

BANNER

DECEMBER 2021

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Light in
the Darkness

2021 Year-End

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J Y

to the
World

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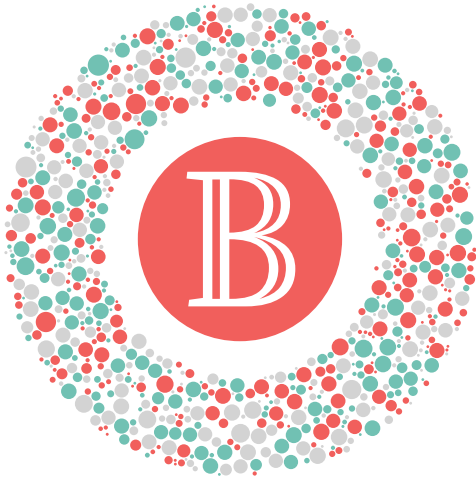
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BANNER

CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

Merry Christmas to all our readers from *The Banner* staff! May you find joy and blessing in celebrating the birth of our Savior this month.



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: Iowa Pastor Participates in Vaccine Panel Discussion
- » Streaming: *Squid Game*
- » Music: *Faithful: Go and Speak*, by Various Female Artists
- » Book: *Carry*, by Toni Jensen

FEATURES



A Massacre in Bethlehem

Kurt Rietema // What ran through Joseph's and Mary's minds?



With Tempered Impatience

Chris Schoon // Excessive patience can be a sin.



The Other Six: Sitting With a Sister

John Groen // We must be made aware of our attitudes, then change.



Cover: The world can feel bleak these days, but we are not without hope. // Photo by Aman Shrestha/Unsplash

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Correction
In the November 2021 issue, Marion "Mike" Meaning's author bio should have said that he is the former pastor of Mountain Springs Community CRC. The current pastor there is Peter J. DeVries.

OUR SHARED MINISTRY

Editor Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,
Director of CRCNA Communications and Marketing



Diversity at Christmas

Kristen deRoo VanderBerg // As we enter Advent, it is good to be reminded of the diversity of God's church.

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Light in the Darkness

Even the light from
a flickering candle
cannot be shrouded
by darkness. Even
death cannot
snuff out the light
of Christ.



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/korean에서 보실 수 있습니다.

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

LIGONIER MINISTRY'S 2020 State of Theology report highlighted a disturbing statistic: 30% of U.S. evangelicals agreed with the statement "Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God." I found this alarming because such a belief is not even Christian, let alone evangelical! Even more disturbing is that the report defines "evangelicals" not by how they self-identify but by their evangelical beliefs, which includes biblical authority, the need for evangelism, and the centrality of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Ninety-six percent of this same group of U.S. evangelical respondents affirm the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet a staggering 65% agreed that "Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God," which is an ancient heresy that contradicts the Trinity. How could evangelicals be so confused about such fundamentally basic Christian beliefs? Were their churches' discipleship programs so poor? Or were they disciplined more by the internet?

Speaking of the internet, recently leaked internal Facebook documents revealed that 19 of Facebook's top 20 pages for American Christians in 2019 were run not by Christians, but by Eastern European troll farms. Collectively, these fake Christian Facebook pages reach about 75 million users per month. Thanks to Facebook's algorithms, these fakes have a larger reach than any genuine Christian Facebook page. That cannot be good. Are Christians being influenced more by their social media feed than by their churches?


U.S. church attendance has declined across all faith traditions. A recent Faith Communities Today survey found a median decline in attendance of 7% between 2015 and 2020. Evangelical churches declined at 5.4% over the same five-year period. The Christian Reformed Church in North America faced a net membership

loss of 1,741 members in 2020. And Canadian Christians and churches are not immune from any of these trends.

These facts are only a few in a long list of social ills, conflicts, and challenges God's people have faced these past few years. We can look at all of this and despair. We can be afraid for the church's future. We can be afraid for our own denomination's future. Maybe some of us have suffered deep losses this past year. Maybe we don't feel like celebrating Christmas.

But I was reminded recently of God's promise in Isaiah 43:1b-2a: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." Note that God did not promise that we will avoid the dangerous waters, but that he will be with us as we pass through the waters. We might be going through difficult times, but God has not abandoned us. Christ is Immanuel, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

At Christmas, we remember that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5, NRSV). Even the light from a flickering candle cannot be shrouded by darkness. Even death cannot snuff out the light of Christ. God's resurrection power gives me hope. Therefore, let us take courage. But let us also grow deeper in our Christian faith and wiser in navigating the world.

Let me end by giving thanks to God for a good year for *The Banner*. This year, we won best denominational magazine awards from the Evangelical Press Association and the Associated Church Press. Our overall monthly reach metrics (print and online) have grown by 10,000 readers over the past fiscal year. Our revenues (advertising and fundraising) have also increased. And we have again surpassed \$400,000 in donations. Thank you so much for all your support! *Soli Deo gloria.* 



REPLY ALL

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

Editorials

The Banner's editorial page is the first thing we read when we pick it up at church. We appreciate Mr. Chong's insight and analysis of the issues he discusses. It seems to us that he gives a balanced, thoughtful, and respectful perspective on the contentious issues our culture and our denomination encounter. We've been members of the Christian Reformed Church for about 40 years. Shiao Chong's editorials always leave us with something to consider and discuss. We enjoy *The Banner* and read most of it cover to cover, but our favorite section is the editorial page.

» Bill and Maxine Crofton // Nanaimo, B.C.

Just a quick note to thank you for your insightful editorials in regard to the issues we CRC people struggle with. I very much appreciate your wisdom and fresh perspective. I always read the editorial first, and they put me in a thoughtful frame of mind as I approach the rest of the articles. Keep up the good work!

» Alice Groenberg // Williams Lake, B.C.

Political Issues and the Pulpit

These wise words from someone who knows and respects the church order as you do are especially helpful (Big Questions, October 2021). Our synod has spoken on so many issues and yet we hardly dare to address these topics in polite conversation, never mind from the pulpit. Those synodical statements, plus your discerning observations, create generous space for pastors to help their flocks engage in thoughtful

reflections on difficult topics. It doesn't mean that no one will be made uncomfortable, but I pray we can find ways to promote vigorous and loving dialogue about how to be faithfully obedient in these challenging times.

» Karl Westerhof // online comment

Bethany Christian Services

How very limited vision the Council of Delegates had when it voted to take Bethany Christian Services off the approved causes list (over the issue of homosexuality). ("Bethany Christian Services No Longer Recommended for Offerings," June 2021.) BCS is one of the five major agencies leading the resettlement of refugees in the United States, and the CRCNA took a negative stance on it just at a time when their service and witness is of national profile/significance. To many who are aware, BCS is closely related to the Reformed faith and churches. (This is) another setback to the reputation that the CRCNA once had for "loving the stranger in our midst" through its resettlement efforts.

» Rev. Lou Wagenveld // Holland, Mich.

Body Shaming

In response to the October 2021 article "The Weight of Body Shaming," God has answered my prayers concerning food. I love chocolate. A while ago, I began daily prayers for Jesus' triumph in his death and resurrection to replace my impulsiveness with self-control. God did much more than I had asked. He took away ALL of my desire for food with two meals a day and only water in between. I praise God for his surprising answer through Jesus' victory.

» Rev. Bruce Leiter // Hudsonville, Mich.

Improving the Prison System

Mr. Terpstra ("Mistakes Can Be Corrected," September 2021), please add this to your list (of ways to improve the U.S. prison system): more equitable access for people of color to serve in prisons/jails in various paraprofessional capacities. Addressing mental health issues is much needed. However, you can't address the American prison system without acknowledging the racial disparities. Prisoners of color make up more than half of the population, yet the administration, chaplains, wardens, guards, social workers, and medical/dental professionals as well as mental health workers are by and large white.

» Pamela Martin // online comment

Wearing Masks

I thought this was a wonderful article; thanks for posting ("Disputes About Masks Reveal Our Cracks in Christ," As I Was Saying, online). My only trouble with it was this line: "I would happily worship in a designated mask area." We share the same world and the same reality; in terms of COVID, that means that we need to pay attention to the disease experts and take what they say into account in our discussions. I agree that it is important to value relationships over being right, yet that doesn't mean we need to deny what is true. Rather, we should be able to talk openly about what's happening and what our options are. I remember restaurants with both smoking and non-smoking sections. The trouble is the smoke didn't know to stay in its section; (I'm) not sure the virus would know that either.

» Bonnie Nicholas // online comment

Getting in Tune with Dementia

Theological Malpractice

“It is not good to have zeal without knowledge” (Prov. 19:2). Preaching and pastoring are two different callings that require distinct skill sets (“Theological Malpractice,” October 2021). Unfortunately, we live in a culture where quick, feeling-oriented, and “inoffensive/inclusive” answers are demanded over self-reflection and deep understanding. Triviality has replaced profoundness, abnormalities are accepted as normal, truth is variable, evil does not exist, and doctrinal teaching is irrelevant. Many people take their morality cues from Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres, CNN, CBC, or *The New York Times*, and they rarely open their Bibles or study the Belgic Confession. Anyone who persists in using the pulpit to teach a watered-down, feel-good message that is not rooted in Scripture or sound doctrine is practicing theological malpractice.

» Charles Ferkranus // online comment

READ MORE ONLINE



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- » Satan: The Father of All Conspiracies
- » The Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam
- » Taking Care of Our Kids During COVID

AS A VOLUNTEER for the Alzheimer’s Society for seven years and having cared for a spouse with Alzheimer’s, I have seen and experienced first hand how providing care for someone living with dementia takes a tremendous toll on the physical and emotional health of the caregiver.

In my work facilitating support groups and assisting in workshops, I have seen how caregivers often set their own needs aside, hoping that if they don’t think about it, the stress might just go away. I also have noticed fatigue and people reaching the end of their ropes in terms of patience.

There are many types of dementia. Healthy human brains have billions of brain cells (neurons) that communicate with each other through neural pathways like long arms and legs that reach out to touch each other. When there is damage to the cells, the ability to communicate is impaired, resulting in symptoms of dementia. Those symptoms worsen over time, and the changes that occur in the brain cannot be reversed. Symptoms can include memory loss, difficulty thinking and performing daily activities, and changes in judgment, reasoning, emotions, communication, and behavior.

My husband had Alzheimer’s for many years. He continued to live at home until I could no longer look after him, and he was placed in a long-term care home until his death in 2018. It was a difficult journey.

Over time, as I visited my husband in the care home, the visits became more emotional and difficult. He did not recognize me and would not allow me to help at meal times. At the end of my visits, I would pray with him, thanking the Lord for the great care he was receiving at the home. I would push him down the hallways in his

God kept me strong in those days and walked me through this unknown valley.

wheelchair, singing familiar hymns that he seemed to like, and he would give a timid smile.

God kept me strong in those days and walked me through this unknown valley. Before my husband was moved to the care facility, God supported me with friends who would offer to stay with my husband so that I, his caregiver, could go out. My faith and trust in God supplied me in the most unique instances, for which I am so grateful every day.

My heart and prayers go out to each of you who is a caregiver. I have found that our suffering brings us nearer to God. I pray God remains with us always. Lift up your prayer, and he will offer you his everlasting love. **B**



Ria Lok volunteers for the Alzheimer’s Society of British Columbia. She uses the experience of losing her husband to this terrible disease to support others walking a similar journey. She attends Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church in Surrey, B.C.



A Massacre in Bethlehem

By Kurt Rietema

“When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.”

—Matthew 2:16

What ran through Joseph’s and Mary’s minds when the first news of the massacre in Bethlehem reached them in Egypt? Did Joseph steel his emotions in front of Mary, working out his disquiet in whatever punishing day labor was afforded him in this new country? Did Mary crumble into spontaneous fits of tears? Were household chores interrupted when names of family they had recently reacquainted themselves with came to mind? Did they succumb to survivor’s guilt contemplating the fates of distant nieces and nephews? Did they ask themselves: Why Jesus? Why us? Why weren’t the parents of the other infants and toddlers warned like we were?

The angel was clear: Go to Egypt. It’s a curious choice, Egypt. The readings of

Torah and the daily prayers offered by every first-century Jew told and retold the story of Jacob sending his sons to Egypt when the promised milk and honey had turned sour and dried up. Egypt had provided refuge to Joseph and Mary’s ancestors before.

But the call to go to Egypt cast a long, long shadow in Israel’s collective memory. Much more so than a place of refuge, Egypt represented Israel’s ruin. What Jewish person would have chosen to escape to Egypt were it not for an angelic messenger making it unquestionably clear?

Joseph and Mary would never have contemplated leaving home unless home had chased them away. Warsan Shire, the British-Somali poet, said it this way: “No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark. You only run for the border when you see the whole city running as well.” The little town of Bethlehem would not lay still in dreamless sleep for long. A nightmare would send the whole city running.

Clever historians, assured by their degrees and publications, like to remind us that there’s little extrabiblical evidence that the Massacre of the

Innocents ever occurred. “The tale is not history, but myth or folklore,” writes Cambridge classicist Michael Grant. If Grant ever spends any time with victims of genocide or other egregious crimes against humanity, he might see things differently. The erasure of massacres from the historical record isn’t a unique feature of first-century Palestine. Massacres disappear even today.

From Cameroon to Mexico

On our way down to Mexico last year to where my wife, Amber, and I had ministered for many years, we went to a migrant shelter in Nuevo Laredo. Father Enrique was pleased to see us. More than 100 English-speaking Cameroonians had descended upon his border-town ministry in the past few weeks. Each American in our group listened as migrant after migrant shared their own stories of how their home in Africa had turned into the mouth of a shark. When Brandon was a college student with his own little electronics store, his father was murdered. To offer protection, his uncle took him in. When the ruling francophones came looking for Brandon, his uncle refused to hand him over, so they killed his uncle too.

Photo: Chicago Tribune Archives

“History is written by the victors” is an observation often attributed to Winston Churchill. Massacres disappear because they get written out of the official account. Cameroonian despots predictably dismissed victims’ accusations, gaslighting them through feigned outrage. Villages were burned. Families were destroyed. Yet thousands of migrants independently risking their lives on a six-month journey spanning three continents isn’t evidence enough. The burden to prove massacres to the world—or, more substantially, to an immigration judge—is on the victims alone. As the kids say, “Pics, or it didn’t happen.”

But newspaper clippings, photos of dead relatives, or other precious relics contradicting the government-sanctioned Cameroonian accounts were often lost. Papers dissolved in sweat or were swept away in river crossings; money and belongings were stripped by organized crime cartels; identification cards were seized by police; people were humiliated and laughed at by those authorized to protect them. This is how massacres disappear.

We met one couple, Luis and Cristal, who had fled their home state in Mexico after Cristal’s brother was killed by an organized crime syndicate. Like Joseph and Mary, there was no returning home for them as long as the oppressors were in power. Every Jewish peasant living under the specter of Herod’s reign of terror knew just how far Herod’s tentacles could reach. Like Herod, the Mexican mafia has eyes and ears everywhere. There was no hiding in Mexico. Luis and Cristal were hoping to find some miraculous favor in the U.S., where their children had been born. Amber gave Luis and Cristal her number in case they made it across the border.

On Thanksgiving, we received a phone call. Luis, Cristal, and their three kids

The Massacre of the Innocents is the Christmas story that gets buried. You can’t tell it with a soundtrack of Bing Crosby songs.

were at a cheap motel in San Antonio. Their papers were being sent up to Kansas City. Could we help them out? Within days we had housing, a job, a car, and an immigration attorney, and we got the kids enrolled in school. These gifts were lavished like frankincense and myrrh. Breadcrumb coincidences coded like celestial texts read by attentive wise men left small reminders that God was on the move.

‘Home Is the Barrel of a Gun’

A couple of weeks have gone by now, and the relief and magic of those first few days out of a migrant shelter have subsided. Now, as they settle in, the first dispatches of other migrants Luis and Cristal met in Nuevo Laredo are coming in. A phone call at a museum. A text during the first snowfall. Not a single other family had made it across. How does one describe the sense of gratitude, the decadence of others’ generosity, and then a sudden plunge into melancholy? I could see the collision of emotions. I could feel the

frustration. All they wanted was to be at home, but home was the barrel of a gun. This was Egypt.

The Massacre of the Innocents is the Christmas story that gets buried. You can’t tell it with a soundtrack of Bing Crosby songs. No swirl of a cinnamon stick can cover up its bitter notes. No freshly cut pine boughs can mask its odor. And yet this is probably the truest of the Christmas stories. The weeping voices in Ramah are the ones who sing, “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” most convincingly. Rachel, refusing to be comforted because her children are no more (Matt. 2:18), sounds the soulful plea to ransom captive Israel with aching urgency. The huddled masses at the border join as a choir that sings with an authority that I cravenly hope to never imitate.

We bury this story with its attendant pains because we hold out hope that there is something or someone more powerful than Rome. We make our pilgrimages to migrant shelters afar, believing that God is somehow incarnate there. And when that one family actually makes it out before all of Bethlehem burns, we shower them with gifts as if they were the holy family because we’re desperate for signs of good news in our newsfeeds. This is the Christmas story we’ve been waiting for. B



Kurt Rietema and his wife and sons live in Argentine, a neighborhood of Kansas City, Kans., where Kurt leads Christian community development efforts for the Christian Reformed

Church and also leads Youthfront, a Christian youth organization.



Illustration for The Banner by Gisela Bohórquez

BIG QUESTIONS

Stewardship

I am in the market for a new car, and friends are encouraging me to buy an electric vehicle because it will be “zero emission” and help fight climate change. I don’t understand the “zero emission.” The electricity has to come from somewhere, and power plants emit carbon. Am I really being a better steward buying an electric vehicle than an efficient gas-powered vehicle?

It’s a thoughtful question, and one that is not simple to answer. You are correct that electric vehicles are not entirely zero emission. They might be while operating on batteries, but carbon was emitted in producing the electricity if the electricity came from a fossil-fuel-fired power plant. Even if the electricity came from solar panels or wind turbines, there were emissions related to the manufacture of the panels or turbines.

Even if your environmentally conscious friends urged you to switch entirely to bicycle transportation, there would be carbon emissions. When you bike, you breathe. Carbon dioxide comes out. Horrors!

The question, of course, is how much carbon dioxide comes out. A gas-powered car that averages 20 miles per gallon puts 1 pound of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere for every mile it is driven. An electric vehicle averages significantly less, but how much less depends on how the electricity is

generated. If electricity comes from coal-fired power plants, the pollution and carbon emissions will be significant, while electricity generated by a mix of natural-gas-fired plants and renewable energy sources will emit much less.

How much less will vary from state to state. Michigan, for example, used to get 60% of its electricity from coal, but that percentage is dropping quickly as power plants are replaced or converted. Michigan utilities have indicated that they plan to build no more coal-fired power plants. By contrast, the state of Washington gets only 7% of its power from coal, with a much higher reliance on renewables. As states and provinces move to a higher percentage of renewable sources, the environmental benefit of electrical vehicles in terms of carbon emissions will increase.

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.

Church, Bible, Doctrine

Our council sometimes meets all together and sometimes separately with only elders or deacons. How do we know what each group can decide?

In the Christian Reformed Church, the council is made up of all the ministers, elders, and deacons in the church. The elders (consistory) and the deacons (diaconate) should meet separately to focus on their particular work. Elders oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and

fellow officebearers, provide counsel and discipline along with pastoral care in the congregation, participate in and promote evangelism, and defend the faith. Deacons administer the mercy of Christ, inspire faithful stewardship of people’s time, talents, and resources, and encourage participation in ministries of mercy, justice, and reconciliation, both locally and globally (Church Order Art. 25). The minister is required to meet with the elders, as their roles and tasks are similar, and both groups report on their work to the full council.

The council is the governing body of the local church and is responsible for the common administration of the church, such as promoting its mission, calling its pastors, approving nominations for church office, conducting “mutual censure,” in which council members review and encourage each other in their work, meeting with church visitors from the classis, and taking up other matters of common concern (Art. 35).

The following are a few examples of how to distinguish the work of elders or deacons from that of the council: The deacons are more involved overseeing the finances and giving levels in the church, but the council approves the annual budget and requests the congregation’s approval as well. The elders provide pastoral care and discipling of individuals, including hearing professions of faith and deciding whether to admit new members directly or require profession or reaffirmation of faith, but the council formally receives or transfers memberships. The diaconate supports mercy and justice ministries locally, but the council brings such matters to the regional classis or the

denominational synod. The consistory supervises worship and the administration of sacraments, but the council calls the ministers who preside in worship.

While elders and deacons have different roles and responsibilities, both groups provide leadership and care to the congregation so that the body of Christ will be built up.

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.

Vocation

What if the vocation I felt called to is no longer a good fit?

When things don't go as we expect, it's hard to discern what to do next. It is often unclear whether the setback is an opportunity to practice perseverance or self-reflection or whether God is inviting us into something new and unexpected, perhaps even a new calling.

A few examples: Does not getting accepted into a specific school or program mean you should take some time off and reapply later, or should you explore something different? Does your lack of motivation for your program mean that you ought to pursue something else, or is this lack of motivation normal at this phase in your program—or even a result of all the challenges of this past year?

Discerning your vocation is hard work, and no one else can do it for you. It is wise to spend some time prayerfully reflecting on or perhaps journaling about your expectations and what has gone wrong. At the same time, God has given us others to encourage us, and it is good to share what you're going through with others whom you trust and who have faced similar challenges.

Their wisdom and experience can help you understand how much of what you are going through is a normal part of pursuing your vocation and what might be unusual, indicating that it might not be a good fit. Talking to others might also help you imagine how God might be inviting you to pursue your calling in a different way.

It can be hard not to know what one ought to do. It feels as if it would be easier if God let us know directly what we ought to do next! But that is not how God usually works. Instead, we are invited, along with our community, to listen, and to wonder about what God might be inviting us into next. Such work is harder, but doing so allows God to form us more fully into people who can love God and our neighbors with our whole heart, soul, and mind.

Brenda Kronemeijer-Heyink is the Christian Reformed chaplain at the University of Toronto. She attends Willowdale CRC in Toronto, Ont.

Digital Life

I have thousands of photos in the cloud. I know they are not really in a cloud in the sky, but where are they?

I suppose every industry has its share of jargon that means little to anyone outside of that industry. (Just think of the words we throw around in our churches!) The term “cloud computing” came about in the late 1990s to describe a new way of working with computers. One person described it as a “rebranding of the internet.”

It used to be that the internet was a way to communicate with others and shuffle small files around, leaving the work of computing to our local machines—those big beige boxes that once sat on desks everywhere. But as the collection of wires and switches and whatnot the internet ran on grew, engineers figured out that more could

be done by bigger machines farther away in “the cloud”—not on some mountaintop, but in large buildings called data centers that employ lots of people and keep lots and lots of computers energized and cool.

The design of these data centers allows for flexibility, so if a company needs more computing power or storage, they can rent more computing power or space in the center.

This new way also allowed for something with a more helpful name: software as a service. Rather than all of us buying a copy of a program (such as Microsoft Office) and installing it on our own computers, we are able to run applications (such as Word or Excel) via the internet and subscribe or unsubscribe to services as our needs change.

Of course, like many advances, sometimes it seems to be two steps forward and one step back. All this interconnectivity means we're dependent on the internet running all day every day. For most of us in the U.S. and Canada, it does so amazingly. If you're sharing space, security can be an issue. And these centers use a lot of energy—something I'm not sure we've gotten a good handle on yet.

So, while “the cloud” might not be nearly as wonderful as real clouds, it's still pretty cool. And those thousands of photos? Maybe we'll deal with that problem another time.

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.



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

Change in Director for Disability Concerns

NEWS

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

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In October, *The Banner* published an online-only guide to the governance structure of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, especially as it relates to the development and history of ministry in Canada. Referencing synod records dating back as far as 1864, the guide includes a timeline, diagrams, and a list of terms to help trace the origins of the most recent struggles over structure. Find the guide under “Free Resources” at thebanner.org.

The Christian Reformed Church’s ministry of Disability Concerns welcomed a new director Nov. 15. Lindsay Wieland Capel took over from Mark Stephenson, who announced his retirement this past spring. Stephenson has also been serving as interim director of Social Justice and Race Relations. He will continue in that role part time until after Synod 2022 (the CRC’s annual general assembly) approves a new director search.

Wieland Capel’s appointment was approved by the CRC’s Council of Delegates in October. She said she wants to continue to share “the value of this ministry and how it fits in so beautifully with the family of God,” recognizing that “we can’t be whole without everybody blessing each other.”

Disability Concerns’s 2014 mandate says the ministry “strives to promote and foster relationships, communities, and societies where everybody belongs and everybody serves.” The ministry dates its beginning to 1982, when the first staff person was hired and the newsletter (now called *Breaking Barriers*) was first published. Since 2009 the ministry has had a close partnership with the Reformed Church in America’s Disability Concerns.

Stephenson, 62, was the third director. He was appointed in 2006. He said the move toward retirement at this stage is to allow him and his wife, Bev, to make room for the possibility of another kind of chapter in their lives in which they are not both working full time. Bev retired from her role as a special education teacher in June. The Stephensons credit their daughter, Nicole, born in 1987, with influencing their career decisions. “As the father of a child with severe multiple disabilities, who needs help with all the tasks of daily living,” Mark Stephenson said, “I’ve had opportunity to do a lot of reflection on, ‘What does it mean for her to be indispensable to the healthy functioning of the body of Christ?’” (1 Cor. 12:22).

Stephenson said he’s most grateful for the dedicated volunteers—disability



Lindsay Wieland Capel



Rev. Mark Stephenson

advocates in local churches and regional disability advocates—who make up the ministry. “They have done a huge amount of work to help churches become more welcoming communities for people of all abilities,” he said.

Wieland Capel, 39, is a trained social worker, most recently with Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Service in referral relations. She has served Disability Concerns as a volunteer, establishing and monitoring its Facebook page in 2009 and serving Beckwith Hills CRC as a disability advocate. She said she’s passionate about training and wants to look at using technology “that people are getting more and more comfortable with” to deepen connections in the ministry’s network. She’s now a member of Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. Wieland Capel said she has a strong faith foundation and learned from her mother a concern for “forming a heart for looking out for people on the margins.”

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

Ontario Church Joins Community-wide Live Nativity

For the second year in a row Exeter (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church joined four other local churches to present a drive-thru nativity play staged outside the five church buildings.

In 2020, 136 carloads took in the presentation Dec. 5. For 2021, event organizers planned to welcome 130 on Nov. 27. Each stop included a 5- to 7-minute scene with readings and a dance or song recounting the Christmas story from Mary's angelic visitor to the birth in the manger.

The idea for the drive-thru event came from a meeting of pastors in the Exeter area, including Pastor Kevin TeBrake of Exeter CRC. He brought the suggestion to the congregation's outreach committee, which ran with the idea. In 2020 over 40 volunteers were involved in the Exeter CRC portion of the event.

—Anita Brinkman



Actors from Exeter CRC portray the biblical story of Jesus' birth as part of a drive-thru nativity presentation for the local community in 2020.

Minnesota Church Shares At-home Advent Kits

Worthington (Minn.) Christian Reformed Church is spending the 2021 Advent season "Unwrapping the Peace of Jesus," studying the prophecies pointing toward the peace that Jesus would bring. For the second year in a row, the church leadership has included at-home Advent kits in their plans.

In 2020 the church prepared kits for church members to accompany Pastor Chad Werkhoven's Advent sermon series, "From Wrecked to Redeemed." The sermons and at-home readings worked through the gospel of Matthew's account of the Christmas story. Two sisters, Kia Nystrom and Tae Nordby, put together the kits, which included 20 scrolls for the daily readings plus an activity or small gift.

"Everyone is connected through these scrolls and activities," said Beth Bosma-Prins, a congregant and essential care worker who delivered kits to elderly participants last year.

The 2021 at-home Advent campaign is "likely (to) reach more homes this year than it did last year," said Werkhoven. "We will be giving our members the opportunity to 'sponsor' home Advent kits to increase our reach to others in our community."

—Callie Feyen



In 2020, at-home Advent kits for Worthington CRC members included 20 scrolls with daily Bible readings.

Noteworthy



Jim Gehrels, a member of Bethlehem Christian Reformed Church in Thunder Bay, Ont., who co-founded the charity Lifewater

Canada in 1997, **received a posthumous meritorious service medal from the Governor General of Canada.** Gehrels died of a heart attack in July 2020. The medal is granted to "individuals who have performed a deed or an activity in a highly professional manner ... that brings benefit or honour to Canada." Lifewater's projects in Nigeria, Liberia, Kenya, and Haiti include drilling and rehabilitating wells, installing rainwater catchment and storage systems, and organizing health and hygiene workshops.



The Banner competed in the **Evangelical Press Association's "Best in Class"** single-entry contest this summer, submitting its July/August

2020 issue to be judged in the print category of circulation size 40,001 to 80,000. It received **third place** after Focus on the Family's *Brio* and *Israel My Glory*, a publication of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. "Writing is well done. The reader is pulled into the articles," the judges wrote.

Council of Delegates Addresses Finances, Plans for Synod 2022, and More

When the Christian Reformed Church's Council of Delegates met Oct. 13-16, 2021, via video conferencing, it had a very full agenda, including planning for upcoming synods, setting vaccination and masking policies for in-person meetings, dealing with revenue shortfalls, and more. The Council is composed of one delegate from each classis (regional group of churches) and a few at-large delegates. It meets three times a year and reports to synod, the broadest assembly of the church.

Money

John Bolt, the CRC's deputy executive director and chief financial officer, brought a strategic review of the denomination's congregational ministries, synodical administration, ministry support services, and central services to the Council. The review was necessary to try to deal with a \$1.5 million deficit in the current budget of the CRCNA Michigan Corporation. The Council rejected a recommendation to continue to meet virtually for February 2022 and May 2022—a plan that would have saved \$80,000 to \$90,000.

A proposal to allow staff to recommend a reallocation of ministry share allotments between Resonate Global Mission and congregational ministries as needed throughout the year was also rejected. Instead, the corporation directors said, the allocation decided last May must be honored.

Conversations about other proposed strategies are ongoing and will come back to the Council in February.

The deficit is primarily the result of a larger overall drop in ministry shares (the contributions congregations give to support ministries done together as a denomination). Starting this year, instead of asking congregations to send in a certain amount per member, congregations were invited to determine and pledge their own amounts for support of denominational ministries.



Photo by Karen Huttenga

Delegates to Synod 2019 pray in a morning worship session. The team making plans for Synod 2022 reported to the Council of Delegates that intentional prayer would be incorporated throughout the assembly.

Total ministry share income pledged for fiscal 2022 (July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022), including money directed to Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary, is \$18.4 million. Ministry share income received in the previous fiscal year (ended June 30, 2021) was \$21,474,000.

“The ministry share shortfall was managed by the other areas (those other than congregational ministries) in their fiscal 2022 budgets through various actions,” Bolt said. The impact of a fall in pledges to congregational ministries (including Faith Formation, Worship, Disability Concerns, Office of Social Justice, Safe Church, and more) is greater because these ministries are supported almost entirely by ministry shares. (For more details, see “Council of Delegates Tackles Financial Shortfall” at thebanner.org.)

Synod 2022

The Council approved a basic blueprint for Synod 2022 designed to help delegates navigate a massive agenda with material for three synods because Synod 2020 and 2021 were canceled. Council members made clear that they wanted as much as possible of synod—particularly

the important work of advisory committees—to be in person. The program committee will now finalize plans with that understanding and communicate them to classes ahead of winter meetings. Some details of the green-lit plan include:

- » Deferring two study reports (studies of the Bivocationality Task Force and the Ecclesiastical Marriage Task Force) in favor of having only the weighty report from the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality on the Synod 2022 agenda.
- » Using technology ahead of synod to offer orientation for delegates and advisers and to convene to elect synodical officers and approve advisory committees.
- » Having more than the usual eight or nine advisory committees so each one can deal with a smaller portion of the agenda.
- » Having delegates remain at the Calvin University meeting site the Sunday of synod. Activities that day might include facilitated table conversations, the

presentation of candidates for ministry, agency and ministry presentations, and greetings from ecumenical guests.

At its special meeting in lieu of Synod 2021, Council asked executive director Colin Watson to find ways for delegates to hear from people in the LGBTQ community in consideration of the human sexuality report. The program committee recommended that LGBTQ voices not be brought in live during plenary sessions but to include them instead via video and other resources that can be accessed as background prior to arriving at synod. Delegates can then discuss what they heard in facilitated table conversations.

Vaccination and Mask Policy

Anticipating a return to in-person meetings while still living with the coronavirus pandemic required the board to consider safety policies. After a spirited discussion, delegates approved a policy requiring attendees at Council of Delegate meetings and synods to be fully vaccinated or to provide a negative COVID test result taken within 72 hours of the start of the meeting.

A proposal requiring all attendees to wear masks was not accepted. The Council decided that mask policy would follow requirements of the local health authority and the venue.

Structure

The Council received an update on the various processes involved in restructuring the denominational governance to be in compliance with Canadian tax law. Search committees have been formed to bring nominations for the positions of general secretary and chief administrative officer. The Canadian Corporation first will work with an executive search firm and then name a search committee to fill the position of executive director-Canada. A nominee for general secretary will be presented to the Council in February 2022 and recommended to Synod 2022 for approval. Presentation

of the nominee for chief administrative office is expected in May 2022, also to be recommended to Synod 2022.

The process of creating joint ministry agreements that will satisfy legal requirements on both sides of the border is ongoing.

The Council decided to add two at-large Canadian delegates, bringing the total number of Canadian at-large delegates to five. The reason for the move is to have more Canadians available to serve on the Council's various subcommittees. Synod has allowed for up to 10 at-large positions. Following this decision there will be seven—two who are American and five who are Canadian. With one member from each classis, that brings the total size of the board up to 56 members. All nominations are provisional until Synod 2022 can approve them.

Neland Avenue CRC

The Council approved a formal communication to be sent to Synod 2022 regarding Neland Avenue CRC's decision to ordain a deacon living in a same-sex marriage. It noted the Council's letter of admonition to Neland sent in October 2020 and urged Synod 2022 to be mindful of what the Belgic Confession calls the three marks of the true and vital church: pure preaching of the gospel, pure administration of the sacraments, and practicing church discipline for correcting faults.

The communication expresses continued regret "that we as a denomination are at this point of fissure, and pray that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the deliberations of Synod 2022 in this matter will bear fruit and begin to restore biblical unity within the body that is the CRCNA."

Neland Avenue is a congregation in Classis Grand Rapids East. The Council had a lengthy discussion over another church in that classis—Church of the Servant—being the host church of Synod 2023. Several delegates said a church in that classis shouldn't host synod because the classis

has not disciplined the Neland Avenue consistory. In the end the Council accepted Church of the Servant's invitation.

Race Relations

The Council heard that the process seeking a new director of Social Justice and Race Relations ended without a suitable candidate. (The search team and mandate had been approved at the Council's May meeting.) Council affirmed a decision to delay a subsequent search for a director until after Synod 2022. Mark Stephenson, currently serving as interim director of that ministry, agreed to stay on in that role beyond his expected retirement.

A revised, temporary, U.S.-only mandate for the office of Race Relations also was adopted. The main change from the synod-approved 2004 mandate (*Acts of Synod 2004*, Art. 35, p. 558) was the removal of the requirement that the agency "initiate" work with CRC leaders, recognizing a desire for a more collaborative approach. The temporary mandate will be "a working document" until Synod 2023 adopts a new one.

In other news:

- » The Council thanked and bade farewell to Charles Kim, Resonate Global Mission's diversity leader and Korean Ministry Coordinator. He has joined the Grace and Mercy Foundation in New York City as managing director.
- » The Council, which had already approved an Inspire gathering for 2022 after Inspire 2021 was canceled due to the pandemic, decided to move the next anticipated Inspire gathering from 2023 to 2024.
- » Using funds from its reserves, Resonate Global Mission established a designated fund to cover costs and support for victims related to allegations of abuse.

—Gayla R. Postma

The Reformed Church in America Anticipates Restructuring. What's Next for Dually Affiliated Churches?

The Reformed Church in America's October General Synod voted on two significant recommendations that have some RCA congregations, including those with a dual affiliation with the Christian Reformed Church, contemplating their associations.

The recommendations came to the General Synod from the Vision 2020 report, a study requested by the RCA in 2018 to chart a way forward for the denomination at an impasse over same-sex marriage and other theological differences. The General Synod decided:

- » To allow for a gracious separation for those churches who choose to leave the RCA. Until 2026 churches may choose to disaffiliate, following the process in the Book of Church Order, and can leave with their property and other assets. (They are asked to pay one year of assessments.)
- » To appoint a team of 10-15 people to develop a restructuring plan for the denomination. The plan will come to the 2024 General Synod.

While not recommending the particulars of a new structure, writers of the Vision 2020 report suggested that "the best chance for success will include" churches being able to choose their classis, aligning "around shared values, understanding, and practices" rather than geography.

Affinity classes will be explored as the task force develops a restructuring plan.

Some churches, anticipating the possibility of grouping churches by affinity on the question of same-sex marriage, have decided that remaining in fellowship with classes that see this issue differently would be the same as endorsement. Several had already disaffiliated ahead of the October General Synod and formed new organizations, such as the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC), launched in May 2021, and the Kingdom Network, launched in September.



Photo from Pillar Church Facebook page

Pastor Jon Brown from the CRC-RCA dually affiliated Pillar Church in Holland, Mich., said his congregation is committed to reconciling divisions, raising up leaders, redeeming the city, and renewing the church and therefore wants to continue "as a reconciling presence" in the process of RCA restructuring.

Some congregations considering their place in the RCA are also affiliated with the CRC. There are nine such churches that the CRC officially recognizes (Church Order Art. 38-g or 38-h). David Moorhead, pastor of the bilingual (Spanish and English) New Hope Community Church of Shafter (Calif.), said his church will disaffiliate from the RCA and intends to join the ARC. New Hope's CRC affiliation is with the Central California classis. "We don't intend to leave the CRC," Moorhead said.

Two previously dually affiliated congregations that have left the RCA and are founding member congregations of the Kingdom Network have petitioned their CRC classes to consider recognition of their new affiliation. The classes are considering the requests in consultation with the CRC's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee. Colin Watson Sr., executive director of the CRCNA, said while much about "the form and governance function of these new networks" is still unknown, "if they do become denominational entities, then certainly the EIRC will entertain a recommendation

to affiliate." He said that in any case, "churches so impacted remain CRCNA churches."

Gary Maas, a CRC commissioned pastor in Classis Iakota who pastors Harrison (S.D.) Community Church (belonging to both the CRC and RCA) and Grandview Reformed Church (RCA) in Armour, S.D., said the RCA's Classis Dakota is urging its member churches to join the ARC. His congregations are taking a wait-and-see approach. "I have not pushed that," he said. "I'd like to see all that we do be unified."

Fred Bates, one of two pastors at Orangewood Community Church in Phoenix, Ariz., said being an RCA commissioned pastor at a church in a CRC facility is like having a foot in both worlds. He said it's been "refreshing to see the two denominations working together." Bates would like to learn how the ARC and the Kingdom Network align themselves before he'd recommend leaving. "If our (Southwest) Classis is sustainable, if enough churches stay within the denomination, I would like to (continue to) hold dual affiliation (with the RCA and CRC)," Bates said.

The congregation of the dually affiliated Pillar Church in Holland, Mich., is committed to reconciling divisions, raising up leaders, redeeming the city, and renewing the church. Pastor Jon Brown said that because of these commitments, Pillar "wants to stay in the process (with the RCA) as a reconciling presence."

The debate over the Vision 2020 report and classes' interactions over human sexuality leading up to that have been tense, but Brown noted the graciousness with which people communicated at the General Synod. "People honored each other," he said. "There was tension and passion, but it was a generous conversation." This is important not only to those within the church, he explained, but to those to whom Christians hope to be a witness. "We are offering a witness to the watching world," Brown said.

—Callie Feyen

Abide Project Seeks to Uphold 'Historic, Beautiful, Biblical Understanding of Human Sexuality'



The Abide Project is a new venture from a group of concerned Christian Reformed pastors, scholars, and church leaders who according to its mission statement want to see the CRC uphold "the historic, beautiful, biblical understanding of human sexuality in doctrine, discipleship, and discipline." The project grew from a Zoom discussion group in late 2020 and launched a website Sept. 1, 2021. Its leadership team of 15 people comes from across the United States and Canada.

"There is broad support across the denomination connected to almost every classis," said Abide Project chair Chad Steenwyk, who pastors Central Avenue CRC in Holland, Mich.

The group has provided a forum for those eager to share their thoughts and experiences related to the topic of gender and sexuality and the church. Its website, abideproject.org, features regular articles by contributors. "I've been really surprised at how many people have said 'I'd like to write a piece,'" said Aaron Vriesman, who pastors North Blendon CRC in Hudsonville, Mich. He serves as clerk for the Abide Project's leadership team.

The group has "been growing organically so far," Steenwyk said at the end of October. Then, they were just at the point of "reaching out beyond pastors and church leaders." With primarily pastors subscribing they were "approaching 200 on the email list," he said.

—Roxanne VanFarowe

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. David
Michael Doyle*

1935-2021

David Doyle was a teacher to hundreds, a passionate preacher to thousands, and a loyal friend to many. An avid reader and lifelong learner, in his 80s he was still studying and working on a commentary on the book of Exodus. David died Sept. 5.

After joining the U.S. Army after high school, David later graduated from Calvin College (now University) and Seminary. Ordained in 1966, he served Crownpoint (N.Mex.) Christian Reformed Church, then Pioneer CRC in Cedar Springs, Mich., before moving to Mexico City to teach at the Juan Calvino Seminario. He then pastored Chula Vista (Calif.) CRC, also ministering over the border in Tijuana. After a 15-year break, he was reordained in 1995 and served Pinegate CRC, Cutlerville, Mich. Through the years he pursued doctoral studies at Oral Roberts University. After retirement in 2000, he served twice as interim pastor at Volga (S.D.) CRC.

David enjoyed crocheting and made an afghan for each of his children and, more recently, a lap afghan for himself. He loved traveling and enjoyed many family camping trips to national parks.

He is survived by Lyla, his wife of 65 years; five children; 13 grandchildren; and 16 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Martinus
Dominicus Geleynse*

1925-2021

A man of deep faith, intensity, and passion, Martin Geleynse loved to preach and teach. Ministry was his calling. "He had this ease and comfort up there in the pulpit," one grandchild said. "You knew, just watching him, that it was where he loved to be." Geleynse died Oct. 1.

After graduating from the Free University of Amsterdam, Geleynse served two congregations in the Netherlands before immigrating to Canada in 1960. He then pastored Medicine Hat (Alta.) Christian Reformed Church and Maranatha CRC, St. Catharines, Ont., before attending Calvin Theological Seminary and graduating with a Master of Theology degree. After a year in the field education office at Calvin Seminary, he was called to First CRC, Montreal, Que. French became a new full-time language as he subsequently became coordinator and dean of the Farel Institute of Reformed Theology in Quebec City (1980-86). He then pastored Stratford (Ont.) CRC, retiring in 1990.

Geleynse loved music, politics, and science, was a voracious reader, and had an insatiable sweet tooth.

Predeceased by Ada, his wife of 62 years, two daughters, and a son-in-law, Geleynse is survived by seven children and their spouses, 37 grandchildren, and 46 great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Classis Watch: Fall 2021

Christian Reformed classes (regional groups of churches) meet two to three times a year, acting on matters with the guidance of the CRC's Church Order, the rules that member churches agree together to follow. Articles are noted here for actions taken by classes in the past several months. Quotations come from classis minutes.

Those **welcomed into ministry** in the CRC include candidates Tim Kimbel, Katrina Olson, Maria Bowater, Charles Dillender, Frank Meneses, Ben Wiersma, David Dick, Jonathan Kim, Lynette van de Hoef Meyers, Katrina Olson, and Josiah Gorter (Arts. 6 and 10).

Those **welcomed into ministry in the CRC from other denominations** (Art. 8): Revs. Dong Shin, In Ho Jang, Suho Lee, and Youngmun Koh.

Ministers **loaned** (Art. 13c): Rev. Jonathan Kim to Hebron Presbyterian Church in Prospect Heights, Ill. (Classis Northern Illinois).

Ministers **released from a congregation** (Art. 17a): Revs. Steven De Ruiters from Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.; Dayna Vreeken from Woody Nook CRC in Lacombe, Alta.; Norman Underland from Austinville (Iowa) CRC; Steve Boersma from Dispatch (Kans.) CRC; John Aukema from First CRC of Crown Point, Ind.; Doug MacLeod from Second CRC in Fremont, Mich.; Nicholas W. Monsma from Fresno (Calif.) CRC; Anthony Joseph Gretz from South Grandville (Mich.) CRC; and Joshua Van Til from Renew Church in Corvallis, Oreg. (disbanded). Vreeken, Monsma, Aukema, and Underland were designated as eligible for call.

Leaving Ministry in the CRC

Classes may end a pastor's ordained ministry status, guided by Church Order articles 14 and 17. Designations of release reflect the manner and spirit in which the minister acted during the time leading up to and including resignation from office.

Jana Koh, Chris Fulkerson, and Elizabeth Turnbull were **honorably released**.

Steve Moerman, Curtis Hwang, and Kyung Lok Jang were **released**.

Brian Seifert was **dismissed**.

Ministers **retiring** (granted emeritus status): Revs. Robert Knol, Cornelius "Corky" DeBoer, Bill Van Groningen, Ted Boswell, Steve DeRuiter, Thomas Dykstra, John Rottman, Ruth Boven, Ferenc "Frank" Varga, Doug VandeKamp, Jack Kooreman, David Dykstra (effective Jan. 24, 2022), and Harrison Newhouse (Art. 18).

Commissioned Pastors

Approved as commissioned pastors called to specific roles within their classis (Art. 23) were Sean Taylor (Classis North Cascades), John VanderWindt (Quinte), Bosco Jen (Chicago South), Kaitlin Ho Givens (Atlantic Northeast), Dan Van Kooten (Central Plains), Paul Dong-Suk Chang (Ko-Am), and Sam Gesch (Minnkota).

Daniel Svendsen (Classis Illiana) was **released** from ministry as a commissioned pastor.

Commissioned pastor **emeritus status** was granted to Jeanne Maher (Grand Rapids North) and Bill Hanchett (Classis Atlantic Northeast, effective Jan. 31, 2022).

New Ministries and Ministry Changes

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

Grace in Garfield (Ill.) CRC was recognized as **emerging**.

Galilee Presbyterian CRC in Albuquerque, N.M., was recognized as **organized**.

Renew Church in Corvallis, Oreg., **disbanded** (Aug. 31, 2020).

First CRC of South Holland, Ill., **disaffiliated** from the CRC.

Other Matters

Classis Minnkota received its Vision Minnkota report, providing recommendations regarding the worship of the Lord twice on the Lord's Day and encouraging classis to pursue an elder-training conference. The report also addressed the mark of discipline in the CRCNA, concluding that "when Synod proves unable or unwilling to discipline classes and councils for serious departures from Scripture, our confessions, our Covenant for Officebearers, and synodical rulings," the mark will have been lost.

Classis Zeeland changed its stipend for elders and deacons who are delegates to synod to a per-day rate that would include "the time spent in pre-Synod Zoom meetings expected in 2022."

Classis Chicago South will form a multi-ethnic ad hoc committee to address racism in the classis' past and present, to encourage confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation, and to make proposals for change.

Three more classes—**Hackensack, Chicago South, and Heartland**—are sending requests to Synod 2022 about the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality. The report was requested by Synod 2016 and released to the churches in 2020. (For details see the Classis Watch on *thebanner.org*.)

Classis Atlantic Northeast asks synod to "clarify the process for reinstatement of pastors who resigned to serve in other denominations."

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

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Canadian Board Approves Senior Leader for Indigenous Reconciliation, Forms Antiracism Advisory Committee

At its October meeting the Canada Corporation of the Christian Reformed Church in North America approved pursuing a senior leader for Indigenous Justice and Reconciliation. The position will be full time, replacing a previous half-time position that gave support to the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee. The Canadian board approved the job description and gave the interim executive director for Canada the go-ahead to pursue a search. It also approved the formation of a National Antiracism and Intercultural Conciliation Advisory Committee to work alongside Pablo Kim Sun, senior leader for antiracism and intercultural conciliation in Canada, who was hired in May.

Responding to a question about funding the expanded Indigenous ministry position, Terry Veldboom, acting executive director for the CRCNA in Canada, said, "We would look at it in the context of the whole of our budget dollars devoted to Indigenous ministries." Veldboom said he would take the board's passing of this proposal as a directive to move ahead with this as a ministry priority, and "staff will have to put the pieces together and present our plans and budgets for next May."

Mandate Addition

Ministry of the CRC in Canada with Indigenous peoples includes the national work of the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee and urban ministry centers in Winnipeg, Man.; Regina, Sask.; and Edmonton, Alta. The Committee (name changed in 2019) has been active since 2007. According to its 2015 mandate, it "facilitates the response of Indigenous people to the healing power of Christ within the context of Indigenous culture. It has the specific role of educating and mobilizing CRC members and congregations to live in reconciled relationships as covenant (treaty) people before our Creator" (parentheses original).

At the October meeting the board approved an addition to the purpose and mandate that



specifies that work will "actively and intentionally" respond to two calls to action— #59 and #60—from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission "through educational programs targeted at institutional and congregational systemic change" and indicates an advisory role in "supporting intercultural ministry in the CRC."

Antiracism Advisory Committee

The new National Antiracism and Intercultural Conciliation Advisory Committee will work in a similar way to the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee. Kim Sun said the new team, with seven members appointed by the Canada Corporation, will put into action "the aspirations, ideals and commitments articulated in various church statements and official documents," including God's Diverse and Unified Family, a study committee report to Synod 1996; the Belhar Confession, adopted as a contemporary testimony of the CRCNA in 2017; and Creating a New Family: A Circle of Conversation on the Doctrine of Christian Discovery, a study report received by Synod 2016.

—Alissa Vernon, news editor

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Robert D. Ruis

1932-2021

Bob Ruis was a Christ-focused and mission-focused man who, in the words of his children, left behind an everlasting legacy. He died Sept. 30.

After graduating from Calvin College (now University) in 1954, Ruis enlisted in the U.S. Army for three years. He spent a year learning Korean at Monterey (Calif.) Army Language School and then deployed.

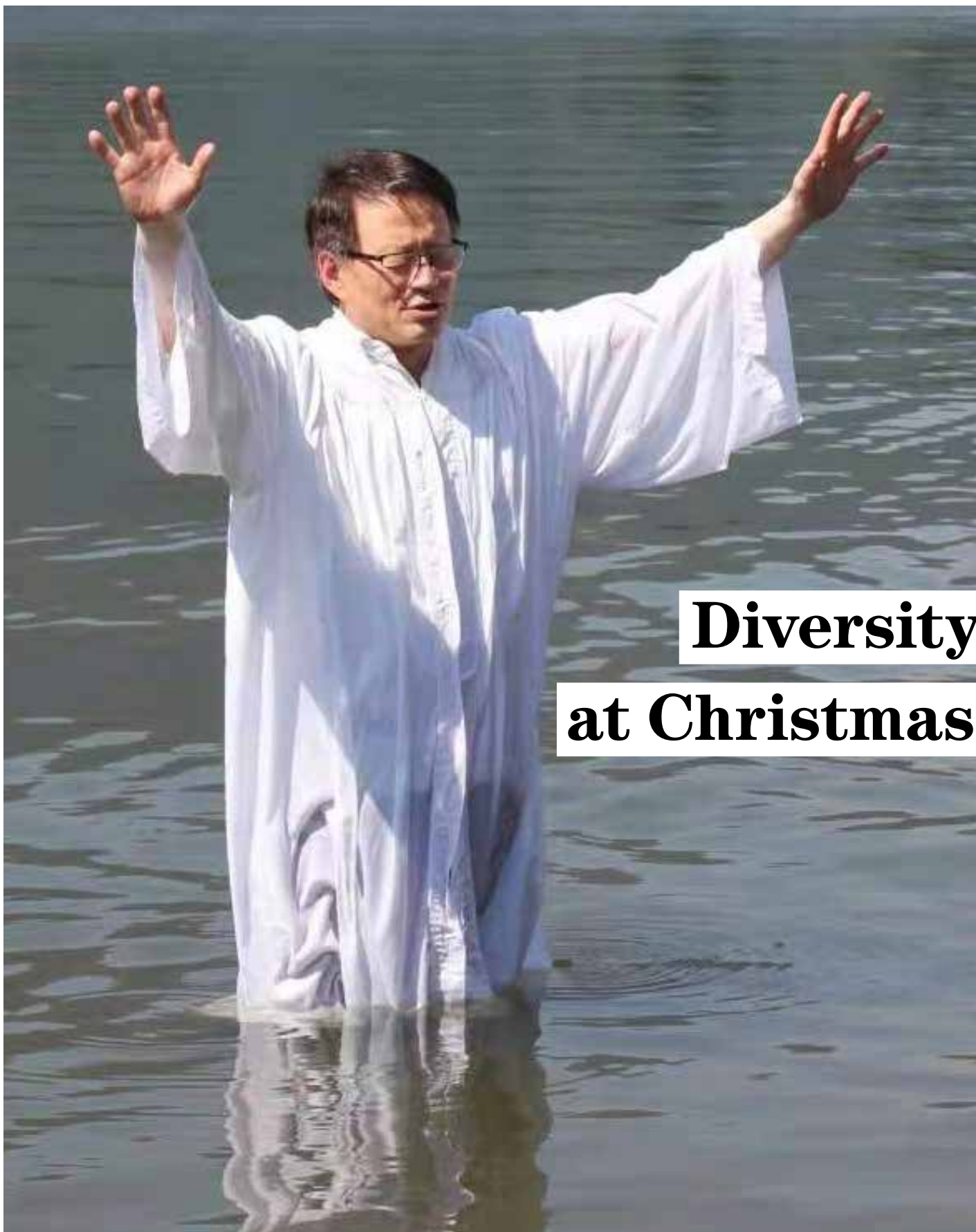
Following military service, Ruis obtained a Bachelor of Divinity from Calvin Seminary, was ordained in 1963, then worked in California with Cuban refugees and Mexican migrant workers, serving Christian Reformed Home Missions (now Resonate Global Mission). In 1966 he became the first CRC missionary in Tijuana and Tecate, Mexico. He served 14 years there. In 1978 he received his M.Div. from Calvin Seminary.

Ruis then pastored Bethlehem CRC, Freeman, S.D.; First CRC, Sioux City, Iowa; and Hancock (Minn.) CRC. After retiring in 1997, he taught English in Beijing, China, and was an interim pastor in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

He had a great sense of humor and enjoyed reading, making home movies, and gardening.

Ruis is survived by Iva, his wife of 65 years; four children and their spouses; seven grandchildren and their spouses; and eight great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus



Diversity at Christmas

By Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

As we enter Advent, it is good to be reminded of the diversity of God's church. The genealogy of Jesus listed in Matthew 1 reminds us that Jesus' human lineage is itself diverse. His family tree included Canaanites (Tamar and Rahab), Moabites (Ruth), Hittites (Bathsheba), and more. Today diversity continues to be a defining feature of the church that serves God incarnate, born from that lineage.

This month, Christmas will be celebrated in a myriad of ways in countries all over the world. And many of those traditions will find their ways into Christian Reformed congregations thanks to the growing diversity of our denomination. Currently, almost a third (32%) of all CRC congregations identify as Hispanic, African American, Chinese, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, Navajo, Zuni, or multiethnic.

Many of these ethnic minority congregations are church plants supported by established congregations, local classes, and Resonate Global Mission. Others have been around for a long time. Whether they are newly formed or have been around for generations, all of these diverse congregations add beauty and depth to our CRCNA family. They offer new ways to worship and relate to God and demonstrate unique ways to serve their communities and share the gospel.

Here are glimpses into the congregational life of a few of these churches.

Zion Chinese CRC, Abbotsford, B.C.

Zion Chinese CRC recently celebrated its 40th anniversary. This worshipping community of about 100 people is led by Rev. Joseph Yu-Jyh Chen (pictured above at a recent baptism). The congregation was originally founded to reach a growing number of Vietnamese and Laotian refugees in the Abbotsford area. The congregation has since welcomed and become a home for new immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, and China. Originally services were offered in Cantonese and translated into Vietnamese. Today, the church incorporates English, Mandarin, and Cantonese into its services.

"Since the pandemic started, we have hosted various Bible study groups and community building events via Zoom," said Lydia Liu, ministry coordinator for Zion Chinese CRC. "Our online Bible study groups have seen unprecedented participation with members desiring to pursue the Word of God. The online platform has served these Bible study groups very well as people could conveniently participate from anywhere, including from China."

Artesia City Church, Artesia, Calif.



Artesia City Church is an Indian and Pakistani congregation in Southern California. It started in 2008 and is currently pastored by Rev. Dr. Eric Sarwar. This worshipping community of about 25 people describes itself as "a congregational missional movement of worship community to Yesu Masih (Jesus Christ) that embraces the covenantal responsibility of Christian life and identity, rooted in the Bible, expressed in cultural traditions, and renewed and applied in the context of the New Covenant." At its annual outreach picnic on the Pacific Ocean, members played praise songs on guitar and harmonium.

(left) Zion Chinese CRC, Abbotsford, B.C.

Iglesia Todas Las Naciones, Hudsonville, Mich.



Iglesia Todas Las Naciones (Church of All Nations) is a church plant that meets in Hudsonville, Mich., and is led by Rev. Pablo Sang Lee. Every week, Spanish-speaking individuals gather from across West Michigan, some driving 30-40 minutes to worship with other Spanish speakers. In July 2021, the congregation celebrated its first anniversary.

Red Valley CRC, Red Valley, Ariz.



Red Valley CRC is a Navajo- and English-speaking congregation that seeks to be “a loving, friendly community that worships God and serves others.” About 40 people regularly attend services led by Pastor Caleb Dickson, who was ordained as a commissioned pastor in 2018. This photo was taken in the sanctuary during Pastor Dickson’s ordination service.

Manhattan Vertical Church, New York, N.Y.



Manhattan Vertical Church is a Korean congregation that describes itself as a “church that prioritizes restoration of relationship with God (vertical) in life.” They worship and strive for God’s will and revival in Manhattan, N.Y., and are led by Rev. Kwon Do Lee (pictured leading worship). [B](#)

Hearts Exchanged Across Canada

Across Canada, 250 participants in 15 groups are engaging in the Hearts Exchanged process. Hearts Exchanged is a reconciliation program designed to equip Reformed Christians to engage with Indigenous people as neighbors and fellow image bearers. Justice and reconciliation mobilizer Priya Andrade reflects, "If this is not the Spirit moving, I don't know what is."

Hearts Exchanged was inspired by the Christian Reformed Church's Cross-cultural Ministry Forum in 2000. The report coming out of that forum emphasized that the rich exchange of hearts across cultures that happened during this event needed to be regular and ongoing. This did not formally continue in the CRC, so it is significant to see this call taken up again.

Participants commit to an eight-month journey with regular meetings and readings. The groups are hosted on a unique online platform that integrates videos, resources, and opportunities for discussion between meetings. The activities and the ability for participants to connect with each other in a rich way despite the pandemic are an important part of creating relationships in which hearts can be exchanged. Participant Helen Y. from Alberta put it this way:

Hearts Exchanged has been a beacon of hope for me. I've spent many evenings weeping as I moved through the self-guided activities, learning about the injustices Indigenous communities have experienced. But in those moments, God affirms that his kingdom is expansive. The beauty of culture, of heritage, of belonging, and of relation were important themes that were emphasized over and over again.



The program is designed to support participants as they work through these emotions and to foster spaces of trust so that small groups can support each other as they tackle difficult subjects.

The program builds on the long and faithful work done by the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee and was designed in consultation with Indigenous people. "We uplift Indigenous theologians, learn about Indigenous practices such as sharing circles and territory acknowledgements, and highlight Indigenous teachings as well as Indigenous theology centered on scriptural principles of humility, peacemaking, repentance, and hospitality," Hearts Exchanged team member Shannon Perez said.

There is a feeling of hopefulness surrounding the program.

"Are we responding as a church to reconciliation perfectly? More than likely not. But are we doing something? Yes. We're not indifferent," Andrade said. "This is a robust program that goes beyond a one-time event or expression of regret and moves toward true justice and reconciliation as a shared spiritual journey."

Learn more at crcna.org/hearts-exchanged.

—Victoria Veenstra,
Canadian Indigenous Ministries

The View from Here

That We May Be One

MATTHEW 2:13-15 tells the story of Mary and Joseph's flight to Egypt after Jesus' birth. In this passage we see echoes of God's love for his people Israel and God calling them out of Egypt as recorded in the book of Exodus. But we also see that Jesus and his earthly family experienced the hardships of life in a difficult land. They experienced homelessness and persecution, and at least for a while they were immigrants in a strange land. This reality is comforting to me as we look at the church today.

It is easy to look at the news and become discouraged. The pace of natural and human-caused disasters seems to be increasing, disrupting the shalom of God we all crave. In the midst of this, we see people fleeing their homelands and striving to find peace and safety wherever they can.

The Christian Reformed Church is a microcosm of the universal church, and in it we see glimpses of God's work manifesting in this current reality. We see local churches growing in diversity, congregations reaching out to their communities, new churches being planted, and immigrants and refugees being advocated and cared for. I thank God for passionate saints, in the CRCNA and beyond, who show deep love for their neighbors by these actions.

In this issue, you will see a picture of the growing diversity of the CRCNA. Of our slightly more than 1,000 churches in Canada and the U.S., more than 330 self-identify as either multicultural or predominantly minority. Most of our denomination's new churches are in this category.

This diversity is something to celebrate, as is the unity we find in our shared passion for God's kingdom and our mutual commitment to reach others in the communities where God has planted us.

The Christian Reformed Church is a microcosm of the universal church, and in it we see glimpses of God's work.

As the church universal heads into this Christmas season, I leave you with Jesus' prayer for his disciples not long before his arrest: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:20-23).

May we live into the reality of Jesus' prayer and his longing for us to be together in community.



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.

우리도 하나가 되기를

마태복음 2:13-15은 예수님의 탄생 이후 마리아와 요셉의 이집트 여행 이야기를 들려 줍니다. 이 본문에서 우리는 출애굽기에 기록된 이스라엘 백성을 향한 하나님의 사랑과 그들을 애굽에서 나오라고 하신 하나님의 부르심을 연상합니다. 하지만 우리는 또한 예수님과 그의 이 세상 가족들이 힘든 땅에서 겪은 인생의 고통도 알 수 있습니다. 그들은 노숙하고 박해받고 낯선 땅에서 일정기간 이민자의 삶을 경험했습니다. 이런 사실은 오늘날의 교회를 바라보는 우리를 위로합니다.

뉴스를 보면 쉽게 낙심됩니다. 천재지변과 인재의 발생 속도가 점점 빨라져서 우리 모두가 열망하는 하나님의 평화의 도래가 방해받는 것처럼 보입니다. 이런 상황에서 우리는 모국에서 도망쳐서 어느 곳이든 평화와 안전이 있는 곳으로 가려는 사람들이 있습니다.

북미주 개혁신교회는 보편 교회의 축소판이며 그 속에서 우리는 이러한 현재 상황에서 하나님의 역사가 어떻게 펼쳐지는지 목도합니다. 우리는 지역교회들이 다양성을 품고 자라가고, 교회가 속한 공동체에 다가가고, 새로운 교회들이 세워지고, 이민자들과 난민들을 지지하고 돌보는 것을 봅니다. 이러한 행동을 통해서 이웃을 향한 깊은 사랑을 보여주는 북미주 개혁신교회 안팎의 열정적인 성도들에 대하여 하나님께 감사합니다.

이번 호에서 여러분은 북미주 개혁신교회 내에서 다양성이 점점 증대하는 것을 보실 것입니다. 미국과 캐나다의 1000여개의 북미주 개혁신교회 중에서 330개의 교회가 다문화 혹은 소수인종이 지배적인 교회라고 스스로 규정합니다. 우리 교단의 새롭게 세워지는 교회의 대부분이 이 항목에 속합니다.

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모든 교회가 성탄절 절기로 들어서는 이 시점에 예수님이 붙잡히시기 얼마 전 그의 제자들에게 남기셨던 기도를 여러분들에게 남기고 싶습니다.

“내가 비옵는 것은 이 사람들만 위함이 아니요 또 그들의 말로 말미암아 나를 믿는 사람들도 위함이니 아버지여, 아버지께서 내 안에, 내가 아버지 안에 있는 것 같이 그들도 다 하나가 되어 우리 안에 있게 하사 세상으로 아버지께서 나를 보내신 것을 믿게 하옵소서 내게 주신 영광을 내가 그들에게 주었사오니 이는 우리가 하나가 된 것 같이 그들도 하나가 되게 하려 함이니이다 곧 내가 그들 안에 있고 아버지께서 내 안에 계시어 그들로 온전함을 이루어 하나가 되게 하려 함은 아버지께서 나를 보내신 것과 또 나를 사랑하심 같이 그들도 사랑하신 것을 세상으로 알게 하려 함이로소이다” (요한복음 17:20-23)

우리가 공동체로 하나되기를 바라시는 예수님의 바람과 기도대로 우리가 살기를 기도합니다.

Para Que Seamos Uno

MATEO 2:13-15 narra cómo María y José huyeron a Egipto tras el nacimiento de Jesús. En este pasaje vemos reflejos del amor de Dios por su pueblo, Israel, y de su llamado a que salieran de Egipto, justo como se relata en el libro del Éxodo. Pero también vemos que Jesús y su familia terrenal experimentaron las penas de la vida en una tierra difícil. Experimentaron la falta de hogar y la persecución, y, al menos durante un tiempo, fueron inmigrantes en una tierra extraña. Esta realidad me reconforta cuando observamos a la iglesia de hoy.

Es fácil ver las noticias y sentirse desanimado. El ritmo de las catástrofes naturales y aquellas provocadas por el hombre parece ir aumentando, interrumpiendo el shalom de Dios que todos anhelamos. En medio de esto, vemos a gente huyendo de sus países y esforzándose por encontrar paz y seguridad donde sea que puedan.

La Iglesia Cristiana Reformada es un microcosmos de la iglesia universal, y en ella vemos destellos de la obra de Dios manifestándose en la realidad actual. Vemos cómo las iglesias locales crecen en diversidad, cómo las congregaciones se acercan a sus comunidades, cómo se plantan nuevas iglesias y cómo son defendidos y atendidos los inmigrantes y refugiados. Doy gracias a Dios por los hermanos apasionados, en la ICRNA y fuera de ella, quienes muestran un profundo amor por su prójimo con estas acciones.

En esta edición, podrá ver una imagen de la creciente diversidad de la ICRNA. Entre nuestras poco más de 1,000 iglesias en Canadá y Estados Unidos, más de 330 iglesias se auto-identifican como multiculturales o predominantemente minoritarias. La mayoría de las nuevas iglesias en nuestra denominación se encuentran en esta categoría.

La Iglesia
Cristiana
Reformada es
un microcosmos
de la iglesia
universal, y en ella
vemos destellos de
la obra de Dios.

Esta diversidad es motivo de celebración, al igual que la unidad que encontramos en nuestra pasión compartida por el reino de Dios y nuestro compromiso mutuo de alcanzar a otros en las comunidades donde Dios nos ha sembrado.

Ahora que la iglesia universal se adentra a la temporada navideña, los dejo con la oración de Jesús por sus discípulos poco antes de su arresto: “No ruego solo por estos. Ruego también por los que han de creer en mí por el mensaje de ellos, para que todos sean uno. Padre, así como tú estás en mí y yo en ti, permite que ellos también estén en nosotros, para que el mundo crea que tú me has enviado. Yo les he dado la gloria que me diste, para que sean uno, así como nosotros somos uno: yo en ellos y tú en mí. Permite que alcancen la perfección en la unidad, y así el mundo reconozca que tú me enviaste y que los has amado a ellos tal como me has amado a mí.” (Juan 17, 20-23).

Que podamos vivir la realidad de la oración de Jesús y su anhelo por nuestra unidad en comunidad.

Center for Excellence in Preaching Offers New Website

The Center for Excellence in Preaching, based at Calvin Theological Seminary, has launched a new website at cepreaching.org.

Scott Hoezee, director of CEP, said the new site restructures CEP's high-quality existing content and provides an immersive experience with easy-to-find sermon commentary for all preachers.

It also includes a new Preaching Connections section that lets pastors search for relevant illustrations and quotations to fit preaching topics and themes.

The website also offers expanded content in Spanish and has infrastructure in place to include additional languages in the future.

"We hope pastors find our new website more intuitive to navigate so they can dive deeply into a whole array of preaching connection topics," Hoezee said. "Every pastor knows that God's Word deserves sermons that are fresh and vibrant, and we hope our new website will provide what is needed to spark just such creative freshness."

If our site is bookmarked in your browser, please update the address to our new domain: cepreaching.org.

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications



A Partnership that Transforms Lives

"Tonight's session was great, as I've learned that I have a Savior who is always there for me. He is just waiting for me to surrender everything to him."

This is one participant's comment after using the WhatsApp messaging app to complete a Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) course provided by The Relay Trust, a partner of Raise Up Global Ministry.

Raise Up's partnership with Relay Trust began as a result of the coronavirus crisis. Early in the pandemic, TLT developed a short manual called "Loving Your Neighbor in the COVID-19 Pandemic" and distributed it to partners around the world.

Members of the Relay Trust team came to know about TLT while they were in Sierra Leone, where they learned it was being used extensively across the country. They had been looking for accessible, Bible-centered material to use in their training programs and found that TLT fit beautifully.

When they heard of the COVID manual early in 2020, Relay Trust reached out to help with distribution. They adapted the materials to microvideos, delivering them through WhatsApp.

"Raise Up had already been using WhatsApp to connect, support, and equip trainers around the world," said Sam Huizenga, Raise Up's director. "Now, with a knowledgeable partner, we could also connect around training materials."

Hundreds of church leaders across Africa were encouraged through these studies as a result.

Today, Raise Up is working to make all of the TLT core manuals available through microvideos. These will provide an interactive learning opportunity to leaders in an additional format. Printable PDFs will continue to be made available too.

All three programs of Raise Up Global Ministries (TLT, Global Coffee Break, and Educational Care) work to partner with leaders to provide Bible-centered, interactive, and accessible learning materials that are relevant to local contexts. Through strategic partnerships, they equip leaders of the global community with materials and training so that more stories of transformation can take place.

—Amy Friedman,
Raise Up Ministries



Gloria in Uganda worked with our ministry partner, Relay Trust, to complete a TLT course via WhatsApp. Her testimony is one of personal change: "Before the course was introduced, I was going through a difficult time. I was spiritually down, and I could not bring myself to read the Word of God or even pray. I needed so much to get off this misery or change my situation. (When I agreed to study this manual, I did not know) it would require me to read the Word of God more, to pray and pray for others. As I speak, I have been reminded of that powerful verse in Romans 8:38-39."

Swati Finds Hope

Swati might be young, but she will remember this year for the rest of her life.

In India, where Swati lives, she followed the news of the COVID-19 pandemic as it went from bad to worse. Hospitals and crematoriums were filling up so quickly that most people were turned away in their times of desperation.

“Some people chose to build makeshift crematoriums, while others were forced to drop the bodies of their loved ones in the river,” said ReFrame Ministries’ Hindi ministry leader in India, whose name is being withheld for his safety.

COVID-19 in India

It’s impossible to know just how many people have died from COVID-19 in India during the past year, but for Swati the number that matters most is two—the number of family members she lost.

When Swati’s uncle and father died, she lost not only two close family members, but what was left of her support system. Still a young adult and an only child, Swati had no job, and her mother had died a year earlier. With very few Christians to talk to, she felt paralyzed about her next steps in life.

“The second wave of COVID-19 infections caused irreparable damages to numerous families,” said ReFrame’s Hindi ministry leader.

While Swati and many others like her were picking up the broken pieces of their lives, she found comfort in some of the audio and video programs produced by ReFrame’s partners in India.

A Prayer Warrior

Vidyut, who works with ReFrame in India, is known in his neighborhood as a Christian leader and prayer warrior. During the pandemic, he’s been working hard to record new programs, answer online questions, and even pass out food to people in his community.

When Swati reached out for help to the staff at the radio program she follows, Vidyut offered to lead a prayer meeting with her and some of her loved ones.



Because of his role as a Hindi ministry producer, Vidyut is esteemed as a Christian leader in his community.

What’s more, Vidyut connected Swati to a family of Christians nearby who had also lost loved ones during the pandemic. Vidyut taught these new Christians how to lead their own family prayer times using biblical programs and devotions that ReFrame supporters have made possible.

Today, Swati continues to worship with this family. And while she still has a long road ahead, she is no longer alone. She has a family in Christ who knows much of the pain she is experiencing, and she has biblical programs on her phone that will help her focus on Christ’s birth this Christmas.

—Brian Clark,
ReFrame Ministries



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A Forest in Winter



Illustration for The Banner by Anita Barghigiani

AS AUTUMN FADES into winter, snow begins to blanket the ground, and the forest seems silent and still. So what happens to all the animals in winter?

When winter comes to the north, people wear extra layers of clothes and turn on the heat in their homes to help everyone stay warm. Extra layers and heavy coats are ways we insulate ourselves from the cold.

Some animals have warm “clothing” built in and survive winter with insulation from fur, feathers, or fat. Foxes even use their tails as built-in scarves! God’s design for snow also helps insulate animals in the winter. Snow can trap heat and helps keep out wind. Did you know there’s a whole world of life living under the snow? Animals such as voles keep warm by staying under the snow all winter long.

The forest is quieter in the winter than in the summer because some animals use the winter to take a break through hibernation. Turtles bury themselves in pond bottoms, and insects find insulated places in old logs. A wood frog waits for spring under a pile of leaves with 60% of the water in its body frozen! That’s pretty incredible!

Some animals are not built for the cold, so they migrate. They move to places where it is warmer and they can find more food. In fact, 90% of birds that spend summer in the boreal forest (that’s the forest furthest north) will migrate or leave the forest for the winter. Some migrate great distances, even flying all the way to South America, but others move a shorter distance, like flying to Ohio. And the 10% that stay behind? They use insulation. Chickadees group together to stay warm at night, and grouse bury themselves in snow overnight to stay warm.

Try This

One of God’s many amazing creations is the bear. Bears are specially designed to sleep all winter. When a bear hibernates, its whole body slows down, and its heart rate can be as slow as eight beats per minute. How many times does your heart beat in a minute?

Dig Deeper

In Job 12:7-10 and Romans 1:20 we read that creation reveals the power and glory of God. Creation is filled with wonderful creatures designed by God, each with its own unique features. What makes your favorite animal special? How has God designed it to be able to survive in its habitat? **B**



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





With Tempered Impatience

By Chris Schoon

“Stay angry, Little Meg,” Mrs. Whatsit whispered. “You will need all your anger now.”

—Madeleine L’Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*

My parents named me Christopher James, desiring that I would become a “carrier of Christ” and that I might have “the patience of James.” It’s a little daunting to think of myself ferrying (*-pher*) Christ around with me—though I suppose that’s true for all of us who follow Jesus Christ. My dad once shared that James’ patience came through in these verses: “Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” (James 1:19-20). Patience, marked by a slowness to anger, has become one of the tangible ways of demonstrating that I am carrying Christ with me into my work, my relationships, and other aspects of my daily living.

While I have no doubt that patience is a virtue, and my name notwithstanding, I am also convinced that I am too often guilty of the sin of *excessive* patience.

Restraint Is Not Enough

Some of the Heidelberg Catechism’s clearest and most pointed teaching comes in response to the Ten Commandments. In particular, I have found that the questions and answers related to “You shall not murder” are prophetically applicable today.

After declaring that keeping this commandment includes “my thoughts, my words, my look and gesture” and that we are not to be party to murdering others through any of these means (Q&A 105), the Catechism teaches that keeping the sixth command requires digging out the “envy, hatred, anger, and vindictiveness” rooted within our hearts (Q&A 106).

That teaching confronts many of the ways we engage on social media, particularly the slander, gossip, demeaning memes, and other ways that we often speak about people who are ethnically different from us or who hold different political views than we do. Those two questions and answers have taught me a lot about my personal responsibility in guarding the dignity of those I talk with and about.

But it’s Q&A 107 that has convicted me the most:

Q. Is it enough then that we do not murder our neighbor in any such way?

A. No. By condemning envy, hatred, and anger God wants us to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly toward them, to protect them from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies.

The absence of direct personal involvement in harming my neighbors is not enough. Just because I did not gossip with my friends does not mean that I am guiltless. Not sharing a post that slams one politician or another does not mean I’ve kept the sixth commandment. Simply refraining from personally murdering another person’s body or character is not enough.

The Catechism’s teaching calls us to spend ourselves—to *do as much as we can*—to protect our neighbors and even our enemies from harm.

What Harms?

But what harm does Q&A 107 refer to? Expanding on the previous two

Q&A's, 107 includes all the ways that our neighbors are harmed. We keep the sixth commandment when we protect our neighbors from anything that demeans, diminishes, or threatens the dignity and sanctity of their lives. While the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism did not use today's language of systemic injustice, their expansion here into a third Q&A on the sixth commandment certainly implies that they saw another layer of harm beyond the personal injuries addressed in the previous two Q&A's.

While recognizing that I may be ignorant to some personal privileges and prejudices that I need to overcome, the Catechism's teaching prompts me to wonder about my own hesitancy toward and even resistance to considering how others experience all kinds of harm for systemic reasons:

- » How am I doing "all I can" to prevent harm that comes when community members and police view Black men as pre-existing threats that need to be followed while shopping in retail stores, pulled over when driving in the "wrong" neighborhood, or confronted and even shot and killed while walking?
- » Am I willing to spend myself, like Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative do, on addressing the harm that comes with unequal access to defense attorneys and with judicial sentencing biases that disproportionately remove Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) from their families and communities?
- » How am I acting to prevent harm being done to children and youth whose vulnerabilities are exposed and exploited at the southern border of the United States?
- » Have I done anything substantive to redress the generational poverty among and socioeconomic harm done to the Native American and First Nations communities—harm that can be traced to broken treaties, discriminatory laws, dehumanizing

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court decisions, church-run residential schools, and violently enforced relocations?

- » Am I willing to develop and facilitate church leadership structures that intentionally resist and seek to overcome the emotional and physical harm inflicted by fellow (mostly white) Christians who have repeatedly questioned, doubted, justified, and even blamed our BIPOC siblings for the discrimination and violence committed against them?

Our sisters and brothers aren't often dying because of what we have personally done, but because of what we continually leave undone. Many of us white Christians in North America have somehow convinced ourselves not to risk our time, energy, reputation, or resources protecting the well-being of others, especially people of color. And the Spirit, through the Catechism's summary of Scripture, declares us—declares me—guilty of murder for not doing "as much as we can" in response to the harming of our neighbors. Personal restraint from actively killing my neighbors is not enough. Loving our neighbors beckons us to leverage all that we have and all that we are to protect our neighbors from all harm.

With Tempered Impatience

So what can it look like to love our neighbors like this? Our World Belongs to God describes faithful living this way: "With tempered impatience, eager to see injustice ended, we expect the Day of the Lord" (OWBTG, 6).

The presence of injustice calls for the virtue of "tempered impatience." The adjective "tempered" is important here. Used in metallurgy and chocolate confectionery, tempering involves heating and cooling an element in order to strengthen it, making it more resilient to future stressors. Steel becomes more durable; chocolate becomes less prone to melting and more likely to hold a molded shape.

When applied to our conversation, an unqualified impatience is messy, tends to lose its form, and is prone to explosions and meltdowns. But a tempered impatience has developed a resiliency that enhances a person's ability to persevere under trial and to stand strong in response to external stresses.

Essentially, tempering impatience helps remove the internal fault lines in our character that would lead us to respond to a situation out of self-righteousness, contempt, hatred, self-protection, or some other malformed disposition. When left unchecked, these character faults often lead us to respond to injustice by demonizing those who are perpetrating injustice or blaming those who are being treated unjustly while justifying ourselves. Unqualified impatience does not have the capacity to recognize and honor the image of God in another.

While injustice harms victims, perpetrators, and bystanders alike, the biblical narrative consistently reveals God to be one who chooses to come alongside those who are most vulnerable to injustice and to be impatient toward those in authority who harm and commit injustices. Even more, in Jesus Christ, God willingly enters the suffering that unfolds in the midst of overcoming injustice. From this perspective, the process of tempering

our impatience is really about the Holy Spirit forming us to be more like Jesus, including growing the character of God's tempered impatience with all that harms our neighbors. Injustice ought to anger us into action with the Spirit—and all of our anger is needed to protect our neighbors from harm.

But Isn't Love Patient?

While leaning into anger at injustice, this tempered impatience is not an excuse to be intolerant toward other people, to mistreat those who perpetuate injustice, or to besmirch their character. The Spirit also teaches us: "In your anger do not sin" (Eph. 4:26). Rather, as 1 Corinthians 13 teaches us, love expresses itself through patience and, I would suggest, particularly in patience toward those who commit atrocious, egregious sins. Jesus extends his call to love our neighbors to include loving our enemies, a beckoning that undoubtedly requires a great deal of long-suffering.

But patiently and faithfully loving other people does not dismiss or diminish our need to name, resist, and overcome the means by which they harm our neighbors. We can pray for God to transform a church, government, business, or neighborhood leader while also praying and working for that person's or agency's removal from a position where they can continue harming others. Patience with people, including those positioned as our ideological and physical enemies, does not mean we are patient with the harm they inflict. As Jemar Tisby says, "Justice takes sides."

Confident, Realistic Hope

One final thought: This tempered impatience operates in confident hope, trusting that God is the one who ultimately will bring about a day of reckoning and transformation. God is the only one who can untangle all of us from injustice. Even as we seek to confront injustice, we are called to admit that we, too, have a tendency to harm others. We need God to save us

and usher each of us into the whole and holy relationships of the promised new heaven and new earth.

That forward-looking hope does not mean we have the freedom to sit back while injustices are perpetuated here and now. Rather, tempered impatience calls us to "protest and resist all that harms, abuses, or diminishes the gift of life" (OWBTG, 44). The Belhar Confession testifies that "the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Art. 4). These discipleship resources make clear that following Jesus Christ faithfully includes actively protesting and resisting injustice in our contexts today even as we anticipate the coming day when all will flourish together in the new creation.


To this end, tempered impatience cannot merely be a personal response. Rather, it calls for the whole church, with all of its institutional power and influence, to actively participate in resisting "any form of suffering and need" and to "witness against and strive against any form of injustice." The church—and all who belong within it—does not exist for itself, but has been created and called to be "a sign, instrument, and foretaste," as missiologist Lesslie Newbigin said, of the righteousness, justice, and shalom of Jesus' coming kingdom.

Practically Speaking: So Now What?

So what does living with tempered impatience look like? Admittedly, I'm still learning and will be learning for a long time to come. I need the wisdom and experience of others not only to recognize and protest the injustices in the world out there, but also to name, repent of, and overcome the ways that I personally harm others.

Living with tempered impatience will look different in each of our contexts because injustice is so often

entrenched in the particular systems and structures of our respective communities. That makes it difficult to provide a universal road map for living justly. But there are people (such as Brenda Salter McNeil, John Perkins, and Soong Chan Rah) and organizations (for example, Equal Justice Initiative and World Renew) from whom we can learn practical steps for acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God (Mic. 6:8). Listening to voices like theirs helps equip all of us to love our neighbors more fully and more faithfully than we've done before.

As I am learning in this season, overcoming the sin of excessive patience and instead seeking justice involves publicly choosing what is good for our neighbors over the advantages we could gain for ourselves. Those of us called by the name of Christ are not invited into a lifestyle of passive comfort and indifference about this world. Rather, we have been given the gift and responsibility of tempered impatience, to protest and resist injustice in every form and to do all that we can to protect our neighbors from harm, even as we cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly." 



Chris Schoon serves as the Director of Faith Formation Ministries for the Christian Reformed Church and is the author of *Cultivating an Evangelistic Character* (Wipf & Stock, 2018).

1. How often have you heard of the distinction between the sins of commission and the sins of omission? How would you describe it, and what examples would you give for it?
2. What are some examples of "excessive patience" in your life or that you have observed?

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Sitting with a Sister

Reflections on Attitude and Behavior

I can't change the fact that at a very young age I learned this behavior of ignoring older women, but I am responsible for how I behave today.



Rev. John Groen is a retired Christian Reformed Church minister who served congregations in Trenton and Richmond Hill, Ont., and Ann Arbor, Mich. He currently resides in Pinckney, Mich.

"CAN I TALK TO YOU one on one?" she asked.

I don't remember her name, but I do remember what we talked about.

"Why do you always ignore me?" she asked. "I've noticed that when we're in group supervision you tend to zone me out. Why is that?"

I was clueless.

"Can we talk about your family history?" she asked.

"Sure," I said.

Upon graduation from Calvin Theological Seminary I did a Clinical Pastoral Education session at a mental health center. One supervisory team member was this Catholic sister.

She suggested my relationship with the only grandmother I knew was likely the reason I now ignored her.

"Describe how you got along with your grandmother," she said.

I visited her often with my father. I'm sure she loved me. But Oma never really spoke to me or paid attention to me the way I've seen many grandmothers speak to their grandchildren. I was seen but not heard.

Oma was, of course, a woman and much older than me.

The sister was an older woman too. Through this particular discussion, I came to learn much about myself and why I tended to ignore older women.

In conversation with a sibling about our grandmother's early history, I came to a deeper understanding of the dynamics in my family relationships. I also learned that we are socialized in ways that ideas and attitudes can seep into our lives at a young age—ideas and attitudes that need to be examined as we become older.

My grandmother was orphaned at 5 years old and placed in an orphanage, where I assume she learned to be seen

and not heard. The way she behaved toward me came naturally to her. So in her presence, I learned to be seen and not heard. I also learned not to "hear" her or any older woman.

I'm sharing this story to shed some light on how we can be socialized in ways that attitudes and behaviors become part of who we are without our realizing their effect on others. I didn't realize how I was treating the sister or see the hurt it caused her until she enlightened me. Ignoring the sister resulted in my missing the wisdom she was sharing with the group.

I can't change the fact that at a very young age I learned this behavior of ignoring older women, but I am responsible for how I behave today.

The author Wendell Berry, in his book *The Hidden Wound*, writes about picking up racist attitudes around the kitchen table with his family. We can learn racism simply by living with people who have racist attitudes.

Isabel Wilkerson, in her book *Caste*, describes how an "immune system against empathy" was built up in children who were taken to the carnivals and county fairs in the early 20th century: "There at these events was an attraction called the 'Coon Dip,' in which fairgoers hurled projectiles at live African Americans. There was also the 'Bean-em,' in which children flung bean bags at grotesquely caricatured black faces, whose image alone taught the lesson of caste without a word needed to be spoken" (p. 149).

Many of us need a sister to sit with us.

Maybe that sister comes to us in the face of Jesus, whose Sermon on the Mount could help us examine ourselves, turn from our dehumanizing ways, and treat all persons with the dignity, respect, and attention they deserve as image bearers of their Creator. **B**

Four Decades

In ways I cannot explain, God impressed on my introspective young heart a passion for service and mission.

FORTY YEARS AGO, I was ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments. It was the last hurdle on a journey that began when I was 16. In ways I cannot explain, God impressed on my introspective young heart a passion for service and mission. It led me stumbling through college, trying to find a major that would get me to seminary. It took me on a roller coaster of faith when I found seminary to be anything but a spiritual retreat. It brought me to an unwanted but transformative internship where a supervising pastor I did not at first respect helped me find Jesus and ministry.

Now came the time for the “laying on of hands.” This dark night, from widely scattered Alberta prairie towns and local farms, people gathered at a rustic unmarked church building to sit on uncomfortable hand-built benches, promising to pin their prayers on this young stranger whom they all, by the audacity of hope, believed Jesus had called to this ministry at this time.

Initially, as a single man in my mid-20s, I did a lot of pastoral visitation over meals at farmhouse tables, often inviting myself to join families too timid otherwise to have the “domine” come over. Sundays were the big days, of course. I stood outside the small entrance of this windswept building to welcome people, trying to remember names and birthdays and anniversaries. I prepared one modestly decent sermon each week for the morning worship gathering, then beat a hasty retreat home to try to pull together another new sermon for the afternoon service. Most of the year, worship services were at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., sandwiched between early milking, noon irrigation pipe moves, and afternoon milking.

Baptisms were overflow celebrations with extended family pouring in from everywhere. One Sunday we baptized

the entire family of refugees we had sponsored. It was Dutch immigrants taking care of Cambodian immigrants. There was not a dry eye in the place when I read from Hebrews 11: “They ... admitt(ed) that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.”

I look back with amazement at these four decades and find that I am still traveling, living often as a foreigner and stranger. I met Brenda two months after my ordination. The congregation spied on us through our long courtship, and then celebrated extravagantly at our Easter wedding and reception. Shortly before the event, one of our farmers shouted down at me from his high tractor-seat perch, “Now you are counting down to the wedding. Then you will count up to nine and the baby!” I scoffed, but it was true. Kristyn came along nine months later.

When our second daughter was born, our elder read the baptismal form before I sprinkled the water. He grinned at me and ad-libbed, “Pastor, I know you were looking for a boy, and here’s a girl instead. But be patient, be patient.” Everyone laughed uproariously.

But the boy never came for us. Our third daughter was born in Nigeria when I was serving there as a missionary. In these 40 years we have lived in four countries on several continents, called a dozen villages and cities home, and taken up quarters in 14 different houses. I have preached in church buildings of all shapes and sizes. While these gatherings were



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Photo by Jon Tyson/Unsplash

invariably friendly and inspiring, the only person I truly remember always being there was Jesus.

Many of those to whom I first served communion have since joined the eternal feast of saints. Now and again a baby I baptized shows up as a student in one of my college or seminary classes. One couple (then unconnected to any church) that asked me decades ago to officiate at their wedding continues to send newsy Christmas cards documenting their growing family and deepening Christian faith, which they attribute to my first interactions with them. But many other marriages have ended in divorce despite my best pastoral counseling and prayers.

Funerals were the best and worst. I have cried many tears of reflective joy when listening to the family tributes paid to true saints. But too many times there was bitterness. One young evangelist brought his friend from the overnight assembly line to worship. Both were married with young children, and soon the two boisterous families occupied one long line of chairs up front in our “contemporary” worship service. The visitor came to talk with me, saying he’d never been “religious” or had a “priest.” We had a great conversation and together formed a

plan for instruction leading to baptism and membership.

But a week later everything changed. The excited new believer was hopping mad. His older brother, wild and impetuous, had been at a party where drinks and drugs and guns tumbled every which way. However it happened, his brother was dead of a bullet through the brain. First, he needed someone to “do” the funeral. Since I was the only “priest” he knew, he asked me to take care of it. But second, he needed justice. And that is where things got really strange. He and his brother were part of a recent and often-despised immigrant community. The killer was not only white, but a brother to several women in our congregation, including the mother of a family whose favored seats during worship had been taken over, unwittingly, by this newcomer and his wild kids! On Sunday the visitor asked for prayers seeking justice for his cruelly terminated brother while the sister of the man who pulled the trigger sat stewing directly behind him.

At the cemetery, as the casket was being lowered into the earth, my new friend jumped down onto it, spread-eagled, pounding his fist on the metal

casing and wailing, “NO! NO! NO! You can’t be gone! I’ll get justice for you!”

This scene and others like it haunt me. I remember the passion of my early love for Jesus and the ordination that confirmed my leadership role in ministry. Jesus and I were going to change the world. Now, as I begin to think about retirement, I sometimes wonder what these four decades have meant. I look with kindness and hope at my students, apologizing to them for the world we know, with its horrible racialization, constant wars, inequities hinged on privilege, famine, and skepticism. “I tried,” I tell them. We tried. Those who have intertwined with my life these 40 years have tried.

But we have failed. I gesture “giving hands” to my students and say, with love and genuine expectation, “I’m sorry. I tried. I did what I could. We’ve left it a mess, but here it is. Make it better.”

In a sense, it is another laying on of hands. Jesus has not failed, and I am thankful for the energizing Holy Spirit that came to me through my ordination. But now I pass it along to others.

And I live in hope. **B**

1. Who were some ministers of the Word of whom you have fond memories? Why do they stand out for you?
2. When you look back over your life, what are some events that stick in your mind as significant? What insights did you gain from them?
3. If you were speaking to the next generation, what issues would you say you have tried to address that they can try to make even better?

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Black Widow Ponders What Makes a Family Real


BLACK WIDOW is the family movie that *F9* wanted to be (sorry, Vin Diesel). *Black Widow* is a story of what truly makes a family a family. There are fights (God knows I've fought my brothers many times), hugs, laughs, and shared experiences, ultimately asking a question: Is family defined by shared genetics or common bonds?

Black Widow tells the background story of Natasha Romanoff (Scarlett Johansson), an ex-Russian spy extraordinaire turned Avenger. The movie opens in 1995 with a young Natasha and her family: her mother Melina (Rachel Weisz), father Alexei (David Harbour), and younger sister Yelena (Florence Pugh). We slowly find out that this unit is not genetically connected, but they posed as a family for three years in America while Alexei infiltrated S.H.I.E.L.D., a fictional agency that handles superhuman threats. During this time they bonded as if their family was real, but their separation was inevitable. This movie portrays the reassembling of this makeshift family 21 years later, in the process uncovering the scars and trauma caused by their separation. Natasha ruminates on what makes a family real.

Natasha is repeatedly confronted with the paradox that this fake family is somehow real. When Natasha is first reunited with her sister, Yelena, they start with a physical fight, then have a conversation revealing how much they still care for each other. After they break their father out of prison, he oozes with pride for his accomplished adult daughters. Ironically, he is proud of their "ledgers dripping red" (translation: the crimes they've committed), and that's the very thing Natasha wants to be rid of. Finally, Natasha is both reunited with and quickly ousted by her own mother before Melina realizes she's made a grave mistake. Yet

through all of the misunderstandings and trauma, these characters still love each other.

John 1:12-13 states that we have the right to become children of God—not of natural birth, but through receiving and believing in Jesus. The thing that makes our faith family real is not genetics, but a deep spiritual connection that leads to real love. Family is not perfect; we don't grow at the same rate or have the exact same views. Family is about fighting to stand together, caring for each other when we hurt, and forgiving each other. The chief connection is always love. This is what God impresses on us by adopting us into his family: he is adopting us into his love.

We learn through Natasha's story that we don't have to be connected through genes to be in the same family, but we do need to exemplify love for each other. Natasha fights her sister, disowns her father, and berates her mother, yet at the end of the day she forgives them and risks her life for their safety because that's love—and that's what real family does for one another. Because of this family theme, this movie was therapeutic for me. Thank you, *Black Widow*. (PG-13, streaming on Disney+) 



LeMarr Seandre Jackson's mission is to raise the bar for student and Christian leadership. He is the director of youth ministry at Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Prepare Him Room: A Daily Advent Devotional

By *Susie Larson*

Reviewed by Sonya Vanderveen Feddema

In her introduction to *Prepare Him Room*, author Susie Larson writes about the Christmas season, "We are people created in God's image. We have access to his presence and his promises. So why all the strain and stress?"

Each of Larson's 24 Advent devotions is based on a chapter of the gospel of Luke and includes other passages to ponder, a biblical meditation, a prayer, and a suggestion for fasting. Larson notes that she has been a strong advocate of fasting for many years and doesn't believe it involves abstaining only from food and drink, but can include fasting from TV and social media to "steward your perspective with vision and wisdom."

Prepare Him Room would make a great addition to a personal devotional collection. (Bethany House)



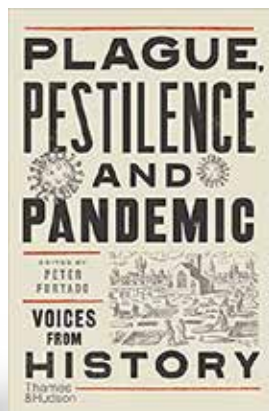
Acoustic Sketches 3

By Phil Keaggy

Reviewed by Robert J. Keeley

Phil Keaggy's latest instrumental release, *Acoustic Sketches 3*, continues a series he began in 1997. In these albums, Keaggy delivers acoustic pieces, most between two and four minutes long, that show his active imagination as he tries out new ideas on the guitar.

This album has given him the opportunity to take those ideas and flesh them out into full-fledged pieces. In some of these pieces, Keaggy uses looping—capturing a few seconds of what he's playing, and having it repeat indefinitely so he can play other things over it. Fans of Keaggy's music will find familiar ideas presented in new ways; those new to his art will be astonished at his virtuosity and his strong melodic sense. (Bandcamp)



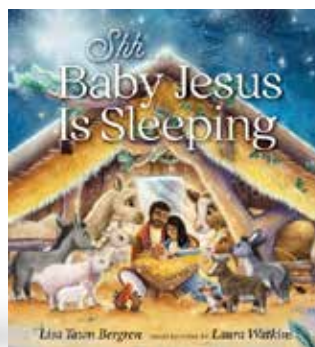
Plague, Pestilence and Pandemic: Voices From History

Edited by Peter Furtado

Reviewed by Aaron Vriesman

The more I study history, the less I fret about the present. With the recent pandemic raising anxieties, it was helpful to read Peter Furtado's collection of firsthand accounts from the pandemics of the past.

From the Plague of Athens in the ancient world to COVID-19 currently, disease has erupted and disrupted people's lives throughout recorded history. Furtado has sections on the Black Death in the Middle Ages, syphilis and smallpox in the Age of Empire, and polio and the 1918 flu pandemic in the modern era. Furtado's selections bring perspective on the current pandemic. Disease has always been part of the sinful human condition. The suffering and fearful reactions are nothing new under the sun, but God's faithfulness always prevails. (Thames & Hudson)



Shh ... Baby Jesus Is Sleeping

By Lisa Tawn Bergren, illustrated by Laura Watkins

Reviewed by Lorilee Craker

It's hard to imagine a more perfect bedtime book for God's littlest image bearers at Christmastime.

Written by Lisa Tawn Bergren, the author of the bestselling *God Gave Us You*, this winsome board book lends itself to cozy times as small children watch the first Christmas unfold through the eyes of animals in the stable—sheep, mice, cows, chickens, and others. These animals call their own babies to be at quiet peace as they watch the holy family settle down for the night.

"Not a peep, Little Sheep. Baby Jesus is sleeping!"

"Lie down now, Little Cow. Baby Jesus is sleeping!"

The illustrations by Laura Watkins are luminous and soothing, and the brown skin of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds are appropriate to their Middle Eastern heritage. (Waterbrook)

The Lowdown

Santa Through Eyes of Faith: Around Christmas we spend a lot of time thinking about presents, but have you ever wondered why we give gifts? Learn about the life of St. Nicholas in *St. Nicholas the Giftgiver* from the new IVP Kids line and discover why he became known as one of the greatest gift givers of all time. (IVP Kids)

Tony and Maria Reimagined: A reboot of *West Side Story* tells the classic tale of fierce rivalries and young love in 1957 New York City. This reimagining of the beloved musical stars Ansel Elgort (Tony) and Rachel Zegler (María). (PG-13, 20th Century Studios, Dec. 10)

Kirk Franklin's A Gospel Christmas: Olivia, a young assistant pastor, deals with transitioning to lead pastor at a new church a month before Christmas and finds a little romance along the way. (Lifetime, December 4)

Love, War, and Redemption: Beasts of a Little Land, by Juhea Kim, is set against the backdrop of the Korean independence movement and follows the intertwined fates of a young girl sold to a courtesan school and the penniless son of a hunter. (Ecco)

How Do We Know If a Biblical Passage is Prescriptive or Descriptive?

In Reformed circles, we ask this question: What would this have meant to the people who first heard or read it?



Mary Hulst is university pastor for Calvin University and teaches at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.

A PRESCRIPTIVE PASSAGE of Scripture directs how we should live today. A good example is “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). Jesus’ words are clear and relevant to every culture, time, and place.

A *descriptive* passage describes an instruction given for a particular person, time, culture, or place, and it might not be a directive to perform that action today. One example is “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (1 Tim. 5:23).

How do we determine which passages are prescriptive and which are descriptive?

In Reformed circles, we ask this question: What would this have meant to the people who first heard or read it? The closer we get to that answer, the closer we get to how it applies to us today. We want to know who was writing this passage, to whom, why, in what genre, and when. We believe the more we know about the culture of the day, the more we can understand the core principle the biblical writer was addressing.

Using the example above from 1 Timothy, we know Paul is writing a letter to encourage and instruct his mentee and friend, Timothy, who is serving in Ephesus. Paul knows Timothy well enough to give him personalized instructions on how to care for his health. Scholars of ancient culture tell us that wine was often used medicinally while water was often contaminated, so Paul’s instructions fit the relationship he has with Timothy, the context of the letter, and the best medical advice of the time.

We now know stomach issues can be caused by many things and can be healed in various ways (though usually not with wine). What we see

here is a mentor caring well for his young friend—body and soul. That’s the principle to take away. The passage demonstrates an intimacy and an attentiveness to care that can be emulated by all of us.

Here’s another example, from Romans 14:2 (NRSV): “Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.” Paul isn’t insulting vegetarians in this verse. He is writing to a culture in which most of the meat available at the market was meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Some believers, not wanting to taint themselves with anything connected to pagan worship, refused to eat any meat. Because Paul’s emphasis in Romans is on God’s grace and learning to love people who have different ways of practicing Christian faith, he essentially says, “Eating meat doesn’t really matter for your salvation one way or another, but if you know people who find it offensive, don’t needlessly offend them.”

A helpful tool for this type of Bible study is a Bible background commentary or a cultural backgrounds study Bible. These books allow us to get insight into the culture in which the passage was first written and allow us to better understand how those hearers would have first heard and implemented those words of Scripture.

Thankfully, we never study Scripture alone. The Holy Spirit inspired the Scripture we read and is eager for us to understand it. We also are part of the church of Jesus Christ, and believers through the ages have written, taught, and preached about the passages we might find challenging. Praying for the Holy Spirit’s guidance and leaning on the saints of all times and places allows us to explore Scripture in the company of others. **B**

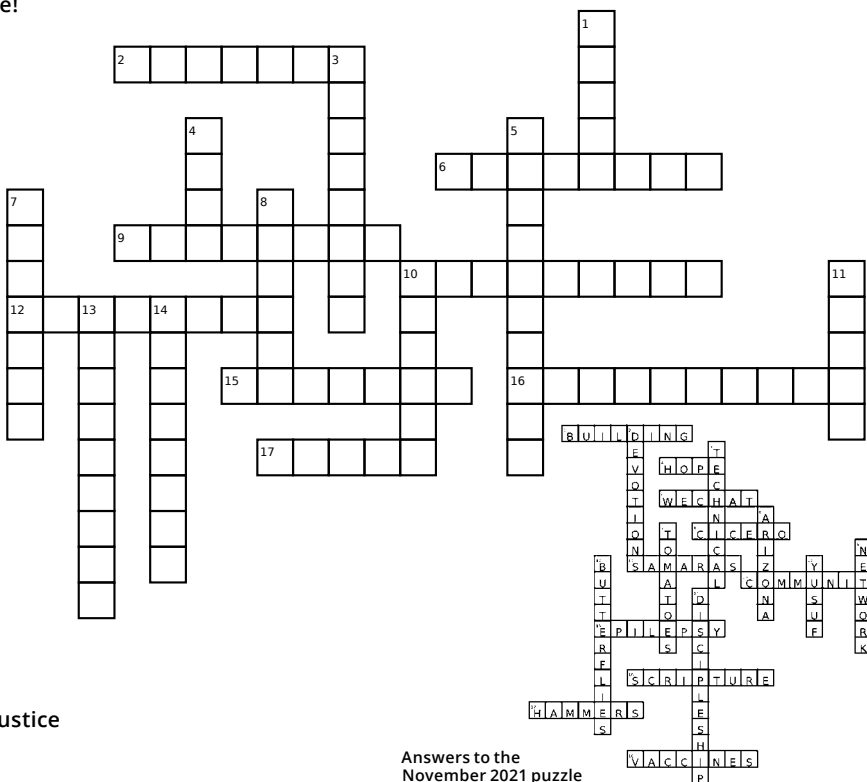
Find the answers to the crossword clues in this issue of *The Banner*. See the solution in the next issue!

Down

1. These animals stay under the snow all winter
3. This ministry has a State of Theology report
4. Chinese CRC in Abbotsford, B.C.
5. Advent series: "_____ the Peace of Jesus"
7. First name of the new director of Disability Concerns
8. First name of *Black Widow* story writer
10. These often disappear for migrants on their journey
11. First name of *Beasts of a Little Land* author
13. The CRC is a _____ of the universal church
14. In Exeter, Ont., church visitors drove past _____ scenes

Across

2. The governing body of a church
6. Canadian Indigenous _____ Committee
9. Book title: *Plague, Pestilence and _____*
10. Center for Excellence in this
12. Alzheimer's Disease is one form of this
15. He was ordained 40 years ago
16. Sometimes we must temper this for the sake of justice
17. Lifewater Canada drills these



Answers to the November 2021 puzzle

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Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that **TYLER HELFERS** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Colin P. Watson, Sr., Executive Director

We are pleased to announce that **JOSIAH GORTER** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Colin P. Watson, Sr., Executive Director

Church Positions Available

ASSOCIATE PASTOR Bellevue CRC (Bellevue, WA) is seeking a full time Associate Pastor. Visit www.bellevuecrc.org/associate-pastor for the job description or submit your resume to office@bellevuecrc.org.

FAITH FORMATION PASTOR Hope Fellowship CRC in Denver, CO is searching for a pastor

who will give leadership to the areas of congregational life and discipleship. For a full job description and church profile reach out to us at pastorsearch@hopefellowshipcrc.org

FAMILY MINISTRY DIRECTOR Bellevue CRC (Bellevue, WA) is seeking a full time Family Ministry Director to oversee our Children and Youth Ministries. Visit www.bellevuecrc.org/family-ministry-director for the full job description or submit your resume to office@bellevuecrc.org.

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

bless every neighbour. Send questions and resumes to Search@hopefellowship.ca.

LEAD PASTOR - Aylmer CRC 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.

PASTOR Community CRC of Meadowvale, a vibrant faith community in Mississauga, Ontario, is now accepting applications for a full-time pastor. Gifts in spiritual direction, preaching, and pastoral care are vital as you partner with our creative, diverse, and inclusive congregation. Learn more at meadowvalecrc.org.

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 kvolsteadt@gmail.com or fprc-guam@gmail.com or call 1-671-734-7778.

Financial Aid

CLASSIS HEARTLAND. Students preparing for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church from Classis Heartland may apply for aid to assist them in their study for the 2022-2023 academic year by contacting Rev. Loren Kotman; 1111 5th Street, Hull, IA 51239; (712) 439-1123; pastor@hull1stcrc.com. The deadline is January 31, 2022.

Birthday

95TH BIRTHDAY



Pastor Antonie (Tony) VandenEnde turns 95 next month! With gratitude to God, we look forward to celebrating our Dad's 95th birthday. There will be an Open House on Dec 18th at Caradoc Sands, (24500 Saxton Road, Strathroy, Ontario) from 12:30 - 3:30. All registered guests are welcome to attend. Light refreshments

Seeking candidates for
General Secretary

of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

This is an opportunity to serve the church by

- shaping and embracing a culture of effective partnership and collaboration,
- encouraging shared mission within the CRCNA, and
- nurturing ecumenical relationships in keeping with synod's long-term vision for the denomination's mission in the world.

The nominee will exemplify a strong, vibrant Christian faith marked by humility and integrity. An ordained minister of the Word, with a deep respect for Scripture and for the polity, theology, history, and growing diversity of the CRCNA, he/she will draw from pastoral experience and advanced leadership training to guide the denomination forward, representing our mission both locally and globally.



For more information visit crcna.org/GenSecSearch. Please direct all inquiries to the chair of the General Secretary Search Team, Rev. Meg Jenista, GenSecSearch@crcna.org.

will be served. COVID-19 guidelines will be followed. To attend the Open House, send a video or mail a birthday card, call or text 519-333-9109 Thanks from all the VDE Family!

Obituaries



BORST, Gerard "Gerry" age 93, passed on to his Lord and Savior on October 10, 2020. He dedicated his career serving God at the CRC Home Mission Board. We praise God for his life and love. Full obit can be viewed at mkdfuneralhome.com



BORST, Gertrude "Trudy", age 93, passed into the loving arms of Jesus on July 30, 2021. She was a beloved mother and reflected Christ's love to all she met. We praise God for her love and life. Full obit can be viewed at mkdfuneralhome.com

BOUWER, Earl J. Child of God, passed away peacefully on September 18, 2021 in Grand Rapids, MI. He is missed by his loving and caring wife Nancy; children Karen and Dave DeMaagd, Mark and Pamela, Greg and Michelle, Jason and Jilen; twelve grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

CAMP, Barb (Anema) an amazing wife, mother and servant of God passed on 10.26 in Grand Rapids, MI. Born in Denver, CO to Jay & Winefred Anema (deceased). She is survived by her loving husband, Bob and 4 children: Heather (Harpreet Mangat), Heidi, Jay, & Mandy (Justin) Dieleman and 4 grandchildren and 4 siblings brother George (predeceased) (Betty), Jane (Dale) Zoetewey & Linda (Jim) Veldkamp. Barb was a loving & gifted woman, Calvin Alumni, & very involved in Seymour CRC. She loved her children, & grandchildren. She will be deeply missed. See her story @ heritagelifestory.com

JONKER, Evelyn L, 89, passed peacefully into the waiting arms of Jesus 10/15/2021. Evelyn is survived by her husband of 67 years, Thaymer, children Dan (Bernice), Tom (Patricia), Ann Wise, Jim (Cindy), Sue (Ron) Medendorp, seventeen grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She is also survived by her brother Marvin (Jeanette) DeBruin. She will be remembered for her zest for living, her positivity and her wonderful sense of humor.

KRUITHOF, James, age 84, went to meet his Savior on Wednesday, October 13, 2021. He joins his parents, his sister, and his infant son, Doug. Jim is survived by his wife of 63 years, Donna (Vande Pol); his children; Mary and Jim Stegink, John and Julie, Amy Bergsma, and Louise and Ed Vecziedins; 10 grandchildren; and 3 great-grandchildren. Jim was a long-time member of the Alger Park Christian Reformed Church.

SCHURMAN, Robert "Dutch", age 67 of New Lenox IL, stepped into the presence of his Lord and Savior on September 19, 2021. Robert was born in Chicago to the late Henry and Lois (nee Van Polen) Schurman. Husband of Paula, father of Jacob (Shannon) Schurman, Abigail (Adam) Barr, and Nicholas Schurman, grandfather of Lily, Everly, Mila and Violet. Brother of Diane (Ronald) Schaap, uncle of Stephanie Sawyer, Emily Hilleman and Kathleen Yager. He was a graduate of Timothy Christian High School and Triton College. Robert spent 30 years in law enforcement. He retired as a Lieutenant with the Will County Sheriff's Department. He will be dearly missed by his family and friends. John 14: 1-6



SEERVELD, Inès Cécile Naudin ten Cate, aged 90 years, fell into her final earthly sleep on 29 November 2021 AD. She will be remembered a long time by her husband Calvin, her children Anya, Gioia, Luke and spouses, and by many persons for her quiet, unobtrusive kindnesses.

WASSENAR, Dr. Robert J., age 96, went home to be with His Lord on October 12th, 2021. 11020 Raleigh Street, Westchester, IL 60154. Beloved Husband of 71 years to Jean Wassenar, nee Zeilstra; loving father of Sharon (Jack) Eriks, Sandra (Andrew) Kranenborg, Dr. Ron (Cathy) Wassenar, and Linda (Verle) Norris; devoted grandfather of Lisa (Mike) Dekker, Jennifer Eriks (Scott Stebbins), and Elizabeth (Mark) Van Holstyn, Brian (Miranda) Kranenborg, Amy Kranenborg, and Steven (Krysta) Kranenborg, Rachel (the late Kyle Huizinga) Wassenar, and David (Sharon) Wassenar, and Drew (Kaitlin) Norris, Gretchen Norris, and Sarah Norris; devoted great-grandfather of Annika, Abby, Jacob, Zachary, Max, Olivia, Lucas, Kenna, Kate, Case, Camden, and Jasper; fond brother of the late Philip and the late Richard Wassenar; uncle of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to Timothy Christian Schools or Lombard Christian Reformed Church are appreciated.

Seeking potential nominees for Chief Administrative Officer of the Christian Reformed Church in North America

This is an opportunity to serve the church by

- Guiding and overseeing the leadership, strategy, and performance of the CRCNA administration, ministry agencies, and ministry partners.
- Promoting the governance partnership between synod, the Council of Delegates, the Canada and U.S. boards, and ministry boards, and ensuring compliance with the denominational ministry plan through joint ministry agreements and other methods.
- Overseeing the administrative and ministry leadership systems of the CRCNA, including capital and operating budgets, and ensuring these achieve budget metrics and outcomes.

The nominee will exemplify a strong, vibrant Christian faith marked by humility and integrity. He or she will also be a strong leader with a master's degree and senior-level experience in complex organizations that include oversight of administration and finance operations. He or she will also be a member of the CRNCA (or be willing to join) and demonstrate a deep respect for the polity, theology, history, and growing diversity of the denomination.



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For more information visit crcna.org/careers. Please direct all inquiries to the chair of the Chief Administrative Officer Search Team, Dr. Patricia Harris, CAOSearch@crcna.org.

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ZWIERS, Robert, age 78, of Grand Rapids was welcomed into the arms of Jesus on Thursday, October 14, 2021. Bob is lovingly remembered by Carolyn, his wife of 57 years; his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren Bob and Jeanne Zwiers (Brad and Gwyn, Trent and Emma [Innes], Drew and Ellery, Grace, and Marcos Asencio), Jim and Jane Zwiers (David and Nicole, Kate, Jack), Ken and Becci Zwiers (Annaliese, Claire, Nick); sister Natalie De-Horn; and nephews Kevin (Lisa) Klanderma and Brian Klanderma. He was a member of Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church.

Anniversary

60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

TALSMA, With gratitude to God, Ron and Faith (Berghorst) celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on August 17th. Children: Donovan & Kelly (Brandon & Alex, Bailey) Robin & Chris Veenstra (Ryan & Kari, Jade and Judah; Reid & Karina; Adrienne, Arielle) Randy & Melanie (Sydney, Derek) Amanda & John Day (Blake, Gavin)

70TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

DOKTER, G. Bernard and Lydia (née Moes) together praise the Lord for 70 years of blessing. We celebrate with our 5 children, 9 grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren. PTL!

Employment

PRESIDENT, Calvin University, located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is pleased to announce the search for its next President. Calvin seeks a seasoned leader with a deep and vibrant Christian faith and practice, who embraces the Reformed tradition in higher education and the university's important relationship with the Christian Reformed Church. The president will be able to articulate Calvin University's mission as a Christian, liberal arts university; as a distinctive educational place where faith and reason work together, academic excellence is expected, and student achievement is celebrated.

It is expected the successful candidate for this position will have established a record of exceptional strategic achievement and impact in past responsible leadership positions. A terminal degree is preferred but not required. The next president will be a faith-centered, academically focused, skilled decision maker called to lead Calvin through a time of change and uncertainty for all of higher education—it is a complex leadership task. The successful candidate will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of and a commitment to Calvin's mission, strategic planning, Calvin's diversity and inclusion values, the role of Christian higher education, academic excellence, and the particular academic cultural expectations that inform and shape leadership in the academy.

Calvin, founded in 1876 by the Christian Reformed Church in North America, is now a University serving 3,300 undergraduate and



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graduate students in-person and online from almost every U.S. state and 50 countries. Calvin University equips students to think deeply, to act justly, and to live wholeheartedly as Christ's agents of renewal in the world. Calvin's teaching, scholarship, and service have been recognized widely; for example, U.S. News and World Report ranked Calvin third among Midwest regional universities in the "Best Undergraduate Teaching" category. Forbes Magazine also named Calvin one of America's top colleges.

Calvin's beautiful 400-acre campus in west Michigan has a park-like feel with sprawling lawns and nearly 4,000 trees. The campus also features state-of-the-art athletic facilities, impressive indoor spaces including the Covenant Fine Arts Center, as well as academic spaces designed intentionally to encourage collaboration across disciplines. Calvin is ideally located to create a small, close-knit community feel while providing easy access to Grand Rapids, the second largest city in Michigan.

Applications must include a letter of interest that focuses on the areas of opportunity described earlier in the profile, a current CV/resume, and five professional references with email addresses and telephone numbers. References will not be contacted without the applicant's authorization. Application materials, inquiries and nominations should be sent electronically (MS Word or PDF) to CalvinUnivPresident@agbsearch.com. For fullest consideration, application materials should be received by January 4, 2022, at the latest. Early submission is welcome.

Please visit the profile here: <https://www.agbsearch.com/searches/president-calvin-university-0> to view more detailed information about this position. Additional information about Calvin University is available at: <https://calvin.edu/>

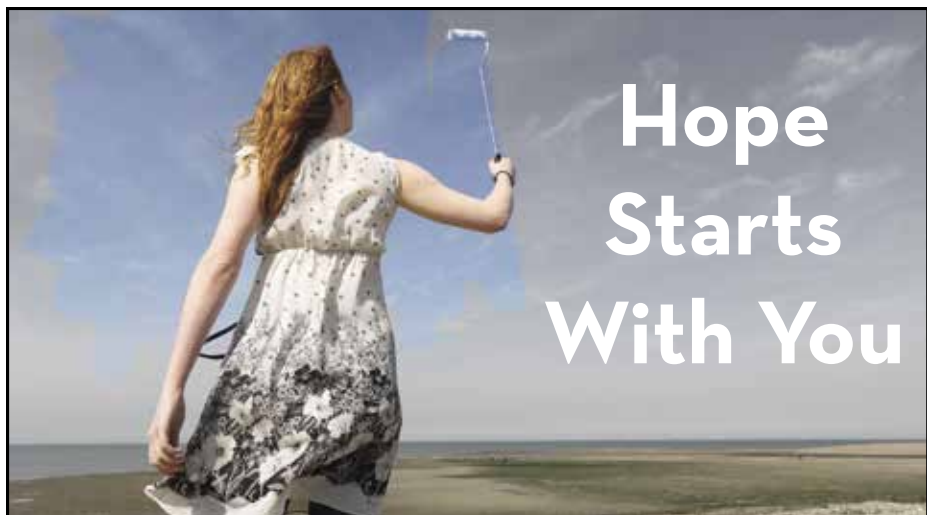
AGB Search is assisting Calvin University with this very important search. Candidates and nominators are encouraged to reach out to the consultants to discuss this opportunity.

Dr. Loren J. Anderson, Executive Search Consultant, AGB Search
 loren.anderson@agbsearch.com
 C: 253-223-3566

Mr. Frederick V. Moore, Executive Search Consultant, AGB Search
 fred.moore@agbsearch.com
 C: 712-299-2544

Calvin University prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, or other characteristics protected by federal, state, or local statute or ordinance.

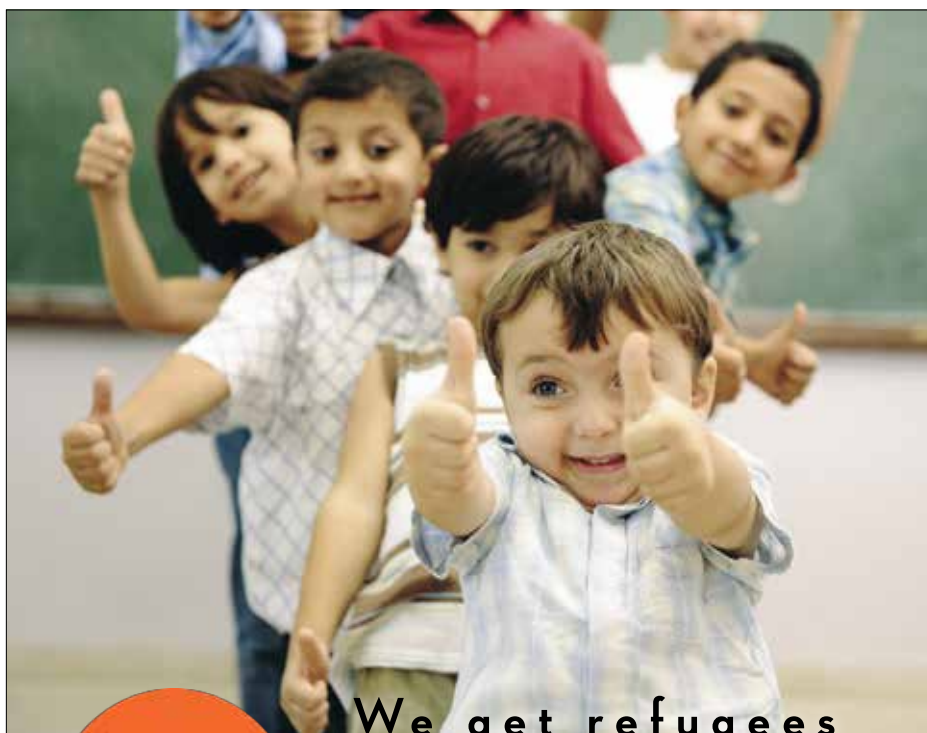
Calvin University affirms its commitment to maintaining a learning, working, and living environment that is fair, respectful, and free from harassment.



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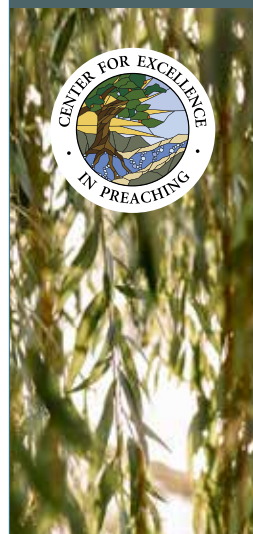
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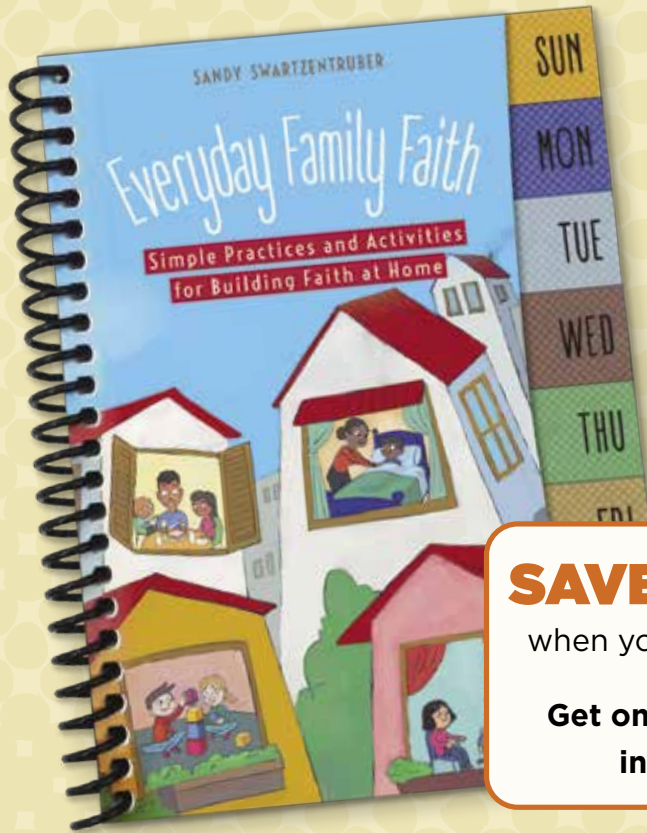


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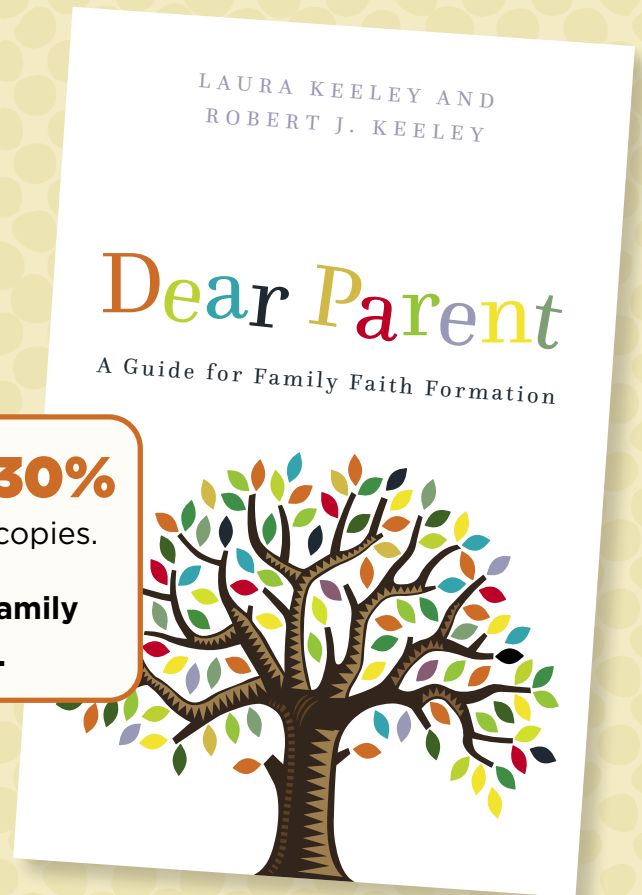
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Young Adults on Launching Life During a Pandemic

We started careers in the land of Zoom and faced unique challenges.



Sarah Patterson-Cole, Naomi Lomavatu, and Chanhee Park are Trinity Western University Fellows mentored by TWU executive leaders to explore their gifts, passions, and opportunities for growth through the lens of renewal and mission in Christ.

NONE OF US PICTURED graduating in a pandemic, trying to navigate through an online world, or starting a career from home. As recent graduates, we felt discouraged and lost after a dramatic—yet painfully anti-climactic—ending to a critical season of our lives.

One day in a makeshift bedroom office, we signed off an online exam, closed our computers, and voilà—we graduated.

We wondered: How do you launch into new, exciting chapters of your life when the past chapter feels unfinished, forced to end mid-sentence?

We started careers in the land of Zoom and faced unique challenges. How do you “read the room” online? How do you get a full picture of an organizational culture when your days are sliced into one-hour meetings?

The greatest lesson we all have learned is that when life does not go according to plan, the challenges can bring unique opportunities to grow.

From a faith perspective, this meant that we looked at trials as an opportunity for growth, had the posture of doing all things for Christ, and found comfort in God’s sovereignty.

As three 2020 graduates who have spent the past eight months together as part of a post-graduate internship, we hope the lessons we learned can be helpful to others who also are navigating this strange time of transition.

It certainly feels strange to finish and start life events during a pandemic because almost everything happens in your room, in front of your computer screen. It is very easy to feel as if you are in the same stage of life when in reality you have moved onto the next step. We believe it is crucial to make this mental transition as soon as possible to thoroughly engage in your new career and perform at your best. Here are some tips we found helpful:

- » **Choose your front row.** Take the time to decide which people you want to build into your life and continue to build memories with.
- » **Be strategically curious.** Rather than focusing only on projects that are assigned to you, look for opportunities to make a difference based on the “fresh eyes” you bring to an organization. This can bring surprising benefits to your organization.
- » **Reach out.** Look at the skills you have to offer and reach out to companies or organizations that you are passionate about to offer your help and support. Not only does this build your network and your skills, but it causes you to step outside your comfort zone.
- » **Study the culture.** Pay close attention in meetings to observe how everyone interacts with one another, see how decisions are made, and discover unique social norms that your new workplace has. This will help you not only to have a better understanding of the organization, but to communicate more effectively with your colleagues.
- » **Actively listen.** There can be tremendous power in actively listening, intentionally reflecting, and respectfully contributing your perspectives at the opportune time.
- » **Establish relationships.** Text, call, or email your colleagues or peers to intentionally show that you are interested in getting to know them. This will help you to quickly obtain that sense of belonging, and it can become a valuable network.

Even in this time of limbo and change we learned that there is value in listening attentively, understanding the context, and contributing at the right moment. Together, we learned that resiliency and hope can grow in the unlikely environments of uncertainty and transition. **B**

Four Weddings

At the bank they teased me about getting hired as the bank's chaplain and wedding planner.



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

AT THE CHASE BANK BRANCH where I had established several church and personal accounts, I befriended the tellers and managers. Knowing I was a pastor, one of the tellers asked me to conduct the wedding for her and her fiancé. After several conversations I determined they were believers and agreed to do it. I met with them for counseling and to plan the ceremony. They chose Scriptures and prayers and songs to be sung. It was a beautiful wedding celebrated by family and friends, including her fellow employees.

A few weeks later the assistant manager approached me and told me how much she had appreciated the wedding and asked if I might conduct hers as well. They also were Christians, and once again I performed the wedding. Again, all the employees from the bank were invited. I used some of the same Scriptures, adding and changing a few things at the couple's request. At the reception one of the other tellers approached me and introduced me to her fiancé. "We want you to do our wedding, too!" she gushed. She rattled on about all the things she loved, and once again I found myself booked to do a wedding. This time it was a beautiful garden wedding in a flowery backyard, and again her coworkers were invited. At the bank they teased me about getting hired as the bank's chaplain and wedding planner.

Maddie attended all three weddings. She was the head teller. One morning she called me over and asked if I might also officiate at her wedding. "I know you want to meet with us before you agree to do the wedding. Would you like to come over for dinner Friday? You can meet my boyfriend, and we can talk." Of course I agreed.

Over dinner she said, "Neither of us is Christian, but we wondered if you could do our wedding anyway and take out all the religious stuff?"

"I could," I said, "but it will be an awfully short wedding. Almost the entire ceremony is taken from the Bible."

"That's not true," she argued. "You quoted 'Turn! Turn! Turn!', the '60's song by The Byrds. I love that song."

"That song is taken from the book of Ecclesiastes," I said with a laugh, opening my Bible to show her.

"What?" she shouted. "The Byrds stole that from the Bible?! I can't believe it." Her boyfriend, Zack, was equally shocked.

After they'd recovered, she said, "Well, I definitely want that to be read. It's great. I also really liked the things you said about love. It was so beautiful it made me cry."

I laughed. "That's also from the Bible: 1 Corinthians 13." Again I opened my Bible and showed them.

"Wow, that's from the Bible, too. I did not know that."

Zack nodded. "Me, neither."

He added, "I really liked when you talked about a man leaving his mother and father. That hit me hard."

Maddie agreed. "I loved that, too. I suppose that's also in the Bible?"

I nodded. "Genesis 2."

"All the stuff we loved is in the Bible. That's hilarious. Who knew?"

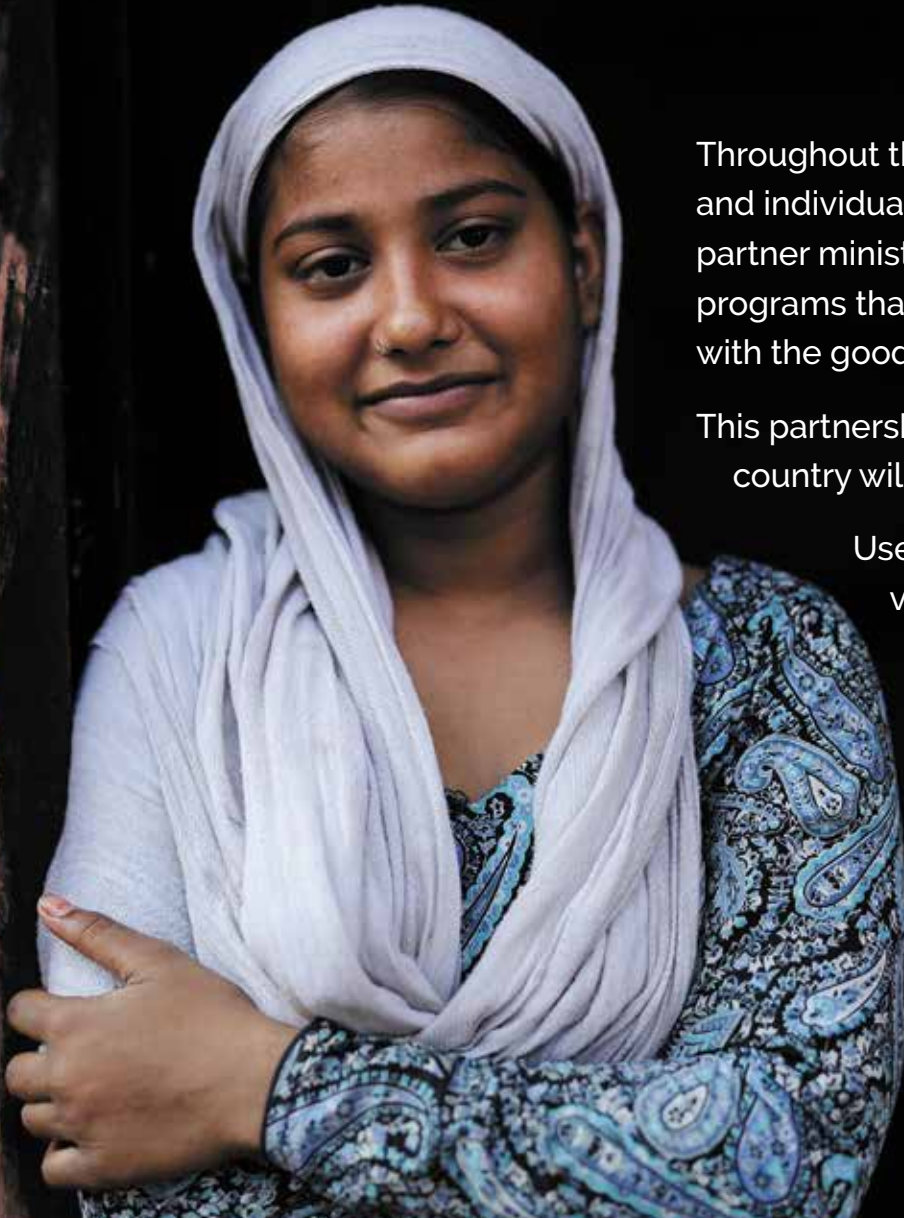
"Well, can you at least not do the prayer at the end? We don't want people thinking that we're praying when we don't believe."

"I understand," I said, "but would it be okay if I prayed for you? I'll make sure people know it's just me praying. I'd really love to ask God to bless your marriage."

They thought for a moment and decided that would be fine.

I gave them a Bible for a wedding present. **B**

Christmas Carols in Many Languages



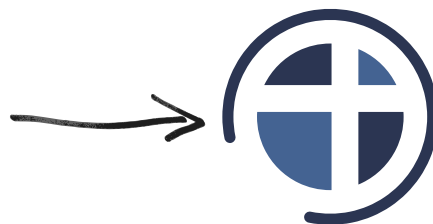
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