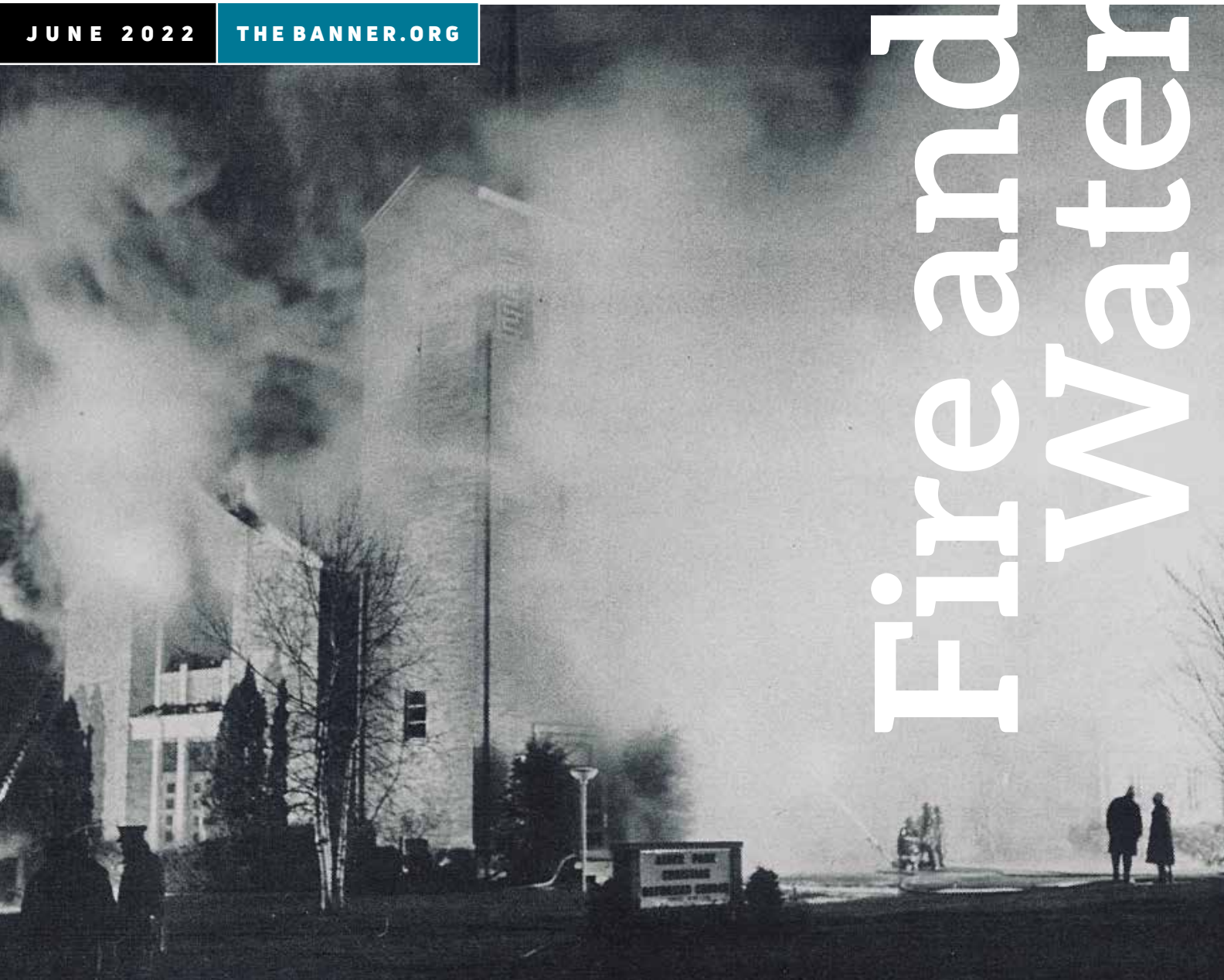


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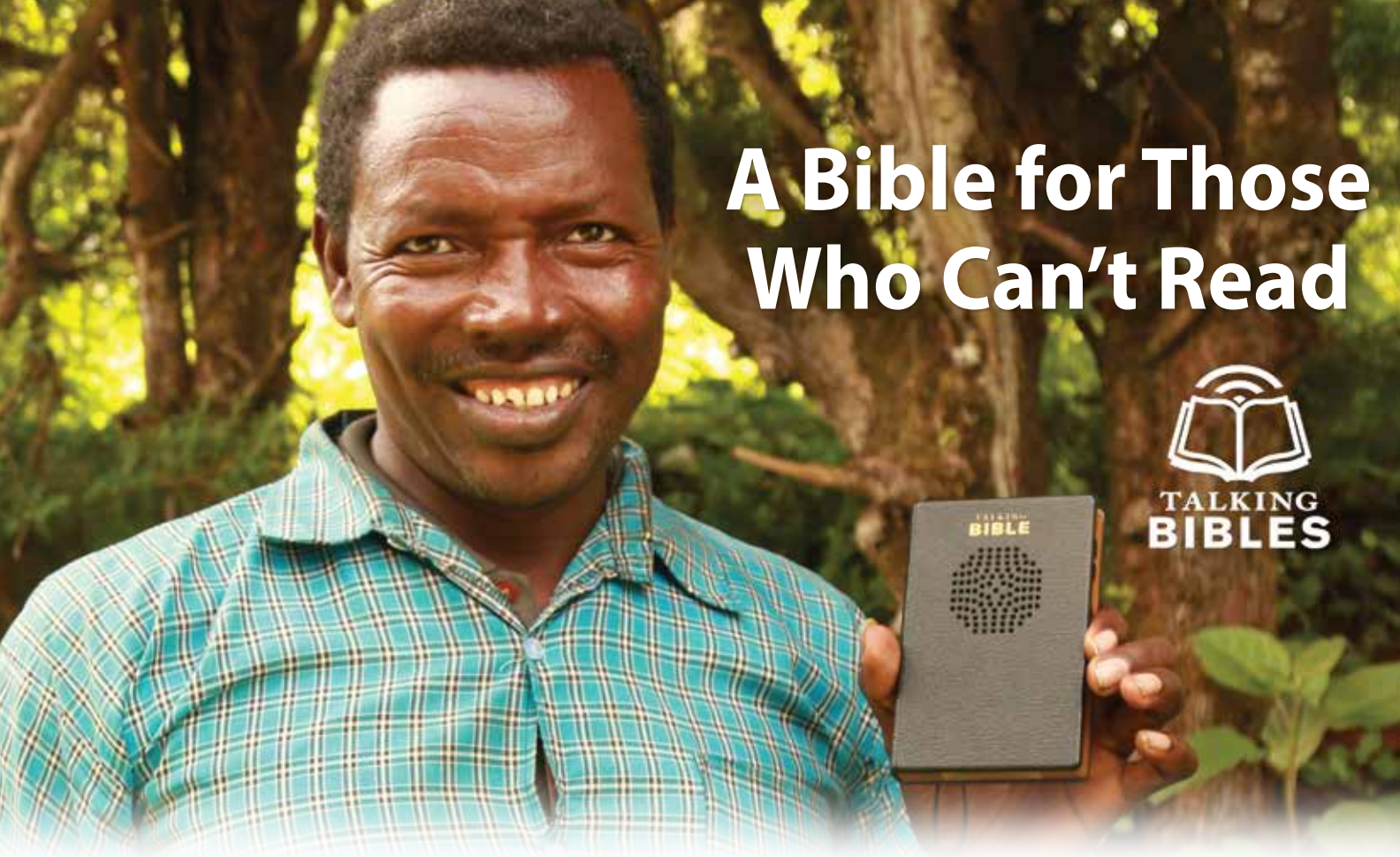
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# Fire and Water

# A Bible for Those Who Can't Read



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***“Everyone is asking to play it in their homes.” Says Yonus.*** Yonus is a pastor in Ethiopia. He has just one Talking Bible. “Who should I give it to?” Is his big question.

Yonus wants everyone to hear the Talking Bible. But how? One way is to play the Talking Bible for the neighbors around his church by holding a microphone to the Talking Bible. He can broadcast God’s Words using a small speaker. Hearing God’s Word draws his neighbors out, and they ask to hear more. But there are still others who need to hear.

More than half of Yonus’ church cannot read. They need more Talking Bibles! “We have a shortage – and if we had more, we could also share it with teachers and community leaders who are asking for it to play with their neighbors,” Yonus explained. *People are begging to hear God’s Word; will you help them hear?*



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## Young Adults Writing Contest

### Topic: What Gives You Hope?

***The Banner* is pleased to offer a writing contest on the topic, "What Gives You Hope?" We'll publish the top two winning articles in print and the top three online, plus award cash prizes of \$1,000 USD (first prize), \$500 USD (second prize), and \$250 USD (third prize).**

This year's writing contest is sponsored by a generous gift from the MultiplicationNetwork.org.



- » Deadline for submissions is midnight, June 24.
- » Contest open to anyone ages 16-23 who has not been previously published by *The Banner* and who is a member of or regularly attends a Christian Reformed church. Immediate family members of staff of *The Banner* and the CRCNA are not eligible.
- » Articles should be no more than 1,000 words in length, submitted as a Word file or Google doc and accompanied by a separate cover letter that includes your name, address, phone number, where you worship, and brief biographical note. Do not include this information on the essay itself. Email to [info@thebanner.org](mailto:info@thebanner.org) with the subject heading "Writing Contest."
- » Decisions of judges are final. We reserve the right to withhold one or more prizes if none are deemed worthy. Winners will be notified by July 8.

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## BY THE NUMBERS

Every organization has a few acronyms or insider language. Although we try to avoid it, to make people feel welcome and included, the Christian Reformed Church has ended up with a fair number of frequently used acronyms. A list is included every year in the published *Acts of Synod*. The most recent one had **75** different acronyms!

### Alphabet Soup

ABCD – Asset-Based Community Development

ABCD(E<sup>2</sup>) – Asset-Based Community Development, Economic Development, and Equity

ADRA – Adventist Disaster and Reconstruction Agency

ARNOVA – Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action

BOT – Board of Trustees

BTGMI – Back to God Ministries International

CCDA – Christian Community Development Association

CCG – Committee for Contact with the Government

CDN – Canadian

CFA – Community Foundation Association

CFGFB – Canadian

CIC –

## 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: Grand Rapids Pastors, Congregations Respond to Fatal Shooting of Patrick Lyoya
- » Book: *Shadows in the Mind's Eye*, by Janyre Tromp
- » Podcast: *The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill*

## FEATURES



### Fire and Water

Sam Gutierrez // A baptismal story.



### Seeking Shalom in God's Mission and Christian Discipleship

Matt Lundberg // How do we reflect the peace of God in this fraught moment?



### The Other Six: The Upside of Failure

Michael Schuitema // My name is Mike, and I'm an alcoholic.



**Cover:** In 1971, firefighters work to douse a fire at Alger Park Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Sam Gutierrez, who supplied the photo, connects the story of the fire to baptism. Article on page 10.

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**CORRECTION**

The article "Classis Watch: Spring 2022" (May 2022) misnamed the towns of two congregations. New Life Christian Reformed Church, which is loaning a pastor, is in Spring, Texas. Hope CRC, which is disbanding, is in Stony Plain, Alta.

**OUR SHARED MINISTRY**

**Editor** Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,  
Director of CRCNA Communications and Marketing



**What Does It Mean to Be a Witness for Christ?**

Cassie Westrate and Brian Clark // Salvation in Christ is only part of the gospel.

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**BANNER**

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## Orthocardia: Having a Right Heart

I believe a rightly ordered heart is required for inner transformation.



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

Spanish and Korean translations of this editorial are available at [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org).

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

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

**YOU MIGHT HAVE HEARD** of the theological terms *orthodoxy* (right beliefs) and *orthopraxy* (right behaviors). But what about *orthocardia*—having the right heart? Although not a new term, I only came across it recently. Of course, all three are interconnected. But although orthodoxy and orthopraxy are both necessary, I think we have overemphasized them at the expense of orthocardia.

At risk of oversimplifying, for some of us Christian spirituality revolves around believing the right things. It is centered, metaphorically speaking, in the head. For others, our spirituality is metaphorically centered in our hands—how we act and behave. Both are ways of focusing on outward conformity to right beliefs or right behaviors. But calls for a right heart—loving rightly, desiring rightly—seem muted amidst the loud cries for the other two.

It is too simplistic to say that the so-called religious right focuses on orthodoxy while the so-called religious left focuses on orthopraxy. Both sides emphasize different beliefs and different behaviors. The right might emphasize purity, truth, and obedience. The left might emphasize justice, love, and grace. Both will chastise those who misbehave, whether it's crossing sexual boundaries or perpetuating racial injustice.

How important is orthocardia, or having a right heart? I believe a rightly ordered heart is required for inner transformation. Without it, both our orthodoxy and orthopraxy will be distorted.

Think of a compass. A compass points to north because it is affected by Earth's natural magnetic fields. You only know where east, west, and south are in relation to where north is. If you bring a magnet close to the compass,

its magnetic force will distort the reading. The compass will no longer be pointing to true north, and consequently its east, west, and south also will be misaligned.

Your heart is like your spiritual compass, for “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). Wherever your heart points affects the other dimensions of your spirituality—your beliefs and behaviors. The triune God is our true north. Only when we love God with all of our hearts will our hearts be rightly aligned and rightly influence our beliefs and our behaviors.

But have we unwittingly allowed other things to distract our hearts away from God? Our hearts can be pulled by the magnetic attraction of other things—even good things. For example, we can love God's truth more than the God of truth. We can love God's justice more than the God of justice. We can love God's church more than God. We can love a right cause—whether it's being pro-life or anti-racist—more than God. Have our hearts loved the gifts more than the Giver? As such, are our orthodoxy and orthopraxy distorted, overemphasizing certain beliefs and behaviors and underemphasizing others? Are we polarized because our hearts aren't properly aligned?

In the final article of our “Seeking Shalom in the Midst of Polarization” series (p. 33), Matt Lundberg says that we are called to be agents of God's shalom. If God is our first love, then our hearts will desire God's shalom for ourselves and for our world. **B**



## REPLY ALL

To send letters to the editor, please see our guidelines at [thebanner.org/letters](http://thebanner.org/letters).

### Is a Split Inevitable?

A wise response from Judy Cook (“Big Questions,” February 2022). We cannot predict the future. I fully believe that Christ-centered unity in the Christian Reformed Church can win out! There are many imitable Reformed denominations that have made very conscious decisions to maintain unity through Biblical fidelity in this LGBT issue (such as the United Reformed Church in North America).

And sadly there are denominations who, through unwillingness to hold fast to biblical truth and unwillingness to prune off the dead branches, have chosen the path that leads to splitting (such as the Reformed Church in America). A pruning would almost certainly be required here in the CRC for the denomination to continue to exist. Without this commitment to God’s Word, the sad reality is that our own history is filled with Bible-believing congregations making the exile en masse that always follows the infidelity of those who should be God’s people.

» Trevor Mouw // Sioux Center, Iowa

### Canada as a Distinct Ministry

I highly commend Peter Schuurman’s article “A Letter to Our American Partners: Canada as a Distinct Ministry” (March 2022). It lays out in logical and meaningful detail the realities we face in this David and Goliath relationship. Recognizing us as “a distinct culture” with “a distinct way of doing ministry” gives me hope that we will listen and be open to celebrating our faith in harmony without seeing the world through the same lenses.

» Mary Kooy // Toronto, Ont.

Schuurman’s “A Letter to Our American Partners” could have been written by “Western Canadians to Our Ontario Partners” just as easily. Our political and cultural differences are vast within our own country. Focusing on differences between our countries to support our wanting to separate is anyone’s easy game. Rather, it is precisely because of our differences that Christ calls us to work together in unison to represent the body of Christ to the world. Perhaps putting all of our time and energy into how we can thrive binationally to fully represent Christ’s body would be the more stewardly use of our God-given resources of gifts and time.

» Karen Van Niejenhuis //  
Edmonton, Alta.

As a Quebecois member of the only CRC congregation in Quebec, I read this letter with mixed feelings because, whereas I don’t agree with all the decisions made by our provincial government, Canadian CRC members in the rest of Canada should admit that some of the tensions between Quebec and the rest of Canada have been caused by lack of sensitivity on their part, not to say outright hostility and indifference. A late CRC pastor told me many years ago that members of his congregation in Stratford drove through the U.S. to avoid Quebec, as if we were leprous or something. That hurt, and it still does. If you experience frustration in dealing with American CRC members, imagine how we feel dealing with Canadian CRC members who consider us as nothing more than troublemakers because they never made the effort to learn about our culture and our anxiety about being roughly 7 million francophones in a sea of 360 million North American Anglos.

» Michèle Gyselinck // Montreal, Que.

### Inclusive Worship

Thanks to Ann Bezemer for her Vantage Point (“Inclusive Praise and Worship,” February 2022), to which we say AMEN! We too love singing hymns accompanied by the organ! As we age, the familiar tunes and words of the hymns we learned in our youth are often sung (or spoken) by us, bringing peace, comfort, and thankfulness to our wearying bodies and minds. With today’s repetitive praise music, those modern hymn alternatives won’t impart much lasting biblical knowledge, especially for future recall. By not learning the old hymn words and tunes, our children and grandchildren will be the losers, missing out on that lasting inheritance. If today’s young people desire praise bands and praise music, please allow the inclusion of some congregation-sung hymns (yes, with organ accompaniment) as a part of those same worship services.

» Muriel & Fritz Kolk //  
Grand Rapids, Mich.



## On Character

### Bethany Christian Services

I am a grateful adoptive parent thanks to Bethany Christian Services, who greatly subsidized our adoptions with the help of churches from the CRC (“Bethany Christian Services No Longer Recommended for Offerings,” online). It saddened me that other families in need of extra support were one vote away from this help. ... Family comes in many forms, I am well aware, and today’s modern family does not always mirror our denomination’s ideal view of family. Nor does marriage. It might not be part of God’s original design to have same-sex unions or parenting units, but I believe he can work through all situations. ... I believe we should support all people in every walk of life—whether that means a divorced person or children who might be deprived of a dependable family. It is my hope we can extend love and grace in our differences and learn from each other.

» Yvonne Linton // Sunnyvale, Calif.

Gift-giving and character: these are the two ingredients for successful leadership. For the world, the accent almost exclusively falls on the former. For the church, there is little difference even though biblical authors are clear that character is central to leadership.


Consider the words of Titus 1:6-8: A leader must be blameless, a faithful spouse, a good parent, not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, and not pursuing dishonest gain. Instead, a leader must be hospitable, love what is good, and be self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. Paul’s first letter to Timothy adds to that, saying that overseers must manage their households well, not be new to the faith, and have a good reputation with outsiders. And Peter tells us that leaders benefit others at their expense and shepherd people (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Where does gift-giving fit in? In two places: the ability to rule, and the ability to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:7). But those gifts are not emphasized more than inner integrity.

Christian leadership entails the gifts of teaching and ruling undergirded by a deep foundation of character. Without this foundation, gifts are only a thin veneer, easily dented, scratched, and scuffed—and left nearly worthless because there is nothing underneath. But a leader with character, even when scratched and scuffed, reveals something more beautiful and precious. They are weathered oaks, majestic and sturdy, and with the passage of time they become even more venerable.

I fear that the past few years have taken a toll on our world. The pandemic and global unrest have led to broken marriages, depression, anger, fear, and mental health issues. We need people of character to lead because, especially in these times, only character will persist. The temptation, however, will be to

Christian leadership entails gifts of teaching and ruling undergirded by a deep foundation of character.

double down on gifts because that is the world’s default mode.

If we look at the world’s heroes, they are usually young and famous for being famous, as historian Daniel Boorstin stated 60 years ago in his book *The Image* (1962). Their gift is getting publicity. Consider, too, the fanfare associated with fame—the Oscars, the Emmys, trophies, and the like. Those are rewards for gifts, not character. In fact, the world seems to altogether separate gifts and character, with gifts catapulted into importance while character is ignored. We need to overcome our modern myopia by rediscovering the wisdom of an ancient witness. If we do, we will see a way forward to bless the world. If we do not, our collective lack of character will destroy what good remains. 



John Lee is an administrator at an independent school and an interim pastor of Newtown Reformed Church in Elmhurst, N.Y. His Ph.D. is in ancient history. He is the author of the book *On Generosity* ([stone-towerpress.com](http://stone-towerpress.com)).



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- » Confessions of a Chronic Advice Giver
- » The Servants Knew: Turning Our Water Into Wine
- » The Wounded Warrior



# Fire and Water

By Sam Gutierrez

**A** single light bulb illuminating a stained-glass window was left on after the Christmas service. Sometime late in the night, the overheated bulb fell onto a pew and ignited the fabric. The fire quickly spread. Soon the stained-glass windows collapsed and melted. Smoke billowed from the bell tower, and flames consumed the choir loft. Neighbors stepped outside their doors into the cold December night to watch the unfolding tragedy in stunned silence.

The fire department quickly responded, spraying thousands of gallons of water into the church to try to douse the flames and save the sanctuary. A few courageous firefighters split off toward the back of the building and found their way to the pastor's office. In an attempt to save a lifetime's worth of collected commentaries and other resources, they tossed hundreds of books through a window onto a tarp on the frostbitten ground.

As the fire continued to blaze fiercely, more and more water poured into

the sanctuary. Soon there was so much water covering the floor that the baptismal font rose from its position and floated down the center aisle. From there the swirling waters carried the font down two flights of stairs, through the opening where the doors had been beaten down, and into the parking lot. As light dawned the following morning and members huddled together to survey the stunning loss, they found the flame-licked baptismal font far from the sanctuary, tipped toward the adjacent street.

This past Christmas marked the 50th anniversary of that night.

In the church archives are pictures and unique details from eyewitnesses, some of whom still attend Alger Park Church. Archived documents say that within a few months, the roof was rebuilt, windows had been replaced, and almost all traces of fire damage were erased. But if you go into the church's attic spaces you can still find a few charred bricks near the apex of the sanctuary roof.

Charred memories lingered, too, in the hearts and minds of some who were there. Years after the fire, someone from the congregation painted the fiery scene. The painting was hung with a bronze plaque telling a moralizing tale about the fleeting nature of all things material.

When I first saw the painting and heard the stories, I interpreted the fire as a tragic event overcome by a group of hardworking people. But as I reflect on the story again, on the 50th anniversary of that night, I think the most important part of the story was the fire-licked baptismal font in the parking lot.

The sacrament of baptism is a means of grace. It's about who God is and how God relates with us. The flowing water is a tangible expression and experience of God's grace. God is love, and we are the recipients of God's love. But love doesn't stop there. The biblical story goes on to assert and demonstrate that there is an outflowing nature to love. As it turns out, baptismal waters are never meant to stay in the sanctuary. They are meant to flow out into the surrounding community.

In some churches the baptismal water rests in a bowl. But traditionally baptismal waters are supposed to be flowing. Many branches of the church carry on this tradition with a bubbling

Baptismal waters  
are flowing  
waters, and God's  
grace is always  
trying to escape  
the confines of  
the church walls.

font near the church's front entrance. Other churches prefer to baptize folks in the moving water of a river, lake, or ocean.

Jesus was baptized in flowing waters. As the Jordan River moved around him, over him, and under him, he was named God's beloved—just as we are when we receive the sacrament. Jesus' ministry embodied the flowing nature of his baptism when his identity was lived out through his words and actions. His life overflowed and touched the marginalized people on the outskirts of society. Jesus understood that God's blessing is not static. It blesses in order to let others know that they are blessed too. It flows out in order to draw in. When we receive the sacrament of baptism, do we embody the flowing nature of God's grace in the same way Jesus did?

On Christmas night in 1971, the baptismal font floated down the stairs and into the parking lot. Baptismal waters are flowing waters, and God's grace is always trying to escape the confines of the church walls, out through the doors to drench our community in endless waves of blessing. And when

the water becomes static, fire gets the water flowing again.


This is not new. Listen to Jesus as he addressed his disciples in Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When a flame appeared on Peter's head, Peter stood up to preach his first sermon. Listen to what he said to those who were gathered: "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39).

As it turns out, fire pushed the promise out into the neighborhood.

Baptismal water is flowing water because the blessing is meant to drench and then move outward toward others. It flows out in order to draw in. This is why at the end of every worship service the congregation is sent in the power of the Spirit as a blessed people, a loved people, a baptized people, into the parking lot tilting toward the neighborhood.

It was true 2,000 years ago.

It was true in 1971.

It's still true today. 

*Editor's Note: A version of this article was first published on the Alger Park Church website, [algerparkchurch.org/blog/archives/08-2020](http://algerparkchurch.org/blog/archives/08-2020).*



Sam Gutierrez completed his M.Div. at Western Theological Seminary and is currently serving as a pastor of community and discipleship at Alger Park Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Read more of his work at [printandpoem.com](http://printandpoem.com).



## BIG QUESTIONS

### Stewardship

#### Is Earth sacred? While we might have an obligation to be stewards of creation, is there a danger for Christians of falling into nature worship?

Two impulses are at work in these questions—one to be lauded, the other resisted. The first impulse is that only God is worthy of worship, and so no rivals to that honor may be tolerated. That is a firm principle within the Christian faith. If some notion seems to infringe on God's exclusive claim to our worship, we should be vigilant and make sure no idol is being improperly enthroned.

The second impulse, however, is more problematic: lumping all who speak reverentially of Earth or nature or creation as "nature worshipers." Yes, there are those who think of Earth as divine. There are others who speak of nature or creation as sacred because of its association with the Divine or who consider that they have sacred obligations to care for the earth because God is its Creator and Sustainer. This notion of "sacred obligation to" is a powerful one. It makes harm or mistreatment of Earth and its creatures a form of sacrilege.

One of the most profound statements of this comes from the poet Wendell Berry, a Christian who once wrote, "There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places." For each of us, as we live out our lives in our various places on Earth, a stewardly question to keep before us is whether our actions are honoring the sacredness of a place or (heaven forbid!) desecrating it.

Perhaps some readers will wonder at or even be troubled by the fact that the word "Earth" was capitalized in this



column. Isn't this a sign of the very issue raised in the opening question—a personifying and possible deifying of Earth? The answer is simple. It is granting to our own planet the same level of respect that we give to all the other planets in the solar system.

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

#### Are there different standards of belief for officebearers and confessing members of the Christian Reformed Church?

No, there are not different standards of belief, but there are differences in responsibilities. Let me explain:

All confessing members of the Christian Reformed Church must hold to the beliefs contained in its confessions, and only confessing members are eligible to serve in office, so they must have indicated their belief in the doctrine of the church.

When individuals make profession of faith, they are not only indicating their personal faith in Jesus Christ; they are also "making a commitment to the creeds and the confessions of the Christian Reformed Church" (Church Order Art. 59a). The ecumenical

creeds are the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, and the Reformed confessions are the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.

Synod said in 1975 that "these confessions are binding upon all the officebearers as is indicated by their subscription to these confessions in the Form of Subscription. These confessions are binding upon all confessing members of the church as is indicated by their public profession of faith."

For church leaders the bar is not higher for belief, but they do bear more responsibility to uphold those beliefs in their leadership roles in the congregation. Officebearers today are required to sign the Covenant for Officebearers (Church Order Art. 5, Supplement), which used to be called the Form of Subscription but was revised by synod in 2012. The Covenant says that officebearers "promise to be formed and governed by the confessions" and "will promote and defend their doctrines faithfully, conforming our preaching, teaching, writing, serving, and living to them."

So while all confessing members are required to believe the doctrine of the church as found in the confessions, officebearers are required to bear that out in their leadership. Likewise, when synods declare a viewpoint to be an official interpretation of the confessions,

Illustration for *The Banner* by Gisela Bohórquez

that decision applies to officebearers and confessing members alike. In the CRC we don't have different standards of belief for members and leaders.

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

## How do I live out my vocation when God doesn't seem to be opening doors for me to do what I feel called to do?

It is deeply disappointing to be unable to fulfill the calling we believe God has for us, whether that be a specific job or career or a desire to get married and/or become a parent. It can be easy to despair or to question whether we have correctly discerned God's calling for our lives.

First, it is good to be honest about our disappointment. Only when we acknowledge how we feel can we bring those feelings to God and admit our confusion to others. The psalms show us that God can handle our questions; we are not the first to ask, "How long, O Lord, how long?" As with the author of Psalm 13, our questions can be part of trusting God.

Second, while pursuing a calling can feel deeply personal, it is also something we do in community. Our calling is affirmed and shaped by those around us. 1 Timothy 5:8 goes even so far as to say that those who do not take care of their family members deny the faith! This means that other callings sometimes take precedence, which can be hard. Out of love for our partner and/or children or to help take care of aging parents or a disabled sibling, we might not be able to move for a job or work the number of hours we might want to. In

these situations it's good to have others who recognize the sacrifices we've made and can help us discern how our calling might be developing.

Last, because calling is communal, it means we all should care whether others are able to live out their own callings. I pray that those of us with jobs that fit our vocations and with more than enough to live on might share opportunities and wealth with others. May we also encourage others and work toward changing society so that all people might flourish. That way we live out our communal calling to be the body of Christ serving God faithfully together.

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

### Digital Life

## Do Christians have an obligation to make the internet better?

I think so, but for me and some of you, it is going to take work. As Reformed Christians we know that everything is being redeemed by God—even the giant, sometimes dark and sinister hole we call the internet. What if we adjusted our attitudes a bit and took a more positive approach? Might people in our circles of influence be less likely to write us off? Here are a few thoughts:

**Be grateful:** Although it wasn't included in Genesis on the day-by-day list of created things, technology in all its forms was and is known to God. Be on the lookout for ways internet technology has enhanced your life.

**Be open to learning:** Some of us talk as if the internet was invented yesterday. It was actually launched in 1983—almost 40 years ago. Asking anyone under 35 to "just give it up" is like asking you to stop using your microwave. Instead, ask questions, listen well, and learn to speak

intelligently about the good as well as the bad.

**Walk with the wise:** "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm" (Prov. 13:20, ESV). That's true for our wandering around the internet as well. Be deliberate about whom you choose to follow online. If someone or something makes you feel worse rather than better after spending time with it, take note and make a change.

**Be yourself:** It's easy to forward something from someone else, but it's so much better to post an original picture, write a unique post, or discover a new way to use the technology.

**Be open to sharing:** For something used by so many people—around 4.6 billion users worldwide—the internet can be a lonely place rife with misinformation. Bring your online wanderings up in conversation to inspire others and to check your sources.

**Take it to church:** Every person gathering with us has been touched by the internet in one way or another. Rather than highlighting the negatives (misinformation, too much screen use, etc.), how about a class or two on how to use it to engage others in a helpful, positive way?

**Take it further:** If you're particularly wise and ambitious, get involved in internet policy at the local, regional, and national levels to make sure this gift is well looked after.

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



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

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# Calvin's Center for Social Research Now Independent

## NEWS

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**DataWise Consulting co-founders Laura Luchies (back row, far right) and Neil Carlson (back row, third from right) with the rest of the team from the Center for Social Research in 2021.**

Announced in February and finalized at the end of April, Calvin University's Center for Social Research is now the private firm DataWise Consulting.

In the announcement, Calvin said the move would position the center to "serve a broader range of clients and grow in ways it couldn't as part of the institution." Reporting by *Chimes*, Calvin's student newspaper, has indicated that one of the things the center couldn't do as part of the university was continue employing a staff member who is in a same-sex marriage.

"Decisions like these often happen in a complex context of both immediate, even emergent, issues, longer-term pressures, and future opportunities," Calvin provost Noah Toly said. "The mutual decision to spin out CSR (the Center for Social Research) was consistent with previously identified pressures and future opportunities for the center to thrive."

CSR's director, Neil Carlson, co-founded DataWise with CSR associate director Laura Luchies. They are now principal consultants. Carlson agrees that seeing the center have an "external footprint" was a long-term goal, though the immediate timing has been challenging.

"We are committed to an inclusive, affirming approach to our teamwork and our clients. That commitment has contributed to our fairly swift departure from Calvin," Carlson said. "We are excited for our future as a team, but we grieve the loss of our membership in the Calvin community and its educational mission."

Carlson said he is grateful for the "high degree of collaboration" with Calvin as DataWise transitioned from university office space to what will at first be an itinerant existence with employees working remotely or in coworking spaces. Carlson will retain membership in the American Political Science Association, and Luchies will remain in the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. DataWise will continue to use Calvin's Institutional Review Board as its board of review, at least for the next year.

Toly said the center was "an integral part of the university for a very long time, and we hope that its mission, organization, and community will flourish in new ways."

He also said Calvin looks forward to "ongoing partnership with the new, independent organization."

—Alissa Vernon, News Editor



## Ministry to New Immigrants Offers Driver Training

In Sioux Falls, S.D., New Roots Ministry, an organization partially supported by regional ministry shares through Classis Iakota of the Christian Reformed Church, provides social service and spiritual resources for people who are new to America. Since 2007, New Roots has run a workplace chaplaincy and equipped new pastors through Timothy Leadership Training, and recently it established a driver training program.

Director Fred Wilgenburg said getting a driver's license is something many Americans take for granted, but for someone trying to integrate into a new country, it's especially important as it allows for more independence and provides a critical piece of identification for accessing social services.

Volunteers, including two from First CRC in Sioux Falls, give the lessons as a free service that might otherwise cost \$300-\$550, Wilgenburg said, putting it out of reach for many of the people New Roots serves.

The help goes beyond driving lessons, though.



**Volunteers with New Roots' driver training ministry help those new to America prepare to get a driver's license.**

"Many of the instructors have built lasting relationships with those they have trained," Wilgenburg said. "It's been a great way for us to build relationships with the students."

Students learn of the program through referrals from the workplace chaplains or by word of mouth. As of April 2022, New Roots had helped three people pass tests to get their driver's licenses.

—Dan Veeneman

## Roadside Chapel in Northern B.C. Damaged by Fire



A highway chapel constructed in 1967 by the congregation of Terrace (B.C.) Christian Reformed Church was damaged by a suspicious fire in April. Local fire and police departments responding to a 911 call were able to save the building from more extensive damage. Volunteers from Terrace CRC, supported by donations of money, supplies, and labor, have already completed repairs to the roof and intend to reopen the wayside chapel to all visitors by July.

—Jenny deGroot

## Seminary Training in Ukraine Continues Online

Ukrainian seminary students expecting to graduate in May participated in online lectures by two Christian Reformed pastors in Oregon at the end of April so they could complete their studies without interruption.

Pastors Robert Toornstra and Bill Wilton have volunteered with International Theological Education Ministries for years, but previous teaching engagements have always been in person. The ministry serves former Soviet states in central and eastern Europe with no-cost, biblically based Reformed teaching and training. Toornstra said that Ukraine has been unstable for some time, with the threat of Russian aggression lingering in the area since its forcible annexation of Crimea in 2014, but no previous teaching trips had to be canceled until Russia invaded Ukraine this year.

Toornstra, of Sunnyslope CRC in Salem, Ore., and Wilton, of Sunrise Church in McMinnville, Ore., had to adjust their teaching schedule to coordinate with the Evangelical Reformed Seminary in Ukraine. Their class on Christ-centered preaching was offered 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in Ukraine, which is 10 p.m.-2:30 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time.

Toornstra said teaching lectures to students in an active war zone was not something he ever saw himself doing. "During some of the lectures, we could hear air raid sirens going off, and some of the students had to leave the lectures to find shelter and safety," he said. The five students and one translator who participated in the classes were mostly still in Ukraine, though a few had already been evacuated to other locations in eastern Europe.

"The future remains unclear currently," Toornstra said, "but we do know that God is working, and all we can do is trust in him and his timing."

—Dan Veeneman

# Council of Delegates Agenda Included Budget, Structure, Togetherness

The Council of Delegates of the Christian Reformed Church met in person for the first time in 26 months May 4-6.

The Council (one delegate from each classis and some at-large members) meets between synods—the broadest ecclesiastical body of the CRC—to carry out the work assigned by synod. The U.S. and Canadian corporations are the legal entities governing the various ministry agencies of the binational denomination. The U.S. and Canadian delegates to the Council also function as directors of the U.S. and Canadian corporations, respectively.

Here's some of what the Council covered:

## Budget

Delegates heard that ministry shares, pledged by local churches to support denominational ministries, are down \$667,200 USD from last year. The amount pledged for the coming year is \$17.8 million.

Some of that pledged money (\$1.5 million) goes to Calvin University, as part of its \$75 million in revenue. The other shares make up about one quarter (26%) of the denominational budget, outside of World Renew. The rest of the revenue comes from individual donations, grants, estate gifts, and extra offerings by congregations. (World Renew is not included in the ministry share budget percentage because it does not receive ministry share income.)

Ministry share reductions are felt particularly acutely in Congregational Ministries, which includes Candidacy, Chaplaincy and Care, Disability Concerns, Diversity, Pastor Church Resources, Race Relations, Safe Church, Social Justice, and Worship ministries. Congregational Ministries receives almost all of its revenue via ministry shares. It cut \$650,000 from its budget and then was asked to reduce it by another half million. (For more information, see online story "Ministry Share Income Down for 2023 Fiscal Year.")



**Nine members of the Council of Delegates, many of whom have served since the board's beginning in 2017, are retiring from the Council at the end of June.**

## Structure

The U.S. Corporation of the CRC appointed its own chief executive, to be known as director of U.S. ministry operations. Joel Huyser, already the interim director of Resonate Global Mission, is that new director. He retains his ministry job.

Some delegates were concerned about assigning additional tasks to a ministry director. Paul DeVries, U.S. at-large delegate, was one of them. "This is not a sustainable model," he said. We can't keep asking executives to do more than one job." Delegates agreed that the arrangement will be reviewed in two years.

Executive director Colin P. Watson Sr. noted that previously, the CRCNA-U.S. corporation had not identified a chief executive. "Historically, we conflated ecclesiastical functions of the church with the business functions of U.S. corporation," he said, meaning the functions of

a U.S. director were assigned to the executive director of the denomination.

Having a director of U.S. ministry operations provides a similar though not parallel structure to that of the CRC Canada corporation, where there is an executive director position. Rev. Al Postma, appointed in April by the Canada corporation, is that board's transitional executive director (see p. 22). The chief executives of the U.S. and Canada corporations will report to the U.S. and Canada corporations respectively. They will work in partnership with the general secretary to carry out the work assigned by synod. The general secretary will be responsible directly to synod.

To further clarify the delineation between ecclesiastical and functional, the Council is recommending to Synod 2022 that a new legal corporation, called the Christian Reformed Church Worldwide, be established for the office of the denomination's general secretary. The creation of the new corporation does not change the name of the denomination

itself, which remains the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Watson recommended that the office of the general secretary be housed in a corporation separate from the U.S. corporation. "In the current executive director model, the ecclesiastical office of the CRCNA is housed within the CRCNA U.S. Corporation," he wrote.

"This conflation of roles—Office of General Secretary staff housed within a ministry corporation—could be problematic since it obfuscates the responsibility of synod to clearly direct its ecclesiastical office."

The changes are part of the restructuring process that has been going on for more than two years. Nearly all of the changes are awaiting synodical approval in 2022 because Synods 2020 and 2021 were canceled because of COVID restrictions. (See "Synod 2022: What to Watch," p. 20.)

## Appointments and Farewells and Anniversaries

- » The Council noted that Tim Sheridan is now the church-planting leader for Resonate Global Mission and Adrian Jacobs was appointed as senior leader for Indigenous ministry Canada.
- » Although previously anticipated, no nomination was presented for the position of chief administrative officer to work in the Office of the General Secretary; the search committee will continue its search.
- » Andy de Ruyter, Michael Ten Haken, Greta Luimes, John Lee, Sheila Holmes, Jill Feikema, Melissa Van Dyk, and Bev Bandstra will serve as the Council's executive committee in 2022/2023.
- » Council members concluding their service June 30 are Heather Cowie, Wendell Davelaar, Peter J. DeVries, Paul R. De Vries, Laurie Harkema, Brian L. Ochsner, David A. Struyk, Samuel D. Sutter, and Lora Copley.
- » The Council honored Watson, executive director, and deputy executive director and chief financial officer John Bolt, both of whom will retire this summer.

- » The Council celebrated significant anniversaries for four congregational ministries:

Chaplaincy and Care Ministry—80 years  
Office of Race Relations—50 years  
Disability Concerns—40 years  
Pastor Church Resources—40 years

## In Other News

The Council heard that ReFrame ministry staff and families in Ukraine and Russia are safe—they continue to minister, including to refugees; however, Russian staff are very vulnerable during this time of war.

The Council took note, though five delegates registered a negative vote, that Calvin University revised its faculty handbook to eliminate the requirement for synod ratification of faculty appointments, citing that synod lacks the information and context necessary to play a role in the faculty appointment process.

The Council heard that about one-third of the staff in Grand Rapids, Mich., are using the denominational office building now while the rest work remotely.

The Council received a presentation by Neil Carlson, founder and principal consultant of Datawise Consulting, regarding decline of membership in CRC congregations. Additionally, the Council revisited a paper written by director of diversity Reggie Smith, titled "Repositioning the CRC for Sustainability Through Listening and Supporting." The paper (originally presented in February) focused on the need to listen to and support the growing number of CRC diaspora and ethnic churches, ensuring all members feel like they are valued and welcomed at the classis level. Future conversations will be facilitated on the topic of diversity and its key place in the CRCNA.

—Gayla R. Postma

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## IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. David Arthur Zylstra*

1948-2022

A faithful man of God, David Zylstra had a calm, easygoing personality and a dry sense of humor. Caring and tenderhearted, he often shed tears at weddings and baptisms. He was a man who enjoyed the journey as much as the destination—whether on a bike or in a car, he was always eager to see what was over the next hill or beyond the next horizon. Hopeful in all circumstances, he trusted in God's care and provision. Zylstra, 73, died March 24 at Pine Haven Christian Home in Sheboygan Falls, Wis., after living for several years with a progressive neurological illness.

After high school in Chicago, Zylstra attended Trinity College, Calvin College (now University), and Calvin Seminary. Following ordination in 1974, he pastored Archer Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Summit, Ill.; Baldwin (Wis.) CRC; Parkersburg (Iowa) CRC; First CRC of Prinsburg, Minn.; and Brooten (Minn.) Community Church. He retired in 2017.

Zylstra served on the boards of Calvin and Dordt College (now University). He loved music and sang baritone in choirs and musical groups throughout his life. He enjoyed ancient history and delighted in God's creation.

Zylstra is survived by his wife, Claudia, their three children, and six grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus



## Professor Appealing Calvin University's Refusal to Reappoint

Joe Kuilema, a professor of social work at Calvin University whose reappointment was delayed after he officiated an October 2021 civil wedding of a same-sex couple, learned at the end of April that the school's professional status committee is not recommending him for reappointment; his contract will conclude in August. Kuilema has filed an appeal, which will be reviewed by the executive committee of Calvin's board of trustees. He said it has been indicated to him that he would have a response by the end of May.

Calvin's student publication *Chimes* published news and memos describing the professional status committee's decision. In a March 22, 2022, memo Benita Wolters-Fredlund, dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, said she was "obliged to consider a far wider body of evidence than is typical for a reappointment process," noting a "unique history" in which Kuilema was asked by the school's board in 2018 to use "good judgment" and abide by "university expectations around tone and strategy in relation to his LGBTQ+ advocacy." Kuilema, despite having been recommended for tenure by the professional status committee in 2017, was denied tenure by Calvin's board of trustees in 2018.

Calvin holds the position of the CRC on human sexuality. In an online LGBTQ+ Students and Homosexuality FAQ, the school said, "We believe that homosexual orientation is not a sin, and we strive to love our gay, lesbian, and bisexual students as ourselves, as God expects of us. We also affirm that physical sexual intimacy has its proper place in the context of heterosexual marriage."

While positions may be challenged, there is "an appropriate tone and strategy for expressions of ecclesiastical freedom," a 2016 Calvin document on Confessional Commitment and Academic Freedom said. "(The *Covenant for Faculty Members*) suggests a strategy that begins by



consulting with those in authority, and a tone of bold humility that cares enough about the confessions to raise difficult issues and, at the same time, is willing to submit to the judgment of the church."

Wolters-Fredlund's memo said, "Prof. Kuilema's act of officiating a fellow employee's LGBTQ+ wedding strongly suggests that he condones behavior that is out of step with stated policies and furthermore easily be interpreted by outsiders as Calvin condoning such behavior."

Kuilema said he was "deeply disappointed by the committee's decision." He said, "I love Calvin University. I love working here. I love our mission. And I think it's important to say that I did what I did because of that mission."

Kuilema is active in his local congregation, Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., where he has served as an elder. That congregation, as recorded in minutes of its classis, affirmed last spring, "that LGBTQ+ people of Sherman Street, whether single, in a dating relationship, or married, who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, enjoy full participation in the life and leadership of the church."

The appropriateness of individual congregations taking individual stances on these matters is disputed. Synod 2016 (general assembly) adopted a report that included pastoral advice for office-bearers in the church to not participate in weddings of same-sex couples. Synod 2022 will hear formal requests to discipline a congregation that appointed a deacon who is in a same-sex marriage. The synod also will review communications cautioning against synod's authority to correct a narrower assembly if not appealed on to do so. (See "Synod 2022: What to Watch," p. 20.)

While the ceremony Kuilema officiated was a civil one, Calvin's decision to not reappoint him takes place in that backdrop.

Kuilema has expressed doubt about the efficacy of the appeal but has not taken a position anywhere else. "It feels like being disowned by your family, and part of you is hurt and angry and another part of you is hoping and praying for reconciliation," he said.

—Alissa Vernon, News Editor

## Synod: What It Is

Every June *The Banner* publishes an article with a title like “Synod 2022: What to Watch” (see page 20). It’s a preview of the expected stories to come out of that year’s general assembly of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. But before you can wonder what to watch for, you might need to know what synod is.

Synod is a gathering of delegates representing all 49 classes (regional groups of local churches). Each classis may send four officebearers (a minister, an elder, a deacon, and one more of any office). Faculty advisers, from the seminary, ethnic advisers and young adult representatives also attend synod. The denomination’s governmental handbook, *Rules for Synodical Procedure*, guides how the annual synod is run.

All delegates and advisers are appointed to one of eight or nine advisory committees, which are assigned various sections of the synod agenda to review. After the classes have submitted their list of delegates, the program committee of synod (officers of the previous synod) appoints members to the advisory committees based upon a number of matters and rules. No two delegates from the same classis may serve on the same committee. The program committee also considers: expressed committee preference, conflict of interest (for example an overture from their classis), diversity (including of region, ethnicity, and gender), a balance between committees of the number of delegates from each office (ministers, deacons, and elders), and more. Dee Recker, director of synodical services said it’s a careful day-long process. For the first few days of synod the committees meet to deliberate together and then bring recommended actions to the full synod. How synod decides on each of these recommendations, and what delegates say about each matter as it’s dealt with, is what *The Banner* reports to you.

You can find the *Rules for Synodical Procedure* online at [crcna.org/synodresources](http://crcna.org/synodresources).

—Alissa Vernon, News Editor

### IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Dr. Joseph Alan  
Brinks*

1949-2022

“My dad was faithful to his God and to his calling,” said one of Joseph Brinks’ sons. “For more than 45 years, he proclaimed Christ to the people in more than 5,000 sermons.” Brinks, 72, died March 8 after living with prostate cancer for almost 18 years.

A graduate of Calvin College (now University) and Seminary, Brinks later earned a doctorate in ministry from Trinity Evangelical Seminary.

Ordained in 1975, he pastored Noordeloos Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Mich.; Jamestown CRC, Hudsonville, Mich.; Sully (Iowa) CRC; Grace CRC, Kalamazoo, Mich.; and Peace CRC, Menno, S.D. He especially enjoyed teaching catechism to young people and mentoring young pastors.

After retiring in 2015, Brinks served for two years as interim pastor at Cottage Grove CRC in South Holland, Ill. He continued preaching and teaching whenever he had the opportunity. He preached his last sermon Dec. 19, 2021.

Brinks enjoyed traveling, reading, and genealogy. He stayed physically active by walking, jogging and biking, and in October he surpassed the 20,000-mile mark on his road bike with a final ride of 50 miles.

He is survived by his wife, Linda, five children and their spouses, and 15 grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

### IN MEMORIAM



*Rev. Dr. David Earl  
Holwerda*

1932-2022

Dave Holwerda, who had a long career as a beloved professor of religion and theology, was a quiet man whose actions spoke louder than his words. He died March 10 at age 89.

The fifth of six boys, Holwerda graduated from Calvin College (now University) and Seminary before earning a doctorate in theology from the Free University in Amsterdam in 1959. He was professor of biblical studies at Trinity Christian College for a few years before becoming professor of religion and theology at Calvin College for the next 21 years. From there, and for the next 15 years, he was professor of New Testament studies at Calvin Theological Seminary. He was dedicated to his students and colleagues and was known as a deep thinker, a skillful writer, and one who promoted unity.

Holwerda loved camping and was an expert baker. One of his daughters said, “He could do pastry with the same kind of precision and care as he took with his writing.”

Preceded in death by his grandson Timothy, Holwerda will be lovingly remembered by Gayla, his wife of 67 years, four daughters and their spouses, 10 grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

# Synod 2022: What to Watch

The headliner of the Christian Reformed Church's annual synod doubtless will be the human sexuality report (officially, the report of the Committee to Articulate a Foundation-laying Biblical Theology of Human Sexuality). The long-awaited report was released more than a year ago, and churches and classes have responded voluminously, sending more than 60 overtures (requests) and communications to Synod 2022. Some overture writers want the report adopted, some want it rejected, some want it partially adopted, and some want more study or additional advice on implementation.

The report, which addresses a range of sexual matters, affirms the CRC's 1973 position on homosexuality that states that same-sex attraction is not sinful but acting on that attraction is. Part of the study committee's mandate was to evaluate whether future synods should consider a *status confessionis* with respect to same-sex behavior and other issues identified in the study. The committee, pointing to Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108 and its condemnation of "all unchastity," said the church's teaching on these matters already has confessional status.

Whatever Synod 2022 decides, the discussions around the report will be the most significant and controversial synod deliberations in a generation.

Related to that discussion will be what to do about Neland Avenue CRC's appointment of a deacon who is in a same-sex marriage. That action is out of step with the denomination's current position on same-sex relationships, but Neland has said that position represents only pastoral advice. A communication to synod from Classis Grand Rapids East describes Neland's decision-making process (that classis is the regional group of Christian Reformed churches to which Neland belongs). Multiple overtures ask that synod discipline Neland for breaking covenant with the denomination.



Photo by Karen Huttenga

**As in this photo from Synod 2019, Synod 2022 will feature times of worship and prayer among delegates as well as discussions about topics on the weighty agenda.**

## Governance Restructure

Delegates will also deliberate about the leadership of the Christian Reformed Church's administrative and governance structure. There are reports about structure and multiple overtures responding to the reports. Major changes have taken place already, including new leaders, new job descriptions, revision of mandates, and more—all without the approval of a synod. The result is that the new leadership position of general secretary has yet to be approved by Synod 2022, but a candidate for the not-yet-approved role already has been recommended to synod and is presently transitioning into that position.

How could this happen? In a word, COVID. For the first time in the CRC's history, not one but two annual synods were canceled. The Council of Delegates (which acts as synod's interim committee) met in special sessions in 2020 and 2021 to handle matters that could not wait until 2022.

Governance restructure decisions were deemed too important to defer because legal advice obtained by CRC-Canada directors suggested the existing

structure didn't adequately meet Canada Revenue Agency rules regarding not-for-profit organizations. CRA requires that direction and control of resources obtained in Canada must be retained in Canada. That standard is not met if the bodies that make those decisions (the Council of Delegates and the CRC's annual synod) are 75% American.

The road to restructuring has not been smooth. Potholes included disagreement among Canadian churches about solving the tax dilemma, the dismissal of the Canadian ministries director, and resulting questions over the decisions made by the CRC-Canada board. Along the way, that road widened to include a decades-old discussion about the desire of the CRC in Canada to determine its ministry priorities and activities without undue influence from the much larger U.S. portion of the CRC.

Making sense of it all at Synod 2022 will not be easy. The *Agenda* contains not only several consecutive structure iterations but also multiple overtures and communications coming from Canadian churches that object to decisions already made.



## But Wait—There's More

Same-sex marriage and governance restructuring are hardly the only things on the agenda. In fact, the *Agenda for Synod 2022* is so lengthy—more than 1,300 pages—that it's been split into two volumes: one for deferred items from 2020 and 2021 and one for everything that would have been on Synod 2022's agenda apart from all the deferred items. Other topics include the following:

### » Ministry Shares

Synod 2019 recommended that Synod 2020 approve an entirely new way of funding ministries at the denominational level. The Council, in a special session in 2020, decided to go ahead with the changeover, noting that it had been thoroughly studied by the churches already.

Instead of setting a budget and then asking congregations to remit a specific amount per member, churches would instead be asked how much they can pledge to support denominational ministries; the budget would then be set based on the total amount pledged. Results since then have been mixed, with some churches that had never before contributed making pledges and some churches pledging less than what would have been expected under the old system.

The upshot is that financial support for shared ministries is down, and budgets have had to be adjusted accordingly.

### » Abuse of Power

Synod 2019 made several decisions to help prevent church leaders from abusing their power in their congregations and in denominational ministries. Three years in, progress will be reported to Synod 2022.

### » Heresy, Catechisms, Bible Translations

After a lengthy discussion in 2019 about a church in Michigan teaching heretical views on mixed-race marriages (kinism),

synod asked the Council of Delegates to convene a group to define the word "heresy" as used in the denomination. The group's report was available in 2020 but was deferred to this year. The report's usefulness might be tested right away because Classis Illiana is asking to declare as heresy any denial that Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection provide a substitutionary bearing of God's wrath on our behalf because of the just punishment we deserve for our sin.

Synod 2019 requested that the denomination's Faith Formation ministry evaluate *The New City Catechism* for use by the churches. That evaluation will come to this year's synod. The report provides its review of the catechism and also provides a blueprint for how such documents can be evaluated.

Synod 2022 also will receive a report from the re-established Bible Translations Committee about how it evaluates new translations.

## What Not to Watch For

After a couple of preliminary sessions, there won't be a Zoom (video conferencing) screen in sight!

Two study committee reports (one on ecclesiastical marriage and one on bivocational ministry, both released in 2020) have been deferred to 2023.

And don't look for a report on the history and rationale for making decisions about political and justice issues that Synod 2019 had asked for from the Council. The Council said that, due to the gravity and complexity of the issue, the task is better given to a study committee appointed by synod itself.

## How Will It All Get Done?

The Council approved some measures to streamline some of the standard synod activities. Prior to synod convening in person June 10, an online meeting will take place May 25 to allow delegates to

elect officers and confirm assignments of delegates to synod's various advisory committees. Those advisory committees will hold introductory meetings online, but all deliberations will happen in person. (See "Synod: What It Is," p. 19).

Instead of delegates having Sunday free from activities other than synodical worship, delegates will convene to hear from ecumenical guests, be part of prayer and conversation groups, and hear reports from denominational mercy and justice ministries and the executive director's State of the Church Address.

Some of Synod 2022's agenda is designated as consent agenda material, to be received as information by way of a single recommendation.

Synod 2019 also made some decisions about synod operation that should help make 2022's gathering more efficient. These include more training for all delegates prior to synod, new rules about what kind of amendments to motions are allowed, and a three-minute limit on delegate speeches.

Before you plan a visit to Grand Rapids, Mich., where Synod 2022 will meet at Calvin University, be aware that Synod 2022's not-yet-elected officers will consider closing the gallery for the deliberations on the human sexuality report. Viewers still would be able to watch via livestreaming, but the officers will consider whether to delay that stream by 20 minutes to prevent viewers from unduly influencing synod delegates through social media. The Reformed Church in America imposed those constraints during contentious deliberations in 2021 and reported positively on that experience.

—Gayla R. Postma

Synod is meeting June 10-16. Follow *Banner* coverage of synod at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) or in the July/August issue.

## Canadians Appoint Transitional Executive Director

At its meeting on April 27, the board of directors of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada appointed Rev. Al Postma as transitional executive director for a period of two years.

Postma, 38, comes to the role in the middle of governance restructuring between the U.S. and Canada that has seen a lot of angst on both sides of the border.

He told the directors that, having served in a denominational role in classis renewal and being part of a binational classis in Thunder Bay, Ont., he believes that God has been equipping and preparing him for a role like this. One of his hopes is that at the end of his two years there will be a clear sense among staff of what it means to do ministry as the CRC in Canada and in relation to U.S. counterparts. "When there is fog in the system, it is hard to understand what is expected," he said.

Postma said he plans to make connecting with pastors and other church leaders a priority.

Above all, he said, "The church belongs to God. I want to attend to it and lead it well and care for it and serve within it and move it in healthy directions, but at the end of the day the CRC belongs to God, and he will do with it what he wants. I'm more responsive and willing to roll with whatever comes."

Chris DeWinter, chair of the search committee, told directors that Postma's established relationships with Canadian staff members, stated clerks around the denomination, and U.S. denominational staff will help him quickly adapt to the role.

"Al is trusted and respected by those already in the system," DeWinter said. "Al is a synthesizer and collaborator. Those are two skill sets we need right now. Binationality needs to be done well, and we believe Al is gifted and able to do that."

Ordained in 2009, Postma was pastor at Bethlehem CRC in Thunder Bay, Ont., until 2016. Since then he has served as classis renewal leader for the denomination. He is currently an elder at Hope CRC in Brantford, Ont. He and his wife, Karissa, have four children.

Postma (no relation to the author) started as transitional executive director May 9. He replaces the acting executive director, Terry Veldboom, who has served in that role since July 2021.



**Rev. Al Postma**

—Gayla R. Postma

## New Role, Old Name



**Rev. Leonard Hofman, general secretary emeritus of the CRCNA**

The story "Zachary King Nominated as General Secretary of the CRC" (April 2022, p. 20) described the role King is nominated to as new and said he'd be the first person to hold the position. This is true, but there wasn't space to explain that the title of general secretary also was used for a previous position of service and leadership in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The first person to be called that title, from 1990 to 1994, was Rev. Leonard Hofman. Since 1982 Hofman had served the denomination as stated clerk. In 1990, synod (the denomination's annual general assembly) changed the position's title to "general secretary." Hofman retired in 1994 and was then known as general secretary emeritus. He lives in Grand Rapids, Mich., and is a member of Shawnee Park CRC.

Rev. David Engelhard, who died in December 2005, was the second person to serve in the position then called general secretary. In 2004 that position was absorbed into what became executive director of the CRCNA.

The CRC's Council of Delegates is recommending to Synod 2022 a revamped structure that no longer includes an executive director but an office of the general secretary composed of the general secretary (nominee Rev. Zachary King) and a chief administrative officer, a position for which no one has yet been nominated.

—Alissa Vernon, News Editor

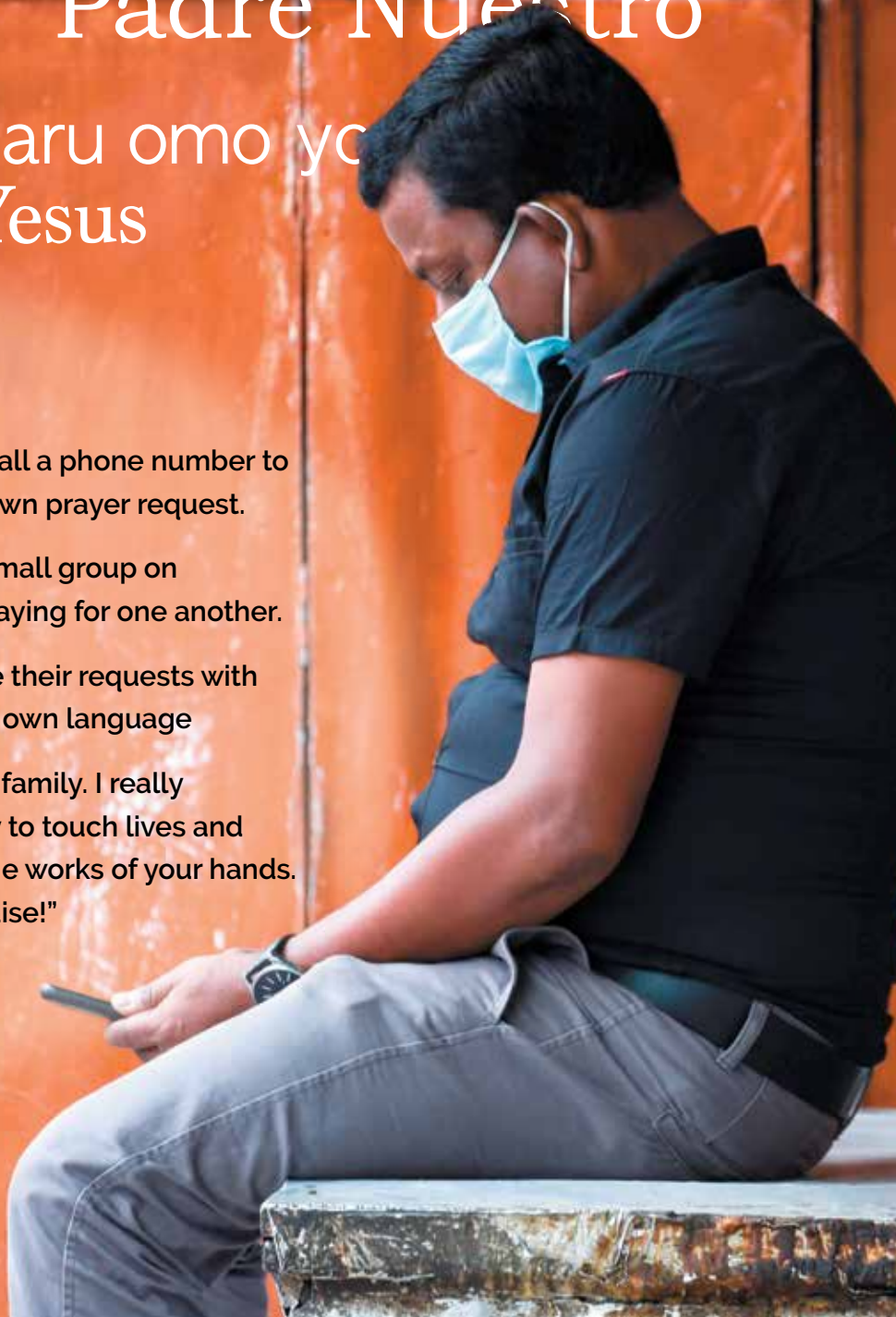
# 亲爱的主 In Jesus' name Dear Father Padre Nuestro Shin'ainaru omo yo Dalam nama Yesus

## Each day...

- Portuguese speakers in Brazil can call a phone number to hear a devotional and record their own prayer request.
- Believers in India check in to their small group on WhatsApp, sharing requests and praying for one another.
- Seekers around the world can share their requests with ReFrame's ministry partners in their own language

"Thank you for praying for me and my family. I really appreciate that God uses you mightily to touch lives and families. May God continue to bless the works of your hands. To God be all the glory, honor, and praise!"

—Nina



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**What Does It Mean  
to Be a Witness  
for Christ?**

By Cassie Westrate and Brian Clark

**W**hat does it mean to be a witness for Christ? Salvation in Christ is only part of the good news of the gospel. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus shares about the kingdom of heaven more than 70 times. That's far more often than he mentions salvation.

Jesus also sets a perfect example for what the good news of God's kingdom looks like—not just for life after death, but for life on earth today. When people needed hope, Jesus spoke truth. When people were hurting and sick, he healed them. When they were hungry, he fed them. Jesus shows us that the gospel is not only about spiritual transformation. It is also about physical, relational, and emotional wholeness.

In partnership with Christian Reformed churches and members, ReFrame Ministries and Resonate Global Mission work to reach people wherever they need to experience the gospel in their lives.

#### Spiritual Witness to God's Kingdom

Sometimes people need hope.

Every spring and summer, John Lee has been walking the neighborhoods surrounding Court Street Baptist Church in Auburn, Maine. He and up to six others from the church walk in pairs, handing out *Today* devotionals produced by ReFrame Ministries as they share their faith with people on the street.

For Lee, this street evangelism is something he's been passionate about for the past 33 years. He first accepted Christ through a similar encounter with someone on the street. He became an ordained minister and has been passionately sharing his faith ever since.

"The devotionals are a great conversation starter," Lee said. "When we walk on the streets, we say we're Christians and that we're handing out free devotionals. As they look it over, we begin to talk about where they stand in their faith."

This is Lee's sixth year leading the street evangelism team with Court Street, which walks these neighborhoods every other Saturday from March through September.

"Many of the people are down and out because of drugs and prostitution," said Lee, "but those who want to talk to us are ready to make a change in their life."

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**Members of Court Street Baptist Church in Auburn, Maine, visit the church's surrounding streets to share their faith and *Today* devotionals in their neighborhood.**

Some of the conversations can last hours, while others last just a few seconds.

"In cases when people are more dismissive, we simply say, 'Know that Jesus loves you dearly, and have a good day,'" Lee said.

Last year, Lee came across three generations working together on a house—a grandfather, his adult son, and a boy who was about 7. All three were interested in learning more about Jesus, and all came to faith that day.

By God's grace, about 100 people have accepted Christ as a result of Court Street's ministry. Some have accepted Lee's invitation to attend church, while others he has not heard from again.

"We always ask God to bring the people he wants us to talk to," Lee said, "and most of the time, we can see that he has done just that."

#### Physical Witness to God's Kingdom

Sometimes people need food.

At least once a month, ReFrame's Hindi ministry leader, Akesh,\* asks ministry team members to leave their recording equipment, computers, and other media ministry tools behind to instead spend time serving the communities where ReFrame programs air.

Working with members of local churches, the team visits nursing homes, schools, homeless shelters, and people who are physically disabled.

"As Christians in India, we're often negatively perceived as a religion who is just proselytizing," Akesh said, "so when we're able to connect with the community in this way, we are able to give them confidence in the good news of Jesus Christ."

This negative perception that Akesh describes has worsened in the past decade due largely to new anti-conversion laws set in place by India's national government. As a result of these laws, ReFrame's Hindi ministry partners have been more cautious about their ministry work and also have been forced to stop some of their print devotional distribution.

Still, "the number of people professing Christ has greatly increased, and the Spirit of God is at work," Akesh said.

During the pandemic, ReFrame's Hindi partners shifted their community service work to focus on distributing food, hand sanitizer, and other supplies to people who lost their jobs due to lockdowns.

Jaywanti, a widow with two young sons, shared that she was eating only one meal per day during that time before receiving rations from ReFrame's Hindi partners.

"God has provided me these things through you in a wonderful way," Jaywanti shared. "I thank God and praise him and also (am) grateful to you all for these ration packets."

Akesh added that he sees this holistic ministry approach as an extension of God's kingdom.

"Every one of our team members has a deep sense of calling from the Lord," he said. "No matter what the circumstances, they are committed to sharing the Word of God, whether it's through sharing the Word online or by sharing God's love at food distribution events like these."

### Relational Witness to God's Kingdom

Sometimes people need to reconcile with a neighbor.

In February 2022, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine. But this conflict began several years before, in 2014.

"Over 14,000 Ukrainians were killed already before this invasion took place. Over a million people were already displaced," said Resonate missionary George de Vuyst. "Ukrainians and Russians have lived peacefully side by side in the country for many years, but below the surface simmered centuries of unhealed wounds."

That's why, after the war broke out in 2014, de Vuyst worked with a team to bring the Healing Hearts, Transforming Nations ministry to Ukraine. De Vuyst and his colleagues use workshops to bring people from different ethnicities together. They work through a process of bringing their personal pain to the cross and reconciling with people who are different from them.

"We were able to develop a team of Ukrainians and Russians working together to bring this message of reconciliation through Jesus Christ," de Vuyst said. "We have seen God do amazing things."

Since Russia fully invaded Ukraine, this healing and reconciliation work has become more important than ever before. While much formal ministry halted with the invasion, God is still at work reconciling people.

"There had been a conflict between several of the church leaders about what's happening in Ukraine today," de Vuyst said. "It caused great division and a lot of pain."

But the church leaders wanted to understand one another. With the sound of gunfire and explosions in the distance, they made their way to a deacon's house.

"When the deacon ... opened the door to let them in, all of a sudden, the heavens went silent. The shelling stopped. And it was quiet," de Vuyst said. "They worked through the process of bringing their personal pain and the pain of their people to the cross. ... God did an amazing work of reconciliation in that one short meeting."

### Emotional Witness to God's Kingdom

Sometimes people need healing from sickness or trauma.

Resonate missionary Lydia\* could hear the shouting as she walked up to the door. Sixteen women from countries throughout Africa shared the three-bedroom apartment in the Middle East. It serves as a shelter while they wait to return to their home countries.

"I could write a book based on the little I know of their stories," Lydia said. "They all include disappointments, pain, people who lied to them, and countless traumas."

Some of the women in the shelter are Muslim, some are Christian, and some hold other beliefs. They usually begin each day singing songs together, but not that morning. They were too angry with one another. Tensions were high, and every woman was carrying a heavy emotional burden.

That's why Lydia was there: to lead a healing group.

"Healing groups provide safe spaces for people to think about pain and suffering and where God is in the hard parts of life," she said.

As Lydia set up, the shouting quieted. A few women drifted off to their rooms, but seven women sat down to participate.

Using materials from The Healing Institute, Lydia shared a fictional story about someone who experienced pain. The group discussed grief and listened to one another as they each shared why they were at the shelter.

"We did a lot of listening, a lot of praying," Lydia said.

Then the women asked if they could sing. The seven in the group started, and more started to join. By the time Lydia left, all of the women were singing.

Healing from emotional trauma takes a long time, and Lydia is looking forward to continuing this work. The materials she uses include stories from Scripture to share that the gospel provides hope not just for life after death, but also for life on earth now. **B**

*\*Names changed for security*



# The Consequences of Human Conflict

**THE HOSTILITIES IN UKRAINE** have delivered daily reminders that conflict creates risk to human lives even beyond violence. Conflict also affects people's ability to access food. In 2018, the United Nations recognized conflict as a key driver of severe food crises, including famine. The conflict in Ukraine has driven over 5 million people to seek safety in other countries and displaced an estimated 7.1 million people within the country, leaving them with few reliable food sources.

In one West African country\* where World Renew works, ongoing conflict has forced thousands of people to flee their homes. But the camps that provide refuge offer limited means for families to earn enough to meet their food needs.

"After the arrival of the jihadis, I left my village," said Yuusuf,\* a 56-year-old father of eight. "Currently, I have no fixed activity to feed my family. Before being internally displaced, I was a teacher, ... but here I have no (students)."

On Dec. 1, 2021, World Renew and its local partner began providing food kits to displaced families in three camps. Adaeze, 30, a mother of five, said, "I was a beneficiary of the emergency program of World Renew and its partner. (I received) a kit consisting of 100 kilograms of rice, 40 kilograms of beans, and 5 liters of oil. Before this, my family hardly ate once a day, but with the arrival of this food my family eats three times a day."

In this country, changing weather patterns have resulted in prolonged drought, and harvests have failed, further affecting food security. The United Nations estimates that more than 1.2 million people struggle with acute food insecurity and over 3.5 million are on the brink of food crisis.




The initial goal of the program, which ended Jan. 31, 2022, was to provide food to 50 of the most vulnerable households (300 people) for two months. But the conflict continues, and families continue to wake each day with the pain of hunger and hopelessness. Understanding the need, World Renew and its local partner extended the program.

Amara, 20, a mother of three, lamented, "Because of the growing insecurity in our region, my husband and I left our village. ... A few days later,

(there was) an accident in which we lost one of our children and a second was seriously injured."

While the food kit cannot take away Amara's pain, it eases the burden of worrying about how she'll feed her surviving children. But the Ukraine-Russia conflict is now threatening World Renew's ability to stand by commitments to support families like Amara's. The consequences of conflict can be far-reaching.

The escalating conflict between Russia and Ukraine is contributing to a global food crisis that is pushing an increasing number of people into food insecurity. Russia and Ukraine are major producers of wheat, barley, maize, and oil, but the conflict has disrupted the supply chain and caused prices to skyrocket, straining budgets, including World Renew's. These rising prices take the heaviest toll on countries in Asia, Africa, and the Near East, where the most vulnerable families were already struggling to meet their basic food needs.

To learn more about the emerging food crisis go to [worldrenew.ca/global-food-crisis](http://worldrenew.ca/global-food-crisis). 

*\*For security reasons, the country cannot be identified and names have been changed.*

—Laurisa O'Brien

**The View from Here****‘That the World May Know’**

**IN JOHN 17:20-21**, Jesus prayed, “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.”

These words should not be taken lightly. Not only are these words spoken by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, but they are the last recorded prayer that he leaves with his disciples. In it, Jesus prays for his current followers and then for all those in the world who would believe the message. This means that Jesus was praying for you and for me.

In today’s culture we place a heavy weight on the words of a dying person. We treat the utterances as if they are the person’s revealed will and deepest desires. Our court system also ascribes great importance to one’s last will and testament. By any measure, Jesus’ final prayer carries great weight, not only because he knows it is almost

The gospel is not simply about right thinking; it’s about gospel relationships done in such a way that Christian community becomes a model for others.

time for him to fulfill the Father’s plan for him to go to the cross, but because he uses it to reveal his deepest desire for all of us.

This should be significant for us Christians. Jesus prays that we will be sanctified and act in such a way that the world may believe that God sent him. This is the essence of our witness: living, working, and acting toward others in such a way that many will desire to be a part of the body of Christ.

We see glimpses of the possibility of this holy community in the early church. Acts 2 tells us that early believers “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer,” and that as they met, broke bread together, and prayed, “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42, 46-47).

Today in the Christian Reformed Church we continue to live into the reality of Christ’s desire for us. The gospel is not simply about right thinking; it’s about gospel relationships done in such a way that Christian community becomes a model for others. You can see some glimpses of this in the stories on these pages.

Jesus further prayed, “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 17:22-23).

May we continue to look at Christ and his finished work and know that our circumstances do not define us. We are called to be countercultural people, to be people of the cross. And when we live into that reality, Jesus promises, the world will know that God sent Jesus Christ to the world and loves us even as the Father loves the Son. May we believe and live into this reality.

To God be the glory!



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.

## Are You Ready to Be Inspired?



Hangwi Liphadzi (front row, far right) is part of Lufhalafhala, a six-person singing group from South Africa that will perform at Inspire 2022.

**“WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD** to being inspired by the global worship styles of fellow believers across the world and basking in the glory of worship with them,” Hangwi Liphadzi says about the upcoming Inspire 2022 conference.

Liphadzi is part of a six-person singing group from South Africa called Lufhalafhala that will travel to North America to be part of Inspire 2022. The group will perform from the main-stage and also take part in all that the conference has to offer.

Inspire 2022 is an event designed specifically for volunteers and leaders from Christian Reformed and Reformed churches across North America. Inspire 2022 will take place Aug. 4-6 in Tinley Park, Ill. Previous Inspire events took place in Detroit, Mich. (2017), and Windsor, Ont. (2019).

Guests such as Liphadzi will help other participants grow in their understanding and appreciation of the diversity of

the global church, CRC executive director Colin P. Watson said.

“This year’s theme, ‘Inspired to Be One,’ focuses on celebrating our diversity in the CRCNA as a denomination as well as the need for CRC members to come together as one church,” he explained.

Each day of Inspire will include Spirit-filled worship led by a diverse worship team, workshops covering every aspect of congregational life, and plenary speakers (such as Ken Shigematsu, Steve Argue, Sandra Van Opstal, and Bishop Zac Niringiye) who will challenge and equip participants to return to their local congregations with new ideas, renewed passion, and deepened commitment to God’s kingdom. Singer-songwriter Sandra McCracken will conclude the event with a special concert.

“There will also be good food, fellowship, and plenty of time to connect with people from across our denomination and around the world to share

stories and learn from each other,” Watson said.

“In a world where we have been locked down because of the pandemic,” Liphadzi said, “we hope to inspire the attendees with our musical stylings inspired by our own context.”

Liphadzi also expects to be inspired in return and hopes the singing group will gather ideas to take back to South Africa.

“We would like to be a fountain that waters similar kinds of conferences to grow in the near future back home,” he said.

The cost for Inspire 2022 is \$110 per person, with discounts available for groups of five or more from the same congregation. Visit [crcna.org/Inspire](http://crcna.org/Inspire) to learn more and to register.

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg,  
CRC Communications



## Doctor of Ministry Candidate: Colin Watson

**COLIN P. WATSON SR.**, executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, has been in high demand in the business world since the 1980s. He was a rising star at AT&T and NYNEX (now Verizon), and he was a top executive at the KeySpan Corporation and NYC2012, an organization formed to bid for the 2012 Olympic Games. For almost 10 years he served as the CEO of Foundation Enterprises LLC, a real estate investment and nonprofit consulting company.

Throughout these endeavors, Watson also was active in the church, leading a parallel career in ministry as an executive minister at his home church and as the board president of Christian Reformed World Missions (now part of Resonate Global Mission).

Watson's wife of more than 40 years, Freida, also has lived the corporate and ministerial life alongside Colin. "She is my best friend and life partner who has journeyed with me in this adventure that God has laid out for us," Watson said.

In 2015, God led the couple in a new direction when Watson moved to full-time ministry as director of ministries and administration for the CRCNA. In 2020 he was named the acting executive director for the denomination, a role from which he will retire in July 2022.

While Watson leaves a legacy in each of these roles, he still desires to contribute more to his neighbors, particularly fellow Christ followers. It was this stirring that led him to apply to Calvin Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) program.

Watson had originally planned to enroll in the program upon his retirement. When he was asked to delay his retirement to allow the denomination time to work through structure and leadership changes that will be considered at synod this year, Watson decided to do both.



Colin P. Watson Sr. is the executive director of the CRCNA and part of the first D.Min. cohort at Calvin Theological Seminary.

"When I'm at the seminary, my name tag says 'student,' not 'executive director,'" Watson said with a smile. It's clear that the role of student is one he relishes.

"I wish I had started this 10 years ago, but it is never too late," he said. "There's no such thing as being too young, too old, whatever—pick your descriptor—to continue to contribute to what God has asked you to do."

Watson is journeying as a student in the seminary's first D.Min. cohort, launched in May 2020. His key study topic is minority leadership in institutions and organizations.

A native of Guyana, Watson moved to the U.S. at age 18. Throughout his journey as a Christian, he has noticed that the texts revered for generations as the great works of theology all come from a similar perspective.

"It is important for us to see from a variety of different cultures to say, 'This is what God has shown me from my perspective,'" Watson said.

From the unity of believers in John 17 to believers coming together in

'There's no such thing as being too young, too old, whatever—pick your descriptor—to continue to contribute to what God has asked you to do.'

Revelation 7, Watson sees God's greater plan for people of all backgrounds to learn from each other. His study of the early church in Antioch has furthered his interest in minority leadership, as this multicultural church was the apostle Paul's sending congregation.

As Watson completes his D.Min., he encourages others to begin their studies.

"I see the D.Min. as a tool to answering some of life's questions," he said. "What questions do you think your life is causing you to ask? What is God laying on your heart in terms of legacy? What other contributions might you be able to make because of what God has allowed to happen in your life?"

Watson believes sharing our testimonies is a central part of Christian life in community.

"Part of loving your neighbor as yourself is sharing with your neighbor what you have learned—not as a rule-book, but as a helpful way of understanding principles of life that God has revealed to you," he said. "These things might be helpful to someone else."

—Annie Mas-Smith,  
Calvin Theological Seminary

## The Drum: A Heartbeat of Worship

### THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

in Canada dedicates one Sunday every year to honor National Indigenous Peoples Day and to celebrate the denomination's Indigenous Ministry. Called Indigenous Ministry Sunday, this date provides an opportunity for all CRC people in Canada to celebrate the gifts and richness that Indigenous people bring Canadian life.

In 2022, this Indigenous Ministry Sunday (June 19) will focus on the contribution of Indigenous people in worship.

"Many Indigenous people and communities have long been told that their culture and language need to remain outside the doors of the church," said Terry Veldboom, acting executive director (Canada) for the CRCNA. "The materials for Indigenous Ministry Sunday hope to reform this sentiment."

Participants in the CRCNA's year-long Hearts Exchanged program have been learning this lesson. They have been blessed to listen to the music and testimony of Jonathan Maracle, a Mohawk man from Tyendinaga, Ont., who shared how he has experienced the Holy Spirit breaking down walls in people's hearts through the use of music and the drum.

Learning from Maracle's testimony, participant Naomi B. said she has been compelled to ask deep questions about what the church might have missed by excluding these elements in the past.

"I listened to Jonathan Maracle share about his experience with the drum and call it the symbol of the restoration of Indigenous people," she reflected. She wondered, "What has been lost by our forebears' reluctance to embrace this traditional music? What understandings of our Creator God have settlers been unable to grasp as a result? And how could the restoration of right relationships expand



An Indigenous drum at the Indigenous Family Center in Winnipeg, Man.

Photo by Joseph Visser

our ability to see Christ at work in each other?"

For Indigenous members of the CRCNA, the incorporation of a drum at collective worship events also has been a sign of acceptance. One Indigenous participant at a previous Canadian National Gathering noted, "(Before arriving) I started to hope that the CRC was looking to truly move beyond being a 'Dutch' church and be a Christ-centered, justice-seeking organization, and that maybe I could help things move forward to a point where I and others like me would feel fully welcomed in the church and thus in God's world. From the opening drum-beat my heart was freed. I belonged."

In a similar way, the Canadian Indigenous Ministries Committee hopes that by focusing on Indigenous worship for Indigenous Ministry Sunday, the use of Indigenous elements of worship and welcome will be for many a breath of fresh air.

Leaning into this vision of everyone belonging, the Canadian Indigenous Ministry Committee collaborated with Cree musician Don Amero to provide the song "The Lord Is Love" for churches to use as a call to worship in their services marking National Indigenous Peoples Day.

Chord charts and an acoustic version of the song are available to download at [crcna.org/indigenous/resources](http://crcna.org/indigenous/resources). Pray that these types of questions and songs will lead to more people experiencing freedom and belonging within the church.

—Victoria Veenstra,  
Canadian Indigenous  
Ministries Committee



# Daffodils

Illustration for *The Banner* by Anita Barghigiani

**DAFFODILS ARE ONE OF MY FAVORITE** flowers. This probably goes back to the influence of my grandpa, who would point them out to me. I grew up on a farm out in the country, and my walk home from the school bus stop was half a mile down a country road, but if I dawdled long enough at the creeks along the way, my grandpa would drive by coming home from work and he'd give me a ride. In the springtime he'd point at the daffodils bursting forth from the surrounding dead grass. "C-Doyle," he'd say, "there's the promise of summer!"


This has always stuck with me, and when I see daffodils come up I can't help but think about the coming summer and the promises of God's cycles. And daffodils have a feature shared by many other spring flowers.

Most plants and trees draw energy from the sun, carbon dioxide from the air, and water and nutrients from the ground during the spring and summer so they can produce fruits, vegetables, and seeds in the summer and fall. We see this in our gardens and orchards time and time again. Our apple trees blossom in the spring and then grow apples all summer. Even some of our earliest garden harvests, such as beans, pull energy from the sun and nutrients from the ground and air in order to make their produce.

God designed daffodils and other spring flowers in a unique way. Early spring bloomers (think about the wildflowers in a forest that bloom in the early spring) collect energy all summer and store it in a bulb. This bulb contains all the energy needed to create the flower and seeds in early spring, before larger plants have a chance to grow up around them and block the sunlight. As summer progresses, weeds grow and trees leaf out, depriving the spring-blooming plants of most of the sunlight. Still,

they get enough. Throughout the summer and fall these plants gather energy from the bits of sunlight they do get among the shade of other plants, along with nutrients from the soil and the water they need, and store them away underground in a bulb preparing to bloom again early the next spring. This is why, once the daffodils bloom, it is important not to remove the leaves on the plant. They're performing a vital task to get ready for next spring's bloom.

This reminds me of who we are as Christians. In this world we will experience struggles; tough experiences will try to choke our faith. We live in a fallen world and will have difficulties, but through it all, God is with us, helping us and equipping us for the next thing! Through these difficult times we should be gathering up God's love and wisdom so that we can be the color in a gray world.

Be like a daffodil! 



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





# Seeking Shalom in God's Mission and Christian Discipleship

By Matt Lundberg

*Editor's note: This article is the last in our series "Seeking Shalom in the Midst of Polarization." Through this series, The Banner, in collaboration with The Colossian Forum, aims to examine the state of polarization in the U.S. and Canada and explore Christian strategies to overcome it. To read more articles in the series, visit [TheBanner.org](http://TheBanner.org).*

**T**his series has been digging into today's political polarization in the United States and (to a lesser extent) Canada, a situation of deep division that has also affected the church. Left and Right have moved more starkly away from one another. Many folks on each side have grown accustomed to dismissing or even demonizing those on the other side. And both sides of the polarity have increasingly gravitated toward media outlets that only further fuel each side's distaste with the other as well as their sense that the other side is ruining society.

Many of the issues at the heart of this polarization are extremely serious: racial justice, abortion, voting rights, responses to a pandemic, how best to encourage a flourishing economy. These are not small things. But we're also left wondering whether we're really that far apart on these important topics. How deep do these fissures cut into the body of Christ?

What can Christians do to inhabit this fraught moment in a way that reflects the peace of God, the reconciliation of Christ, and the fruit of the Spirit? Given that the church has been painfully afflicted by these divisions, it's

clear that there are no quick fixes or magic Christian answers. A renewed way of being in community with one another will take patience, hard work, and a reconsideration of the vision that guides our engagement with one another. One key biblical image that can refresh that vision in this divided moment is that of shalom.

## The Depths of Peace

The word "shalom," which we find throughout the Old Testament, is often translated into English as "peace." We sometimes use the word "peace" to describe the absence of overt conflict. Think of a parent frustrated with bickering children: "I just want some peace and quiet!" "Shalom" is sometimes used similarly in the Old Testament, such as when King Abimelech departs from Isaac "peacefully" (literally: "in shalom") after an episode of simmering tension that could have broken out into violence (Gen. 26:31).

But "peace" in that sense only begins to scratch at the surface of the richness of the concept of shalom. The Abimelech story, for example, ends with more than just swords staying in their scabbards. It ends with a renewed relationship between the two parties, the sharing of blessings and promises, and even a feast. Similarly in English, for example, there is talk of what a "genuine peace" would look like after a war, or finally being "at peace" after a time of grief or trauma. Even with the frustrated parent, the desire for "peace and quiet" is usually a yearning for flourishing relationships within the family, not simply quiet children. Such ways of using the word

"peace" connect us to the depths of the biblical notion of shalom.

To express the fuller sense of shalom concisely, it is hard to improve upon the definition provided by Neal Plantinga in *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*: "universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights." Shalom is a way of encapsulating God's creational desire for the world. In view of the world's sin, however, God's desire takes the form of redemptive promise. Shalom is a big-picture vision of what God wants and what God will eventually accomplish for the world.

## Shalom in the Bible

The notion of shalom appears prominently in some of the Old Testament prophets, including Isaiah and Zechariah:

» Isaiah 65 and 66 use the actual word only once but present us with one of the most poignant visions of shalom. In these chapters we glimpse the promise of "new heavens and a new earth" (65:17), where long and full lives will be the norm (65:20) and work will result in enjoyment and blessing (65:21-23). "'The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,' says the LORD" (65:25). This promise of a renewed Jerusalem, which

Scripture ultimately broadens as a promise for all of creation, will involve God extending shalom “like a river” (66:12), resulting in prosperity, comfort, rejoicing, and justice.

» In Zechariah 8 we again encounter promises regarding Jerusalem that have a broader creational horizon. God promises to return to the city (v. 3). The old and the young will flourish (v. 4). The people of God will return home (vv. 6-8). In contrast to a time of scarcity and danger, “there shall be a sowing of peace (shalom); the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew” (v. 12, NRSV).

These prophetic passages that envision shalom occur as bursts of hope in situations of turmoil, judgment, hopelessness, and uncertainty. In Isaiah they take place in exile, far from the promised land and the temple, at a time when the people wondered if God had abandoned them. In Zechariah the vision of shalom is found in the tenuous context of returning home from exile.

Isaiah 9 also promises a child who will be named Prince of Shalom (v. 6). Christians, of course, see this as a messianic promise fulfilled in Jesus and his work. In the New Testament, Jesus is revealed to be the only one who can bring enduring peace/shalom. Ephesians 2:14-16 uses the key division of Jew and Gentile to make this point:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Much of the time  
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#### **Agents of Shalom**

Christ creates the possibility of shalom. Through Christ, shalom is the very mission of God in the world—reclaiming creation from sin and brokenness. But one of the truths of the biblical storyline is that God tends to use people as agents of the divine mission. Tellingly, Zechariah 8:19, after describing God’s promised shalom, includes the command to “love truth and peace (shalom).” And after proclaiming Christ as our peace, Ephesians “urges” us to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (4:1-3).

In other words, the shalom of God’s mission has consequences for the life of discipleship to which we are called. While shalom is ultimately the gift of God, it is not the kind of *gift* we just sit around waiting for. Rather, it is the kind of gift that invites and empowers our participation—a *task* to which we are called. We are called to give witness to God’s promised shalom through our own actions, practices, and patterns of life, including in times of political polarization.

#### **Shalom and Polarization**

This is where things get complicated. Christians on various sides of today’s divisions sometimes appeal to the biblical picture of shalom to defend their views. They usually believe that their side’s perspectives and policies are a more reliable path to justice, flourishing, and wholeness. The notion of shalom is thus not a silver bullet that will automatically or easily vanquish our disagreement and contention. Part of Christian work related to shalom is to make the case that certain approaches to political and social life together are more resonant with the biblical notion of shalom than other approaches and policies. And one of the biggest challenges is to do so with words, actions, and attitudes that are in keeping with shalom. This can be hard when we would rather go on the attack or remain bitterly in our own self-assured confidence that our side is right.

Not only is work for shalom complicated, but it can also be overwhelming. The biblical vision of shalom is a grandiose, all-encompassing vision: The wolf resting gently with the lamb, the lion going vegetarian, flourishing and delight for all. How can we contribute to that? *Can* we really contribute to that?

Much of the time witnessing to shalom takes place most effectively through small steps—through commitments, attitudes, and practices that run considerably against the grain of today’s cultural and political moment. Such commitments, attitudes, and practices can accumulate over the course of time, often by simply giving witness to a better, more joyful, more promising way.

Here are a few practices and habits that Christians could foster in their own lives as a witness to Christ’s promised shalom in the face of polarization and conflict:

- » **Resist letting political markers identify us**, at least as our primary identity. First and foremost, we are disciples of Christ, servants of the triune God. Second, we are members of our communities and citizens of our nation, hopefully committed to the overall well-being of all who dwell therein. Only then, thirdly, should we identify ourselves as liberals, conservatives, Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, Independents, or some other partisan label.
- » **Check our media consumption.** Have we confined ourselves to media messages that reinforce polarization (which can be very lucrative for media companies)? Do our media choices frequently demonize people and viewpoints? Are we taking in media that feed our sense of self-assurance in our opinions without challenging us to consider other points of view?
- » **Seek out conversation with people**, including other Christians, who disagree with us on political and social matters. (I must confess that this is one where I especially need to grow—I often shy away from such conversation, perhaps out of a sense of insecurity or fear or even just exhaustion). Are we regularly encountering real people of different perspectives and listening carefully to the reasons, hopes, and fears behind their views?
- » **Search for common ground**, including common ground related to faith. There might be viewpoints on the far extremes of today's political spectrum where this is impossible to do. But the vast majority of people who identify as conservative or liberal, progressive or traditionalist, are closer to the middle than our media or perceptions usually allow us to believe. Might there be

important things—quite human and even Christian things—that motivate them? Considering those can reframe the conversation.

These first few suggestions might seem too small and mundane to be a form of witness to God's promised shalom. But if we remember that a biblical sense of shalom has everything to do with reconciled relationships, with our noblest needs and desires being fulfilled, with shared dwelling with a sense of safety, justice, and mutual flourishing, then the very act of decentering our political allegiances, thinking about the messages we are ingesting, and entering into genuine conversation with others are crucial steps toward shalom.

Here are three more suggestions for actions and attitudes that intersect even more directly with the notion of shalom:

- » **Consider the vision of shalom in our voting and policy advocacy.** If we see a candidate or platform whose message or effects seem out of keeping with the biblical picture of shalom, perhaps we should ask some hard questions about that platform.
- » **Let the spirit and vision of shalom inform the way we think about others and the way we interact with them.** If I am using the vision of shalom to inform my political preferences but acting on those preferences in ways that are out of keeping with the character of shalom, something has gone awry.
- » **Recognize that the prophetic message of shalom is often nestled next to a message of judgment** against those who are self-assured. True shalom in our attitudes and words means being open to the new thing that God is doing in the world and to the surprising insights and

gifts we can glimpse through the people of God who surround us.

### Receiving Hard Gifts

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has challenged Christians to seek to discern signs of obedience in other Christians who hold different social, political, or ethical viewpoints. Even if we think they are seriously or even dangerously wrong on this or that issue, if we see something in them that seems like the life of Christ—a genuine wrestling with the Bible, a sincere life of prayer, or diligent service to their community, for example—that might indicate that hidden somewhere in (what we regard as) their wrong view is something we need to hear. It is a gift they are offering to us, even though it might be a painful gift to receive.

If we as Christians can allow the Spirit to train us to seek a surprising gift in those whose minds we're trying to change, our way of living amid disagreement may take us one step closer to shalom. And that might be a contagious step, one that opens up further surprising possibilities beyond the bitterness, anger, and division of our current polarized moment **B**



Matt Lundberg is the director of the de Vries Institute for Global Faculty Development at Calvin University. He and his family are members of Boston Square Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

1. What does "shalom" mean to you? How have you heard it used and/or explained?

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## Catechism Kaleidoscope

I almost fell out of my leafy perch to get a better look.



Ruth Verkaik and her engineer husband live in the tension of “everything is theological” as they discuss life around their dinner table and raise thinkers. They are members of Overisel Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. Follow her on Instagram @ruthwriter and at her blog, [ruthverkaik.com](http://ruthverkaik.com).

### HE FASCINATED ME.

I almost fell out of my leafy perch to get a better look.

The gold edge of his white robe brushed the ground as he slowly lit each candle. As each flame roared to life, I saw his dark eyes close a moment. Though I had no idea the importance of the candles, his dedication to God was clear.

I inched forward. It certainly didn’t look like the sanctuary of my father’s church. How I longed to be invisible as the kaleidoscope windows called my name, to let the solemn smell waft over me and take in the beauty of human craftsmen reflecting the eternal. Something nudged my soul.

But an 11-year-old pastor’s daughter from the local Bible church doesn’t go into a Catholic church, no matter how pretty the windows. She hides in a tree.

Beauty seemed complicated—worship heavy with doctrine and scary questions—so I ran and hid in my compartments of right and wrong.

Until a professor dared to say, “Everything is theological.”

I thought catechism was irrevocably tied with Catholicism. But in truth, it’s only tied with theology. The framework I understood was simple: memorize the words in the Bible. Know them and you will know God.

Except that’s not completely accurate.

That unintentional catechism had some massive holes. The largest of which: why?

I have a spiral-bound books filled with Bible verses. I can still quote most of them, yet without asking that one question it was like looking through a dimly colored piece of glass. No dimension. No depth.

My compartments collided when I tried to teach Sunday school. I struggled to hold “everything is theological” and “memorize to know God.”

How can I expect these kids to know God when all I give them is a good moral story?

Why do churches silence those who ask that holy question “why”?

Do I even know the answer?

All I heard was an echo until I began writing what I knew about God.


Little by little, I started to see it: the purple and blue mixed with yellow and flecked with green. To my surprise, the cache of verses I knew only enhanced the beauty I saw.

It wasn’t the God I thought I’d find.

He didn’t demand perfection without giving me his grace. Justice and mercy were not in contradiction, but perfectly balanced. It was his kindness that led me to pray during Bible club one night, and it was again his kindness to continue giving me the pieces to see him for who he is.

Peering through the leaves all those years ago, I knew I had “fire insurance,” but I wish someone would’ve said, “It’s OK! Go sit in that beautiful room. Let those stained-glass windows draw your mind and heart to him. Don’t be afraid to ask questions. Feel God’s love as you see the beauty he created just for you.”

Even though as a kaleidoscope turns the view looks as if it changes completely, the pieces are still the same. You’re just getting a different perspective.

The catechism is no different. Asking the questions and seeing the answers, as children and then as adults, simply gives us a different view of the God who never changes. 

1. What were your previous experiences with the question “why?” when it comes to doctrine in the church?

[READ MORE ONLINE](#)

## The Upside of Failure

God uses failures to draw people toward him and to advance our faith and spiritual connection with him.



Photo by Vladimir Vladimirov



Michael Schuitema is an attorney in Petoskey, Mich., where he lives with his wife and two children. Michael graduated from Calvin University in 2004 and attends Genesis Church.

**“MY NAME’S MIKE**, and I’m an alcoholic.” That’s how I introduce myself in meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I, like most others, didn’t start attending AA meetings out of mere curiosity or boredom. I was compelled by the damage caused by my drinking habits.

When I was drinking, of course, I never considered myself to have a problem, and I certainly never considered myself to be, of all things, an alcoholic. You see, I didn’t drink every day. I didn’t drink before or during work. I held down a professional job. I was married with two kids. I faithfully attended church. I considered myself to be a good, upstanding, and productive Christian and member of my community who just happened to enjoy tipping back a few. I mean, who other than prudish teetotalers doesn’t like to drink? I worked hard and deserved the break from life’s stress, anxiety, and worry that alcohol afforded. That’s what I thought at the time, anyway.

But my drinking was a problem. Once I started, there was really no telling

how many drinks I might have. Maybe just one ... but maybe 10. Maybe I’d leave the bar early or switch to water. Or maybe I’d stay until last call and switch to the hard stuff. And this habit of mine affected every aspect of my life. Being hung over, tired, and cranky made me a lesser husband, father, employee, and Christian—not to mention someone who said and did hurtful things while intoxicated.

All this came to a head one evening when I decided to dissolve my worries in a bottle at the local bar. Afterward, in my attempt to drive home, I hit a parked car and drove off the road. I was subsequently charged with and convicted of a crime. But that wasn’t the worst part. Because of my job as a local prosecutor, my selfish and irresponsible misdeeds became front-page news. And in the age of social media, it seemed as if everyone in the community not only knew what I had done, but was publicly attacking and judging me online.

I was overcome with guilt and shame. I strongly considered changing careers or moving to a different community.

Everything I had worked so hard to accumulate and everything I had relied on to provide safety and security vanished before my eyes. My bank account was drained and, worse yet, my carefully cultivated reputation in the community as an upstanding Christian and family man not only vanished, but was upended as I was exposed as an irresponsible and dangerous drinker.

I won't lie or sugarcoat the experience. This was hands down the worst and most difficult time of my life. Yet even if I had the power to go back in time, I wouldn't change a thing. You see, I've come to view my failures differently. God uses failures to draw people toward him and to advance our faith and spiritual connection with him. In fact, our failures can be a necessary part of our walk with Christ. Without failure, we Christians might stagnate—or worse, regress—in spiritual maturity. Because of this, those of us who experience such profound failure need not give in to despair or hopelessness. Instead, we should view our failure as God does: as an opportunity to draw closer to him and to make our hearts a little more Christlike.

The worst experience in my life has become the best thing that ever happened to me. Sure, I no longer

drink, which is a positive and tangible difference, but I used to prioritize work above all else and use alcohol to deal with the stress of life. I attended church on Sunday but “just didn't have time” for a small group, daily devotions, or prayer. I preferred to limit God to Sunday mornings, where he wouldn't interfere with the important work I had to do throughout the week.

Then, in the span of a single night, God demonstrated to me how shortsighted and hollow my perspective had been. The image of competence and integrity I had worked so hard to project was shattered. The career I'd invested countless hours preparing for and building was suddenly in jeopardy. Everything I'd built and relied upon was in shambles—everything, that is, except for God. God, through his boundless grace, rescued my stubborn heart. A cruel or uncaring god would have allowed me to continue living my life so selfishly. But God drew me back toward him in the only way that could have worked: by allowing me to experience the natural consequences of my sinful behavior and demonstrating how my life, built upon worldly definitions of success and stability, had the structural integrity of a house built upon sand.

Though painful and unpleasant, this is exactly how God wants failure to work in our lives. Jesus tells us that to be his disciple, we must deny ourselves, take up our own cross, and lose our lives for the sake of Christ (Matt. 16:24-25). We are told to resist the temptation to love the world and conform to its patterns, which value personal accomplishment and material success above all else (Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15-16). From the perspective of an imperfect and selfish sinner like me, this commandment seems impossible. How can I resist the constant pressure from our world and culture to exalt myself above

God? How can I place my relationship with God above my inherent desire for financial success and security, professional achievement and respect, and personal image and status?

Well, God used the only method for exposing the fool's gold promised by this world that will work on a stubborn heart like mine: failure. Discomfort and pain cause greater change in our lives than comfort and ease. And God promises to work in all things for the good of those who love him (Rom. 8:28). Not some things, or successful things, or pleasant things, or even good things. God uses our failure, sin, and mistakes for our good as well. As James explains, our “trials of many kinds” are used by God to build within us a strong, enduring faith and to transform us into mature and complete followers of Christ (James 1:2-4). That is exactly how God used my failure. I am certainly not a finished product and never will be this side of eternity. But I'm not who I used to be either.

Failure and personal trials do, in fact, come in many different forms. They can look like a failed business, divorce, addiction, bankruptcy, a wayward child, an extramarital affair, or any number of unique circumstances. But if you find yourself having made such mistakes, please take heart. Know that God can and will use even this for your good. There is a transformative resolution to our failure and pain. There is a life and heart change that previously seemed impossible. Have faith, have patience, and trust in a God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20). **B**



## Books for Summer's Sunlit Days and Firefly Nights



### Once Upon a Wardrobe

*By Patti Callahan*

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Eight-year-old George Devonshire and his 17-year-old sister, Megs, are living in Worcester, England, in 1950. George is frail, having been born with a weak heart. After discovering C.S. Lewis' Narnia, he begs Megs, a brilliant math student at Oxford, to visit Lewis—or Jack, as Lewis preferred to be called. George is consumed with burning questions, and because he is dying, his questions need to be answered soon: “Where did this land of the lion, a white witch, and fauns and beavers and castles come from?”

As Megs continues to visit Jack, listen to his stories, and share them with George, the siblings are transformed. Ultimately, Megs understands that “we are enchanted not by being able to explain it all, but by its very mystery. That is—finally, that is—enough.” (Harper Muse)



### Home Is In Between

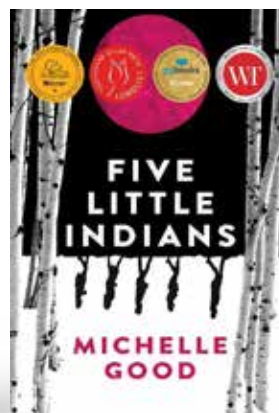
*By Mitali Perkins*

Reviewed by Li Ma

A little girl named Shanti moves with her parents from India to the United States. At first her parents' presence and cooking make their new city neighborhood feel just like their village. But changes and challenges happening outside, from different holiday practices such as trick-or-treating to the use of a new language in school, cause Shanti to have an identity crisis.

Living in between cultures can be exhausting, but children have a unique resilience. Shanti recovers her optimistic attitude. She no longer feels out of place because home can be “in between.”

The author notes how her own story as an immigrant child led to the creation of this book. She affirms that switching between two sets of cultural codes can be hard but also is an enriching gift. (Macmillan)



### Five Little Indians

*By Michelle Good*

Reviewed by Agnes Mastin

Michelle Good draws her audience into the lives of five children who come of age and are released from the control of St. Mary's Indian Residential School in Mission, B.C. All of the five must find their own ways.

Turning away from the so-called “Christian” ideals taught to them in the abusive setting of the residential school, they face addiction, prostitution, rage, suicide, and other mental disorders as they live in Vancouver's Lower East Side.

This is a story of succumbing to pain and oppression. It is a story of resilience and overcoming the worst life has to offer.

I recommend this book for anyone who wants to truly understand the experience of those who survived the residential schools, which oppressed and crushed humans God created and called good. (HarperCollins)



### Birdie's Bargain

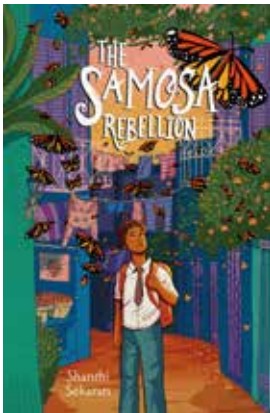
*By Katherine Paterson*

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Ten-year-old Birdie is sad, scared, and most of all angry because her dad has been called up for his third tour of duty in Iraq. Struggling beneath a financial burden, Birdie, her mom, and her baby brother, Billy, move in with Gran in her cramped apartment while he's away.

Birdie is comforted when she wears her “I ♥ Jesus” T-shirt. She has a plan and decides to make a bargain with God for her dad's safety.

Renowned author Katherine Paterson sensitively explores the deep spiritual questions that children ponder as they face the disturbing complexities of war, domestic abuse, poverty, and bullying. Recommended as a great shared reading experience for Christian parents and children, it's an avenue to talk about the things of God. (Candlewick)



## The Samosa Rebellion

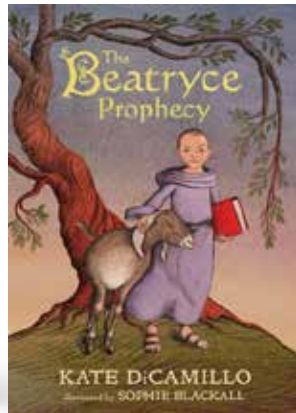
*By Shanthi Sekaran*

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Muki Krishman loves his friends and multiethnic community in the neighborhood of Oceanview, where most people are like him and his family: hardworking immigrants.

Unsettled by seeing a drone—“a winged camera”—called a Dragonfly zooming about the neighborhood, Muki thinks, “Maybe it’s the Dragonfly, maybe it’s Paati (grandmother) moving in, or maybe it’s just being twelve, but I can’t shake the feeling that a big change crouches just around the corner, waiting to pounce. Something—something—is on its way.”

Fast-paced, adventurous, and humorous, this novel for middle-school readers, which includes some profanity, is relevant to current cultural issues such as xenophobia and immigration. Well-drawn, realistic characters who speak truth to power and rise up against injustice are inspiring and refreshing literary companions. (Katherine Tegen Books)



## The Beatryce Prophecy

*By Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Sophie Blackall*

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Brother Edik and the other monks of the Order of the Chronicles of Sorrowing fear the malevolence of Answelica, an ornery goat that does what she pleases, butting any who anger her or stand in her way. Life irrevocably changes for Brother Edik when one morning he discovers an injured and feverish child lying beside Answelica in her pen; the girl, Beatryce, is holding the goat’s ear as if it were a lifeline.

Kate DiCamillo once again presents middle-school readers with a stirring novel that celebrates the power of love and explores the human desire to find a place to call home. DiCamillo’s deft characterization, subtle humor, and engaging plot combine with illustrator Sophie Blackall’s winsome artwork to make *The Beatryce Prophecy* an engaging and entertaining experience. (Candlewick)



## The Inventions of God (and Eva)

*By Dave Connis, illustrated by Amy Domingo*

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Young Eva is bursting with exuberance and imagination as she explores God’s world and makes various objects. That’s not surprising because Eva is a child of God made in God’s image. God loves to invent—he made the earth, after all!

Eva reflects God’s image in another way too. She likes to take things that are broken and fix them. God does, too. But while Eva merely glues Mr. Robotreestuff back together after he falls from a great height, God accomplishes so much more as he takes a broken world—humanity and creation—and sends his “Redemption Glue: Made with Jesus: Holds All Things Together.”

This spirited children’s picture book, replete with humorous, flamboyant artwork, will turn young children’s attention to our awesome Creator. (WaterBrook)



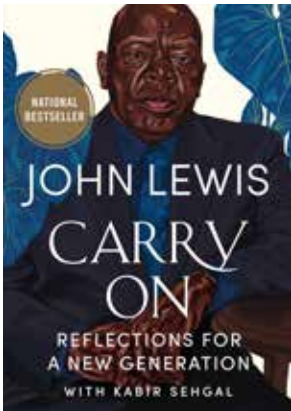
## The Girl Who Could Breathe Under Water

*By Erin Bartels*

Reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Twenty-six-year-old Kendra Brennan has experienced success and acclaim with the publication of her first novel, *That Summer*. However, while attempting to begin writing her second novel, she receives a letter signed by “A Very Disappointed Reader.” Stymied in her creative efforts, Kendra knows that before she can banish her writer’s block she needs to confront the person who wrote the letter—and she’s convinced she knows who it is.

In this complex, stirring, and at times deeply disturbing novel for adults, Erin Bartels skillfully weaves threads of love, hope, forgiveness, and restoration in a tapestry that also portrays abuse, despair, hatred, and brokenness. Subtly and effectively, Bartels sets her novel on the foundation of Christian hope and God’s sovereignty over all things. (Revell)



**Carry On: Reflections for a New Generation**

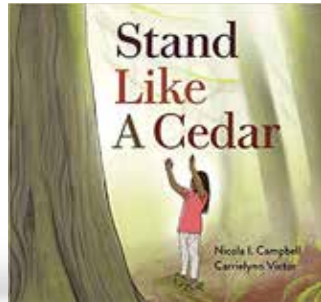
*By John Lewis*

Reviewed by Reginald Smith

U.S. Representative John Lewis, who died in 2020, was the youngest protege of civil rights giants Martin Luther King Jr., Andrew Young, and Ralph Abernathy.

In these pages, Lewis willingly shares his experiences with his mentors and heroes who gave him courage to get into “good trouble,” as when facing Alabama state troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma. His wife also gave him quiet counsel. Lewis’ voice and energy easily flow from the pages as a man saturated in the faith of the Black Southern Baptist tradition.

This compact book is a reminder that seeking justice as a Christian is more than sending a check or writing a terse letter to your politician. Like John Lewis, we can get our shoes and bodies involved to become better racial justice allies. (Grand Central Publishing)



**Stand Like a Cedar**

*By Nicola I. Campbell, illustrated by Carrielynn Victor*

Reviewed by Agnes Mastin

Set in traditional Coast Salish territory in the Pacific Northwest, this delightful story for 2- to 5-year-olds opens the door for children of all ethnicities to glimpse a traditional Indigenous life-style. Campbell uses her storytelling abilities to invite the audience to walk with Creator by respecting all of creation.

Expressions of ancient cultural traditions are illustrated in watercolor by Stó:lō artist Carrielynn Victor. Illustrations feature West Coast landscapes and a blend of European and Indigenous art styles. Images work hand in hand with Campbell’s storytelling to bring this story to life.

Songs and stories reflect the belief that everything in creation has a story to tell, include prayers to Creator, and invite a promise to stand tall like a cedar by protecting, honoring, and respecting all creation. (Birchbark Books)



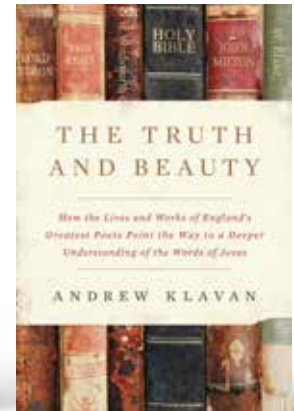
**The Jesus Music: A Visual Story of Redemption as Told by Those Who Lived It**

*By Marshall Terrill*

Reviewed by Paul Delger

*The Jesus Music* book, an accompaniment to the 2021 documentary film of the same name, provides a comprehensive picture of contemporary Christian music over the genre’s 50-year history. It begins with the story of hippies in California coming to faith and not liking the traditional music of the church. A more contemporary music style was born.

Highlights include going down memory lane with Christian rockers such as Larry Norman, Resurrection Band, and Petra and learning how Keith Green wanted to give away his music to those who couldn’t afford it, much to the chagrin of his record label. Readers also learn how Michael W. Smith refused to create a worship record, but the Lord kept after him. When Smith finally agreed, it became the second-largest CCM record of all time and launched the modern worship genre. The book is also filled with beautiful photographs. (KLOVE Books)



**The Truth and Beauty: How the Lives and Works of England’s Greatest Poets Point the Way to a Deeper Understanding of the Words of Christ**

*By Andrew Klavan*

Reviewed by Trevor Denning

As Andrew Klavan and his son Spencer were enjoying drinks on a balcony, father confessed to son, “I don’t understand the Sermon on the Mount.” The words of Jesus seemed so illogical—beautiful and undoubtedly true, but blurry.

“Maybe the problem is that you are trying to understand a philosophy instead of trying to get to know a man,” was Spencer’s reply. Klavan found it one of the most profound things he’d ever heard.

As Klavan tries to understand the man Jesus, he weaves in the stories of the Romantic poets. Klavan is a gifted storyteller, and these sections shine. He discusses the poets’ artistic influences and their own influence on the art that followed before bringing it all back to the words of Jesus. A glorious, singular book. (Zondervan)



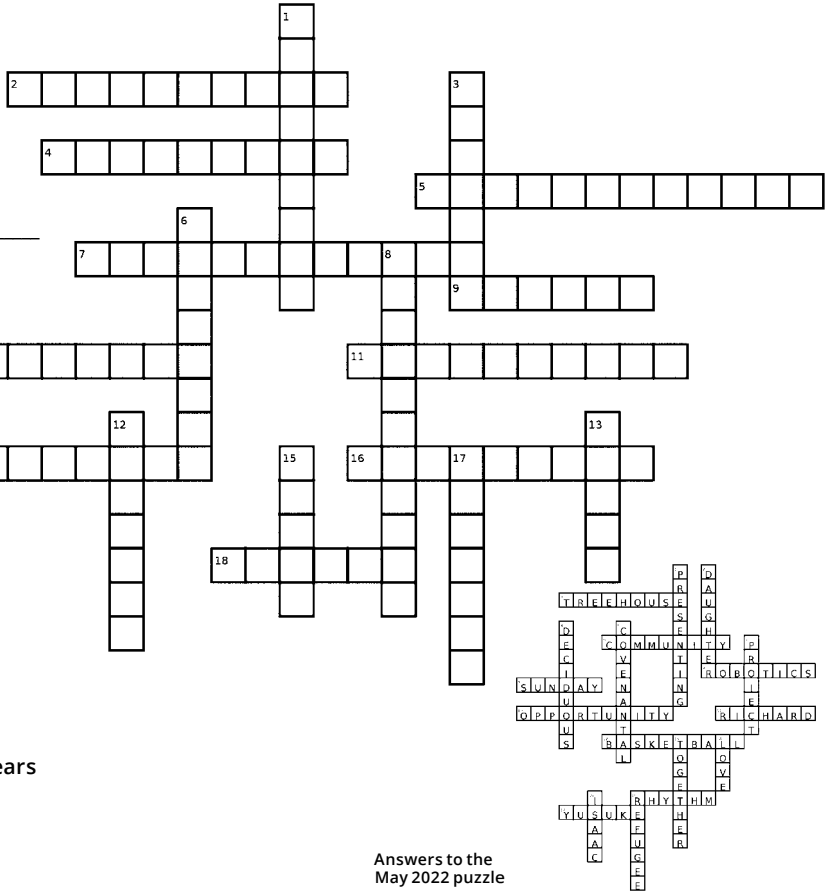
Find the answers to the crossword clues in this issue of *The Banner*. See the solution in the next issue!

**Down**

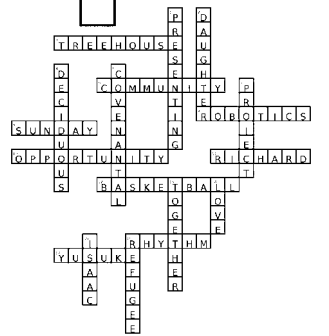
- 1. International Theological \_\_\_\_\_ Ministries supports seminary training in Eastern Europe
- 3. Synod 2022's lengthy agenda is published in two \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. The \_\_\_\_\_ *Prophecy* by Kate DiCamillo
- 8. Having a right heart
- 12. Books for Summer's Sunlit Days and \_\_\_\_\_ Nights
- 13. A fire hit \_\_\_\_\_ Park Church in 1971
- 15. New \_\_\_\_\_ Ministry serves newcomers to America
- 16. God can use even \_\_\_\_\_ for good

**Across**

- 2. Canadian \_\_\_\_\_ Ministry Committee
- 4. The denomination's governmental handbook: *Rules for \_\_\_\_\_ Procedure*
- 5. A six-person singing group from South Africa
- 7. An optical device with mirrors and bits of colored pieces
- 9. Polarization can keep us from this
- 10. This is central to leadership
- 11. The ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ and Care is celebrating 80 years
- 14. It's happening Aug. 4-6
- 16. Often the first sign of spring
- 18. \_\_\_\_\_ Perkins, author of *Home Is In Between*



Answers to the May 2022 puzzle



# Free Family Faith Formation Resources

**5 WAYS TO BRING CHILDREN'S MINISTRY HOME**

High participation in children's ministry programs for just a few more each month, but those hours can be valuable resources for a lot of growth for your family. Here are five ways to build on what your child learns at church.

**5 WAYS TO PRAY WITH KIDS**

Prayer is an anytime and anywhere conversation with God—no fancy words required! The five ways to pray listed here are easy and meaningful to do, like them with your family to encourage ongoing conversations with God.

**5 WAYS TO RETELL A BIBLE STORY WITH KIDS**

A great way to help (and delight!) to remember God's story and to experience it more deeply is to read it in ways that engage that head, heart, and hands. Get inspired with these easy ideas for retelling a Bible story.

**5 WAYS TO WONDER WITH KIDS**

Encouraging curiosity in kids helps them want to learn more. A wonder is an important part of their faith development, so they are to promote curiosity and wonder in your family life.

**5 WAYS TO HELP KIDS WORSHIP**

Children learn through observation, but they learn best through participation. We take them to church so that being part of a church family and gathering regularly to worship God in community with others becomes part of the fabric of their lives! Discover twelve more ideas for helping kids worship.

**5 WAYS TO HELP YOUR FAMILY GROW IN FAITH**

Family faith formation is a priority, not a distraction. Here are five ways to grow in faith together with kids.

Want to help families learn to pray together, explore God's Word together, and grow in faith? Check out *Dwell at Home's* "5 Ways" series at [DwellCurriculum.org/Home](https://DwellCurriculum.org/Home). These FREE one-page tip sheets give parents and caregivers practical, creative ideas for nurturing faith at home. They're perfect for sharing with families via email, social media, and your church's website. Or download and print them to hand out.

For more ways to connect children's ministry and family faith formation check out [DwellCurriculum.org/Home](https://DwellCurriculum.org/Home)

**dwell AT HOME**

**DEADLINES:** 6/14/22 July/August; 8/1/22 September. Subject to availability. Details online.

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**PRICES:** Most ads are \$0.45<sup>US</sup> per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.38<sup>US</sup> per character and \$65 per photo applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements.

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### Church Positions Available

**FULL TIME LEAD PASTOR:** Sully CRC (Sully, Iowa) is prayerfully seeking the next lead pastor God has chosen for us. Nestled in the heart of the Midwest amongst sprawling farmland, enjoy the perks of a small-town and ease of travel by being located just south of Interstate 80. Our congregation seeks a pastor who has a passion for intergenerational shepherding and discipleship. A pastor who has the same calling as we do: to cultivate space for people to experience the transforming love of Christ. We invite prospective pastors to inquire further about using his unique gifts to glorify God and edify the body by joining our family of believers. Please contact [sullycrcsearch@gmail.com](mailto:sullycrcsearch@gmail.com).

**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](mailto:Search@hopefellowship.ca)

**GENEVA CAMPUS MINISTRY DIRECTOR** Geneva Campus Ministry (GCM) is a vibrant and established ministry of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of America on the campus of the University of Iowa. GCM is in search of a new Director to lead the U of I campus ministry, serve as a campus pastor and foster the vision and goals of the GCM board. For more information about Geneva Campus Ministry and the job description please see our website: <https://www.geneva-ui.org/>. Please submit application materials (resume, cover letter with statement of why you are interested in this position, and your statement of faith) to [geneva.ui.search@gmail.com](mailto:geneva.ui.search@gmail.com).

**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, conve-

niently 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](mailto:bruceandlisavk@hotmail.com). Job description and church profile are available on the portal. Housing is available if needed.

**LEAD PASTOR** East Saugatuck Church, located just south of Holland, MI, is seeking a full-time lead pastor. The ideal candidate will be gifted in Biblical preaching and have a heart for discipleship, community outreach, and congregational care. To learn more or access our church profile, visit [espoint.org](http://espoint.org). Send questions and resumes to [search@espoint.org](mailto:search@espoint.org).

**MINISTER OF WORSHIP AND LEADERSHIP** Plymouth Heights CRC (Grand Rapids, MI) seeks a full-time pastor gifted in preaching, leadership, and fellowship to join our ministry team. We invite interested pastors to learn more and apply on our website: [www.phrcrc.org](http://www.phrcrc.org).

**SOUTH GRANDVILLE CRC** is prayerfully seeking a full time pastor to lead our congregation. We are looking for someone that can engage with all ages, especially the youth, lead us in community outreach and challenge us through teaching. To learn more, see <http://southgrandvillechurch.org/pastorsearch> or look on The Network for our church profile and job description. If interested in pursuing this position further or with any questions, contact Brenda at 616-558-8196 or [brendaz0422@gmail.com](mailto:brendaz0422@gmail.com).

**WORSHIP DIRECTOR** Evergreen Ministries in Hudsonville, MI is seeking a part time worship director to oversee the music/production team and lead the congregation in worship. It may also be possible to supplement this position with recently vacated youth responsibilities. A complete job description can be found at [EGM.org](http://EGM.org). Please send questions and resumes to [searchteam@egm.org](mailto:searchteam@egm.org).

### Congregational Announcements

**GENEVA CAMPUS CHURCH CELEBRATES REV. MICHAEL WINNOWSKI** Geneva Campus Church in Madison, Wisc., gives thanks for Rev. Michael Winnowski and his 19 years of pastoral ministry at Geneva; 32 years in the CRC. A celebration of the ministry of Mike and his wife Beth will take place Saturday, July 16, 2022. After August, Rev. Winnowski hopes to continue serving in ministry as a Specialized Transitional Minister. For more information contact [office@genevacampuschurch.org](mailto:office@genevacampuschurch.org).

### Church Anniversary 75 Years

**BETHEL CRC EDGERTON, MN** will be celebrating 75 years of God's providential care on June 4-5. We invite former staff and past members to join us. For more information visit [www.betheledgerton.org](http://www.betheledgerton.org)

### Wedding Anniversary

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 70 YEARS



**BRENTON, Robert (Bob) and Marion (De Vries)** and their family and friends are planning to celebrate 70 years of Christian union of the couple at the Delavan CRC on June 19. Bob and Marion were married in the First CRC of Lansing, IL on June 21, 1952. They were charter members of Bethel CRC in Lansing, IL and are currently members of the Delavan CRC in Delavan, WI. Bob and Marion were the first teachers of deaf students at Elim Christian School from 1953 to 1960 and taught deaf students in Vermont and Wisconsin from 1960 to 1993. They reside at 830 Oak Street, Delavan, WI, 53115

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 65 YEARS

**KUYERS, Milt and Carol (Winkelhorst)** of 172 Cty Hwy D, Belgium, WI 53004, will be celebrating 65 years of marriage on June 20, 2022. Their 4 children & spouses, 11 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren rejoice with them for God's faithfulness and blessings throughout their marriage.

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 60 YEARS

**BOER, John & Frances (nee Prins)** are celebrating our 60th anniversary on June 5. We and our children Lydia, Kevin, Cynthia, Wiebe and spouses rejoice in the goodness of the Lord. 1250 Bute, Suite 907, Vancouver BC V6E 1Z9. [boerjf@hotmail.com](mailto:boerjf@hotmail.com) ; [www.SocialTheology.com](http://www.SocialTheology.com) . See website for our story.



**VAN HEYST, Peter & Leona** will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on June 15, 2022. Congratulations!! Love from your family

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**2022 GUIDED ITINERARIES:**

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with Glacier National Park  
Aug 20 - Aug 28 | Bruce Buursma

**MEDIEVAL TO MODERN:  
HEARTS OF GERMANY**  
Sep 8 - Sep 21 |  
Russell & Cathryn Baldner, Leslie Prideaux

**ROME AND THE AMALFI COAST**  
Sep 24 - Oct 2 | Mindy Miller & Eric Kuhn

**EXPERIENCE PORTUGAL**  
Sep 25 - Oct 5 | Bruce & Judy Buursma

**JOURNEY THROUGH THE LAND**  
Sep 29 - Oct 13 | Jeff & Karen Blamer

**PAUL'S MISSIONARY  
JOURNEYS IN GREECE**  
Oct 6 - Oct 18 | Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima

**NEW YORK: ARTS & CULTURE**  
Oct 7 - Oct 13 | Henry Luttkhuizen

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## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY 50 YEARS



**ROTSCHAFFER** The children of John and Ellen (Garrison) are pleased to announce their parents 50th wedding anniversary on June 2! Their grateful three children Jennifer, Lori, and Ben along with their spouses and seven grandchildren rejoice and give thanks that God has blessed them with 50 years.

## Birthdays

### BIRTHDAY 95 YEARS

**HENRIETTA ROOY** celebrates her 95th birthday on May 24. Her family is grateful for her life and invites you to send her a birthday greeting to her home address at 1932 Concord SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

### BIRTHDAY 90 YEARS

**REV GERRIT SHEERES'** children gratefully acknowledge God's goodness on the occasion of our dad's 90th birthday on June 6. He and mom (Janet) live at 2023 Mallard Dr SE Grand Rapids MI 49546.

## Obituaries



**FLIKKEMA, Wilma** (Cok, Sinnema) of Manhattan, MT; went to her Eternal Home in Heaven on Friday, April 22, 2022. She is survived by her children, Shelley, Terry, Tami and Bonnie. Now she is worshipping her Lord in heaven. Alleluia!

**HAVEMAN, Janice.** On April 14, 2022 Jan's residence moved to Heaven. After a series of strokes and declining health over the past eight years she moved to Faith Hospice. She was married to Lou Haveman and together served for 22 years with World Renew in five African countries. They had two children, Jeff (Rachel) and Natalie (Jereme) and eight grandchildren.



**MEULINK, David John,** age 65, March 26, 2022. Preceded in death by his father John. Survived by his mother Helen, and siblings Ken and Jane, Susan and Mike Hekstra, and Steve and Judie. Beloved uncle and great uncle.

**VAN HAMERSVELD, Dale Allen** began his earthly journey on May 24, 1929, and began his eternal life on Thursday, April 21. Dale is survived by his partner Dorothy; children Mike (Peggy) and Terri (Jack) De Jong; grandchildren Jack (Sonya), Paul (Elizabeth), Mike (Colleen), Lynn (Zachariah), Rachel (Aaron), Matt (Adeola), Sarah (Mario), Samuel, Sarah, and Nathaniel. Preceding Dale in death are

his parents Herman Sr and Magdalene and Brother Herman Jr (Angie) Van Hamersveld. He was a faithful member of his church known as Church of the Servant.

**WALHOUT, Alma Joyce,** age 96, passed away on April 21, 2022. She is survived by Nancy (Paul Deceased) Recker, Mary (Dave) Thornton, Ruth Jones, Jim (Cheryl) Walhout, Beth (Bob) Banning; 12 grandchildren; 13 Great Grandchildren; and her sister, Lois Grinwis. Alma was preceded in death by her husband, Edwin. She was a faithful servant and member of Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids, MI.

## Employment

**KIDS' LIFE BIBLE CLUBS IS HIRING!** Is God calling you to be the next Executive Director or Program Coordinator of KLBC? KLBC is a Christian non-profit based in Grand Rapids, MI. Browse our website and click on the job openings page to read the descriptions and steps to apply, [www.kidslifebibleclubs.org/job-openings/](http://www.kidslifebibleclubs.org/job-openings/).

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Angels offer meal prep, light housekeeping, run errands, provide transportation to appointments, and joyful companionship. Whether you need a few hours a day or up to 24-hour care for assisted independence in your home, call Visiting Angels at 616-243-7080.



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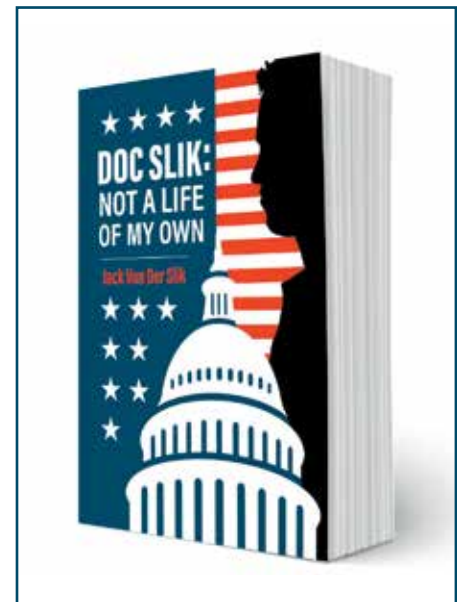
**TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS** provides in-home (non medical) care to seniors. We have been offering excellent care to the greater Grand Rapids area for over 10 years. We are owned and operated by Calvin Alums. To find out

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# I Buried My Dad Today

It was as if I had stepped into an icy puddle of water.

## I BURIED MY DAD TODAY.

Today was a day I had thought about many times during my 12 years as a pastor. But I had never thought of it before then and could not have imagined what a unique honor and privilege it is as a pastor to enter into a person's most vulnerable time in their living: their dying. That role becomes harder when you realize that one day you will be in the chair next to the coffin of someone you love. Would I have hope when the time came?

Well, that day was today. It isn't what I thought it would be. It was as if I had stepped into an icy puddle of water. The cold crept into my feet and continued up through my body until it took my breath. The puddle became a lake, working its way up until it poured out of my eyes. I kept wondering: where is my hope? Shouldn't that take away the pain of this?

Breathless, we drove to the cemetery. Then it came—the moment of watching my sons and nephews carry my father's coffin and place it on the straps that would lower the metal box, now locked shut, into the newly thawed earth. We followed the coffin, and then I sat in one of those chairs—the chairs next to the coffin.



Norlyn Van Beek is a third-career pastor. He was ordained as a Christian Reformed minister in 2005. He is a graduate of Dordt University and Sioux Falls Seminary and is currently training to become a Specialized Transitional Minister.

It was a beautiful early spring morning. The air was still, and everyone was gathering close behind. No words had been spoken; the pastor was stepping into the place where I had found myself many times before—that place of wanting to say just the right thing or read just the right Scripture verse to ease the pain.

I, too, was hoping, wanting relief from that stranglehold of pain. Please, Pastor, give me something. Say something so I can breathe.

The gathering crowd had settled. There were no sniffles, no coughs—just stillness. Through the heaviness

of the moment anticipating a word of comfort from the pastor, through the stillness of the chilly, crisp air, there came a pure, quiet, innocent little voice that pierced the stillness: "Daddy, is that the hole to heaven?"

In that moment I remembered what Jesus had done. In that moment I could breathe again. In that moment the flood of emotions turned warm. I wish I could say the pain went away, but it didn't. But like a warm blanket I felt the Holy Spirit say, "I've got this. There is hope."

I have come to realize now that there is a need for pain—that hope does not mean the absence of pain. There is a need to see the hole. There is a purpose to sitting beside the grave. There will be a moment when at the same time nothing will make sense and yet it will all make sense. The joy of life, the struggle of sin and pain, and the assurance of hope come from knowledge of the work of Jesus on the cross, the display of power and authority over the grave, and knowing Jesus will return again to make all things new. B

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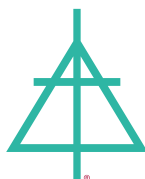
## Chat

Oh yeah, we chat too. Type and we'll type back.

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## Young Adults Writing Contest

### Topic: What Gives You Hope?

***The Banner* is pleased to offer a writing contest on the topic, "What Gives You Hope?" We'll publish the top two winning articles in print and the top three online, plus award cash prizes of \$1,000 USD (first prize), \$500 USD (second prize), and \$250 USD (third prize).**

This year's writing contest is sponsored by a generous gift from the [MultiplicationNetwork.org](http://MultiplicationNetwork.org).



- » Deadline for submissions is midnight, June 24.
- » Contest open to anyone ages 16-23 who has not been previously published by *The Banner* and who is a member of or regularly attends a Christian Reformed church. Immediate family members of staff of *The Banner* and the CRCNA are not eligible.
- » Articles should be no more than 1,000 words in length, submitted as a Word file or Google doc and accompanied by a separate cover letter that includes your name, address, phone number, where you worship, and brief biographical note. Do not include this information on the essay itself. Email to [info@thebanner.org](mailto:info@thebanner.org) with the subject heading "Writing Contest."
- » Decisions of judges are final. We reserve the right to withhold one or more prizes if none are deemed worthy. Winners will be notified by July 8.

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