to be 'to go.' In 2020, when the church considered canceling the outreach event due to COVID-19 gathering restrictions, one church family stepped in to instead prepare 195 trays of takeaway turkey dinner.

Timothy Elgersma, whose family has been involved in the annual dinner for about 15 years, challenged his family by asking, "People aren't hungry this year?"

Elgersma and five family members roasted 220 pounds of turkey and prepared all the trimmings in the church's kitchen. All the food was donated by a local grocery store. They worked in the church's kitchen and kept the volunteers to just their own family to minimize contact.

Church members distributed meals to neighbors in the community. Jack Klooster, the church's youth pastor and the community relations coordinator at a nearby apartment complex, said, "Our mission at Community Church is to reach out and

enfold. We see this as an amazing opportunity to meet those in our community, start a conversation, and let them know that we are there for them if there is anything they need."

Peter Elgersma said in late August that Thanksgiving 2021, which in Canada is celebrated in October, would likely be "a repeat of the 2020 experience, as an in-person event is still viewed as a little risky." A final decision was to be made in mid-September.

—Kristen Parker

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Kenneth
Martin Gehrels*

1959-2021

A vibrant leader, a man of deep convictions, and a friend of God and countless others, Ken Gehrels, pastor of Ontario's First CRC of Kemptville, died peacefully at home May 10 after a year-and-a-half battle with cancer.

A chemical engineer before completing a Master of Divinity degree at Calvin Theological Seminary, Ken was ordained in 1987 and served Collingwood (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church, then Calvin CRC in Ottawa, Ont. Along the way, he earned a doctorate in worship studies from the Institute of Worship Studies in Jacksonville, Fla. He became pastor of Kemptville CRC in 2012.

Ken brought his faith to bear on the needs and cares of the wider community. He led the community to welcome two refugee families to a new life in Kemptville. He was beginning his ministry as Padre (chaplain) to Kemptville's Royal Canadian Legion Branch 212 when his illness forced him to step down.

He and his wife, Sharon, made a great team for over 40 years, whether curling, sailing, or at home together. Ken was a runner—a natural fit for his quiet, competitive spirit. He ran distances from 5Ks to marathons. Ken will be lovingly remembered by Sharon and their four children and families, including six grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Nebraska Church Car Repair Ministry Looks to Expand

Charity Auto Repair, a ministry of Northern Lighthouse Church in Lincoln, Neb., is preparing to build a new and bigger garage after 15 years of offering the community free mechanic services and providing mentoring and training opportunities to work-release correctional inmates.

The ministry is "remarkable," said Sam Keyzer, the church's founding pastor, for the way it helps people who can't afford work on their car and "for the way it encourages people from community corrections and helps them get their feet back on the ground."

"Inmates will come out, they maybe don't have any church experience, but they experience church at a different level ... and then often will get drawn into the church," Keyzer said.

Longtime Charity Auto leader Dan Pratt said the ministry hopes to build a three-stall garage on the church's five-acre property, located near Interstate 80.

"We need at least one lift so we can get the car off the ground to do some of the work that we want to do," Pratt said in a video that describes the ministry's work and was shared with Classis Heartland, the regional assembly of churches to which Northern Lighthouse belongs.

Keyzer helped to establish Northern Lighthouse in the late 1990s and retired last year as its pastor, but he is still part of the community. He said most of the current repairs are done in a parking lot outside a small garage on the church property.

"It's really hard in the winter," he said. Because the garage has just one narrow opening, "the guys work mostly in the parking lot. They're out there in all kinds of weather."



Much of the Charity Auto Repair work is currently done outdoors on the grounds of Northern Lighthouse Church in Lincoln, Neb.

Northern Lighthouse also offers a reintegration class for inmates seeking to transition back into society, teaching them life skills and offering mentoring.

"Fifty to 60 percent of our congregation has been locked up at one time," Keyzer said.

The congregation has about 120 members. Keyzer's son, Jon, recently accepted a call to succeed his father as pastor of the church.

Charity Auto Repair provides labor at no cost, but clients have to supply needed parts for the repair. If the customer is unable to bring in the needed parts, the garage reaches out to other agencies to try to secure them. Customers who are able to are encouraged to make a freewill donation.

Anna Keyzer, Sam Keyzer's daughter-in-law, said in July that the fundraising was just a few thousand short of the \$100,000 goal and that they would be ready to break ground on the new garage in the fall.

—Greg Chandler

Craft Kit Giveaway Spreads the Love of Jesus

Once a week through the past two summers, friends, neighbors, and park visitors near Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Lethbridge, Alta., could pick up a free craft kit designed to provide a fun activity and some community connection amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Typically the church's community relations committee seeks different ways throughout the year to share the love of Jesus with its neighbors. It has hosted movie nights, a summer pancake breakfast, Vacation Bible School, and more. But social distancing and limited gathering during the pandemic required committee members to get creative in communicating to neighbors the church's continuing care. After seeing the idea for a craft bag on the Facebook page of a different local church and asking for permission to use the idea, Maranatha launched its "Neighbour to Neighbour" craft kit giveaway in June 2020. Committee member Paula Haugen described it as "sharing the love of Jesus, one kit at a time."

Kits are designed for children from preschool to age 12 and include instructions and materials for a simple craft, coloring pages, a snack, words of encouragement, and information about Maranatha CRC. On Saturday mornings a volunteer stands by a table with assembled kits ready for the taking. Because the church is across from a park, there is a fair bit of walk-by traffic. Last summer, the church handed out about 50 kits each week. Members were pleased with the response and made more kits for Christmas 2020 and for Easter and Mother's Day in 2021. Weekly giveaways began again in mid-June, in time for Father's Day.



Mikeala, 10, always was willing to hand out kits and perhaps meet a new friend.

Haugen said Maranatha has received emails and Facebook messages from other churches—even one in Florida—asking to use this idea in their neighborhoods.

The kits give Maranatha CRC a way "to send the message that no one needs to be alone," Haugen said. "Our church is here for you. Most importantly, we are trying to share the love of Jesus through this small gift."

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Richard
John Hamstra*

1955-2021

Rich Hamstra pastored his congregations with energy, enthusiasm, and love. He took his work and faith extraordinarily seriously without taking himself too seriously; he believed it was important to have fun. He was grateful for the tremendous gift of God's grace; treated everyone with dignity, respect, and kindness regardless of their situation in life; and will be remembered for how he blessed old and young with his gift of storytelling. Hamstra died May 15, two and a half years after being diagnosed with cancer.

After graduation from Valparaiso University, Hamstra graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and obtained a Master of Theology degree from the University of Notre Dame. He was ordained in 1983 and served Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich. He then pastored Olentangy CRC, Columbus, Ohio; First CRC in Grand Haven, Mich.; and New Community CRC, Newaygo, Mich. He retired in 2017.

Hamstra loved history, theology, teaching, encouraging people to think, and supporting issues of social justice. Always active, he enjoyed fly fishing, woodworking, travel, and time with family.

He is survived by his wife, Sue; three sons; two daughters-in-law; and five grandsons.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Carl G.
Kromminga Sr.*

1925-2021

Pastor and professor Carl Gerhard Kromminga was a humble man with a servant's heart, an encyclopedic mind, and a great sense of humor, and he was always willing to walk the extra mile for others. He died June 25 at age 96.

Following graduation from Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, Carl was ordained in 1948 and pastored Lodi (N.J.) CRC, then Harderwyk Ministries in Holland, Mich. In 1953, at age 29, he was appointed professor of practical theology at Calvin Seminary, where he remained until his retirement in 1990. During those years he also received his doctorate from Amsterdam's Free University.

Carl loved to sing and to read. His children remember home as a haven where many good things abounded: books, music, discussions, friends, and food. During retirement he served in various capacities at the International Theological Seminary in West Covina, Calif. During his final years at Holland Home in Grand Rapids, Mich., he led a Bible study and ministered to staff and residents with deep love.

Kromminga is survived by seven children, 22 grandchildren, and 24 great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by Margaret, his wife of 38 years, and by Joan, his wife of 26 years.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Indiana Church Shares Assets After Closing

When Hope Community Christian Reformed Church in Lawrence, Ind., closed in December 2020 it arranged to bless others with remaining funds, giving over \$500,000 to more than a dozen organizations in order to continue advancing God's kingdom.

The church gave \$25,000 to the YMCA in Greater Indianapolis; \$50,000 for seminary training, library assistance, and new church plants in Nigeria through LEMA (Leadership Education Mission for Africa) Institute; and \$50,000 to Classis Kalamazoo, the regional group of churches it had been part of since 2018. Each congregation in the classis also received \$10,000 with instructions that it be shared between benevolence and ministry to seniors.

Dan Sarkipato, Classis Kalamazoo's stated clerk, said the classis gift will be used for Kalamazoo's church start fund.

"We decided that the best way to thank classis for their welcoming spirit and nurture was to encourage them directly," said Pastor Michael Vandenberg, a minister with the Reformed Church in America who was called to Hope in 2008. (Synod, the CRC's annual leadership meeting, approved Hope CRC's transfer to Classis Kalamazoo in 2018, partly because Hope was not connected "in either representation or involvement" with the churches of its original classis, Illiana (*Agenda for Synod 2018*, p. 309).)

In its later years Hope CRC had become a congregation of seniors. "We found that those who were most in need of Hope Church were the seniors living around the YMCA (where the church was meeting) and attending their facilities," said Vandenberg.

But many seniors were finding it difficult to get to the YMCA, and when one of the coordinators of a senior living center asked Vandenberg for pastoral care after a cancer diagnosis, the ministry of the church shifted to take services to the people. The church served Greentree Senior Living for five years and added others until Vandenberg was preaching five times a week in five different centers.



The last worship gathering of Hope Community CRC took place Dec. 13, 2020, in the YMCA facility in Lawrence, Ind.

Despite the lively schedule, the COVID-19 pandemic that began sweeping North America in the spring of 2020 made it difficult to serve seniors, but that wasn't the deciding factor as the church council deliberated closing, according to Vandenberg. "Ministries that our small congregation had begun were mostly self-sufficient," Vandenberg said. "Other ministries that were part of our life were now being maintained by other congregations." Worship life, for example, was also happening through other congregations, chaplains, and pastors. "This led (the elders) to believe, after much prayer and discussion, that the time to close was God's direction for Hope Church, but (we) all firmly believed that the congregation would live on in the members and ministries that had been who we were."

Vandenberg said he is proud of Hope Community's congregants, who recognized the gifts they held to be God's. "I think churches get into trouble and confusion when they begin to think of the church's resources as theirs and not God's to move and use as he sees fit," he said.

—Callie Feyen

The Banner published two other stories related to church closure or reinvention this year: "Facing the Realities of When Churches Close" (March, p. 16) and "'Rebirth' for a Wisconsin Church" (July/August, p. 24). Do you have a story of a church coming to grips with closure or transformation? Let us know at news@thebanner.org.

Community ‘Seeks to Live the Good Way of Jesus’



A Christian Reformed pastor in Ontario has started a community that has attracted about 60 people from across different denominations to intentionally live a set of rules or habits intended to draw them into a deeper relationship with God.

Habitus Community is “a redemptive community of practice organizing our lives around the way of Jesus through a common rule of life. We devote ourselves to the recovery of regular but radical Christianity, seeking the renewal of the church and its mission in the world.”

Phil Reinders, new pastor at Clearview Christian Reformed Church in Oakville, Ont., and founder of the Habitus Community, described the purpose of such living. It “seeks to live the good way of Jesus with joy, wisdom, and courage so that the skeptical and suspicious generation would consider Christ and the church would be renewed.”

Reinders began the community in May 2016 as part of a research project during

his doctoral ministry studies. At the time, he was serving at Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto, and he led a group of about 30 people through a practice of following an agreed-upon set of habits, called a “rule of life,” for one year.

The people committed to pray intentionally three times each day; read Scripture daily; detach from digital communication for one hour each day; keep a weekly 24-hour Sabbath; keep weekly fellowship with a triad (a group of three or four people); fast once each week (from what and for how long was decided in the triad); practice weekly hospitality, such as having someone from outside one’s community over for dinner; and keep a yearly retreat.

Habitus Community is entering into its fourth year this fall. Reinders anticipates about 20 people from Clearview CRC will commit to the practice. There are about 10 people from Knox Presbyterian who are committing to another year, plus 20 to 30 additional people from other churches, mainly in Ontario.

Pastor Phil Reinders, in a Habitus Community video, explains the biblical foundations of a rule of life.

Sandy Swartzentruber, resource coordinator for the CRC’s Faith Formation Ministries, said the faith formation team is curious about how the budding Habitus movement might fit with its own five-year emphasis on faith practices, and they’re planning to explore it. “I think being absent from church during COVID (restrictions) has caused many folks to recognize that we cannot expect our pastors and other church leaders to do our faith formation for us—we each need to cultivate personal faith practices as well as corporate ones,” Swartzentruber said.

Reinders welcomes others to explore habituscommunity.org to learn more about the movement or bring the practice of the rule of life to their community.

—Kristen Parker

Permanent Home for Colorado Street Ministry Nearing Completion



A transformation is underway at 9605 and 9617 East Colfax Ave., and when it's complete, Jesus on Colfax Ministries will have a permanent home from which to serve the vulnerable population of the poorest part of Aurora, Colo. It will be a dream come true for Pastor Shawn Sikkema. "That dream was a vague notion in my mind when I spent my first day on Colfax," he said. "I looked into the window of a building, saw mess strewn everywhere, and felt God calling me to pray."

Sikkema and his wife, Diane, started Jesus on Colfax in 2016, moving into a room in one of the 25 old motels lining East Colfax Avenue and ministering in the name of Jesus to those they met there. In 2018, "in what can truly be called a miraculous event," Sikkema wrote in a blog, "we were able to purchase a vacant, 100-year-old, two-building complex on East Colfax." It's that complex, with the help of partner ministries and community investment, that's now being transformed.

On July 29, a Bible study group of men from five different Christian Reformed congregations in the Denver area enjoyed a barbecue and tour. "So many of the people living along Colfax have experienced severe trauma in their lives, and the vision of providing a center for trauma recovery is exciting," said

Shawn and Diane Sikkema give a presentation at what will be the new home for the ministry of Jesus on Colfax.

Donn Hansum, the director of deacon ministries for Classis Rocky Mountain (a regional group of CRC churches) who serves on the ministry's board of directors.

"The name 'Jesus on Colfax' is the right name," said Tom Draayer, a retired CRC pastor and part of the visiting group. "If we are the body of Christ, then truly Jesus is on Colfax through this ministry," he said. Dominic Palacios, pastor at Hope Fellowship CRC, came to the tour that night and counts Sikkema as a mentor and friend. "Shawn's approach to gospel ministry is brave and bold," Palacios said. "Rather than a myopic focus on individual salvation, Shawn seeks a holistic application of the gospel—one in which individuals, city blocks, neighborhoods, and cities are healed."

Rehabilitation of the first of the two buildings is about 80% complete, Sikkema said. They've been able to get this far with contributions of \$100,000 from the Anschutz Foundation, \$250,000 from the City of Aurora, \$400,000 from Denver-area Christian Reformed churches, and more support from individual donors. The ministry's campaign, "A Place to Come To," is working on

acquiring the remaining required funds. Sikkema said they hope to open by the end of the year.

Calvary New City Church, led by Matt and Kayla Horne, will be the lead church partner. A Seat at the Table BBQ will offer "pay what you can" meals and provide job training to individuals returning from prison. World Coffee, which trains immigrant and refugee youth in the coffee business, is another partner. The Family



A men's Bible study group visits the new site July 29.

Room will be a beautiful, safe space where street and motel friends can hang out and connect with resources.

Sikkema is a mission network developer with the CRC's Resonate Global Mission, and the agency has involvement "on a variety of levels," Sikkema said. His ministry is also supported by Sikkema's calling church, Family in Christ Community Church of Westminster, Colo., where Pastor Paul Jorden serves on the Jesus on Colfax board.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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**Christian
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**In Search of Shalom:
Changing Stories of Violence
and Hunger Where We Are**

By Katy Johnson, Victoria Veenstra, and Rebecca Sooksam

“I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace (shalom) to his people, his faithful servants—but let them not turn to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace (shalom) kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.”

—Psalm 85:8-12

In Psalm 85 and elsewhere in the Bible, God promises shalom to his people. But what does shalom look like, and how can it be found in the midst of the pandemic, conflict, injustice, and uncertainty we often find ourselves living in?

In West Africa, a young Christian woman we will call Chioma has nurtured a fierce hunger for shalom. Chioma’s community suffers from the persistent violence of bandits who plunder homes and murder community members, all in a desperate attempt to survive.

While many assume one of the largest threats in West Africa to be Boko Haram, a Muslim terrorist organization, the area where Chioma lives suffers far more from violence flaring up between farmers and herders. Conflict often erupts over the scarce resources of land and water. This has been exacerbated by extreme changes in climate and from population growth that has resulted in people settling on former grazing land.

The violent outbursts between the warring parties reflect a difference not only in vocation but also religion. Herders near Chioma’s home are typically Muslim; most farmers identify as Christian. Both parties have experienced violence at the hands of each other and suffer from pronounced food insecurity.

In fact, economics and hunger are intertwined with the causes of this violence. António Guterres, secretary general of the United Nations, explains:

Conflict and hunger are mutually reinforcing. ... They cannot be resolved separately. Hunger and poverty combine with inequality, climate shocks, and tensions over land and resources to spark and drive conflict.

Likewise, conflict forces people to leave their homes, land, and jobs. It disrupts agriculture and trade, reduces access to vital resources like water and electricity, and so drives hunger and famine.

Chioma works for shalom by using skills in trauma healing to bring hope, healing, and the promise of peace to her West African community.

For years Chioma witnessed this vicious cycle first hand, believing herself powerless to stop it. While her own family and home remained safe, Chioma saw deep suffering in her community, and her heart felt burdened for the young women who were losing their homes and loved ones and being forced to move to a local camp for displaced people.

All along Chioma knew: this is not the shalom God intended for the world.

When World Renew launched a training initiative in 2018 so members of Chioma’s community could learn how to listen to and care for those who have experienced pronounced trauma and how to start building new pathways toward peace, Chioma found herself standing up to participate.

“This is a God-given opportunity for me, and I am very thankful I did not miss it,” she said. “Pray for me to use the skills I have acquired to impact young girls like me who are suffering for no fault of theirs.”

The work has not been glamorous, and the setbacks are numerous. Still, Chioma continues to use the skills she has in healing trauma to bring hope, healing, and the promise of peace to her community. This gradual, everyday work is the calling God has placed on Chioma’s life.

From the comfort of our homes and church pews in Canada and the United States, perhaps we too have felt a bit powerless to change the story of violence, hunger, and climate crisis around the world. We ache for shalom.

Chioma’s story encourages us with the reminder that joining in kingdom work often begins with a small, intentional act. While large, one-time events like a protest, Sunday sermon, or conference might stoke our passions and shake us awake to injustice, these experiences mean nothing if not sustained by daily actions that promote peace and justice in our own communities.

And the truth is that the challenges West Africa is facing with the climate and the economic fallout of COVID-19 are circling the globe. In North America, we no longer have to look very far to see signs of disrupted food production, growing food insecurity, and a lack of shalom.

People at John Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Truro, N.S., have learned to identify and lend a hand to those who might be facing a food crisis. As a town founded on a modern floodplain, Truro can be a difficult place to grow food, making fresh produce in the area quite expensive. The health disparities this creates between high- and low-income families inspired members of the church’s Justice League to reassess their role in loving their neighbors and

has also led many members of the congregation to join the Climate Witness Project (a joint campaign of the CRC's Office of Social Justice and World Renew) as advocates for creation care in their community.

As a result, John Calvin CRC has spent the past seven years developing a community garden on a half acre of its land that is safely removed from the floodplain. With this garden, local families—members or not—can tend their own plots and supplement their diets with fresh vegetables they grow themselves. Most of these families are Truro residents from low-income neighborhoods.

With the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the church watched as the community garden took on added significance for Truro by helping families maintain a measure of food security even in this time of increased economic hardship. At the same time, John Calvin CRC found its gaze widening to those struggling beyond Truro. The congregation began to pray about ways to bring peace and flourishing to more families.

The community of East Preston is about an hour away from Truro. Historically an African Nova Scotian community, it was once a farming community that supplied fresh produce and meat to residents of urban Halifax. However, farming has declined in East Preston, and today there are no grocery stores in the community, making it a modern food desert.

When an elder and a deacon from John Calvin CRC met with three members of the East Preston Ratepayers Association via Zoom in May 2020 to discuss the situation, they learned that pandemic restrictions had created a sense of urgency to increase food production. When the conversation turned to solutions, no one was looking for a quick fix. They were seeking a sustainable approach that could build a foundation for food security far into the future.

The East Preston Ratepayers have a vision of a community that produces food and shares it with each other, restoring the strong bonds of care they used to have. The main barrier to getting started was funding for supplies, such as lumber and soil to create raised garden beds.

With grant money from Diaconal Ministries Canada and World Renew plus additional funds raised by a church offering and a vegetable transplant sale, John Calvin CRC committed to support the East Preston Ratepayers in achieving their vision. Community gardeners also donated dozens of seedlings to the East Preston garden to help it get started.

Church members and neighbors shared their experience of starting a community garden, including the adaptations they made due to COVID-19 restrictions, so that residents of East Preston would be better equipped for success.



Bobby Taylor (left), president of the East Preston Ratepayers, and Yvonne Atwell, another member of the community garden team, stand in front of their newly constructed and planted beds.

One year later, the East Preston garden was up and running, with community members enjoying the fruits of their labor. With minimal support from the congregation at John Calvin CRC, East Preston residents had everything they needed to spread flourishing throughout their community and start changing its food landscape for good.

For Chioma, shalom started with tending to stories of trauma in her community. For John Calvin CRC, shalom began with the choice to change stories of hunger. For both, shalom required them to bear witness to stories of hardship happening right before their eyes.

When the issues affecting hunger and poverty become political, they can sometimes shift us away from the people right in front of us who are hurting. As we seek to faithfully follow our Lord Jesus Christ, we have an opportunity to focus less on the politics of our day and more on the wounded before us. How might God be inviting us to follow in the footsteps of Chioma and John Calvin CRC to cultivate shalom right where we are? **B**

Far-reaching Support for CRCNA Justice Ministries

FROM TERRACE, B.C., to Bridgend, Wales, messages of encouragement, prayer, and support streamed into the Christian Reformed Church in North America's Office of Social Justice early this year after the Council of Delegates made it known that several staff employed in CRCNA's justice ministries had been bullied, harassed, and even threatened by those opposed to their work.

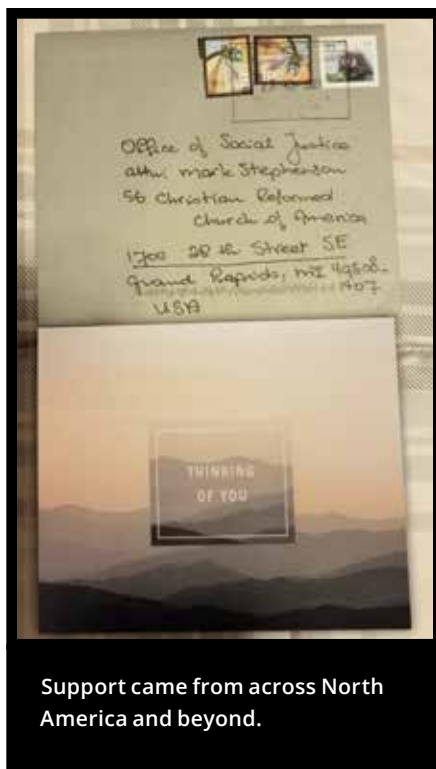
The OSJ was started in 2000 in response to the World Hunger reports adopted by synod in 1979 and 1993. Today this ministry helps CRC members love their neighbors in tangible ways by providing resources to learn about the root causes of poverty, hunger, and oppression and by empowering the church to call on those in power to improve systems and enact just public policy.

Because the work of social justice involves engaging public policies and political systems, the efforts of this ministry often encounter resistance.

"We expect differences of opinion," Mark Stephenson, director of OSJ, told the Council of Delegates. "The problem comes when it's not a difference of opinion but when it's bullying and name-calling and sometimes specific threats."

As word of this mistreatment was shared, letters of support began to stream in. Along with lamenting harm, the messages reverberated with thankfulness and encouragement for continued work toward shalom in the midst of turmoil and injustice.

"I want you to know that, for me, finding your Facebook pages has been a lifesaver during this challenging time," wrote Karen Thompson from Alberta. "I appreciate the knowledge you share and the different perspectives you offer. If not for you I would have struggled to remain involved



in 'church' as so much I'm hearing is against my heart and what I believe is the heart of God."

Messages arrived by postal mail, email, and video messaging. The variety of communication forms and the geographic range of the senders depicted a network of support that speaks to what it means to be the body of Christ: a community of sisters and brothers with diverse skills, resources, and opportunities.

The notes came from individual members, congregations and councils, fellow CRC organizations, and even entire classes. One classis in Canada shared a collective message including these words: "We believe (the work of social justice) is necessary and important work and that the church needs to be engaged in this form of spreading God's love and the good news of the gospel."

OSJ staff were encouraged by this support as well as by the increased financial donations during this period.

Congregations continued to demonstrate support through their participation in OSJ workshops. In a recent Faith in Action training for the Climate Witness Project, staff member Cindy Stover reported on the renewed engagement of people in the U.S. and Canada after a time of decreased opportunities because of the pandemic.

"Before COVID, we used to do (legislature meetings) regularly," she said. "We'd do it as part of delegations, taking people to Ecumenical Advocacy Days." (Ecumenical Advocacy Days is an annual gathering of Christian advocates from around the U.S. worshipping and meeting with legislators together.) "We appreciate this groundswell of support. It helps us move forward confidently in our advocacy work, equipping both Americans and Canadians with the tools they need to feel confident connecting with their legislators on justice issues in their constituencies." 

The View from Here

Justice and the Gospel

OUR WORLD IS REplete with problems! Global conflicts, growing food insecurity, racial inequality, economic disparity—there seems to be an unending list of wrongs that need to be righted. Some have said that these things are a sign of the end times—but are they?

If we scan the Bible, we can find innumerable stories of inequality and injustice. Many of the people living through those experiences had similar feelings to ours today. They wondered why and for how long their situation would endure.

Injustice is not new; it is a sign of our fallen condition. In the Bible and today, God invites us as “called-out ones” to live in the midst of this fallen creation. Each of us is asked to do our part to alleviate the suffering of others and to point to a better way—the way of the Savior and shalom.

In the Bible and today, God invites us as “called-out ones” to live in the midst of this fallen creation.

One example of someone who did just that is Bob Moses, a quiet and unassuming civil rights icon who recently died at the age of 86. Bob was an example of one who saw the wrongs of the world and tried to right them—not in an attention-seeking way, but quietly, caring for others by helping remove impediments to their success. He was a teacher and the originator of The Algebra Project, which improved the educational levels of many poor children across the southern United States.

Bob was a quiet hero, and though we do not read much about his faith story, it should be noted that he was inspired to act by the Southern Christian Leadership Council, a group of pastors and leaders working to uplift their communities.

In a similar way, God calls us to be rooted where we are and to work for God’s justice and kingdom in these places. See Jeremiah 29:7, for example: “Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” We must seek shalom in the places where we have been planted.

This is a difficult calling. It is challenging to live through times and circumstances of injustice. It is difficult to be light and salt in our communities. It is exhausting to work for change and see it come only in increments.

In these times, I am comforted by the words of Jesus: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

God is with us in our messes. God is present and helps us in our distresses. God comforts us in our pains and equips us to comfort others—not just with words, but with everything he provides.

The Christian Reformed Church is described in our vision statement as a collection of healthy churches “transforming lives and communities worldwide.” May we live into the reality of this worthwhile vision.



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

Seeking God's Will 'On Earth as It Is in Heaven'

"SO, WHAT KIND OF CHRISTIANS are you guys? Are you the ones who only care about people's souls?"

The question came from a neighbor. Sam Kamminga, who works as a community chaplain in Halifax, N.S., with Resonate Global Mission and the Trellis Collective—a grassroots, locally based group seeking peace in the community through various initiatives—was helping another neighbor move.

"You tell me," Kamminga said. "What do you see?"

Sometimes global mission work is separated from justice and mercy work, and Christians get a reputation of caring only for people's souls and not whether they have enough food, clean drinking water, or a safe and comfortable place to live. It's one of the reasons Kamminga often meets people who are wary of Christians.

"So many people know the church as preaching something but not embodying what God cares about," he said. "When you're walking with people and discovering God together, then how else can you do it than to live it out with them?"

When Kamminga is getting to know neighbors and reading the Bible with them in his work of unearthing the good news of the kingdom in the city, he often sees and hears about injustices in the community they can't ignore.

"What is God's dream? What does God want?" he asks. "When I read Scripture, I see the big picture is the restoration of all things."

The reconciliation and restoration of all things is part of the good news of the gospel. Kamminga, the Trellis Collective, and their neighbors are working toward God's peace—shalom—in their city, and they come alongside and support one another when they are fighting injustice.



Isaac and Abu, two members of the Trellis Collective, at a neighbor's home in Halifax, N.S. Trellis Collective, a Resonate Global Mission partner, works together with neighbors to seek the peace of the city.

This past winter, for instance, many families in their 3,000-person apartment complex did not have heat. Most of these families had come to the city as refugees from countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, and Syria. Some had lived without heat for several of Halifax's frigid winters.

Many residents, including Kamminga, worked together to resolve this issue. They went first to the complex's management, but when management did not act, they were finally able to get the attention of a fire inspector. It took months of work, but now all residents can stay warm.

The Trellis Collective also knew that many children who recently came to Halifax as refugees weren't learning how to read. With packed classrooms, teachers didn't have the time or resources to give individual attention to so many students, and some students have been advancing grade

levels and even graduating from high school without being able to read.

The neighborhood worked together to rally young adults to work with students in their homes, and in the process they are able to form friendships. Through one relationship at a time, literacy rates are improving among newcomers in the city.

That's often how Kamminga and the Trellis Collective work: from the ground up, working in relationships toward neighbors' well-being. They invite one another into their homes, share meals, and often talk about how they see God present and at work.

"I find that when we are seeking the right relationship of all things—this shalom—then along the way ... we're going to find Jesus in really unique and surprising ways," said Kamminga.

—Cassie Westrate,
Resonate Global Mission

Longing for More in Burkina Faso

MANY MUSLIMS in Antoine's community have looked to him as a leader in the faith. But Antoine had a secret.

As the muezzin in his local mosque in Burkina Faso, West Africa, Antoine is responsible for calling local Muslims to prayer. Yet Antoine doubted that anyone was answering those prayers.

Antoine's struggles began in his home. He and his wife have been longing for a child for a long time, and he said he felt "desperate" in his longing.

Then one day, Antoine and his wife came across a radio program from ReFrame Ministries' French ministry partners in Burkina Faso. The broadcast was a program for families, and it spoke about hope for people in their situation—a hope that is found in the gospel.

Antoine secretly kept listening to this and other programs from ReFrame. He later contacted ReFrame's French ministry team.

"He had so many questions, and he wanted to meet with someone from the ministry team," said Rev. Marc Nabie, ReFrame's French ministry leader.

Offering Reassurance

As more and more people like Antoine came forward, ReFrame recently expanded its outreach team in Burkina Faso. They added two new ministry team members, Esther and David, who are dedicated to following up and visiting with listeners in their region.



Esther is a member of ReFrame's follow-up and discipleship team in Burkina Faso.

"People have many struggles in their lives," Esther said, "but the Word of God and the listening that we offer them reassures them that God takes care."

After meeting with David, Nabie said, "Antoine decided to give himself to Christ. ... But his fight had just begun."

Nabie knows that Antoine will face struggles as a result of his new faith in Christ.

For now, Antoine is keeping his faith a secret. He continues to meet with ReFrame's follow-up team, and he has even attended a Christian church with them a few times.

"Please pray for Antoine," said Nabie, "that Christ will walk with him and that he will stay strong in his faith. Pray also for his conversations with his wife as she considers making a decision for Christ."

—Brian Clark,
ReFrame Ministries

Learning Sign Language for the Church Setting

AT THE DISABILITY CONCERNS

Leadership Training in August 2021, the ministry launched a program titled “Who’s Missing in my Church?”

During the training event, disability concerns advocates heard from allies who spoke about what the church must do to fully engage a younger generation of people living with disabilities.

Trying to practice what they preach, organizers of the training offered closed captioning, simultaneous interpretation to Spanish and Korean, and American Sign Language interpretation. Coreen Gruppuso led the ASL team. Here is her story in her own words:

I have always been fascinated with language, especially American Sign Language. Looking back, I am so thankful I was guided by two significant women in the church on my journey.

I grew up in Bobcaygeon, Ont., where we attended Lindsay Christian Reformed Church (now Jennings Creek CRC). Debbie, the wife of the town’s Baptist pastor, interpreted for a Deaf couple at church.

I was so mesmerized that my mom and I arranged for Debbie to teach me all she knew. But she had not learned sign language from a Deaf person. And to progress, you need to learn the language from someone from the Deaf community.

When I got my driver’s license, I drove Debbie and myself to night school at Fleming College in Peterborough to learn more.

After two years of weekly night classes with her, I was ready to attend the four-year interpreting program at George Brown College in downtown Toronto. Sadly, while I was in college, Debbie passed away.



Coreen Gruppuso recently provided American Sign Language interpretation for a Disability Concerns leadership training.

During my time at GBC, my husband and I attended Clearview CRC because they had ASL interpretation. There I was able to watch, learn from, and be mentored by another woman, Nellie. She had graduated from GBC too and was the support I needed to get experience interpreting in a church setting.

I improved my interpreting skills at Clearview while giving back to the church community in a way that is so meaningful for me.

I continue to use my ASL interpreting skills in medical and community settings. Within my current church, North Bramalea United Church, I am involved in the Affirming Ministry process, wanting to make our church more inclusive for all people.

—Coreen Gruppuso and Becky Jones,
Disability Concerns

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Old Testament

Responsibilities to begin July 1, 2022

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Applications submitted by **November 15, 2021** will receive preferred processing.

We also anticipate openings (full-time or adjunct or affiliate faculty) in the following areas or combinations: New Testament, Philosophical Theology, Preaching/Communication, Latino/na Ministry Program Leadership and would welcome applications and nominations for these positions as well.

We want faculty members who engage students, the church, and the wider culture through teaching, mentoring, preaching and scholarship.

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Molly, Faith Hospice Nurse

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Dragonflies

DRAGONFLIES are among my favorite insects. I have always enjoyed their acrobatics, but one of the first times I really became a fan was when I was fishing in Canada.

A cousin and I had been getting eaten up by mosquitoes when a “flight” of five or six dragonflies joined us. At first we thought they were just dodging around us as they darted to and fro while we fished, but then an interesting thing happened. One snatched a mosquito right off of my arm. In a few minutes the mosquitoes were gone—the dragonflies had eaten them all!

To me, the most interesting thing about dragonflies is their life cycle. When we think about dragonflies, we might think they are the fighter jets of the insect world: fast-moving, highly maneuverable insects that control each of their four wings separately. But this is not how we should think of them.

Dragonflies spend the vast majority of their lives as nymphs. You might have seen these nymphs and not realized what they were, but more than likely you have passed them by in lakes, rivers, or streams. Dragonflies spend up to four years living in the underwater muck. Like their parents, nymphs are voracious predators of any other larvae or nymphs they catch in the muck, but just like adult dragonflies, they are harmless to humans. God has given them a body shaped like a decaying leaf, so they seem to disappear in the clutter on the bottom of a lake or river. Once a nymph matures, it climbs up a weed, dock, or lily pad, and an adult dragonfly emerges.

To me this seems like the way we should view our lives. We tend to think of ourselves as adult dragonflies, but in reality we are nymphs. We spend our lives in the muck, but we don't know any differently. But someday we will! Someday Jesus will come again, all of the sin and pain and sadness we experience on this earth will fall away, and creation will be restored. We will experience something we cannot even imagine at this point. We will be the dragonflies!

So the next time you see a dragonfly, remember: restoration is coming! **B**



Clayton Lubbers teaches science at Byron Center (Mich.) Christian School and has been teaching for more than 25 years. He loves the outdoors and commonly meets and sees God while hunting, fishing, or exploring creation.





Abraham Kuyper: Cancel or Celebrate?

By Michael Wagenman

When I was growing up, my parents took us to visit extended family in the southern United States. I was too young then to understand some of what I experienced. My relatives had a different flag in their front yard. Only later did I learn it was a Confederate flag. Sometimes I wasn't allowed to swim in the community pool. Only later did I hear my relatives explain that the Black neighbors made the water "dirty."

Of all our extended family members, these relatives were my favorite. They burned their trash in the backyard, and I was a child fascinated by fire. They had a pinball machine under their front porch! But as I grew up, my love for them became conflicted as I realized that they were deeply (even violently) racist. For many years, this was a confusing and disorienting problem for me: how to love family who were deeply broken themselves and abusive toward others.

Then I met Abraham Kuyper, another complex person. I devoured Kuyper's many writings and his world of thought. I loved his passion for teaching the embodiment of Christian faith in a culture that was rapidly becoming secular, and I loved the courageous

way he faced seemingly insurmountable challenges with energy and principle. The world-engaging form of Christian life he articulated and practiced resonated deeply with my own commitment to Christian engagement in public life.

But I've felt an uneasy feeling with Kuyper similar to what I felt with my extended family. Why was Kuyper connected with South African apartheid? Why is Kuyper dragged into today's American political wars? How do we appreciate and retain Kuyper's insights while also being clear about where he got things wrong? How do we celebrate Kuyper today—or is he someone we must cancel?

Who Was Kuyper?

Kuyper appears in the history of the CRCNA, but many today might have only a vague awareness of his idea that "every square inch" of life belongs to Christ. Kuyper was one of the great Dutch cultural critics, church reformers, and institution builders at the dawn of the 20th century. Especially for post-World War II Dutch immigrants to Canada, he is a key inspiration for how Christian faith takes robust shape. Even after his death more than a century ago, his vision of Christians bearing witness to their faith in all of life inspires a growing global community.

Kuyper is an essential teacher for a world-engaging Christian discipleship and witness that arises from neither a conservative nor a liberal agenda. Kuyper's ideas even had similarities to theological and philosophical developments far after his lifetime, such as attention to power dynamics within society—an important issue today.

Yet his complexity persists because Kuyper was unhelpfully ambiguous on issues of race. His thought is uncomfortably open to a variety of interpretations, some deeply problematic. It is this element of Kuyper's legacy, as well as how Kuyper's ideas have been (mis)used, that warrants more reflection. How do we learn from Kuyper while simultaneously maintaining a critical posture toward the ongoing development and refinement of the Kuyperian tradition? To put it concisely, how do we love and learn from Kuyper when he, like all of us, was a deeply complex, fallible individual?

Kuyper's Context

To understand historical figures, we must understand their historical contexts. We are deeply shaped by our time and place. The dominant ideas and assumptions that surround us shape how we respond to the questions of our day. Because Kuyper died a century ago, his historical context

is unfamiliar to many. Two main elements are worth highlighting.

Kuyper was born not long after the European Enlightenment era, an age marked by the emergence of a new, scientific way of knowing the world. New ideas and discoveries rooted in new technologies opened up a whole new perspective on the world around and within. Authority shifted from divine revelation or the proclamations of the institutional church to what could be proven by the scientific method.

It was called the “Enlightenment” because this new way of knowing was viewed as a new dawn after humanity had fumbled in intellectual darkness and ignorance for millennia. As a consequence of this new perspective, European civilization assumed itself to be superior to those “primitive” peoples and cultures still living in the darkness of religious superstition.

As Europeans were exploring and “discovering” other parts of the world, their experiences reinforced their sense of superiority as well as their sense of responsibility to bring “civilization” to the “savages” they encountered. Many European countries, including the Netherlands, saw it as their political and religious duty to expand their “superior,” “civilized,” and scientific way of life into the “new worlds” across the oceans via colonization.

In this way, the Enlightenment built upon what we call today the “doctrine of discovery”: the worldview rooted in legal and church proclamations from the 15th to 18th centuries that deemed non-Europeans inferior and unable to hold legal rights, land titles, or political sovereignty. And so, in the U.S. and Canada, North America’s Indigenous peoples lost their place, and the “empty land” (Latin: *terra nullius*) was simply claimed for European crowns.

A result of this attitude of superiority is a desire to forcefully control and rearrange the world socially and politically. For Kuyper, the prime example of the Enlightenment’s proud grasp

of political power was the French Revolution (1789-99). Traditional forms of society rooted in aristocracy and religious hierarchy were violently overthrown (just think of the guillotine).

Kuyper viewed this revolutionary spirit as fundamentally opposed to orderly Christian faith and life. Instead, wrongs needed reformation (organic self-correction) over time rather than revolution overnight. And since the French Revolution was stridently atheistic, Kuyper sought to safeguard a place for Christian belief by advocating for pluralism within society (sometimes called pillarization) with a legal right for all confessional beliefs in the public square.

Diversity, therefore, grew out of Kuyper’s theology of creation and culture. Kuyper believed that God, being the creator, had woven potentials into the creation—potentials that human activity would discover and unfold over time. Kuyper called these the “spheres” of human culture and asserted that God had normed the proper functioning of each one. Kuyper believed that diversity is integral to God’s creative purpose.

But this diversity, he thought, functioned best within clear distinctions. This is where Kuyper’s uneasy legacy on issues of race and culture emerges.

Kuyper’s Legacy

The exact relationship between Kuyper or his theology and South African apartheid is a much-debated topic. But the proximity of Kuyper to apartheid (in the state and/or the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa) is one of the most disconcerting elements of his legacy.

The South African Black Reformed theologian H. Rossel Botman has shown that Kuyper has both an oppressive and a liberative legacy. Kuyper’s oppressive legacy can be seen in the racially segregated mission policies of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa. It appears

that apartheid took inspiration from Kuyper’s cultural distinctions but extended them to rigid separations between peoples, assuming that different peoples should live (and develop in time) separately from each other without comingling.

As European colonization continued in the centuries leading up to Kuyper’s lifetime, this general value of cultural separation morphed into an adversarial attitude toward non-Europeans. One scholar describes this as a European attitude of “over-against-ness” toward foreigners. American theologian Martin Marty has noted that the value of “separateness” and the attitude of “over-against-ness” emerge whenever churches attempt to navigate the uncomfortable complexities of diversity.

Therefore, when Kuyper’s ideas arrived in the tense racial landscape of South Africa, this European value of separation and attitude of “over-against-ness” combined to create an assumption among white people that the best way to manage diversity would be to legislate barriers between themselves and indigenous South Africans. This is the basic shape Kuyper’s oppressive legacy has regarding South African apartheid.

This is also the pattern we see in how Europeans related to indigenous North Americans during colonization. Canada’s residential schools and the relocation to reservations were an attempt to exert this European attitude of enforced separateness.

Kuyper’s liberative legacy, on the other hand, receives far less attention. While some used Kuyper to construct apartheid, it was also Kuyper’s theology that empowered Black Reformed South Africans (and some Dutch South Africans, who often paid dearly for supporting their Black brothers and sisters) in their fight to dismantle apartheid. In fact, it was Kuyper’s worldview rooted in Christ (rather than culture or political ideology) that produced the Belhar Confession, the first Reformed confession that emerged from outside Europe. Because

of Kuyper, Black Reformed Christians asserted that only God is sovereign and that God sides with the poor and marginalized for justice and against colonial domination.

Kuyper's "Address to the Members of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Societies" in London is a good example of his alternative to white/European superiority. As the trans-Atlantic slave trade was winding down, Kuyper argued that Christians must respect the dignity of non-Europeans. Given the culture of the day, Kuyper's attitude is hopeful.

Black South African theologians recognize that most of Kuyper's public career was spent safeguarding social justice (not only white justice) in the midst of political, economic, and religious revolution. Black South Africans perceived this liberative legacy because they occupied a very different social location. They read Kuyper and celebrated his values of justice, diversity, and equality.

I am certainly not the first to wonder why, when Black South Africans expressed their faith in the form of the Belhar Confession, many white Reformed Christians paid little attention to Kuyper's liberating legacy. Part of the answer lies in how his oppressive legacy continues to receive more attention and emphasis than his liberating legacy still today.

Kuyper Today

In North America today, we face massive social challenges: diversity, justice, and reconciliation, to name just a few. These are all attempts at decolonization, or what the Christian Canadian scholar Grace Ji-Sun Kim calls the process of liberating diverse peoples from the destructive European attitude of superiority that has become enshrined in law and culture. The church is learning how to live after Christendom (when the church had primary civic power). North American society is currently sifting through and reexamining its European heritage in light of the new value we place on equity, diversity,

and inclusion. How does Kuyper fit into this process?

First, we must recognize that ideas can be used in liberating or oppressing ways. Much of how we receive Kuyper today is rooted in our worldview. Worldviews are the implicit value systems through which we interpret the world. One of the primary ways our worldviews are shaped today in North America is along a conservative/liberal divide. But this is not the same as Kuyper's liberating legacy versus his oppressive legacy. We need to be clear that how we read and apply Kuyper today depends on the worldview through which we receive him.

Second, there are many ways we could (unfortunately, to my way of thinking) sustain Kuyper's oppressive legacy, such as highlighting the "separateness" or "over-against-ness" of Dutch/European ancestry versus others in our diverse society. It would take the shape of assuming that European theology or white culture are normative and that everything else needs an adjective tacked on to show its "lesser" status ("Black theology" or "Indigenous culture," for example). Kuyper's oppressive legacy is evident when power or leadership is assumed to be hierarchical or when differences are deemed to be dangers. It's an oppressive move to draw bold lines between "us" and "them" and then assume that "we" are superior and "they" must be excluded.

Third, the opportunities presented by Kuyper's liberating legacy today are numerous. That legacy gives prophetic voice and concrete paths for social justice, reconciliation, and hospitality in our broken and alienated world. Those of us who are white/European can listen to voices and experiences that are different from ours with genuine interest and a willingness to learn and change. We can prayerfully and receptively study the Belhar Confession to hear the cries of the poor and marginalized and commit ourselves to welcoming and serving our neighbors. In these ways, we could celebrate our beautifully diverse world with Kuyper guiding us.

We face two main challenges in living downstream from Kuyper today. The first challenge is the complex task of bringing our historical tradition forward into the present in a nuanced and discerning way. If we attempt to put Kuyper on a pedestal and uncritically or woodenly apply his ideas today without appreciating his historical and cultural context (as well as our own), we are guaranteed to run into more problems. Theology becomes a dominating force when divorced from its original context and unreflectively imposed on new and different contexts.

The second challenge is more straightforward: are we followers of the God we come to know in and through Jesus Christ, or of Abraham Kuyper? As I've journeyed with Kuyper, I've become more convinced that he can lead us to be the liberating hands and feet of Jesus in the world today—but only where Kuyper points us to follow Jesus, not himself or some ideology. We must abandon our visions of superiority over others and confess with Kuyper that it is only in Jesus Christ that the global human community can hear God's transformative words of life. B



Michael Wagenman is the Christian Reformed campus minister at Western University in London, Ont. He teaches New Testament at Redeemer University and is Senior Research Fellow at the Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology (Cambridge, U.K.). He has written about

Abraham Kuyper in *The Power of the Church* (2020) and *Engaging the World with Abraham Kuyper* (2018). He blogs at "Faith in Scholarship" (thinkfaith.net/fisch/blog).

1. How do you feel about Abraham Kuyper and his legacy, especially his legacy and influence in the Christian Reformed Church?
2. Have you heard/read about Kuyper's racist ideas before? In what context? What was your reaction?

READ MORE ONLINE

Using Talents to Share the Gospel

My talents as a graphic designer allowed me to create the pictured artwork, which I have used to share the good news.



Fred Stringer is actively retired in Orangeville, Ont. He is a graphic designer who also did ministry in prisons, Extencicare, retirement and nursing homes. He attends Orangeville Christian Reformed Church.

MANY PEOPLE have personal skills and talents that can be used to share the gospel. Quilters, for example, can talk while working together on a large project, and conversation can turn to spiritual subjects.

My talents as a graphic designer allowed me to create the pictured artwork, which I have used to share the good news (Isa. 52:7; Luke 8:1).

To make the piece, I used electrical conduits (bent with the heat from a stove), 4-by-8-foot wallboard (background), wood (frame), modeling clay (wheat), plaster (clouds), latex paint, and cardboard (hands). Each element of the piece represents a characteristic of God or a part of the Christian life.

Most of us eat bread every day in some form or another. The wheat kernels at the top of the stalks remind us to feed on Jesus, the living bread of life, and on the Word of God by faith and with thanksgiving (John 6:51, Matt. 4:4).

The three stalks of wheat represent our triune God: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Further down is a red cross, representing the shed blood at the crucifixion of our Lord (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

These symbols remind us of the communion we take, the bread and red juice or wine representing our Lord's broken body and shed blood (Matt. 26:26-28).

The clouds tell us that the sun has set but will rise again.


In the background are two other crosses as there were at Golgotha. The man hanging on the left cross said, "This man has done nothing wrong. ... Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:41-42).

Finally we come to the raised hands, each with a drop of blood on it. One might ask why the hands are raised.



Are they hands of praise, hands asking for mercy, or hands asking for forgiveness? (Ps. 28:2; 34:2).

Such a question is open-ended, and one must ask, "Why are *my* hands raised?"

The main reason for using my God-given talents now is to invite people to have a cup of tea or coffee, and when they ask about the contents of the huge mural, the opportunity is provided, visually and audibly, to present the gospel. 

Theological Malpractice

There is enormous pressure in the church today to build a curriculum that is contemporary and to produce young leaders who will draw a crowd.



Gary M. Burge, Ph.D., is dean of the faculty and professor of the New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary. He has served there since 2017 and attends Church of the Servant in Grand Rapids, Mich.

“YOU SHOULD NOT TRUST SCIENCE. The Scriptures make this clear. When Paul was admonishing his young friend Timothy, he wrote, ‘O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith.’”

A friend had sent me a link to a large church’s website and encouraged me to listen to the previous week’s sermon. She was thinking about joining. I was only marginally interested and skimmed emails while the video played. But when I heard these lines, I froze. *What? What was that?* Rewind and replay. There it was.

I have a reasonable acquaintance with the New Testament and had never heard this before. I immediately paused the sermon, opened a Bible software app, and ran a comprehensive search of the Bible in four common translations. Not there. I then ran a Google search and found it in the King James translation of 1611. It was from 1 Timothy 6:20-21, and a quick glance at my Greek New Testament immediately showed me the error. I decided I was listening to a bit of theological malpractice.

The Aims of Theological Education

As dean of the faculty at Calvin Seminary I spend a lot of time thinking about how we shape pastors. Our entire faculty thinks about this. The church counts on us because we are sending newly minted pastors into leadership, and we prefer they avoid malpractice.

There is enormous pressure in the church today to build a curriculum that is contemporary and to produce young leaders who will draw a crowd. Traditionalists will disdain both of these ideas. But both also bear some truth. Each generation requires

leaders who can understand the modern landscape and speak to it successfully. And certainly these leaders should be winsome, authentic, honest, and intriguing enough that we listen to them out of interest, not duty. Audiences know when all of these things are at work in a person—and they gravitate to the pastoral leader who has mastered them.

The Great Temptation

However, we live in an era where theological education is on a downswing. Major nondenominational churches are growing, led by men and women who are remarkably talented but have no use for a seminary degree. I have had the privilege of working alongside many of them. They are bright, self-educated, passionate, and always excellent communicators. As one lead pastor told me, the key question in hiring is: *Can a person move the room?* Has this become the first criterion for pastoral leadership?

When I attend these churches, quite honestly, I enjoy them. They are vibrant, contemporary affairs with dynamic music, fantastic screen work, worship leaders who really lead, and speakers who know how to speak. And promoting these good virtues is what is on an upswing. Large churches like this shop for the great leader/speaker, not the contemplative pastor/theologian. Today the question isn’t “Are you a solid theologian?” The question is “Do you have what it takes to generate growth and vibrancy?”

In their private moments—when they trust me—many of these leaders will share a secret: they all wish they had more academic study in their background.

So here is the catch: How do you build a seminary for the future that anchors students in the solid, time-tested academic preparation of the past?




And how do you do this without diluting students' passion? How do you create an environment where faculty are as energized as students are and where inspiration is a four-course meal served daily? How do you find the courage to throw out old curricula and refurbish what's left into something new and responsible and vibrant? Will your denomination let you do this? Will the older generations let you do this? What about the senior professors?

Theological Malpractice

I know it is severe to use the words "theological malpractice" about a pastor. But I don't know what else to call it. One of the largest churches in southern California is led by a person who didn't go to college. I find his sermons astonishing. The pastor in this online sermon had no theological education either. My friend told me that Jesus didn't go to seminary, so our pastors shouldn't either. I'm still stewing over that one.

1 Timothy 6:20 is Paul's warning to Timothy to avoid what will distract him from the true faith. The Revised Standard Version handles it well. Timothy should avoid the "contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge." The Greek word here is *gnosis* (knowledge), which had an important and technical use in Paul's day. In the 1600s, the Latin word *scientia*

meant "knowledge" and came from *scio* (to know). This is the origin of our modern word "science." That modern term, therefore, is not the same as Paul's word *gnosis*, but it was the right word 400 years ago when the King James Version was created. Thus the King James Version inadvertently misleads us today.

Should a pastoral leader know this? Is this leader responsible for representing our Scriptures accurately—as accurately as we expect our attorneys, engineers, and doctors to know their respective subjects? This is the dilemma. This online pastor leads an enormous church of 12,000 people and enjoys a tremendous following, but he preaches ill-informed, popular sermons. I hope seminaries like Calvin throughout the continent will reclaim their role of providing essential training for leaders like this. 

1. What are some of the most memorable sermons you have heard, for good or ill?
2. What do you think should be the aims of good theological education?
3. If you have to choose between solid theological teaching and great inspirational speaking, which would you choose? Why?

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

Britney Through the Eyes of Faith

I'LL NEVER FORGET the day my then-agent asked me if I'd be interested in writing a book with pop star Britney Spears' mom. "Hit me, baby, one more time," I might have said had I not been so shocked.

Lynne Spears was looking for a Christian to collaborate with on a "devotional," which ultimately became *Through the Storm*, Lynne's deeply Christian memoir and 2008 *New York Times* best seller. I was already the author of seven or eight Christian books and an entertainment writer for *The Grand Rapids Press*.

I didn't know much about Lynne then, but I knew she would have a humdinger of a story to tell. From the time I first met her in 2007, I was on the ride of a lifetime, a rollercoaster that, after a decade of quiet, has me buckling my seatbelt again as Britney's contentious conservatorship rides the waves of the news cycle.

I've been keeping up with the latest on Britney and her conservatorship, and there's no end of articles to read. But as someone who had a front-row seat to Britney's life in 2007 and 2008, including the beginnings of the conservatorship, I think there is a missing piece: Britney through the eyes of faith.

As I got to know her mom extremely well over a year and a half of writing the book (through some of the family's most tumultuous times), I observed an unshakeable faith in Lynne. I witnessed a fierce and loyal Christian community that gave Lynne shelter and guidance as she faced circumstances that would have left most of us curled up in the fetal position. I knew God was moving in that family and continues to do so. I began to view Britney differently—not as a glittery cautionary tale, but as a dearly loved child of God and a cherished daughter.

Once again, Britney is on everyone's minds. Some people continue to judge her, while others worship and obsess about her. As we watch her claw her way to freedom, we've again lost sight of her as a human being, handcrafted by God in his image.

Fellow believers, let's not fail Britney again. During her first round of troubles in 2007 and 2008, instead of praying for her and rooting for her as a sister who had been crushed by the weight of crazy fame (a kind of unnatural attention we as humans were never designed to bear), mental illness, and a broken family, we judged her and consumed her like a product.

Let's do better now as Britney struggles to gain her freedom from a conservatorship. What can you and I do? I can bear witness to the truth as I saw it 13 years ago when I wrote at the end of our book about the beginnings of the conservatorship. But we can all remember Britney's createdness and belovedness in God's eyes. We can pray that Britney would be free, in every sense of the word, and that justice would roll down like a mighty river for her. And we can remind ourselves that God is redeeming Britney's story just as he makes all things new in all our lives. **B**



Lorilee Craker, a native of Winnipeg, Manitoba, lives in Grand Rapids, Mich., in a 1924 house full of teenagers, pets, exchange students, and houseplants. The author of 15 books, including *Anne of Green Gables*, *My Daughter and Me*,

she is the Mixed Media editor of *The Banner*. Find her at Lorileecraker.com or on Instagram @thebooksellersdaughter.

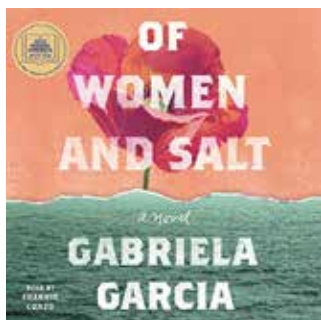


Under the Tulip Tree

By Michelle Shocklee

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In this novel set in the 1930s, Rena struggles to find meaningful work as a writer, her life's passion. Let go from her job as a local newspaper reporter, Rena learns about the Federal Writers' Project, a government initiative to provide work for unemployed writers with the goal of interviewing former slaves and preserving their stories for posterity. At first Rena keeps her new job a secret from her family because of their discriminatory attitudes toward Black people. Rena herself questions whether she should participate in the project because her ancestors were slave owners. In *Under the Tulip Tree*, author Michelle Shocklee combines historical events, gentle romance, realistic characterization, and biblical truth to offer adults a rewarding fiction-reading experience. (Tyndale)



Of Women and Salt (Audiobook)

By Gabriela Garcia, narrated by Frankie Corzo

Reviewed by Michelle Loyd-Paige

This debut novel by Gabriela Garcia is a sweeping tale of sacrifice, sorrow, struggle, and dreams of a better life in multiple generations of a Cuban family. Carmen and her family eventually move to the United States. Woven into the story of Carmen and her daughter Jeanette is the story of Anna, brought from El Salvador to the United States as a child. One day Anna's mother is taken into custody by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, but Anna is not. What happens next has consequences beyond their imagination. Narrator Frankie Corzo doesn't change her voice for characters to differentiate them. Her voice is earthy and has a fitting weariness to it. *Note: This book contains strong language, stories of illegal drug use and addiction, violence, and sexual encounters. 7 hours, 7 minutes. (Audible)*

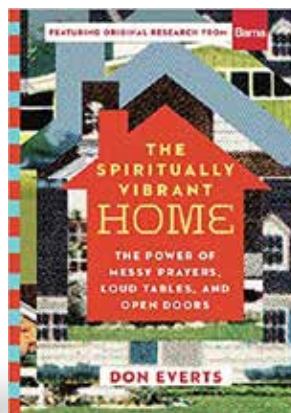


Tales from My Grandpa's Pulpit

By Annie Moses Band

Reviewed by Paul Delger

Sometimes one must savor every morsel of a favorite food or album. The Annie Moses Band's latest project, *Tales from My Grandpa's Pulpit*, is a musical project to be savored. The sibling band offers a heavy dose of country, some folk, and some rock 'n' roll. The incredible instrumentation blends fiddle and guitar with awe-inspiring harmony. The album covers old hymns, such as "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" and "Everlasting Arms," and even an old country folk song, "Ghost Riders in the Sky." "One of the great figures in our family history was our grandpa, who was the preacher and the deputy sheriff in a small mountain community in Oklahoma," said lead singer Annie Dupree. "This album is our ode to him." (Gaither Music Group)



The Spiritually Vibrant Home

By Don Everts

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

As I read this short book with lots of colorful pictures and graphs, I grew more excited about the possibilities for increasing the spiritual vibrance of my home through three main practices: "messy prayers" (making prayer and Scripture a regular, organic part of our daily lives), "loud tables" (engaging in spiritual conversations about anything and everything), and "open doors" (going from isolated, private "submarine life" to becoming more of a "rescue ship" via hospitality). Weaving original research from the Barna Group, candid and relatable anecdotes, and keen insight, this book offers households (a term mentioned 2,100 times in the Bible) a practical blueprint for becoming "warm, beautiful outposts for the kingdom of God." (IVP)

The Lowdown

Differences That Remain: In *Five Things Theologians Wish Biblical Scholars Knew*, theologian Hans Boersma highlights five things he wishes biblical scholars knew about theology so that these disciplines might once again serve the church hand in hand. (IVP Academic)

From Amy Grant to Lecrae: This documentary reveals *The Jesus Music's* untold story, from its humble beginnings at the Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, Calif., through its transformation into the multi-billion-dollar industry of Christian contemporary music today. (Kingdom Studios)

Modern Love, Season 2: Amazon's anthology inspired by the New York Times' "Modern Love" column is coming back for eight more stories of romance and heartbreak. Like Season 1, Season 2 has a stacked cast that includes Lucy Boynton, Dominique Fishback, Garrett Hedlund, Minnie Driver, Anna Paquin, and many others. (Amazon Prime)

Stylish and Propulsive: Amor Towles, the best-selling author of *A Gentleman in Moscow* and master of absorbing, sophisticated fiction, returns with *The Lincoln Highway*, a stylish and propulsive novel set in 1950s America. (Viking)

What Does It Mean That Man Is Totally Depraved?

Often the doctrine of total depravity is interpreted to mean that we are horribly evil or as depraved as we can be.



Felix Fernandez is pastor of South Kendall Community Church in Miami, Fla.


WHEN I WAS GROWING UP in church, the analogy that the fiery evangelist loved to use to compel the lost to come to Christ was that of a person drowning out at sea. All they needed to do, he said, was take hold of the life preserver called the gospel of Christ, and they would be pulled to safety. At the time the appeal was very stirring for me. Who would want to drown when salvation was within your grasp? However, as I grew older and my understanding of passages like Ephesians 2:1 became grounded in the Reformed doctrine of total depravity, my image of those lost at sea went from being a search and rescue mission to becoming a search and recovery one.

God's Word says in Ephesians 2:1, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins." The apostle Paul was describing the Ephesians' spiritual state before they came to faith in Christ. They were spiritually dead, unable to take a breath spiritually, much less reach out for a life preserver in order to save themselves. That's the key to understanding the doctrine of total depravity.

Often the doctrine of total depravity is interpreted to mean that we are horribly evil or as depraved as we can be (often described as "worm theology"). However, Jesus teaches us that even sinful people are capable of demonstrating compassion and generosity. In Matthew 7:9-11, Jesus says, "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" The reason a father can give his hungry son bread and fish to eat is that the father on earth, though evil, is still made in the image of the Father in heaven. We are still image bearers!

The focus of the doctrine of total depravity is our inability to respond to the gospel proclamation with faith and repentance apart from the grace of God. Why? R.C. Sproul once said, "God just doesn't throw a life preserver to a drowning person. He goes to the bottom of the sea, and pulls a corpse from the bottom of the sea, takes him up on the bank, breathes into him the breath of life and makes him alive."

Another way to look at the doctrine of total depravity is to compare it to a coin. One side reveals that because we are spiritually dead, we are unable to respond to the gift of salvation God offers to us through his Son, Jesus Christ. But the other side of the coin declares that through the grace of God, the Holy Spirit is more than capable of pulling corpses from the bottom of the ocean and performing spiritual CPR on them. And after the Spirit has breathed spiritual life into us, we are transformed.

"As a result," the Canons of Dort say, "a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant" (Art. 16, The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine). And it is only after the Holy Spirit has completed his search and recovery mission by breathing spiritual life into us that we are enabled not only to respond to the gospel with faith and repentance, but also to love one another as Christ has loved us. 

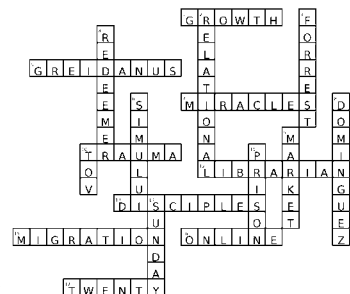
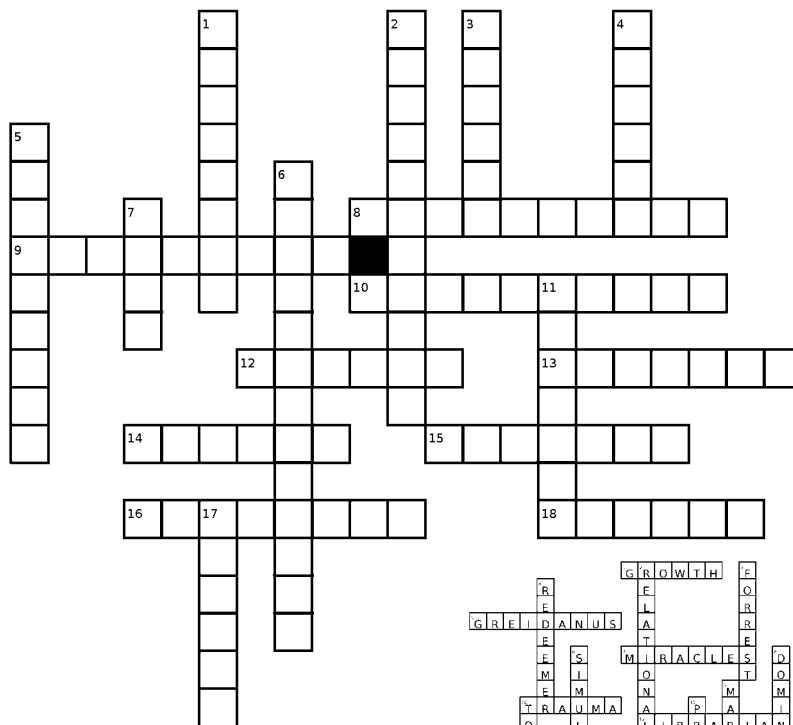
Find the answers to the crossword clues in this issue of *The Banner*. See the solution in the next issue!

Down

1. Our world is replete with this
2. Bad pastors can be guilty of this kind of malpractice
3. This kind of health should be given more consideration in prisons
4. The author of *Of Women and Salt*
5. Total _____ is often described as “worm theology”
6. A new online series looks at these
7. In Orange City, Iowa, First CRC has the only working one of these
11. A community centered around a “rule of life”
17. This Christian rapper is one of many artists profiled in *The Jesus Music*

Across

8. A CRC Olympian plays this sport
9. Author of the poem published in this issue
10. Northern _____ Church runs a car repair ministry
12. Jesus on _____ is a Colorado street ministry
13. The pop star trying to be free of her conservatorship
14. Theologian with an “oppressive” and “liberative” legacy
15. Sometimes global mission work is separated from this
16. Genuine spiritual revival is this
18. What God promises in Psalm 85



Answers to the September 2021 puzzle

Support CRC ministry with a direct gift from your IRA!

Benefits to you. . .

- It is an easy and tax-wise way to make a gift
- Charitable gifts from your IRA can fulfill your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD)
- You benefit even if you don't itemize deductions on your tax returns since distributions made directly to the CRC and its ministries are not treated as taxable income
- IRA gifts can fulfill any charitable giving pledge you have already made

IRA Charitable Gift conditions. . .

- IRA holder must be age 70 1/2 or older
- Gifts must be made directly to a charity
- Gifts may be made from traditional IRAs and Roth IRAs
- You can give up to \$100,000 per year tax-free
- Your gift must be received before December 31 to qualify

Do you have questions about supporting the CRC ministries by giving from your IRA? We're here to help! Call 1-800-272-5125 or email advancement@crcna.org



DEADLINES: 10/4/21 November; 11/1/21 December. Subject to availability. Details online. Advertising in *The Banner* does not imply editorial endorsement.

PRICES: Most ads are \$0.43^{US} per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.36^{US} per character and \$60 per photo applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements.

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

Denominational Announcements

CLASSIS NORTH CASCADES will be holding its fall classis meeting on October 21, 2021 at 7 pm in the Second Christian Reformed Church of Lynden, WA. Agendas will be published on the classis website as they become available. <https://clerknorthcascades.wixsite.com/classis/programs>

Congregational Announcements

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION October 5, 2021, marks the 70th anniversary of the ordination of Rev. Leonard J. Hofman as a minister in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Rev. Hofman was ordained on October 5, 1951, in Wright CRC, Kanawha, Iowa. He subsequently pastored the CRC congregations of Kenosha, WI, North Street, Zeeland, MI, Ridgewood, Jenison, MI, and Bethany, Holland, MI, followed by twelve years as Stated Clerk and General Secretary of the denomination. After retirement in 1994, Rev. Hofman served eight years as secretary of the Interchurch Relations Committee of the CRCNA. He is a member of Shawnee Park CRC in Grand Rapids, MI. His family and his many parishioners thank God for 70 years of faithful ministry.

WINTER WORSHIP IN BRADENTON, FL Bradenton Chapel invites you to join us for Sunday Worship and Wed. Bible Study. Visit our website at bradentonchapel.com

Church Positions Available

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.

IMMANUEL CRC WAPPINGERS FALLS, NY SEEKS LEAD PASTOR to take our small dynamic congregation into the future. Please contact Mike Toth at mi.toth@yahoo.com for our church profile and any further info.

LEAD PASTOR - Aylmer CRC is prayerfully seeking a Lead Pastor to join our ministry team. The Lead Pastor we are seeking would ideally be self-motivated, compassionate, devoted to providing engaging preaching, passionate

about nurturing spiritual growth, and able to equip us for community outreach. If you would like to live and work in the beautiful, thriving town of Aylmer, Ontario, conveniently located near the shores of Lake Erie and close to larger urban centers, we would like 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. Housing is available if needed.

LEAD PASTOR Covenant CRC in Cutlerville, MI is seeking a Lead Pastor with gifts in Biblical preaching and spiritual leadership to help our congregation in their spiritual formation and to live out our mission of being "Captivated by God's Grace; Compelled to Love" to the community around us. The job description and church profile are available on our website www.covenant-crc.org/open-positions/ Applicants can send their resume or questions to: search@covenant-crc.org

LEAD PASTOR Mill Creek Community Church (MCCC) is actively seeking a full-time Lead Pastor who is passionate about nurturing our spiritual growth and equipping us for community outreach. We are prayerfully searching for a seasoned Pastor whose Biblical messages are enlightening and relevant, within a dynamic and inspiring worship. MCCC is located in Mill Creek, Washington, in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. If this position sounds like something you feel lead to be a part of, please contact the church office: Millcreekchurch@comcast.net or the church office at: 425-745-2094

PASTOR First CRC in beautiful Thunder Bay, ON is seeking a full-time pastor to lead our congregation. Please email your resume or inquiries to search@fcrctbay.ca.

SENIOR PASTOR American Protestant Church of The Hague, Netherlands. For over 65 years, the American Protestant Church of The Hague (APCH) has been a "home away from home" for both expatriate and resident English-speaking Christians. Our 300 regularly attending congregants represent a richness of nationalities and denominational diversity. APCH is in the search process for a new experienced and ordained Senior Pastor beginning late summer/fall 2022 Application deadline: Oct, 30, 2021. Read full details at: <https://apch.nl/new-senior-pastor-search> Application deadline: Oct, 30, 2021. Read full details at: <https://apch.nl/new-senior-pastor-search>

SOLE PASTOR Faith Presbyterian CRC of Guam is seeking a pastor for our multi-ethnic

congregation. Desire a candidate with strong Bible-teaching skills and a heart for evangelism. Web:www.faithchurchguam.org. Interested applicants may email kvolestadt@gmail.com or fprcguam@gmail.com or call 1-671-734-7778.

YOUTH DIRECTOR (FULL TIME) Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of York, ON has an opening for a full-time Youth Director. York is located along the Grand River just 15-20 minutes south of Hamilton, ON. Maranatha is a church community with approximately 160 youth under the age of 17 in 2021. If God is calling you to work in the Youth Ministry then we invite you to explore that with us. To learn more or request a job description, please email office.yorkcrc@gmail.com or call (289) 757 4114 or visit our website at www.maranathacrcyork.ca

YOUTH/KIDS COORDINATOR: Crestview Church, Boulder, CO is seeking a part-time Youth/Kids Coordinator to share and model God's love through building relationships with children and youth in a small church setting. Contact Mark at 303-920-6563 or pastormark@crestviewchurch.org for more information.

SENIOR PASTOR Blythefield CRC in Rockford, MI is actively seeking a senior pastor. Please see our listing in the CRC Portal for details.

Birthdays

BIRTHDAY 100 YEARS



ANDREW BUIKEMA, Victorian Village, 12565 W Renaissance Cir, #317, Homer Glen, IL 60491, will celebrate his 100th birthday on Nov 2. Andy is a World War II veteran and was husband to Marge (Post) for 62 years before

she passed away last December. In his later years, Andy worked for the World Home Bible League and Marge volunteered there. Andy is thankful to God for all His blessings. Throughout his life, beginning with the war years, his favorite song has been "All The Way My Savior Leads Me". Open House Oct 24, 1-3pm at Victorian Village.

PHARES LEFEVER celebrates his 100th birthday Oct 15. His family is thankful for his life of service and love. Birthday greetings are welcome: 322 Boston Ave NE, Orange City, IA 51041

BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS

REV. JOHN VAN RYN celebrated his 90th birthday on 9/23. His family gives praise to the Lord for his godly example and faithful service. Neland Ave. CRC held a coffee to recognize God's goodness on 9.26.

Anniversary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 50 YEARS

BAATENBURG. With Gratitude to God, we celebrate on October 26, 2021, the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents John & Lorel Baatenburg. Jeff, Katie, Mila & Randy.

BRUNSTING, Charles and Marjorie (Roorda) of Sioux Center, Iowa celebrated 50 years of marriage on September 3rd. Helping to celebrate were their 5 children and 12 grandchildren

MARTINUS, William & Shirley (VanBaak) thank God for his grace on their 50th wedding anniversary (55-year "high-school sweethearts!") Children: Fenna & Brian Gray, Anna & Michael Peters (Kenna, Tessa), Marty & Sara (Kyler Wulf). Long-time members First Grand Haven CRC; teachers Holland Christian Schools.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 60 YEARS



BODE, Ronald and Ruth (Mellema) of Chesterfield, MO. commemorated 60 years of marriage on Aug. 24, 2021. Our hearts are overwhelmed with gratitude at God's faithfulness, grace, and mercy in our lives as we celebrate with

our children Brian + Claire, Tim + (fiancée) Tara, Rhonda + David Stoltzfus, 13 grandchildren and one great-grandbaby! Deut. 31:8

VENHOUSEN, Andrew and Sharon will celebrate their 60th Wedding Anniversary on Oct 27th, 2021. Their family celebrates with them and are thankful for their Christian example and faithfulness throughout the years. Greetings can be sent to 2000 St. Regis Dr. #1L, Lombard, IL. 60148.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 65 YEARS



DORNBUSH, Gene and Hazel (DeVries) give thanks to God for His faithfulness as they celebrate 65 years of marriage on October 18, 2021. Blessings include 5 children: Linda (Warren Disselkoben), Kathy (Harv Roosma, predeceased son-in-law John Boss), Karen (Doug Riemersma), Jim (Nancy Dornbush), and Amy (Brent Sluiter), 18 grandchildren and 28 great grandchildren. What a beautiful example of a Christ-centered marriage modeled to the generations! Greetings can be mailed to 255 Interlaken Ct., Zeeland, MI 49464.



POSTEMA, Rev Don & Elaine (VanderPloeg) of Ann Arbor, MI celebrated their 65th anniversary on August 17. With gratitude, their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren rejoice and continue to celebrate this milestone.

Obituaries



BOSSCHER, Janice Lenore, age 70, of St. Cloud, Florida, went to be with her Lord on Thursday, August 12, 2021. She was preceded in death by her parents, Harry and Jane (Ash) Bosscher. She will be lovingly remembered by her children,

Scott & Marcie Schoone-Jongen (fur grands) and Angie Schoonejongen, her precious granddaughter Alexandria, and her dear friend, James "Woody" Wood. Also mourning her loss are her siblings Peggy (and the late Joe) Hayes, Bette and Robert Rabe, Thomas and Sheila Bosscher, Beverly and Robert Papke, Joy and Mark Jurries, and Gail Besemer, in addition to an abundance of nieces & nephews. Jan loved being a Secretary at Park School in Grand Rapids MI. She also enjoyed working merchandise at Fort Wilderness, and most recently, as Front Desk and Trainer at Yacht & Beach Club Resort at Disney World in Florida. Jan was a creative painter and loved to sing gospel. A Celebration of Life will be held later this autumn in Florida. In lieu of flowers, please consider helping Jan's family with her final expenses at: <https://gofund.me/acff258e>

BRUINIUS. William K, 90, Evergreen Park, IL, went to glory 8/21/21. Preceded in death by Ella (nee Pleiter) wife of 60 years. Children: Sandy (Jack Mudde, Marcia (Tim) Kuiper, Bill (Carrie) Bruinius, 11 grandchildren, 17 great grandchildren. Brother of the late Pearl (late Marvin) Vis, Judith (late William) Meyer, Laverne (John) Yff, Leonard (Patricia) Bruinius.

DE GRAFF, Sylvia M.(Van Someren), age 88, of South Holland, IL, went home to her Lord and Savior on May 20, 2021. Beloved wife of Bernard De Graff. Loving mom of Grace (Jerry) Singer, Wes (Cindy) De Graff, Shirley De Graff, David(Dawn) De Graff, Glen De Graff, and Wayne De Graff. Cherished grandma of Kevin (Bethany) Singer, Kim Singer, Katie (Pat) Smith, Eric (Becca) De Graff, Amanda De Graff, Rev. Daniel (Christie) De Graff, Robert (Rachel) De Graff, and Rachael(Hayden) Heavrin. Proud great-grandma of Matthew, Rozie, Tyler, Wilhelmina, Sophia, Greta, Addison, Georgianna, Elizabeth, and Brooks. Dear sister of the late Franklin(late Marian) Van Someren. Kind aunt of several nieces and nephews. Preceded in death by her parents, Rev. Bernardus and Gertrude Van Someren, and by great-granddaughter, Ellie De Graff.



DEVRIES, Sarah Essenburg, went to be with her Lord on August 23rd, 2021. 100 W. Butterfield Rd, apt 101N, Elmhurst, IL 60126. Loving mother of Joyce (Kirt) Zimmerman, Marcy (Cal) Tameling, and the late Charlene Bulthuis; devoted grand-

mother of 9; great-grandmother of 21; fond sister of Mariella (Pete) VenHousen, the late Jacob (the late Ann) Essenburg, the late Martha (the late John) DeWeerd, the late Leonard Essenburg, the late Mathilda (the late John) Hendrikse, the late Marie (the late Henry) Tameling, and the late Ben (the late Grace) Essenburg; dearest aunt of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to Timothy Christian Schools, 188 W. Butterfield Rd, Elmhurst, IL, 60126 or Faith Christian Reformed Church, 1070 S. Prospect Ave, Elmhurst, IL, 60126, are appreciated.

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KWANTES, Peter Raymond, age 95 of Grand Rapids MI, passed away peacefully into God's loving arms on July 25, 2021. He is survived by his wife of 73 years, Dorothy; daughter Joan (Patrick) Nagle; grandson Christopher; brother Ken (Irene) Kwantes; brother-in-law Melvin (Patricia) Bulk; as well as many nieces and nephews and friends. Peter was a member of Alger Park CRC.



NOBLE-SCHLAMM, Kathryn (Goudberg), 97, of Lynden, WA, passed away August 6, 2021. "Kay" is survived by her children Bill (Joyce) Noble, Patty Whittaker, and Nancy (Michael) Urban, 4 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren. She grew up in Tohatchi, NM, on the Navajo reservation and served in the medical field for 40 years with her last post in Nigeria under CRC World Missions.



OLTHOFF, David P. age 76 of Boynton Beach FL died August 15, 2021 He is survived by his wife of 49 years Mary (Koeman) Children: Kimberly and Daniel, son-in-law Clayton Vanderlaan and grandchildren Benjamin and Lucas also sister Ruth (Olthoff) Vanderlee.

ROETERS, Marilyn Joan (Dekker), age 83, of Willowbrook IL, went home to be with her Savior on August 1, 2021. She was the loving wife of Peter of 62 years. Loving mother of Beth Medema (Robert) Stephanie and Emilia, Daniel (Stacey) Angelina, Victoria, Elizabeth and Alex. She is survived by her sister Beth Kluck (Henry) and brother James (Rose). Marilyn loved the Lord, her church and the old blue Psalter Hymnal. She loved Holland Michigan from the time she was a young girl and spent many summers there as a child and later on at her own cottage on Lake Michigan. She passed this love onto her daughter and her two oldest granddaughters. She enjoyed reading and had a special interest in the history of the CRC, Grand Rapids MI, Holland MI and the Netherlands. Marilyn will be missed not only by family but also by her lifelong group of friends lovingly called "The Flying Nuns".



RYE, Mike [64] died on May 28, 2021 from cancer complications. He was a long time Sunday School teacher and council member of Crossroads Fellowship CRC in West Des Moines, IA. In fact, he was at the end of his elder duty when he unexpectedly passed away. He was a mentor and friend to many. He enlisted in the U.S. Marines in 1975, and over the course of 28.5 years, he retired as Chief Master Sergeant in the Iowa Air National Guard. He also worked for the Postal Service for 36 years. Mike was a

faithful follower of Jesus Christ. He was a man of excellence. Mike was committed 100% to everything he did. He loved his family and friends. He was always the protector and a great provider. He rarely complained. Survivors are his wife, Winnie, daughters Attalie Rye & Shaeyla [Michael] Rye White, grandchildren Aria & Neveah, his parents, Harold & Mary Rye, brothers Ken [Cheryl], Keith [Bernadette], Kevin, sister Renee [Scott] Ristow, sister-in-law Nancy Barwegen & 10 nieces/nephews. He was preceded in death by his father-in-law, John Barwegen [Dec., 2014], mother-in-law Nellie Barwegen [Nov., 2020] & sister Debra Thomas [Mar., 2009]. Memorial gifts may be made to the Navigators [Brandon & Ashley Wilson-UCONN-23809163]. Checks may be mailed directly to Crossroads Fellowship Chr. Reformed Church, 1200 60th St., West Des Moines, IA 50266. Online giving can be made to <https://www.navigators.org/staff/23809163/>



ROZEMA, Fred, age 76, of Jenison, went home to be with his Lord and Savior on Friday, July 30, 2021. Services were held at LaGrave Ave. Christian Reformed Church. A full obituary can be viewed at mkdfuneral-home.com.

VAN VALKENBURG, Carol Ann (Aardema) age 83, of Kentwood MI died on August 16, 2021. She was preceded in death by her husband Martin Richard Van Valkenburg. She is survived by her children: Kristen DeStigter, Michelle Van Dyke (Mike), Kimberly Klein, Alison Brewer (Bill), Martin R. Van Valkenburg, & Karen Campbell (James); grandchildren: Kaitlin (Matt), Aryn, Tyler, Madison, Gabe (Liz), Olivia, Hannah, Ethan, Jack, Ben, Robyn, Charlie, Graham, Peter, Sara, Grace, & Maggie; great-grandson: Grayson; sisters: Joyce Sluis (Leonard) & Cheryl Bylsma (Geoff).

ZIGTERMAN, Rose (Klooster), age 95, went to be with the Lord on July 19, 2021. Loving wife of the late Clarence Zigterman, loving mother of Karen (the late Case) Admiraal, Kent and Kathie, Paul and Bonnie. Loving grandmother of 15 and great-grandmother of 21 (1 deceased) with 2 on the way. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

ZWIER, Eleanor (DeBoer) passed away August 8, 2021 in Grand Rapids, MI. She was preceded in death by her husband, Paul J. Zwier and is survived by her children, Jill and Phil Stegink of Grand Rapid, Paul and Marlene Zwier of Atlanta, GA, Tim Zwier, of Livermore CA, Gail and Tim Villanueva of Bishop CA, Joel and Leah Zwier, Grandville, MI, and Ken and Diana Zwier, Phoenix, AZ. Ellie has 14 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren.

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Thinking Historically About Church Conflicts

My point is not whether any of this is good or bad. It's about becoming more self-aware.

Editor's Note: This article is the first in an online series called "Past Controversies, Present Insights." The series explores issues that shook our denomination at the time, but now we might wonder what the big deal was. In the articles, William Katerberg, curator at Calvin University's Heritage Hall, outlines the historical contexts and digs into what we can learn from our denomination's past disagreements. Read the series online starting in October at thebanner.org.

THIS SUMMER I SPENT TIME thinking about the history of controversies in the Christian Reformed Church. That's partly because I've been writing a series of stories about this for *The Banner*. And it's the case that the CRC has been arguing about one thing or another—such as now with human sexuality—for as long as I can remember. It's part of our Protestant DNA.

My earliest memories of controversy date to the discussions about women in office in the 1970s (and beyond). Some issues from that era—membership in fraternal lodges and baptizing adopted children—did not make my radar. I did not know about synodical discussions of Pentecostalism, but I do remember hearing concerns that "small group" programs were cult-like. My Christian high school forbade dancing even though the CRC changed its mind on the issue in 1982. When I was in college in the 1980s, it was women in office (still) and evolution (again).

I knew about "the battle for the Bible" and anger at what some professors and clergy in the CRC allegedly taught. I did not know about synod's Report 44 on Scriptural authority and interpretation. I was a kid in 1972. Like most CRC folk, I assumed that all our battles ultimately were about who got the Bible right.


We were children of the Reformation, after all. Scripture was the proper authority. We criticized Catholics for

bowing to tradition and liberals for exalting reason. I don't remember what I knew about the church splits in the Netherlands and America that led to the formation of the CRC, but the idea that faithfulness to the Bible often required separation was a part of my heritage.

In the 1990s, in graduate school at Notre Dame and Queens University, I studied religious and social history. I learned comparative perspectives on my background and started to see more dimensions to my Reformed heritage and its militant impulses. Somewhere along the way, I began to wonder whether the individual was the functional authority for Protestants—each person his or her own interpreter of the Bible.

My series of stories avoids taking sides. It explores how we in the CRC have fought and how social and religious contexts have shaped our conflicts.

- » We've often agreed to disagree and allowed for local options.
- » Issues occasionally fade away. Synod condemned three "worldly amusements" in 1928. It changed its mind on movies and dancing, but not card playing. Yet we play cards without guilt.
- » The way we argue is predictably Reformed. I don't mean the content—the doctrine of grace, for example. I mean how we apply categories such as "confession" to conflicts and other traditions, even if that category makes no sense to another tradition.
- » We've never been just "Reformed." Being an immigrant church also has shaped our conflicts, as have Americanizing/Canadianizing and growing more bourgeois and ethnically diverse.

My point is not whether any of this is good or bad. It's about becoming more self-aware. My hope is that we can learn to see our peculiarities in new ways. 



Will Katerberg is a professor of history and curator of Heritage Hall at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Mich. He is a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids.

School Child

An Apology for the Residential Schools

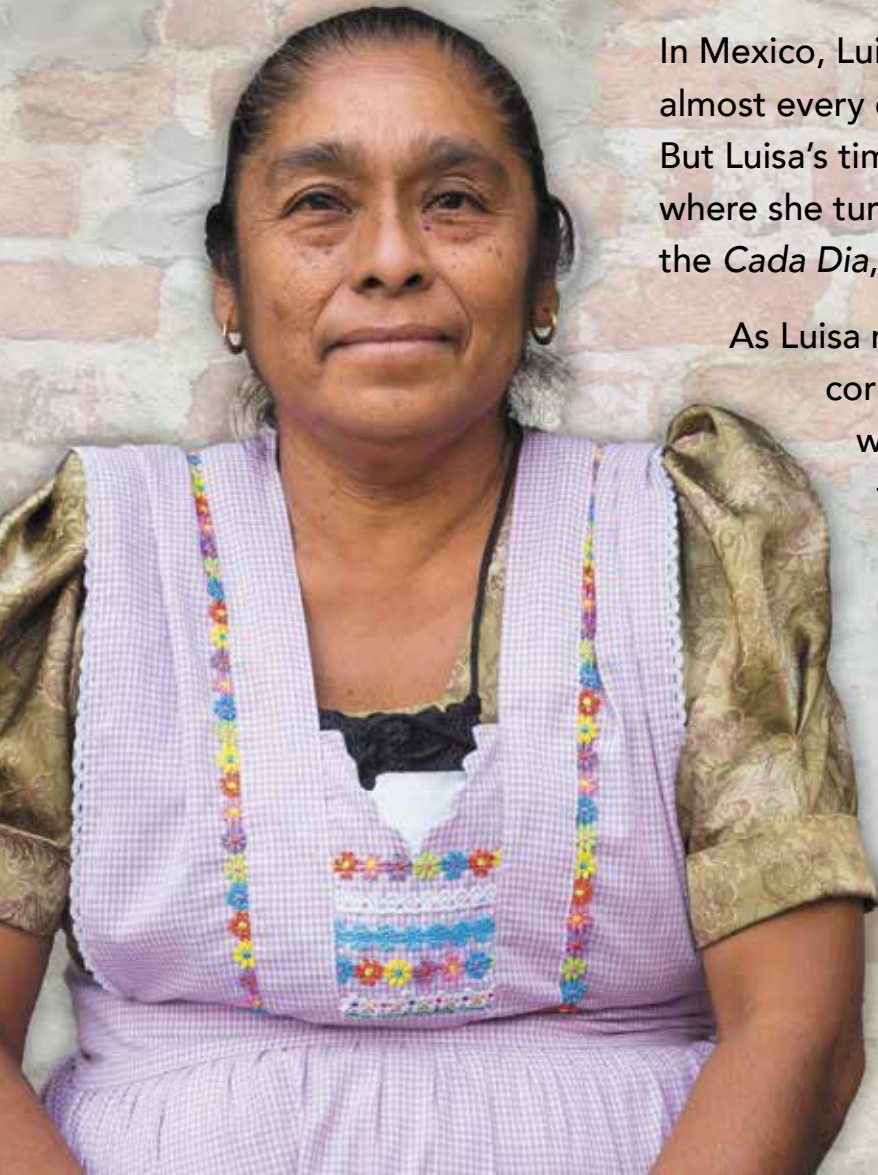
Your story is hard to hear;
 Yet I hear you ... finally.
 Thank you for sharing it.
 You are brave, your spirit endures.
 And I am sorry ...
 For not knowing, and not being a friend.
 I couldn't, for I was but a child myself.
 I would have been though.
 I felt your small hand
 On the worn down, silky smooth stair rail.
 My heart wept ...
 I would have grabbed that hand
 And run to play in the forest with you,
 Said "I love you."
 I am not native to your land;
 I am one of the race that didn't want to see you.
 Yet I cannot understand their ways
 And I am sorry ...
 for what they did.
 I befriended a refugee from Vietnam,
 Played with displaced children from Laos,
 Tutored an immigrant from Holland ...
 You would have been my friend,
 If I could have found you.
 But they kept you from me,
 And I am sorry ...
 When I find you now
 I will listen to your stories;
 If you let me, I will hold your hand
 And tell you that I love you.
 To be your friend would be an honour.
 You are precious, worthy to be seen, heard.
 You are brave ...
 And your spirit endures.



Jerune Rodermond
 is a homemaker and
 homeschool mom
 who lives in Vernon,
 B.C. She attends
 East Hill Christian
 Reformed Church
 with her husband
 and four children.



Screen Time With a Purpose



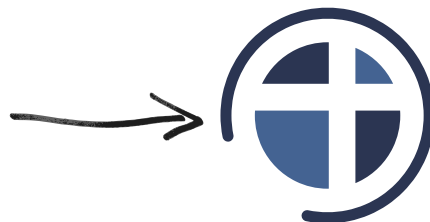
In Mexico, Luisa checks her Facebook account almost every day, and oftentimes more than that. But Luisa's time on Facebook has a purpose. It's where she turns to read her favorite devotional, the *Cada Dia*, or "Every Day."

As Luisa reads Scripture and the corresponding devotional message, she writes a short prayer as a response to that day's reading and shares it for anyone to see.

This simple act of writing a prayer helps Luisa to remember what you and I also know to be true. **That God's Word is alive and that it speaks to us each and every day.**

"God gives me the desire to read through his Word each day and the wisdom to carry that message with me," Luisa shared.

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



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