

BANNER

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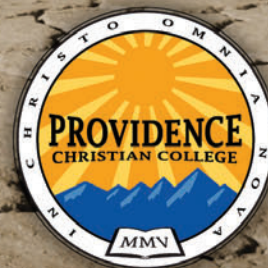
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BANNER

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Shoes

Read the Belhar Confession online at www.crcna.org. Click on the "Resources" tab, then choose "Synod Resources," and scroll down to the "Belhar Confession Report," which includes the full text of the Belhar.

AS AN IMPOVERISHED COLLEGE STUDENT I gratefully accepted my Dad's hand-me-downs. He gave me his coat. It went from a seasoned preacher to a pre-seminarian, so we called it "Elijah's mantle." He gave me some well-worn shoes. Their tips pointed heavenward. They were my "Hallelujah shoes."

The coat was more comfortable because shoes wear down in a way that conforms to the wearer's unique physiology and stride. When someone else tries to walk in them, they cause problems. I soon discarded the "Hallelujah shoes." I wish I had

known that a cheap addition to the heel using "Shoe Goo" would have done the trick!

Synod, the annual leadership convention of the denomination, is meeting in Chicago this month. It has a very important, though under-noted, decision to make. It's being asked by its Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) to take the first formal step of adopting the Belhar Confession as the fourth confession of the Christian Reformed Church. (The final step would be taken by Synod 2012 after we all have had a chance to respond to this proposal.)

The Belhar Confession has been adopted by a number of South African Reformed churches as "a declaration of faith that emerged when certain practices of the church were so clearly contrary to biblical teaching that the integrity of the proclamation of the gospel was at stake" (IRC report, *Agenda for Synod 2009*, p. 277). Those practices included racism/apartheid, social injustice, and indifference to poverty in society as a whole.

The content of the Belhar Confession develops five major themes:

- Faith in the triune God
- Unity of the church
- Reconciliation of people in Christ
- God's justice and care for the suffering and the call of the church to work against injustice
- A call to confess and practice the teaching of the Belhar Confession

—*Agenda for Synod 2009, page 277*

Few doubt that the Belhar's message against racism and its call to biblical justice and compassionate action to help the poor apply to all Christians. And it's agreed that the confessions we already have in the CRC address these issues only tangentially.

Where there's some hesitation in embracing this confession is in the advisability of transplanting into the heart of a North American denomination what grew within the soil of the unique South African social and church environment.

So back to those shoes. Can we walk in each other's shoes? In this instance I believe we can. The Belhar Confession is an amazing gift that we should gratefully receive from the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa.

What we should *also* do, though, is to make a simple addition to contextualize the Belhar and to make it something we can comfortably walk in as we follow Jesus. We should add a preamble that states clearly why we adopt this confession, how we interpret parts that could be misunderstood in our North American context, and how we shall make it confessionally applicable and normative for our church.

Adopting the Belhar and attaching a brief, well-conceived preamble would be worth the effort, providing us with a genuine set of "Hallelujah shoes." ■

Let's adopt the
Belhar and
attach a brief,
well-conceived
preamble.



Rev. Bob De Moor is editor of *The Banner* and pastor of preaching and administration for West End CRC, Edmonton,

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Prince of the Mound

It is early yet,
only the first inning,
and he stands so tall and sure.
He's a lefty
with confident eyes,
and he will pitch
into the seventh today.
Winning is so important,
but so is losing,
for this young man
whose curveball
finds the unmoved mitt
will walk many paths
where suffering people
will need his strength
and keen vision.
But just as surely
they will need
the compassion for self
he learns today
when he walks the winning run.

—James P. Pecquet



A Letter to Rev. Veenema

IMHO My advice is, love your son very much.



WE HAVE A SON, Mark, who is gay and was a confessing member of the Christian Reformed Church.

Rev. Veenema, from your picture and reading between the lines of your article “Where Is My Son Welcome?” (*The Banner*, May 2009), I assume that you are somewhat younger than my wife and I. When I think back on the time we learned about our son’s sexual orientation, 15 years ago, the pain resurfaces with all its side-effects. It is still there, and it is still raw. But we can and do pray for Mark, his partner, and our family.

I think of the time when Mark was in high school and he came home late one evening from what turned out to be his last date with a girl. He was devastated, crying in agony. Little did we know at the time that Mark had realized in anguish the affirmation of his fears: yes, he was gay. We will never understand how that feels. He would never realize his biggest wish: to be straight, to have a wife and children, as he told his pastor, who did not reject him.

Things changed rapidly. Being a professing member of the CRC and very involved in church matters, Mark taught catechism and was a dedicated, contributing member of a well-functioning small group that included a senior couple who were heterosexual and others who were of same-sex orientation.

But once this group asked to meet at the church to support each other and possibly reach out to others of same-sex orientation, and it became known at council that members of the group (called “AWARE,” As We Are) were gay, the door closed. It became impossible for them to function within the local Christian Reformed church.

I am sure that in their youthful idealism they did not always act with tact. But the rejection hurt and angered Mark so much that he told me, “I will never set foot in the CRC again.”

My son is very aware of the synodical reports of 1973, 1993, and 2003. He says, “The church has not even *started* to follow up on the recommendations from Synod.”

As time went on, Mark went into business as a home renovator. He became quite successful and lives an exemplary life. We are proud of the way he conducts his business; his ethics are beyond reproach. But being a people person, Mark needs a companion, and that he has. He met a very likeable young man, and finally they were joined in a civil

Continued on p. 42 »



John Vaandering is a retired businessman and a member of Guelph (Ont.) Christian Reformed Church.



Failure to Create Safe Churches

“How We Fail to Create Safe Churches” (IMHO, May 2009) suggests that churches and councils are not doing enough to hold abusers accountable even after receiving a report from a Safe Church Team advisory panel.

In some cases the abuse-response function of the church may be a victim’s worst enemy. As a former elder, I witnessed a Safe Church Team and the denominational abuse-response function violate defined rules governing evidence, engagement, process, and the confidentiality of both the accused and the accuser. As a result of those violations, innocent people were harmed significantly.

If faced with evidence of abuse by a Christian Reformed church leader, I would much sooner engage civil authority than the current CRC abuse-response process. I hope we can spend as much time working to improve our internal systems as we do imploring others to wake up.

—Scott Vander Kooy
Grand Rapids, Mich.

The “unknown story” behind the opening of the Abuse Prevention office (see February and May issues of *The Banner*) is

TTERS

not so much about “a study” as it is about a certain CRC pastor’s concern of how another CRC pastor hurt a woman within a short time of being at a congregation.

This concerned pastor saw firsthand how uneducated and ill-equipped our churches and classes are in understanding abuse and knowing how to respond to it. This concerned pastor not only advocated for the victim, but spent countless hours addressing the issues with the church, and with members of that classis, and then went through all the hoops to get synod to hear that our denomination has a great need: abuse is happening in our churches and we need help.

Abuse is sin. God hates abuse. But half of us don’t believe it.

—Judy De Wit
Minneapolis, Minn.

Politically Speaking

Thanks for including the excellent question “Should churches get involved in politics?” (FAQs, May 2009). Helen Sterk’s answer was helpful, with one note of clarification: churches are *not*, by law, prohibited from advocating political positions. They *are* prohibited from endorsing a particular candidate or political party. But churches can (and should!) use their voices to speak into the political process on issues. . . . It’s unfortunate that certain justice issues often become associated with one political party or another, but that association shouldn’t stop churches from following God’s call to “speak for those who cannot speak” (Prov. 31:8-9).

—Peter Vander Meulen
Coordinator, CRC Office of Social Justice

Our Valuable Graduate School

Thank you for your timely and insightful observations regarding the valuable contribution of the Institute for Christian Studies over the years (“Who Teaches the Profs?” April 2009). I hope many readers will take your words to heart to the benefit of ICS.

—C. Van Egmond
Brampton, Ontario

Without a doubt ICS has made a major contribution to the Christian university movement throughout the world. Ironically, we received the April *Banner* in our church mailboxes on the day we had a special offering for ICS. Even more ironically, in that evening’s worship service we heard a former resident of Taiwan, now a professor at Simon Fraser University and a Christian Reformed church member, speak on Buddhism. He told us that Buddhists in Taiwan have opened no less than four Buddhist universities in the past five years—all of them thriving. You can’t help but wonder why it is that in North America Christians are unable to maintain a fully accredited Christian university. I believe the main reason is that none of the major religions allow for the concept of secularism, except Christianity. There is no word for *secular* in any of the other major religions. Christians speak of a world-and-life view but do not practice it.

—Simon Wolfert
Surrey, British Columbia

Mental Illness

I’d like to make a couple comments regarding “Light for a Dark Path” (May 2009). First, I sometimes hear it said that “mental illness is just like any other illness”—I suppose with the intent to reduce the

perceived stigma. Trouble is, there is a sense in which that is very much *not* the case. Diabetes or cancer or losing a limb or whatnot rarely changes a personality. Mental illness will, by its nature, change how a person interacts with others. It’s not that person’s fault, but it is a fact.

Second, mental illness can profoundly affect the family of the sufferer. Too often all the attention is on the sick person, and no one seems to be aware of what those around that loved one are going through.

I’ll just say I’ve been there and done that. My spouse is mildly schizophrenic, which is now thankfully controlled by medication.

—Name Withheld

Corrections

The Banner is happy to report that Celebration Fellowship is not “the only Christian Reformed church located entirely within a prison” (“Getting to Church by Way of Prison,” May 2009). There is at least one other: Cornerstone Prison Church has been meeting for four years in the South Dakota State Penitentiary. Obviously, *The Banner* regrets the error.

Also, the John Calvin bobblehead would like to apologize for claiming that John Deere is “the only righteous choice for Reformed farmers” (March 2009). It was his first time on a tractor, and he got a little carried away.

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Conference Offers Coping Strategies for Depression

Depression, sometimes called "the common cold of mental illness" because of its prevalence, is as serious a problem as it is widespread. So said psychologist David Dozois at the annual conference of Disability Concerns held April 25 in Kitchener, Ontario. Disability Concerns helps churches include people with disabilities in congregational life.

Depression affects every aspect of a person's life. Dozois noted that it doesn't reflect a lack of commitment to God, and those who experience depression shouldn't blame themselves.

While feeling "blue" is a common response to negative life events, clinical depression is more severe and lasts longer. "It can be very impairing," Dozois said. In addition to feeling sad or experiencing a loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities, a person may experience changes in sleep, appetite, and activity; loss

of energy; decreased decision-making ability; and/or feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and self-blame.

"The bad news is that there are many pathways into depression. The good news is there are lots of ways out," Dozois said, explaining that many types of treatments are available.

Dozois focused on cognitive-behavioral therapy, in which those suffering from depression are helped to monitor and test the truth of their thoughts, especially negative ones, to try to influence mood and behavior. They learn to avoid using a lens of false negativity to filter how they see themselves. "God wants us to see the truth about who we are," said Dozois.

Depressed people can get caught in a vicious circle where they withdraw from life, which results in low energy, which leads to more withdrawal. "Try to reverse it," said Dozois. Paradoxically,

becoming active often reduces fatigue and clarifies thinking.

Sharon Penlington, a Roman Catholic paramedic from Kitchener who regularly encounters people in difficult moments, hoped that the conference would help her choose her words carefully. "I seek first to understand," she said.

"Depression affects the whole family. It has a ripple effect," said Sara Van Luyk, a conference participant from Holland Marsh, Ontario, who appreciated hearing a Christian perspective on the subject.

Len Bakelaar, a regional advocate for Disability Concerns, observed that over the years many disability issues have been resolved. "At one time we had to get buildings up to speed. Now we deal with depression and aging. The need is still there. It just changes its face."

—Sophie Vandenberg



SOPHIE VANDENBERG

Former *Banner* Editor De Koster Dies

Lester De Koster, who served as editor of *The Banner* for 10 years as well as being a long-time librarian at Calvin College and a noted author, passed away April 19 at age 93.

De Koster was editor of *The Banner* from 1970 to 1980. He was known for his commitment to biblical interpretation and church unity and for expressing strong opinions in his editorials.

"He was much kinder to meet in person than to meet him in writing," said Rev. Andrew Kuyvenhoven, who succeeded De Koster as editor of *The Banner*. "His writing had a sharp edge."

Articles and editorials published during De Koster's tenure were known to provoke emotional responses from readers. Nevertheless, the quality of the publication was well regarded, and under De Koster's tutelage the Evangelical Press Association awarded *The Banner* "Publication of the Year" in 1979.

De Koster graduated in 1937 from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. He amassed several degrees, taught English and speech in the Grand Rapids public schools, and taught speech at Calvin College before being appointed director of the college's library in 1951.

In that role, De Koster oversaw the transition to the Library of Congress classification system as well as a significant expansion of the library's holdings. His interest in theologian John Calvin led De Koster to begin assembling a collection of Calvin's work.

De Koster was also a prolific author. His most well-known book, *Communism and Christian Faith*, was endorsed by Rev. Billy Graham and former U.S. president Gerald R. Ford, but his interest in communism and labor unions led to accusations that he himself was a socialist. De Koster was the only Democrat on the Calvin College faculty in 1960 who openly campaigned for former U.S. president John F. Kennedy.

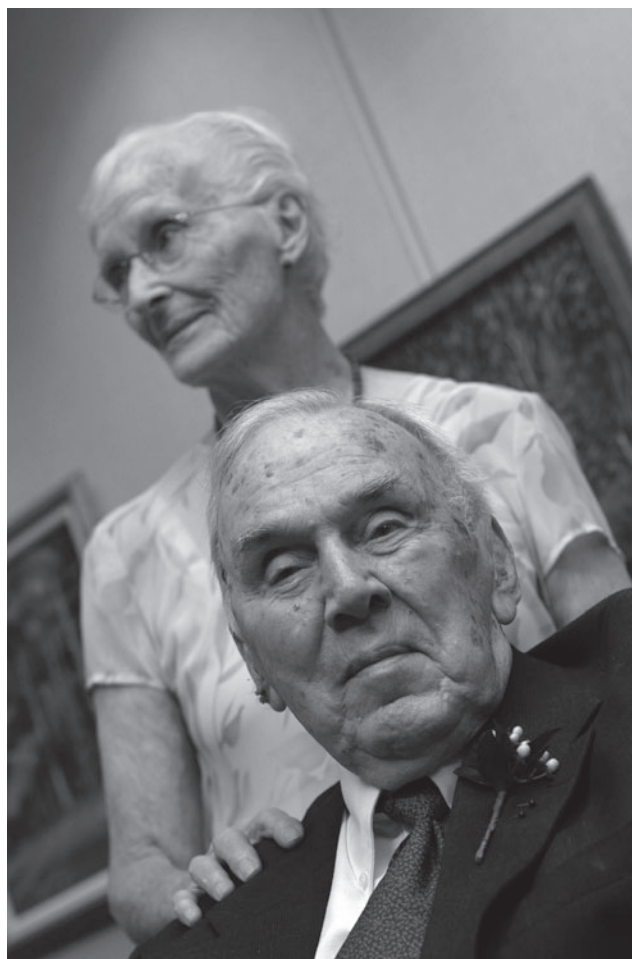
Despite his acerbic prose, colleagues—even those with whom he had sharp disagreements—respected De Koster as a fearless scholar with a tenable faith.

"We were not on the same side on many issues, but he was a classic man," said Kuyvenhoven. "He was very well educated, versed, and grounded."

"He was a very intellectually tough debater, but he was a very kind man," added former Calvin librarian Conrad Bult, who was hired by De Koster in 1965. "I remember him with a great deal of fondness."

De Koster was a member of Calvin CRC in Grand Rapids. He is survived by his wife, Ruth, four children, and 10 grandchildren.

—Christian Bell



Lester De Koster with his wife, Ruth

BEN ARENDT



MARGARET VAN OORD

New Brunswick Team Cleans Up in Texas

Sixteen members from Fredericton Christian Reformed Church in New Brunswick traveled from the Canadian Maritimes to Texas to do disaster cleanup still needed after 2005's Hurricane Rita.

The group traveled as part of Disaster Relief Services, the relief branch of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

"We were amazed to witness for ourselves the horrific damage," said Anne-Marie Hood, a member of the Fredericton church.

—Brenda Visser

Is CRC Decision-Making in Too Few Hands?

Banner News Writers Needed

Do you have the WRITE stuff? *The Banner* is looking for news correspondents in southwest Ontario to write about Christian Reformed people and activities of interest to our readers. We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

All expressions of interest should be sent via e-mail to Gayla Postma, news editor, at gpostma@crcna.org. Please submit a short resume, including your writing experience and two recent samples of your work.

Is decision-making in the Christian Reformed Church being concentrated in the office of the executive director in the cause of efficiency and streamlined ministry? That's the question being asked by some senior directors who work for agencies of the CRC.

A decision made last fall by the denomination's Board of Trustees to change the church's administrative structure is raising questions inside and outside the Grand Rapids, Mich., U.S. headquarters. The directors who spoke with *the Banner* do not wish to be identified.

Of concern is the board's decision to replace the Ministry Council, which was mandated by Synod 2004, with a new, smaller group called the Ministries Leadership Team.

Synod 2004 called for the Ministry Council to be a group made up of 13 senior executives

in the denomination's administration, including the directors of all the ministry agencies, and chaired by the executive director.

It was part of a new structure that moved the church from having two top executives to one. While each agency director had his or her own responsibilities within a specific agency, the group as a collective was to ensure that appropriate checks and balances in leadership were retained and to avoid too much responsibility and authority from accruing in one office. The rules that defined the Ministry Council's authority gave it an independent administrative voice to be used when needed. (See box.)

According to Synod 2004, the ministry agency directors would report to the director of denominational ministries (DDM). However, as a group they would still be chaired by the CRC's executive director.

The decision by the board last September splits up the members of the Ministry Council into two groups: the agency directors

(excluding Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary) will now form the Ministries Leadership Team, chaired by the DDM. Other senior directors, such as the director of finance and director of Canadian ministries, will form a separate advisory body for the executive director.

CRC Executive Director Rev. Jerry Dykstra said that what was adopted by the board does not change what Synod 2004 put in place, but simply takes it to the next logical step.

"The new Ministries Leadership Team will be similar to the Ministry Council, but its reduced size and new membership will help it focus on the ministries and CRC ministry plan more effectively. The mandate and activities will be virtually identical to the mandate of the Ministry Council," he said. "The council—and now the Ministries Leadership Team—was designed to create collaboration among the ministries of the CRCNA and provide mutual accountability."

But others disagree, stating that the move changes what Synod 2004 put in place. They believe the Ministry Council was meant to balance the authority placed in the executive director's office, not just to create collaboration among ministries.

"The functioning of the administration was envisioned as collaboration, a shared leadership model," said one source. The source added that since the Ministry Council is synodically mandated, only synod can dissolve it—it is not the Board of Trustees' prerogative to dissolve it.

Some directors who spoke with *The Banner* expressed concern that the new Ministries Leadership Team does not have the authority that the Ministry Council had because it is now

What Synod 2004 Said

- In the background report supporting the recommendations that Synod 2004 adopted: "The proposed structure retains appropriate checks and balances. Care was taken to avoid placing too much authority and leadership responsibility in one position—primarily by the inclusion of the director of denominational ministries and the Ministries Council, which is comprised of senior denominational personnel" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 83).
- As the grounds for the recommendation that was adopted: "The proposal contains appropriate checks and balances in keeping with Reformed polity" (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p. 553).
- In the appendix outlining how the report authors came to their recommendations: "The recommendation that is likely to draw the most attention is the proposal to have a single head of the denomination. . . . The committee recognizes the historic concern in Reformed circles of putting too much authority in the hands of one individual" (*Agenda for Synod 2004*, p. 87).

—Gayla R. Postma

reduced to being advisory to the DDM.

Dykstra said that because the new Ministries Leadership Team meets separately from the executive director, in some ways it has greater autonomy in its decision-making processes than if the executive director were convening and chairing it.

Others cite a lack of clarity about the new body's role and mandate. It has not yet been determined if the new body has the same responsibilities and authority as the previous Ministry Council because at the time of this writing, there is no written mandate for the new body, which has raised questions about whether the board should have approved a change before knowing those details.

Keith Oosthoek, chair of the Board of Trustees, said the board's decision was simply following up on a request by Synod 2006 that the executive director recommend to the board the most effective way to structure the denomina-

tion's ministries so as to implement the priority of healthy congregations.

What isn't clear is whether Synod 2006 requested the board to streamline the way agencies work together, or requested the board to change the balance of power that Synod 2004 built into the structure.

In the end, all decisions made by the board are subject to ratification by synod, so delegates to Synod 2009 will be the ones reviewing the board's actions. Ultimately, they will decide if replacing the Ministry Council with the Ministries Leadership Team was the right thing to do.

—Gayla R. Postma,
News Editor

Minority Voice Lost

Just months after the CRC's director of Race Relations was made a voting member of the Ministry Council, the voice of ethnic minorities at the denomination's most senior levels has been removed.

In March 2008 the director of Race Relations was granted full voting privileges on the Ministry Council, a group made up of the senior executives in the denomination's administration. Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the denomination, recommended the move, stating that granting the Race Relations director voting privileges "will give his advice appropriate status and communicate a clear commitment to minority voices at the table."

However, since the new Ministries Leadership Team was formed by the CRC's Board of Trustees just six months later (see "Is CRC Decision-Making in Too Few Hands?"), the minority voice has no longer been at the table.

"The makeup of [those groups] is based not on specific people but on the position those people hold within the senior leadership of the organization," said Dykstra. "I have been greatly disappointed that the CRC has not yet appointed ethnic minorities to senior leadership positions. I personally do not believe that placing people on the [Ministries Leadership Team] or the [executive director's advisory team] based on their ethnicity is the best or even the most appropriate way of accomplishing denominational diversity, but we must and will find other ways to do so."

—Gayla R. Postma

Budget, Denominational Survey on Board's Agenda

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church met at the end of April with a full agenda. The board conducts denominational business when synod is not in session. (Synod is the annual leadership gathering of the CRC.)

Church Loyalty Declining

Results of the denominational survey, conducted every five years, show that the CRC has an aging constituency with fewer households with children. The survey revealed declining loyalty to both the denomination and the local church.

Eighty-three percent of respondents said their congregation rates well in keeping the Bible central, and more than half of respondents said their congregation encourages generosity and loving relationships.

Salary Freeze

The board is recommending to synod a ministry share amount of \$307.53 per member for 2010, the same amount approved for 2009. Ministry shares are the amount of money collected from local churches for shared denominational ministries.

The board also accepted a recommendation that salaries of all denominational personnel be frozen at 2009 levels.

Director of Finance John Bolt reported that at the nine-month mark of the current fiscal year, ministry share income is coming in at 90 percent of what was budgeted.

CRWRC, Communities First

In other news, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) informed the board that its North American ministry team that focuses on community development is being spun off as a separate organization called Communities First, allowing it to work with

churches of other denominations and draw resources from those churches.

Communities First will have its own board outside the administrative structure of the Christian Reformed Church and will work with CRWRC as a partner agency.

Staff Ministry Credentials

The board received a report about formal credentialing of people serving in staff ministries in Christian Reformed churches. Currently, 1,200 people serve congregations in that capacity, but the qualifications and requirements for those people vary widely. A pilot run of the credentialing process that would lead to more parity could begin in summer 2009.

—Gayla R. Postma

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. William Versluys

1946 - 2009

Rev. William Versluys II, 62, sympathetic friend to many, companion to society's injured, a man who was passionate for the spread of the gospel, and a man of prayer and song, passed away on January 22 as the result of a spinal cord infection.

Versluys entered ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church after working in the business world for ten years. He graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1981. He began ministry as a missionary to the Philippines. Subsequently he served one church in Michigan and four churches in Minnesota. He also served as a chaplain in The Good Samaritan Center in Grand Forks.

Versluys had a passion for serving the parishioners of his churches, as well as the communities around them. His winsome friendliness afforded him a ready entrance into people's lives.

Versluys is survived by his wife, Connie, six children, and eleven grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Versluys, please visit www.thebanner.org. In addition to being posted online, further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the front pages of the Christian Reformed Church's annual Yearbook.

Pastor Coordinates Tax Tea Party

Rev. Tyler Wagenmaker, pastor of Beaverdam Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich., helped coordinate an anti-tax Tea Party that took place in his neighborhood April 15, the deadline for filing income taxes in the United States.

Wagenmaker said he did it "as a concerned citizen and as a concerned pastor."

He said that taxation in the U.S. is "stealing trillions of dollars from future generations." He also feels that people are looking to the government to solve their problems "when they should look to the church, to God, and to family."

He said that expecting government to solve problems



TOM DEVETTE

Tea party organizers (l-r) Deborah VanDyk, Rev. Tyler Wagenmaker, Heidi Pronk, and Amy Lengeler

"prevents people from re-connecting with families and church to go the extra mile."

Tea parties were held in cities across the U.S. in protest of tax policies under President Obama. They were fashioned after the Boston Tea Party of 1773 when American colonists dumped three shiploads of tea into the Boston Harbor in a protest against British taxation.

The Hudsonville Tea Party was held at a local parking lot. Approximately 1,000 people attended.

—Karen Gorter

Retired Pastors Stage Unique Fashion Show

When the saints came marching in to Raybrook Chapel at Holland Home in Grand Rapids, Mich., they were dressed for the occasion. More than 240 people packed the chapel of the retirement home to see pastors and others, most of whom are Raybrook residents and retired CRC leaders, dressed in period clothing to represent men of faith through the ages.

The fashion show, which included brief presentations, was the idea of Raybrook resident Rev. John Meppelink. "The styles change with the times in which we live, but the Word of God does not change," Meppelink said.

Among the featured characters were Moses played by Clarence Vos, David played by Rev. Leonard Hofman, Isaiah played by Rev. Carl Kromminga Sr., John the Baptist played by Rev. Kenneth Slager, the apostle Paul played by Roger Mendricks, Rev. John Calvin played by Rev. Jake Hekman, Rev. Abraham Kuyper played by Rev. Sierd Woudstra, Rev. Albertus VanRaalte played by Rev. Bill Buursma, Rev. Henry Beets played by Rev. Harry Boonstra, and Rev. Henry Schultze, played by Meppelink. Slager played a second part as a modern-day pastor dressed casually in jeans.

"It was a very worthwhile presentation," said Raybrook resident Lois Hannink. "I think that everybody I talked to felt that they got quite a picture of what it would have been like to be alive at that time."

—Christian Bell



Rev. Leonard Hofman portrays David at a clergy fashion show at the Raybrook chapel.



Adria Libolt (left) greets the wife of a Nigerian pastor during a welcoming program in Sev-av, Benue State.

Local Church Partners with Nigerian Church

Eight members of River Terrace Christian Reformed Church in East Lansing, Mich., recently traveled to Nigeria to learn about the Nigerian churches' efforts to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic in their communities.

In Jos, the River Terrace team met with leaders of the NKST (Church of Christ in the Sudan among the Tiv). They learned about Beacon of Hope, an AIDS ministry supported by 13 Reformed denominations. In central Nigeria, the church is primarily responsible for the local health infrastructure.

The trip was part of the Embrace AIDS campaign sponsored by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, the relief and development arm of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Beacon of Hope focuses on orphans and vulnerable children, youth abstinence, and persons living with HIV and AIDS. River Terrace member Grace Kreulen said, "We sensed great need as we spoke to caregivers who have taken in from one to nine orphans of deceased family members."

According to the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), approximately 12 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

River Terrace pastor Rev. Clay Libolt said, "The peoples of the NKST long for contact with us, and we have been blessed by contact with them."

River Terrace plans to form a three- to five-year partnership with the NKST and Beacon of Hope, providing support to expand programs for Nigerians living with HIV/AIDS.

—Eileen De Vries

Celebrating Joy in South Dakota

Only the buzzing of overhead lights disturbed the hush when 834 women listened to Debbie Mayer tell of losing three daughters in a traffic accident and how her faith helped her deal with it.

The women were attending the 15th annual "Morning of Joy" event in Sioux Falls, S.D. They came from South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa for the event sponsored by Coffee Break ministries for women.

Brenda Elgersma of First Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Falls has attended Morning of Joy

events five or six times. "It was very encouraging that [Debbie Mayer] could still celebrate God," she said.

This may be the final year for the Morning of Joy event. The organizer for the past 15 years is retiring, and no one has yet volunteered to take on the task.

Holly Dekkers of Hawarden (Iowa) CRC heard about the topic and was one of many young women attending for the first time.

She observed, "It's always amazing to be in a room with this many people and know there's a Christ connection."

—Sherry Kooiker



KIMBERLY LAMB

More than 800 women from three states gathered for the "Morning of Joy" event in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Holly Dekkers of Hawarden (Iowa) CRC at "Morning of Joy" in Sioux Falls, S.D.



SHERRY KOOIKER



MIKE SLOFSTRA

The teen retreat included four-wheeling.

Lynden and Seattle Youths Break Down Barriers

In March, 100 teens from Lynden, Wash., hosted 50 inner-city Seattle teens for a weekend that included worship, paintball games, four-wheeling, and horseback riding.

The youth retreat began with the breaking down of a cinder block wall. Just as the cinder block wall was dismantled, the walls of hesitation, fear, and stereotyping were broken down over the course of the weekend.

“We all realized that we are called to make decisions and take actions to change our life, lifestyle, and preconceived ideas,” said Mike Slofstra, youth pastor for Sonlight Community Christian Reformed Church in Lynden. Teens from his church were at the retreat.

Teens from Lynden’s Bethel CRC and Third CRC also joined in the

retreat, which was organized by Whatcom Unite—a group of seven churches that have a monthly program to bring youths together across denominational lines.

The Lynden/Seattle retreat came out of a friendship between Slofstra and two Seattle youth workers. “We realized that our students live geographically close together and yet live in and reflect such different worlds,” Slofstra said.

Whatcom Unite plans to make this retreat an annual event. Next time the Lynden teens will be hosted by their new Seattle friends.

Slofstra is encouraged that young people such as these will be the future leaders of our churches. “Our capacity to love is connected to our ability to know, and this was a start in getting to know each other.”

—Jenny de Groot

New Jersey Students Buy Solar Cookers for Darfur

“What will you tell your grandchildren you did during the genocide in Darfur?”

This jarring question on a billboard spurred Rev. Ken Vander Wall, Christian Reformed campus pastor for William Pat-

erson University (WPU) in Paterson, N.J., to action.

With the help of the WPU Christian Fellowship, Vander Wall organized a teach-in on campus that included a fundraiser for solar cookers for Darfur. Solar cookers

allow women to forgo leaving the refugee camp to look for firewood, since during such trips they are at great risk of being raped or killed. Students raised \$350 to purchase 23 cookers.

Students also participated in a postcard campaign urging U.S. President Barack Obama to do all he can to end the genocide in Darfur, where 400,000 people have been killed and 4.7 million have been displaced.

Vander Wall also gave a presentation on Darfur at Unity CRC in Prospect Park, N.J. People there signed more postcards and designated an offering to buy more solar cookers.

Vander Wall and students from WPU personally delivered more than 1,600 postcards to Washington, D.C.

—Calvin Hulstein



SOPHIA BROOKS

Rev. Ken Vander Wall (left) and Lakoa Habes display a solar cooker used by women in Darfur.

Intergenerational Group Continues Katrina Cleanup

A 38-member work crew from Second Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Mich., spent spring break in Waveland, Miss., cleaning up damage done by Hurricane Katrina.

Group members, ages 6 to 68, landscaped and installed drywall, insulation, and flooring. They



An intergenerational crew from Byron Center, Mich., helped clean up post-Katrina damage in Mississippi.

reported that they bonded as they worked together.

"This trip helped me connect with people other than in the youth group," said Kyle Spoelma, 17.

Amy Dykhouse, 28, found the communal work gratifying. "I think God was calling me to use spring break for him rather than for relaxing."

This was the church's fourth intergenerational project in Mississippi.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

What to Watch for at Synod 2009

When Synod 2009 convenes near Chicago in mid-June, the usual number of delegates will be in attendance, but there will be some changes among them.

Synod is the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church, made up of 188 delegates from the denomination's 47 classes (regional groups of churches). In addition to delegates, there have previously been advisory panels of women and ethnic minorities, along with faculty advisers from Calvin Theological Seminary.

This year there will be no female advisers. Women are now allowed to be synodical delegates, and there will be 17 of them this year, down from last year's 26. There will be 24 ethnic minority delegates, the most ever in attendance at synod, so instead of the usual panel of seven advisers, there will be only two.

New this year will be a panel of youth observers, ages 18 to 26. Their role is to interact with delegates, observe the proceedings, and give feedback about how the CRC can better involve and engage with young people.

Third Wave Redux

For the second time in three years synod will discuss the Third Wave Pentecostalism movement and its emphasis on prophesying, healing ministries, spiritual warfare, and deliverance ministries.

Synod 2007 received reports from a synodical study committee on the Third Wave movement, but sent the work back to an expanded study committee that is now reporting to Synod 2009.

Synod will receive two reports. Most of the committee would like synod to accept the way the Third Wave movement manifests the work of the Holy Spirit, acknowledging the gift of prophecy today, remaining aware of any claims of prophecy that go beyond Scripture or foster dissension, and acknowledging the reality of demonic impact on human life and the validity of engaging in deliverance ministry.

One member of the committee demurred from that opinion, raising several questions about whether Third Wave prophecy is the gift of prophecy described in the New Testament—warning that inner healing ministries may have inherent dangers of false memories and spiritual confusion, and counseling churches

to avoid accepting beliefs about the demonic and spiritual warfare that have no basis in Scripture.

Ministry Share

Synod will receive a report about how money is collected from churches for shared denominational ministries. A two-year study yielded a recommendation that our current per-member ministry share system is still the best way to do that, but that congregations need to be better informed about how the system works and why it's important.

Former Pastors

Synod will receive proposed guidelines for the relationship between church councils and former pastors, particularly for retired pastors who desire to remain part of their previous congregations. The guidelines suggest a negotiation of the relationship between the council and the pastor, as well as a sample agreement.

Ministry Associates

The Candidacy Committee wants synod to amend the CRC's Church Order Supplement regarding ministry associates. Currently a church can release a ministry associate on its own. The requested amendment would require that the local classis be

involved in that decision, since the classis is involved in appointing ministry associates.

Belhar Confession

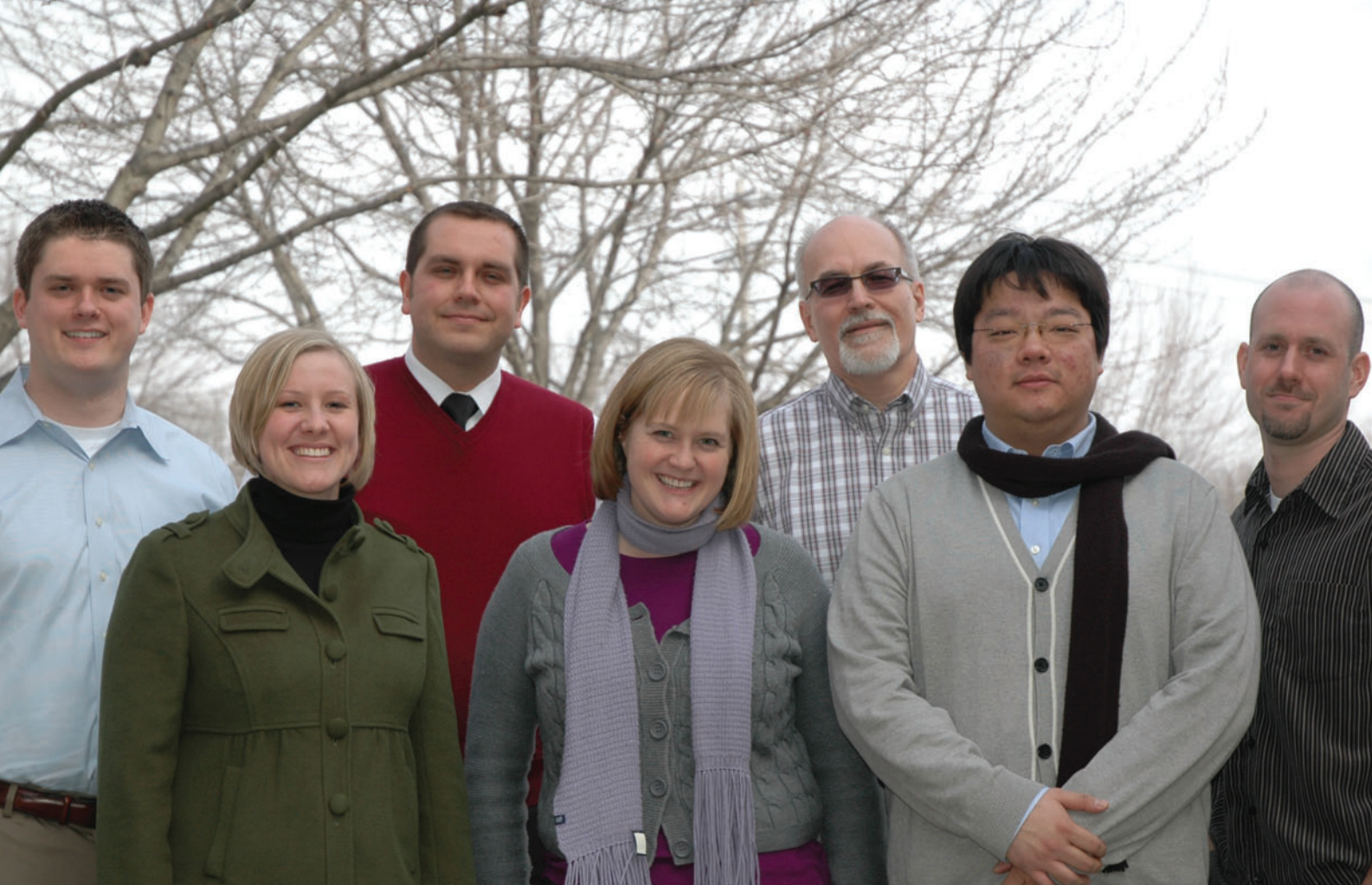
The Interchurch Relations Committee is proposing to Synod 2009 that it ask Synod 2012 to adopt the Belhar Confession as a fourth doctrinal confession (in addition to the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort). The intervening three years would be a time of study and reflection regarding the Belhar.

This year's delegates and advisers may be the best-trained ever. For the first time, there are a series of orientation recordings and documents posted on the synod website, preparing delegates old and new to be ready to roll when they arrive at synod. The online training can be found at www.crcna.org/synod.

Synod convenes at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill., on Saturday, June 13. You can get updates on synod's work by calling the synod hotline at 1-888-CR-SYNOD (1-888-277-9663). In Grand Rapids, Mich., the local number is 616-224-0841. To receive e-mail updates, subscribe online at www.crcna.org, following the link under e-newsletters.

Live webcasts will also be available at www.crcna.org.

—Gayla R. Postma



BRIGHT HOPE FOR TOMORROW

EAVESDROPPING ON TODAY'S YOUNG CHURCH LEADERS

Recently *The Banner* asked Rev. Ken Baker and Rev. Meg Jenista to host a roundtable discussion with young pastors, seminarians, and church leaders. Participants included G. Ben Bowater [BB], Nathan [NDM] and Samantha [SDM] DeJong McCarron, Dominic Palacios [DP], and Paul Shim [PS].

WHEN THE BANNER APPROACHED KEN BAKER AND ME

about conducting a roundtable conversation with younger pastors in the Christian Reformed Church, I was excited for two reasons. First, I was excited about engaging my peers and colleagues in this conversation. Almost immediately I thought of the 50 to 100 people I wanted to invite—colleagues in places as widespread as Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; and Anchorage, Alaska; even overseas.

The second reason for my excitement was for you, the readers. Whenever I overhear people fretting about the future of our denomination, I wish they could listen in on the hopes and dreams of my peers and colleagues. I am humbled and honored to work alongside them. We don't always agree—even this article demonstrates that—but we DO love God and God's church.

As I dream about what God has in store for the CRC, it always begins with prayers for faithfulness in ministry. As pastors we need to keep pace but also realize that God is already present in the world and in our churches. Our call is to steadiness, faithfulness, and the sure and certain knowledge that God is still taking care of the CRC, as God has *always* taken care of the CRC. Don't believe me? Keep reading.

—Meg Jenista

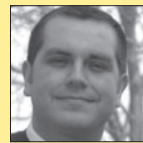


Rev. Meg Jenista is minister of community life and witness for Third CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich. She graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in May 2008. While a seminary student, she interned at Yellowstone National Park with A Christian Ministry in the National Parks and served as intern pastor at Emmanuel CRC in Calgary, Alberta.

Q. Before we talk about dreams and hopes for the future, let's talk about current reality. Every generation of pastors enters ministry in a particular historical, cultural, and ecclesiastical context that helps shape its visions, dreams, and hopes. Where do you see the Holy Spirit moving in the CRC today? What do you see that particularly encourages you at the outset of your ministry careers?

[SDM] As a female seminarian I am encouraged to see that we can disagree on theological issues but still maintain the unity of the church. I think that is a testament to the Spirit moving in our lives. I see this not only with gender issues in the church, but also with worship. There is an embracing of worship styles across the spectrum now, and they are all still carrying the denomination with them.

[DP] Yes, but there is still friction. There's unity, but kinda like the unity around the Thanksgiving dinner table.



Rev. Dominic Palacios currently serves as associate pastor of youth and congregational life for Holland Heights CRC, Holland, Mich. He was ordained this past October after earning his master's of divinity at Calvin Seminary. During his time in seminary, Dominic interned with the campus ministry at Grand Valley State University. He has been married to his wife, Kristin, for just over a year.

[SDM] In that tension around the Thanksgiving table, you all say grace and you accept one another even if you don't agree on diddly squat. You have one main point—Jesus as your Savior—and you're hanging on to it.

[BB] As I preach around, it appears that many churches have turned a corner. . . . More people seem to recognize that there is a value to reaching out to people in the community—people who don't have the same background, the same values, the same commitment to Christian education, the same ethnic heritage. People are beginning to see that our neighbors are not our enemies, but the people that God has called us to serve.

[DP] I find that there's a big passion among young people for doing something with their lives in terms of service or mission. Give them something mission-oriented or service-oriented, and they are all over it. I believe it's coming out of the overflow of their faith.

[NDM] With regard to the missional impulse, I love the fact that the CRC is being more missional. I love that these youths are coming up in the CRC and want to be evangelistic and proactive, and I love the fact that it's becoming easier for people to go out into their communities and be part of that. But I worry that we may take Jesus out of mission and just end up doing good deeds.

[PS] As a leader with Calvin Seminary's "Facing Your Future" program, I observed that the kids were there because they had »

a passion for the church to continue. . . . [They] want to go beyond a job and do more than make money. They're serious and earnest about it. I think a lot more missionary fruits are being borne through our children.

[BB] Church folks are realizing that you begin with the relationships, you draw others into community, *then* you share the good news. Once the relationship is built, the Spirit opens the door for sharing Jesus. So I think our conversation about being more attuned to the community is a very healthy thing. And I'm comfortable that the structure of accountability in the CRC works to keep us confessionally grounded.

[NDM] I get that. For so long the church has worked with the paradigm that "you believe and then you belong." But we will need to invert that model—"you belong and then you believe."

[PS] We're entering into a sense of relevance and impact in this world, which makes us nervous and challenges us. . . . We are becoming more and more part of North American culture so that we can impact it in a real way. We're not just an immigrant church taking care of ourselves. We're stepping into the circle with our brothers and sisters. **We are the beginning of something, the beginning of a shift, and we cannot be afraid to keep moving forward.**



Paul Shim is currently serving at Grand Rapids Hahn-In CRC in Wyoming, Mich., as a youth pastor. He was born in Los Angeles and grew up in Grand Rapids, Mich. He attended Calvin College and is currently attending Calvin Seminary (4th year) and hopes to finish next year. He is not married . . . but likes cookies, long walks on the beach, and organization.

Q. You've described some of the features of our current reality, what encourages you, and where you see the Spirit moving in the CRC. So what are your hopes, dreams, and visions for the church as you move into your ministry careers?

[BB] I want the seminary to do more of what they are already doing: to look at how God has uniquely gifted us for the unique ministry that God has in mind for us. Not a cookie-cutter approach . . . but one that says, "Nourish the gifts and experiences God has already given you." That approach will allow us to go out into churches and figure out what each congregation is called to be in the strategic location where God has placed it. **The box that defines what it means to be CRC is a lot bigger than people are willing to admit.**

[MJ] As a newcomer to the CRC, the idea of having creeds and confessions is particularly attractive to me. Our creeds and confessions don't *end* the conversation; they *begin* the conver-

sation. I hope we will learn to delight in and play with all the things that are "in bounds" for us.

[DP] When I became a Christian at the age of 18, I fell in love with the Bible. And that's what my hope is—that we would continue to be people of the text, with our theology and creeds as the servants of that.

[BB] My hope is that the CRC will get more involved in a messy world—feeding the hungry, getting into the schools, helping people to meet tangible needs. It's my hope that the CRC doesn't look at the people in our communities as a project or as notches in the *Yearbook*, but that we will treat them with the dignity and respect that we should show for all God's imagebearers.



G. Ben Bowater is a church planter for Classis Kalamazoo and Christian Reformed Home Missions at RedArrow Ministries in Paw Paw, Mich. He previously served two years with World Missions and more than two years as youth director for West Leonard CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich. Before going into full-time ministry, he was a public school teacher in and around Chicago.

[SDM] I hope we can be more accepting of our sinfulness and more open about it, more aware of our faults and the messiness we all carry with us. We don't have it all together.

[DP] Clearly we have a decision to make in the face of the phenomenal pace of change in the world—we are either going to be ReformING or we are going to be ReformED. The pace of our changes will have to be hastened considerably.

[BB] We will have to treat our youths as active, equal members with their parents. We've segregated them for so many years that we've taught them that the church is their parents' church. So they've left to find a place where they could have a sense of ownership. I hope we will change that.

Q. What kind of leadership do you think will be needed to realize the future you envision? What are the competencies that will be more important for you as young pastors moving into the future?

[NDM] The reality is that the Baby Boom generation of pastors is retiring, and there's going to be a huge void of leadership. Younger people will have to step into leadership roles and take the bull by the horns and ask, "Where is God leading us? What's going on? Where is the Spirit moving?" As we ask these questions, we want to be in conversation with those who have gone before us. We don't want to be a bunch of hotheads emerging onto the scene. We want to capitalize on the base we have in our history, confessions, and Scripture.

[SDM] In order to stay relevant, we are going to have to take calculated risks and take them more quickly.

We're going to have to be willing to change some things faster than we have in the past, but always with an eye on the soundness of our doctrine and commitment to Scripture in that process.



Nathan and Samantha DeJong McCarron are looking forward to being declared candidates for the office of Minister of the Word by Synod 2009. Nate has served as an

intern in Chicago. Sam has served with World Missions through the Summer Missions Program. They will be interning as co-pastors for Chelwood CRC in Albuquerque, N.M., through March 2010. After that they will seek a call to ordained ministry in the CRC.

[MJ] Agreed. There are a lot of people in our churches who are afraid of what they hear about our culture, about postmodernity, for example. And I want to communicate to our denomination that **just because it's a foreign language to you doesn't mean it's a foreign language to us.** Every generation that has gone through

seminary has been excited about tackling ministry in the context of their generation. And we're no different. Being launched into ministry at such a time as this is exciting. It's a new opportunity for myself and for my colleagues, and we're engaged with it. That gives me hope.

[DP] We're going to have to do the hard work of going into that world and saying, "Hey, I'm here for you. I don't understand you, but I want to." And as the older generations, in turn, listen to the younger generations, we will bear a lot of fruit, bringing up new leaders.

[SDM] What the church will need is not cookie-cutter leaders, all cut of the same mold, but a variety of leaders with a variety of gifts.

[MJ] And there's another challenge we will face. With all the leadership models that abound in the world around us, we will have to be able to plant a flag in the midst of our churches to say, "But I am a *pastor* and that means that this is who I am and how I lead. I'm not a CEO. I'm not a corporate manager. I'm called to be something different for you and with you."

[BB] We will get into areas of ministry where there will be countless expectations. One generation expecting something of us. A younger generation expecting something totally different. Then throw into the mix the expectations of the unchurched who come in. . . . As pastors we will need to adapt to the expectations of people around us, but we will be challenged to clarify the priorities. Whose expectations will carry

the most weight? Leader-pastors will need to resolve, "If I'm faithful to what God wants me to do, it will work out."

[NDM] We will also need to become calculated risk-takers . . . committed to our historical, doctrinal, biblical roots. **We need to be pastor-leaders who lean forward.** All too often we lean backward, on our heels, digging in. We need to have faith in our roots, the ability to lean forward and say, "Where are we going?"

[PS] What makes me hopeful is the people around this table, being in a room like this and realizing that we all bring different gifts to ministry and that we all work together. . . . We do need to become lighter, faster, more mobile. We are unable to survive in the state that we are in right now.

Concluding Observations

The shifts and changes that have occurred in the church since I was ordained in 1978 have been remarkable. When I graduated from seminary, I set out to preach, teach, and do pastoral care. I was armed with an RSV Bible, a blue *Psalter Hymnal*, and 12 banana boxes full of 40-percent-off theology books and commentaries.

Over the years the Bible versions have changed and the blue *Psalter Hymnal* turned to gray. The volumes in my banana boxes now fit on a single CD. We've weathered worship wars and women-in-office wars. And increasingly churches have expected pastors to be more than pastors. They want them to be charismatic, visionary leaders who will take the congregation to new levels of success.

On that score I must echo the last comment by Paul. What makes me hopeful about the future of the CRC is the people who sat around the table with Meg and me on a wintry February morning to talk about church and ministry.

They understand the challenges ahead. They read the culture well, both within and outside the church. They are aware that ministry involves leading. But what I'm most encouraged by is their understanding of themselves as pastors.

The church will be well and well served as long as there are men and women in ministry who are lovers, keepers, tellers, and interpreters of The Story for God's people. When pastors do that, God's people thrive and God's kingdom comes. Just read the book of Acts.

—Ken Baker ■



Rev. Ken Baker was ordained as a minister in the CRC in 1978. He has served churches in Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia, and is now in his 17th year of ministry at Third CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich. He has two sons in M. Div. programs in different seminaries and is encouraged and challenged by their dreams and hopes for the church.

Fasting from Facebook

“NATHANIEL VAN DENEND is fasting from Facebook. See you when the Son comes up.”

I wrote that on Ash Wednesday, shortly after deciding to give up Facebook, the social networking site, for Lent. But then I thought to myself, “Facebook, well I only check that maybe 10 times or so a day—it won’t be much of a sacrifice.” So I decided to give up all news-related media for Lent.

For 40 days I did not watch any news on television, I did not listen to NPR, I did not read the news on the Internet. I tried my best to refrain from even talking to my friends about the news. That meant I basically gave up the Internet entirely, because I primarily use it to read the news and to read people who are commenting on the news and then to read the commentators on the commentators, and so on. So, no Internet, save school research and e-mail.

So what exactly did I give up? I began to reflect on a typical day in my life. Wake up to “NPR Morning Edition,” listen while eating breakfast and while driving to the seminary. Arrive at the seminary, check my e-mail accounts, check Facebook, check Reuters, DrudgeReport, Aldaily, First Things, Slate, CNN. Go to class. Finish class and repeat. At 5 p.m. turn on NPR and drive home. Do homework and check all the news sites again and again. At 11 p.m. go to bed, turn on BBC and fall asleep listening to “The World Service.” Wake up and repeat.

Giving all that up was more difficult than I thought. During Lent the U.S. banks and Congress were wrestling over executive compensation, and I had to tell my friends that I did not want to hear about it. My e-mail account mysteriously added a “news ticker” to my e-mail page, which I had to figure out how to remove. I did some traveling and had to stealthily avoid CNN pumped into the airport terminals. I went all the way to Prague, where there at least

the news would be in Czech, which I do not understand—but President Obama followed me and I could hear his speech, presented in English, to the citizens of the Czech Republic.

The news media seemed like some fast-growing killer plant in a horror movie—cut off one branch and another one would come out to nab me!

During my fast a peculiar thing began to happen. I found myself better able to concentrate in church. This was something I did not expect.

I had previously noticed my lack of concentration. When my eyes closed during the congregational prayer, my mind would race, thinking about a million things at once. The same thing happened during the sermon. That can’t be good for a seminarian! I’d tried harder to concentrate, but it was like my mind had a mind of its own.

But then, about two weeks into Lent, I noticed that my mind had slowed down. I was able to concentrate. I was able to listen again. The Word of the Lord began to cut through the dense cloud of information that hung over my head wherever I went.

Lent is over now. The Son has risen. I have slowly begun to incorporate the news back into my life. I found many comments on Facebook to respond to and hundreds of unread articles online to read. But I hesitate now. How much do I really need to know? ■

Nate Van Denend is a third-year M.Div. student at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.



After two weeks,
a peculiar thing
began to happen.

FAQs

Creation Care

Q Every time I hear about environmental issues I feel guilty and unable to do anything constructive. How can I shake this off so I can contribute?

A Guilt is an interesting phenomenon. When it prompts us to change our actions for good, it can be a powerful force. But when it causes us to shut down, it's not healthy and needs to be released. On *100 Huntley Street's* recent television series on creation care, a Mennonite man explained that we need to put the guilt aside for a moment, not as an excuse but as a way to open up some breathing room to allow for more creativity in the way we live. Let's admit it: sometimes we are guilty. But we know that if we admit what we have done wrong and ask for forgiveness, Jesus will help us find the breathing space we need to make positive changes in our lives. Start with one small thing. The African saying *Kamu kamu gwe muganda* says it all: "One by one makes a bundle."

—Cindy Verbeek

Cindy Verbeek is the church and community group liaison for A Rocha Canada—Christians in Conservation and an active member of Houston Christian Reformed Church, British Columbia. For more ideas contact her at cindy.verbeek@arocha.org.

Church

Q Years ago unwed pregnant young ladies in church had to stand before the congregation to confess their sin against the seventh commandment. In a recent conversation with one of these people we asked, "Why didn't the young men stand up and do likewise?"

A The church has always been hard on sexual sin, requiring more of such sinners than it did with other "public" sinners. When well-known author Dorothy Sayers talks about the seven deadly sins, she tells the story

of a person who exclaimed, "Seven! I didn't know there were seven! What are the other six?" And as the John 8 story of the woman caught in adultery illustrates, (male) religious leaders can easily focus only on the females.

Apparently church practice differed regarding this issue. You indicate that only the woman stood, but people I contacted said that in their churches both parties were required to stand. Even when they were not required to stand, both parties were required to meet with the elders. One of the pastors

Sometimes we need to put guilt aside for a moment.

in my home church transformed such meetings into a doubly positive experience when, after hearing the confession of the couple, he instructed the elders, "You've heard their confession. It's now your responsibility to counter any gossip or demeaning conversation you hear about this from members of the congregation."

—George Vander Weit

George Vander Weit is a retired pastor in the Christian Reformed Church.

Health

Q A friend of mine has incurable cancer. How can I best support and help her without making her feel like an invalid? What practical things can I do? What should I be sure *not* to do?

A Thank you for this question. Isn't this a difficult time? My suggestions are of a general nature, but I hope some of them help.

DOs

- Listen more than you talk.
- Let her do what she can for herself. If she is struggling, ask before helping.
- Bring her meals.
- Be yourself. Be cheerful, but don't fake your emotions. Cry when you need to.
- Depending on your friend's current health and energy, keep your visits with her short. She will let you know if she really wants you to stay longer.
- Allow her to guide the subject of the conversation, including death, heaven, and other end-of-life issues. Few or none of us have the answers, but at a minimum, listen.
- Pray with or for your friend—non-Christians value an "I will pray for you" if they know you are a Christian.
- Continue to visit her as the process continues. Do your best to be constant, even when death is near. You will probably find that in the end it will be an uplifting experience for you as well as your friend, and easier than you feared.

DON'Ts

- Don't give your opinion on the medical treatment. If there is a concern, guide her to her own doctor or suggest a second opinion.
- Don't dwell on the concept of "God will cure you." As Christians we believe this is possible, and we pray for healing, but human experience shows us that this rarely happens when the diagnosis of incurable cancer is made. Most patients are accepting of their prognosis but need encouragement along the way.
- Don't keep a conversation going at all costs; sometimes just sitting there quietly is enough.
- Don't repeat to anyone else what you've heard in confidence.

—Herman Borkent

Dr. Herman Borkent practices medicine at Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton, Alberta. ■



Jubilee Fellows Explore Call to Ministry

by Myrna Anderson

Josh Kuipers, a junior majoring in religion, anthropology, and Kiswahili at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., had not considered a calling into ministry.

“For the longest time I wanted to be a lawyer and politician,” Kuipers says. But that started to change when he spent some time in Mexico and a year in Kibera, a huge slum outside Nairobi, Kenya. In those places Josh found himself “searching for God and his calling on my life.” What he found was a new direction.

“There was no moment where formal ministry became a focus. It was a slow shift, moving away from a focus on anything else.”

Kuipers will explore his calling further as one of the 2009 Jubilee Fellows at Calvin.

Every year, the Lilly Vocation Project gives students the opportunity to discern their vocation for Christian ministry. This year, together with Kuipers, the project named the following students as fellows: Nick Baas, Rachel Bergman, Jonathan De Ruiter, Brandon Haan, Blake Jurgens, Kate Oswald, Katie Pruss, Charlotte Sandy, Tracy VerMerris, and Philip Vestal (see sidebar for more on each 2009 fellow).

The students chosen as Jubilee Fellows spent the spring semester being mentored for ministry by Calvin’s chaplain emeritus Dale Cooper and his wife, Marsha, and by co-leaders Ren and Elsa Prince-Broekhuizen.

“We study God’s longing for the church,” Cooper said. “We study the role that people play in the church [by using their] gifts and position. We talk about

The 2009 Jubilee Fellows with mentors Dale and Marcia Cooper and Ren and Elsa Prince-Broekhuizen.

the church in whatever age we find ourselves. We talk about history. And then we talk about the discernment process.”

When summer arrives, the fellows apply what they have learned through internships in congregations throughout the United States and Canada, where they experience ministry “up close and hands on.”

Cooper says the internship experience “takes a look at church ministry in all its joys but also its sadness and disappointments and occupational hazards. It’s fraught with blessings and difficulties, like all vocations.” **»**

Meet the 2009 Jubilee Fellows

Nick Baas



A junior from Grand Rapids, Mich., majoring in religion, philosophy, and Greek, Nick has been interested in ministry since his participation in the "Facing Your Future" program at Calvin Seminary. He is grateful for this chance to use his gifts in a community and is thankful for those who have supported him as he finds his place in the kingdom of God.

Rachel Bergman



A junior from Orono, Maine, majoring in psychology, Rachel plans to pursue both a master's degree in social work and a seminary degree following graduation. She is particularly interested in working with families.

Jonathan De Ruiter



A junior Greek major from Alger, Wash., Jonathan spent the early years of his childhood on the mission field in the Dominican Republic. He is eager to use his gifts to serve God and God's people during this coming summer and plans to attend seminary following graduation.

Brandon Haan



Brandon Haan is a pre-seminary student from Lansing, Ill., majoring in both English and religion. Although Brandon is unclear on exactly how he will

serve God in the future, he is confident that the Jubilee Fellows program will help him to discern God's calling. Brandon, who serves as a resident assistant in the Beets-Veenstra residence hall, is excited for the many opportunities to be like Christ to others.

Blake Jurgens



A junior from Byron Center, Mich. majoring in philosophy and Greek, Blake sees ministry as not just a "hobby" but a passion. His plans after college include attending seminary and earning his master's of divinity. He hopes that the Jubilee Fellows opportunity will allow him to gain hands-on experience in the field of pastoral ministry while gaining a better perception of the body of Christ here in North America.

Josh Kuipers



Josh is a junior from Abbotsford, British Columbia, and is an interdisciplinary major in religion, anthropology, and Kiswahili. He feels a specific calling to serve the hurting and marginalized people of this world. Josh is excited for the adventure that following Christ brings.

Kate Oswald



Kate is a junior psychology major from New Providence, N.J., whose future plans include grad school, seminary,

or foreign missions. Her hope for life is that she would always be growing in her faith, fully used by Christ, and purposeful in her actions. Kate is grateful for the opportunity Jubilee Fellows provides her and is eager to experience serving in a U.S. church setting.

Katie Pruss



A senior nursing major, Katie came to Calvin College from Saline, Mich., near Ann Arbor. She has joined the Jubilee Fellows program to grow as someone who can minister to the soul as well as the body. Katie dreams of starting a ministry in rural Africa and providing excellent healthcare along with the Good News of the gospel. She feels strongly that there are no "ordinary" people and hopes to know the heart of God and others more deeply through Jubilee Fellows.

Charlotte Sandy



Charlotte is a junior psychology and religion major from Birmingham, Mich. A transfer student from the University of Michigan, Charlotte came to Calvin in order to study religion and have opportunities that would help her discern her call to ministry. Charlotte is passionate about teaching people the Word of God, and she is excited to explore that in the Jubilee Fellows program. Her specific ministry interests are youth and family ministry, pastoral care, counseling, and community.

Tracie VerMerris



Tracie, a junior from Dorr, Mich., majoring in music in worship and vocal performance, has a passion for both music and worship. Tracie is excited to be part of the Jubilee Fellows program to explore her gifts and interests, and she hopes this will be a valuable learning experience in worshiping God and serving a Christian community.

Phil Vestal



Phil, a junior from Manhattan, Ill., first came to Calvin to study physics, but after feeling God's call to ministry is now majoring in religion. After Calvin, he plans to attend seminary to work toward a master's of divinity. He is excited to preach and bring the Good News to people all over the world. God has also given him a heart for the poor and a passion to spend some time serving the least of these, whether it is at home or abroad.

—Myrna Anderson

Most important, the internships allow students to discern whether formal ministry is right for them. “It helps students to discern what is best,” said Cooper, referring to Philippians 1:10: “So that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.”

In the seven-year history of the program, about two-thirds of the Jubilee Fellows have gone on to seminary; others have pursued Bible translation and other ministry options. Still others have chosen to be more committed and active members of their respective congregations. All of those are successful outcomes, Cooper said.

The Jubilee Fellows program was founded in the 2002-2003 academic year with a five-year grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. When the grant ran

Jubilee Fellow Brandon Haan with mentor Ren Broekhuizen



Tracie VerMerris prepares for devotions at the Jubilee Fellows’ weekly seminar class.

out this spring, the program came under the auspices of the new department of Congregational and Ministry Studies.

Cooper is grateful for the college’s continued support. “We are partners together in this [program],” he said. “The people who raise the money and the people who use the money are all putting their gifts together to say, ‘What are we doing for the next generation?’”

At least one member of that generation is enthusiastic—and flexible—about finding out where his calling might take him. “In the future I could see myself involved in anything from pastoral training in Africa to working at a soup kitchen to preaching on Sunday mornings,” Kuipers said.



Myrna Anderson is a senior writer in communications and marketing at Calvin College.

Calvin Gets Four-star Rating

Charity Navigator, named one of the “50 coolest websites” by *Time* magazine, is the largest independent evaluator of charities in the United States.

The website evaluates the efficacy and responsiveness of nonprofit organizations by analyzing raw financial data about their fundraising, programming, and administration.

Calvin College recently received Charity Navigator’s top rating of four stars.

“Receiving four out of a possible four stars indicates that an organization excels, as compared to other charities in America, in successfully managing its finances in an efficient and effective manner,” says Kaitlin Wolf, a program analyst for Charity Navigator.

“[Calvin’s] rating is an exceptional feat, especially given the economic challenges many charities have had to face in the past year.”

Doing More with Less

Calvin garnered this top rating in large part due to its lean administrative and fund-raising operations. At Calvin, only 1.9 percent of the total operating budget is spent on administrative expenses, and Calvin spends a mere 8 cents to raise one dollar in charitable contributions.

To compare nonprofit organizations, including colleges and universities, see www.charitynavigator.org.

“Calvin has very lean and efficient faculty and staff configurations. Our faculty and staff are well qualified, and they work hard and effectively, and our staff-to-faculty ratio is very low com-



Taking their studies outdoors is a spring-time rite for Calvin students.

pared to other colleges and universities,” says Calvin College president Gaylen Byker.

“These features combine to give the college low administrative costs and low fund-raising overhead.”

Educating the Giver

Many causes are worthy of philanthropic support. But which organizations are most effective at translating financial gifts into action? Which nonprofits are the best stewards of your financial resources? Charity Navigator’s mission is to help prospective philanthropists make informed decisions about their charitable gifts.

Last year more than 12,000 donors gave to the Calvin Annual Fund, a vital source of year-to-year support for the college’s operating budget. Thanks to additional sources of revenue, like the Calvin Annual Fund, each student’s tuition is on average 25 percent less than the actual cost of a Calvin education.

“We are very grateful for these gifts,” says Jan Druyvesteyn, Calvin’s director of development. “Donors can feel con-



Calvin student at “home” in the dorm.

fident about their decision to support Calvin because as a college we strive to be good stewards of all our resources. Most important, each gift to the college directly strengthens our ability to serve our students.”



Ashleigh Draft is coordinator of donor communications at Calvin College.

Calvin College at a Glance

Calvin College was founded in 1876 in Grand Rapids, Mich., as a school to train Christian Reformed Church ministers. The college’s first class consisted of seven students and one professor who met in a one-room schoolhouse.

Calvin has grown significantly since those early days. Today the college offers 100 majors, minors, and programs to a student body of 4,100 undergraduates who come to Calvin’s 400-acre campus from across North America and around the world (almost 10 percent of the student body comes from outside the United States).

But the essential mission of Calvin and its foundational principles have not changed. Now, as was true a century ago, Calvin College works to train young women and men to make a difference in God’s world.

In the words of the college’s mission statement, “Calvin College is a comprehensive liberal arts college in the Reformed tradition of historic Christianity. Through our learning, we seek to be agents of renewal in the academy, church, and society. We pledge fidelity to Jesus Christ, offering our hearts and lives to do God’s work in God’s world.”

Why Hold Synod?

APRIL SHOWERS, MAY FLOWERS, JUNE SYNODS. That might sound strange, but for those of us directly involved in denominational ministries synod marks the beginning of summer. This year 188 elders and pastors from across North America will gather June 13-20 on the beautiful campus of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill., to worship, fellowship, work, and eat together.

Half of these men and women are pastors, called by God to serve and lead local churches as they engage their communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The rest are men and women who serve God in other vocations. Leaving family and friends at home, many will come from far away to serve God and the denomination in a unique and special way.

For a week they serve the Christian Reformed Church by setting directions and future plans. For a week they are “synodians,” to coin a term. While synodians have a special task and calling, they are just like you and me. They have the same struggles, the same fears, the same hopes, the same disappointments.

They come from small churches, medium churches, and large churches. They worship in traditional, contemporary, and blended styles. Some speak English; others Korean, Spanish, Navajo, Cantonese, or other languages. They are as diverse as the churches and members they serve. When they gather, they bring all this diversity to the table, along with their desire to advance the kingdom of God.

One may wonder how a gathering of leaders conducting the business of the church advances the kingdom of God. After all, aren't those who teach and preach, those who bring healing and relief, those who *do* the work—aren't *they* the ones who ultimately make a difference? Wouldn't the church be better served if we just let those folks do what God has called them to do? Why have synods at all? Why spend the time, energy, and money to hold this weeklong gathering?

There was a time when I asked the same questions. I wondered if there was a more efficient way, a more effective way.

“We need Synod to keep us accountable to one another.”



But let me suggest that we need Synod to keep us accountable to one another.

We need our best hearts and minds reviewing, critiquing, and affirming the work we do together. We need men and women with a passion for the gospel of grace to help us remain faithful to the great commission and to living out the great commandment.

Just as we need and honor relief workers, missionaries, and pastors, we need and honor the delegates who will serve the church at Synod 2009.

When I say *we*, I do not mean just the denominational ministries and agencies. I mean *all of us*. We need to think about how we address the Belhar Confession, how we respond to Third Wave Pentecostalism, how we gather and use the financial resources so generously provided by churches and individuals across our continent.

We need to find methods and structures that will guide and direct us in the future. We need to come to terms with the financial realities faced by our churches and by our denomination. We need to ask the tough questions and listen to the tough answers. We need to pray and work for the coming of the kingdom.

We need our “synodians.” We need these elders and ministers who have been called by God to serve in this special way. I encourage you to pray for them. Pray for discernment, for servant hearts, for wisdom, for grace, for love. And pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of these men and women as they seek to be God's agents of transformation in a world so desperately in need of Jesus and his message of hope.

P.S. Synod proceedings will be webcast on the CRCNA's website (www.crcna.org). I invite you watch and listen. On Monday evening I will present a “state of the church” address. I hope you can join us. ■



Jerry Dykstra is executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Rev. Paul Mpindi of BTGMI preaches at the Tyrannus Rally in Bangui, capital city of the Central African Republic.



“CAUGHT BY THE LORD”

Félix and Adela had been hearing for weeks about a big rally planned for Bangui in the Central African Republic and wondered what all the fuss was about.

They asked their friend Joseph, the director of a Christian radio station, “What is Tyrannus 2009?”

Joseph encouraged Félix and Adela to go to the evangelistic rally to hear Rev. Paul Mpindi, radio preacher for “Perspective Réformées,” Back to God Ministries International’s French-language program.

They decided, mostly out of curiosity, to join 15,000 others who crowded into a soccer stadium for the rally. The encounter changed their lives forever.

Pastors and church leaders in Bangui organized the Tyrannus Rally (named for the discipling ministry of the apostle Paul in Acts 19:9) and invited Mpindi to speak.

Mpindi also trained 900 pastors and 1,000 women (faithful listeners to a program hosted by Mpindi’s wife, Charlotte) in preparation for follow-up after the rally.

After months of planning and preparation, Mpindi preached a powerful message based on John 8:30-36 about the freedom God gives through Christ. At the end, more than 3,000 people came forward to commit their lives to Christ, and approximately 5,000 people made a recommitment to live as disciples of Jesus.

Félix and Adela joined those who flocked to the front of the stadium to give their lives to Christ for the first time. “They were longtime unbelievers who came out of curiosity,” reports Mpindi, “but they were caught by the Lord!”

Mpindi spent the next three days in Bangui, along with the follow-up leaders, discipling those who came to the ministry center for prayer, Bible

study, and spiritual counseling. Many asked to be freed from the power of witchcraft.

“The exciting part about the success of the rally is that it was initiated and planned by the local churches working in cooperation with each other and with Back to God Ministries International,” he said.

“In addition, the president of Central African Republic [who is a Christian] lent us his

high-tech sound equipment to use at the rally free of charge. It was truly remarkable to see the wonderful collaboration of so many people to bring the good news of freedom in Christ. The place was soaked with the Spirit of God. Everyone could sense it.”

—Nancy Vander Meer,
Back to God Ministries
International

MAYOR TELLS OF FAITH AT WORK

Rev. George Heartwell, mayor of Grand Rapids, Mich., recently talked with students and staff of Calvin Theological Seminary about his leadership journey and his work with churches and community organizations.

Heartwell told the story of his unlikely journey from successful mortgage broker to pastor to politician.

He was on a safe and secure career track in the financial world when he went to Haiti on a mission trip that changed his life. After finishing seminary, Heartwell took a position at Heartside Ministry, an organization that serves homeless people in the core of Grand Rapids. Eventually, he became a city commissioner and has been mayor of Grand Rapids for the past five years.

Asked to evaluate the impact of the church on the city of Grand Rapids, Heartwell spoke passionately about the church’s ministry of mercy, manifested by a host of food pantries, ministries for the homeless, and volunteerism in scores of nonprofit organizations committed to addressing the needs of the poor.

At the same time, he challenged the church to be more passionate in its call for justice, to confront those in power—including the mayor—to seek justice for all, and especially to advocate for the most vulnerable members of society.

—Duane Kelderman, vice president for administration at Calvin Theological Seminary

MEETING FOCUSES ON WOMEN IN POVERTY

Being born female shouldn't mean having less access to health-care, education, or safety. Unfortunately, that is the experience of women and girls all over the world.

Some experts estimate that more than 70 percent of people living in absolute poverty are women and that two-thirds of uneducated children are girls.

That's why the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) has made gender equality a central component of all its programs. It's also why a team of CRWRC staff and partners met in Senegal to



Through a CRWRC-supported youth program, Senegalese girls are gaining skills and hope for their future.

review gender programs and share best practices.

"In many parts of the world women are seen as second-

class citizens," said CRWRC-Bangladesh staff member Kohima Daring. "But women are valued by God, and

CRWRC's job is to help communities understand this and work for gender equality."

During its time in Senegal, the gender evaluation team reviewed case studies of CRWRC programs around the world. In Niger, for example, CRWRC staff visited communities and encouraged leaders to get input from males and females alike. They also addressed community needs, including issues that were important to women.

When women saw that they were heard and included, they began to speak up. As men saw how improvements

EQUIPPING STUDENTS TO BE DISCIPLES

As a campus pastor at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Ed Laarman faces a daunting challenge: how to introduce the gospel to students who are skeptical about God and religion.

But Laarman, who leads the school's Geneva Campus Ministry, funded by Christian Reformed Home Missions, believes that his ministry has something unique to offer the university's 30,000 students.

"By bringing a Christian worldview to life on campus, we help students and faculty see that faith doesn't conflict with learning and professional service, but complements them," says Laarman,



Ed Laarman: "We help students and faculty see that faith doesn't conflict with learning and professional service, but complements them."

who has directed the ministry since 2005. "Our students will bear this witness throughout the world. That's a pretty powerful vision."

With his wife, Joan, Laarman leads a host of activities

designed to challenge students to consider a biblical, Reformed worldview.

Raised in Michigan, Laarman attended Calvin Theological Seminary and earned a Ph.D. in theological ethics at Notre Dame, which led him to three visiting assistant professorships.

"I loved university life," he says. "But when I couldn't find a permanent teaching job, God called me into parish ministry. It seemed like a whole new career path." In fact, it was the same path, just a different leg of the journey that eventually brought him to Geneva Campus Ministry. "Twenty years later I realized where I was being led," he says. "I'd done campus and I'd done ministry; God had prepared me for campus ministry."

Now it is Laarman's task to prepare students to be followers of Christ. "Geneva is steadfastly committed to equipping students, faculty, and staff to be mature disciples of Jesus Christ," he remarks. "But a campus is a dynamic place, always in motion, and our ministry taps into that."

—Ben Van Houten,
Christian Reformed Home Missions

for women made positive impacts on families and communities, they became more open to new ideas.

“Women in savings groups were initially awarded smaller loans than men, due to pressure from the men in the group,” said CRWRC-Niger staff member Harouna Issaka. After two years, the women had demonstrated that they were just as capable of managing loans as were the men. Today, gender makes no difference in loan amounts.

The evaluation team also visited project sites to talk with program participants.

“This program has changed the way I feel about myself, encouraged me to share with my parents, given me courage to tell men to leave me alone, and now I can make good choices and decisions,” said a teenage girl who is part of a youth program organized by one of CRWRC’s partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Senegal.

Through the process, the team gleaned successful methods, techniques, and activities to share with the whole organization and made recommendations for how CRWRC can enhance gender-equality efforts, including surrounding the work with prayer, increasing staff knowledge and skills, and reminding staff to be sensitive to context while also challenging cultures with God’s truth.

— *Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, CRWRC*

CRC BLOSSOMS IN SIERRA LEONE

More than 20 years of patient work, coupled with some timely interventions by God, have led to the blossoming of the Christian Reformed Church among the mostly Muslim population of several villages in northern Sierra Leone.

When he talks of the growth, a light comes to the eyes and a smile to the face of Paul Kortenhoven, a Christian Reformed World Missions missionary who worked for many years, through good times and through a bloody civil war, to share the gospel with the people of this West African country.

Kortenhoven no longer lives there but stays in close contact with Rev. John Phiri, the Zambian pastor hired by World Missions to work among the people of Sierra Leone.

As he watches the church grow, Kortenhoven says he is grateful that his approach to ministry was to first immerse himself in the culture, which meant becoming familiar with the customs and even reading the Qur’an, and then responding to the needs and interests of people as they expressed them.

Sometimes that meant helping people fix diesel engines. Kortenhoven and his wife, Mary, reached out with delicacy and diplomacy, aware that if Christianity is forced on someone, it generally doesn’t last.

“We waited 20 years, and all of a sudden there was an opening,” he said. “I think that



Paul Kortenhoven (center) with John Phiri (right) and Karifa Jalloh (left). Jalloh is a former evangelist now studying to be a teacher.

being there, going through the war, and being in the refugee camps was an example to the people of how Christians live and act.

“We treated everyone the same. We worked with the existing structures and rolled with the punches.”

The Kortenhovens left full-time ministry in Sierra Leone in 2002, and Phiri was recruited and hired by World Missions in 2005.

“John is an amazing gift from God,” Kortenhoven said. “He is completely dedicated. He sleeps in the villages, but only goes there if he is invited. He has many skills and exudes a love for the people.”

Phiri said he and his staff reached five Muslim villages

with the gospel last December. In all, they connected with more than 100 people. He is working with the youths of these areas and hopes to be able to add a youth coordinator to his staff. “The future looks promising,” he says, “as the youths embrace the faith.”

Phiri also reported some stunning statistics about the growth of the church in Sierra Leone. In 1980 there were no churches in the area. Now there are 47, with plans for six more.

Church attendance has grown from zero in 1980 to 3,100 in 2008. Baptized membership has grown from none to 500. And the number of local leaders in training for Christian ministry has grown from zero to more than 50.

—*Chris Meehan, CRC Communications*

Common Scents

What are your favorite spring and summer smells? Lilacs? Freshly-cut grass? Rain? Grilled hamburgers? There are lots of great smells (scents) out there right now.

Correction: There are lots *and lots* of great scents out there. There are many of them we can't smell—but some creatures can. Read these pages for some amazing examples.

Here's the point: Lots of things that we can't possibly observe happen right under our noses. Creation is much more complex than we'll ever know.

One thing we do know: We don't *need* to smell lilacs, freshly-cut grass, rain, or any great spring scent. But those smells are still there. That's a gift from our Creator. Enjoy!

Try It!

Who smells what? See for yourself. Put small samples of these things onto a plate: rotten fruit, spoiled meat, dry sugar, honey. Put the plate outside for a few days. Check it often to see which creatures visit each food.

Sensing Scents

Instead of posting "No Trespassing" signs, squirrels mark their territories with scents. They smell each other's scents to read these invisible "No Trespassing" signs.

Some squirrels recognize individual squirrel scents. Sniff, sniff: "Mom's home." "Chip's been here." Or "A stranger's nearby!" That helps keep squirrel families safe.

Squirrels can also sniff out some predators (other creatures who might want to eat them). They recognize the scents of wild cats, foxes, and snakes. Snake scent can drive some squirrels nuts. Because snakes can be sneaky, God gave squirrels an early warning system.



SCOTT HOLLADAY



Smelling in Stereo

Instead of using a nose, a snake smells with its forked tongue. It flicks out its tongue to collect scent molecules from the air. Then it rubs those molecules onto a special two-part "scent detector" in its mouth. It can smell its food (like squirrels), other snakes, and enemies that way.

The tongue is forked so that the snake can follow scent trails. If the odor is stronger on one side, the snake turns in that direction. That's great for tracking prey or a mate, or for following other snakes to a winter den.

A snake can't see much from flat on the ground. So it surveys the scene by smelling in stereo. Perfect!

Night Scents

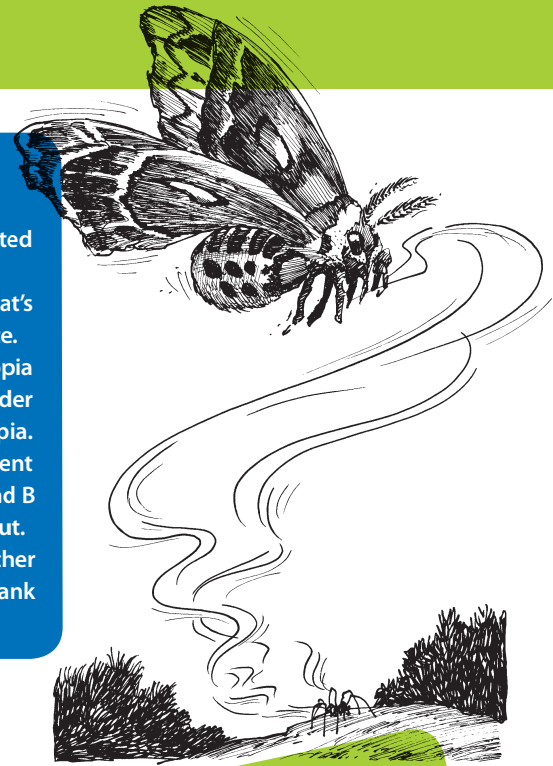
Moths are night fliers. They usually smell, rather than see, the flowers they visit. Moth-pollinated flowers often give off scents at night, not during the day.

Some moths also smell each other. A male *Cecropia* moth can smell a female *Cecropia* that's more than a mile away. He doesn't smell other female moths, only the *Cecropia*. That's his mate.

A certain spider hunts *Cecropia* moths. The spider can't fly. It must sit and wait for a *Cecropia* to come to it. What are the chances of *that* happening? Actually, they're very good! This spider makes the female *Cecropia* scent and wafts it into the night air. That lures in the male *Cecropia*.

There's more. Another spider hunts two different types of moths that fly at slightly different times of night. The spider wafts scent A into the air when moth A is out. It wafts scents A and B when both moths A and B are out. Later it wafts scent B only when only moth B should be out.

There's more yet, but you get the point: Creation is fantastic. Much of its web hangs together by scents. Thank God that certain creatures can smell them. And sometimes, we should thank God that we can't!



Sensing the World

Imagine this: Someone knocks on your door, but you don't know who's there. What do you do? Peek through a window, right? That's how you find out if the person is a relative, a friend, or a stranger. You need to know that before you open the door, so you peek.

Dogs and their wild relatives do the same thing. They need to know what other animals are nearby so they can defend their territory, their food, and their mate. But instead of peeking, they sniff. One or two sniffs tells them all the things that you learn by peeking. Scents tell them a lot about their world.

Making Scents

Have you heard ants talk to each other? Probably not. But you can watch them "talk." Watch them touch antennae when they meet, walk in a line, or swarm to protect their ant hill. They're "talking" to each other with scents called pheromones ("FARE-uh-moans").

Most ants say things like, "I'm from your colony," "Follow me to food," "All is well," and "All is not well." Some ants even say, "I'm dead!" When they die they let out a "death pheromone." Other ants smell that, pick them up, and drag them out of the nest.

Ants need messages to make their colonies work together. So they've been given lots of them. In the world of scents, ants are champs. When you see ants marching in a line, drag your finger across the line between two ants. This erases the scent trail for a few seconds. It confuses the ants, but it won't hurt them.




Little Scents

When it comes to smelling scents, flies and beetles are no slouches. A blowfly can smell something rotten up to a mile away. A bluebottle fly can smell a squirrel an hour or two after it dies. That's long before we think it stinks. A burying beetle can smell a dead mouse up to two miles away just one hour after it dies.

These bugs bury and recycle dead and rotten stuff. Thank God that they can smell that stuff long before we can!



Joanne De Jonge is a U.S. National Park ranger in northern Michigan. She belongs to West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.



BY GORDON TERPSTRA

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN A WAR ZONE

AS I LIE AWAKE each night in Iraq, I ache with homesickness for the abundant water, the evergreen trees, the peaceable mountains, the lush farmlands, and the loving safety of my home in Washington state. This is the most difficult year of my life and yet, paradoxically, the most deepening and meaningful. I would not relive this year, but neither would I trade it. Go figure.

The tests here are arduous, and they stretch my soul. But the growth of spirit and the meaningfulness of ministry are every bit as tangible as the ordeals. It is a year of terrible trial yet beautiful blessing . . . a paradox for this Army chaplain.

My assignment is Phoenix Base in Baghdad, where I am responsible for 900 soldiers. I also fly across the country to distant FOB's (Forward Operating Bases), where I minister to another 300 scattered soldiers. Mostly I travel via Blackhawk

helicopter, but occasionally we convoy into the Red Zone. I never sleep well the night before we fly over dangerous areas.

As chaplain to these troops I counsel them, befriend them, conduct their chapel services, listen to their heartaches, sit with them in their tears, pray for them when they are wounded, and hug them when they need it. I conduct their memorial services if they die. I perform these ministries no matter what their faith or lack of faith. An Army chaplain serves every soldier in the unit.

The Worst Day

What a trial this war is! The most graphic cost has been performing six memorial services for seven of our soldiers. One was for a 24-year-old airman who only had two weeks of service left before he could return to his wife and little girls.

In March 2008 a rocket attack killed two and wounded 18. That attack knocked me to the ground. I spent all afternoon and

evening in the hospital, praying with the wounded, crying with the grieving, and committing the deceased into the gracious arms of the Lord. The floor was awash in blood. At day's end I dropped my body armor onto the floor of my hutch with a thud and literally collapsed into bed. The next day I began counseling those with survivor's guilt and ongoing trauma.

Colonel Stephen Scott was one of our two KIAs (Killed in Action) that horrific day. A few weeks before, he had approached me in the mess hall with a sunny smile and thanked me for the message about heaven I'd given that morning in chapel. Now, as I stared into his lifeless face, contorted in violent death, I wondered what it was like for him to be with Jesus his Savior.

Another killed that day was Major Stu Wolfer. I sat between two Army captains with my arms around their shoulders as they wept over their dear friend. Some-

times ministry is simply being present as people weep—even tough Army captains need to cry. That very night I gazed down at those two black body bags ready to be airlifted out to the States. We call these “Angel Flights.” Indeed, may God’s angels bear them home. We all stood saluting in the dark until the choppers were gone.

That horrible day in the hospital was its own paradox. On the one hand I felt so helpless. I am not a doctor or a nurse. All I could do was walk among the wounded, touch them, say a prayer, be present, hold those who wept, and pray over the dead. I could not do anything medical for them. I felt so inept.

On the other hand, in that very weakness was God’s power. To be present in the name of the Lord, to pray, to touch as Jesus would touch, to read Psalm 23, and to weep with those who weep is to feel divine strength.

Ongoing Trials

Trials continue. Seventeen soldiers came to me after their spouses in the States told them their marriages were over. Sit with me and listen to their agony. Or stand with me by the bed of a 24-year-old soldier whose right leg was just amputated because of a bomb attack. Or listen with me to a high-ranking officer as he expresses his raw fear. Or sit with a suicidal soldier and try to bring some sanity back into his life.

We have endured more than 460 rocket attacks this year. Continual dashes to bunkers become a daily habit. After one attack I held a sergeant in my arms as he sobbed on my chest, realizing how close he came to never seeing his little boy again.

We often awaken at 6:00 a.m. to the warning siren as another attack comes in. At those times, all I can do is lie there and pray with my heart racing and sweat



**I would not
relive this year,
but neither
would I trade it.**

pouring off my forehead. The crack of a rocket hitting 50 feet away punches home how quickly life can be over.

I also minister to the Iraqi workers on base. One morning I arrived at Phoenix Base to discover that one of our translators had been found beheaded in the Tigris River. We gathered in a room for prayer and to calm the other workers’ terror-stricken hearts.

I walk to our church service on Sunday morning as the sound of a gun battle resounds a few blocks away. You get used to it. Or you hear the explosion and feel the concussion of a suicide truck bomber trying to crash our gate and you wonder how many people died in that instant. You get used to that too. You hear the medevac helicopters ferrying the wounded and dying to the hospital all day and all night. I will never forget that day-in, day-out drone.

You trudge into your empty hutch night after night without your loving spouse to greet you, thinking, “How many nights can I endure this, Lord?”

Ongoing Blessings

Paradoxically, blessing and meaning live here as well.

Chapel services on Sunday run 120 soldiers. They don’t care about the worship wars of churches back home. They just want to sit in the presence of God and be fed in their souls. They crave assurance that God is with them in this place.

And there is the blessing of being present for a soldier who needs a human pastor to sit with him as he cries. Or the blessing of wearing the cross on my uniform where soldiers can see it and be reminded that God is here. Or the beauty of how God uses this desert experience to enlarge my soul and deepen my walk with him. Or the openness of 500 soldiers at Chris Frost’s memorial service to the statement before the message: “In a time of sadness like this, we need to hear a word from the Lord.” Or the blessing of praying for our troops and their families with my chaplain assistant, Staff Sergeant John Lucero, as we arrive at Phoenix Base each morning.

All this is part of what your military chaplains continue to do each day in Iraq and Afghanistan, in places where the touch of Christ is especially needed. That is why we wear the cross on our uniform—not to endorse war, but to be the living presence of the Prince of Peace in these places too. Yes, even here. ■



Rev. Gordon Terpstra is a military chaplain (lieutenant colonel) with the U.S. Army Reserves and associate pastor of Hope in Christ Christian

Reformed Church, Bellingham, Wash. He spent 2007-2008 ministering to soldiers in the war zone of Iraq.

Stories for Summer Days



IF READING IS TO DO ANYTHING, it is to delight us and to enlarge us. And now, in summer, when life moves a little more slowly, a little less hysterically, perhaps reading can work its way most potently upon us.

To that end, books such as the following wait to entertain and challenge both children and adults.

For younger readers, Kimiko Kajikawa's *Tsunami!* (Philomel) offers a tale of nobility and honor and sacrifice. Illustrated by Ed Young, the story is an old Japanese folktale in which a wealthy farmer burns his rice crop, ruining himself, to save the townspeople who live by the sea from the tidal wave that the farmer sees coming—but which they do not. The noble sacrifice is trumped only by his hospitality: When the entire village is destroyed, the farmer says, "My house remains. And there is room for many." That, as my grandmother would say, will do.

For upper-elementary readers, there is Kate DiCamillo's *The Tale of Despereaux* (Candlewick)—and here, ignore the movie and the lousy "junior novelization" that came out with it. Read the original,

**In summer,
perhaps reading
can work its way
most potently
upon us.**

in which you will find a mouse willing to brave darkness and despair for the sake of light and love. The astonishing narrator of this book, who beckons you close because stories have light and truth, shows an unlikely hero whose greatest quality is not bravery or martial feats, but his ability to forgive. That will do, too.

For middle-grade readers, Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* (Square Fish) tells of a boy who tries to remake himself to fit into the larger culture, only to discover the falseness of crafting new identities. His story is brilliantly intermixed with the Chinese mythology of the Monkey King, and culminates with Yang's powerful evocation of Psalm 139: "Where can I go from your Spirit?"

For high school readers, try Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion* (Simon Pulse), a powerful futuristic fantasy in which the protagonist is a clone. The questions raised in this fast-moving plot are those all adolescents ask: Who am I? Who does the Lord say I am? How do I find my place in the world? The answers will surprise and challenge and affirm our uniqueness.

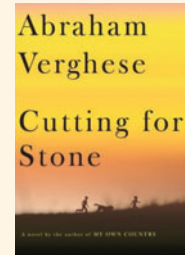
These, with the sounds of birds, promise an afternoon well spent. ■



Gary D. Schmidt is a professor of English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. He has also won several awards, including two Newbery Honors, for his books for children and young adults.

Cutting for Stone

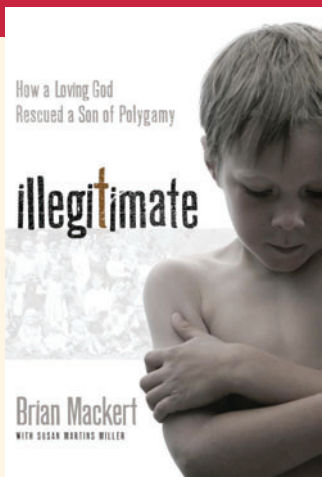
by **Abraham Verghese**
reviewed by **Otto Sells**



If you can't travel far this summer, take the imaginative and well-crafted ride offered by this historical

tale of doctors and nurses in India, Ethiopia, and New York City. A professor of medicine, Verghese has a knack for turning medical procedures and surgery into exciting drama. Crossing generations and cultures, the novel focuses on the lives of Marion and Shiva Stone, twin brothers born to a nun in an Ethiopian mission hospital. This medical page-turner takes on biblical proportions by addressing themes of misguided love, separation, adoption, and reconciliation. For adult readers. (Knopf)

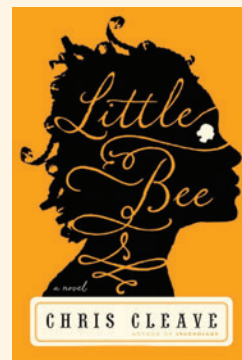




Illegitimate: How a Loving God Rescued a Son of Polygamy

by **Brian Mackert**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

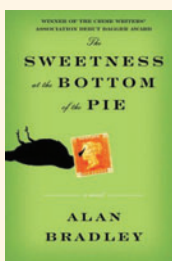
The police raid on the Yearning for Zion Ranch in Eldorado, Texas, and the imprisonment of its leader Warren Jeffs in 2007 brought Brian Mackert back to his painful past. He was a child of a polygamous family belonging to the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (FLDS). Comparing his family to the FLDS, Mackert writes, "We lived a hidden, deceitful existence in a hidden, deceitful community." This narrative of his journey out of the cult into the freedom of Christ is both informative and inspiring. (David C. Cook)



Little Bee

by **Chris Cleave**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

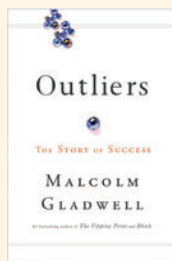
In this searing indictment of Britain's immigration removal centers and treatment of refugees, Cleave gives readers an unforgettable character in Little Bee, a Nigerian asylum seeker. Caught between her homeland's violence and a democracy's inhumane treatment, Little Bee does what she needs to in order to save herself and those whom she loves. By turns despairing and hopeful, this challenging novel, containing violence, profanity, and sexually explicit scenes, offers profound insights into the lives of "floating people." (Simon and Schuster)



The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie

by **Alan Bradley**
reviewed by **Jim Romahn**

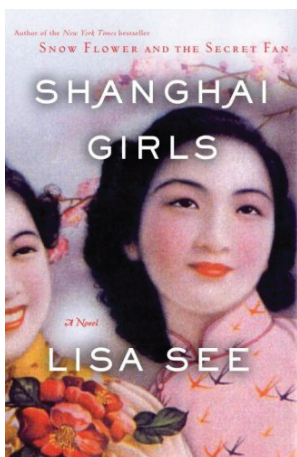
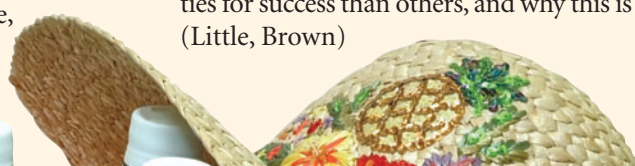
Flavia de Luce is only 11, the daughter of the heir to the Buckshaw mansion. She is brilliant. Fascinated by poisons, she experiments with them in a well-equipped lab in the mansion. She delights in aggravating her two older sisters. Her reclusive father is a stamp collector and is rattled when a dead bird, its beak spiked through a stamp, is left at his door. In this novel for adults, Flavia leads us through this humorous tale of intrigue, murder, and suspense. (Doubleday Canada)



Outliers: The Story of Success

by **Malcolm Gladwell**
reviewed by **Ron DeBoer**

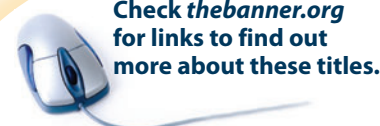
Did you know that more professional baseball players are born in August than any other month? Ever wonder why? Did you know Bill Gates and the Beatles owe much of their success to the fact they got their 10,000 hours of practice in their chosen interest at a very young age? In *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell dismisses the usual myths of intelligence and rags-to-riches success and looks more deeply at things like family, birthplace, and birth date to explain why some people have better opportunities for success than others, and why this is wrong. (Little, Brown)



Shanghai Girls

by **Lisa See**
reviewed by **Joyce Kane**

Lisa See (*Peony in Love*) offers another excellent historical novel, this one set in Shanghai in the 1930s. Privileged sisters Pearl and May travel with freedom throughout the city, socializing and posing as "calendar girls," until their father loses his wealth and Shanghai is invaded by the Japanese. Driven by the horrors of war, they set out on a difficult journey to America, carrying with them a secret that will determine the course of their future. (Random House)



Check thebanner.org
for links to find out
more about these titles.

This Is Water Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life
by David Foster Wallace

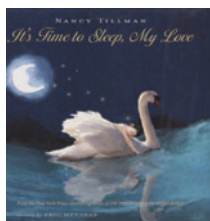
This Is Water

by David Foster Wallace
reviewed by Phil Christman Jr.

The late David Foster Wallace never outgrew his reputation as a writer of zany, brainy hipster entertainments. But those who actually read his books (and not just their reviews) know that compassion, not cleverness, was his true subject—and his true achievement. Like the speeches and fables of Tolstoy, this 2005 commencement speech, published in the form of a gift book, reveals that quality in the course of describing it. “The really important kind of freedom,” writes Wallace, is showing compassion “in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day.” (Little, Brown)

It's Time to Sleep, My Love

by Eric Metaxas
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



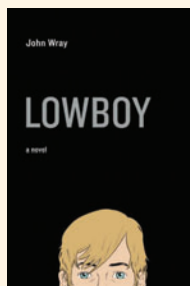
It's the end of the day, time for children and animals to sleep. Eric Metaxas's soothing lullaby, punctuated with a recurring refrain—

“It's time to sleep, my love”—invites young children into the beauty and peacefulness of the God-given gift of rest. Nancy Tillman's exquisite illustrations of the natural world celebrate God's creatures caring for and loving their young as night falls. (Feiwele and Friends)



Lowboy

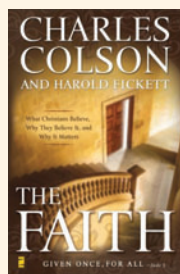
by John Wray
reviewed by Phil Christman Jr.



A 16-year-old escaped mental patient roams the New York subway system, convinced that only he can save the world from global warming. Wray's third novel blends the excitement of a suspense thriller with a convincing evocation of mental illness; makes some delightful, sly *Catcher in the Rye* references; describes the tunnels of NYC so thoroughly (and entertainingly) that you'll throw away your map; and gives dramatic form to an ecological and political problem from which most American writers shrink. (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

The Faith

by Charles Colson and Harold Fickett
reviewed by Wayne Brouwer



Colson's latest book might be called “Christianity 101.” Fifteen short chapters spell out “what Christians believe, why they believe it, and why it matters.” A bit disjointed, like many of Colson's books, this collection would serve as fine discussion material in a small group that meets weekly or monthly. While the elements of faith are made accessible by Colson, following the general outline of the Apostles' Creed, only those that focus on behaviors (for example, chapter nine, “Reconciliation”) are gripping. (Zondervan)

Tender Grace

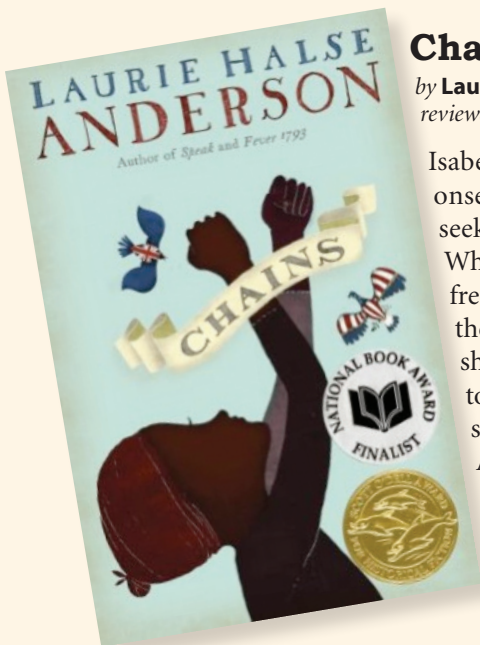
by Jackina Stark
reviewed by Kristy Quist



At age 55, Audrey Eaton realizes that she lost her love for life when she lost her husband more than a year before. Leaving her home and loved ones behind temporarily, Audrey takes a solitary road trip. Though she continues to grieve, she finds friends and a renewed gratitude for life and God's grace along the way. Fans of inspirational fiction will appreciate this thoughtful debut novel. (Bethany House)

Chains

by Laurie Halse Anderson
reviewed by Kathryn Hoffman



Isabel is a young slave girl in New York at the onset of the Revolutionary War. Desperately seeking freedom, Isabel enlists as a Tory spy. When she discovers that the Patriots' call for freedom does not include her, Isabel turns to the British army for help, only to realize that she is their pawn and must find the courage to help herself. Using Isabel's voice, Anderson's young adult novel deftly reveals how African slaves were “chained between two nations” throughout this period in American history. (Simon & Schuster)

Piety and Religion

IF I HAD TO CHOOSE ONLY TWO CONCEPTS from John Calvin’s vast theology to teach my spiritual heirs, I’d choose *piety* and *religion*.

Perhaps my choices surprise you. The word *piety* has fallen on hard times. Nowadays, most people think piety has to do with a show of exaggerated religious emotionalism. It smacks of affected—artificial?—external spiritual devotion. *Religion* doesn’t fare much better. Most folks view it as something that forces people into an institution or organization, corralling them within imposed beliefs and practices.

But for Calvin, *piety* and *religion* are good words—*very* good words! They’re shorthand for describing all that goes into living life as God intends, becoming more and more the person that God wants us to become in Christ. Taken together, *piety* and *religion* form the entire dynamic of the Christian life.

Do me a favor and read this article to its very end with an open mind toward what Calvin meant by *piety* and *religion*. Then I’ll let you decide whether these concepts are worth keeping.

Says Calvin: “I call ‘piety’ that reverence joined with love

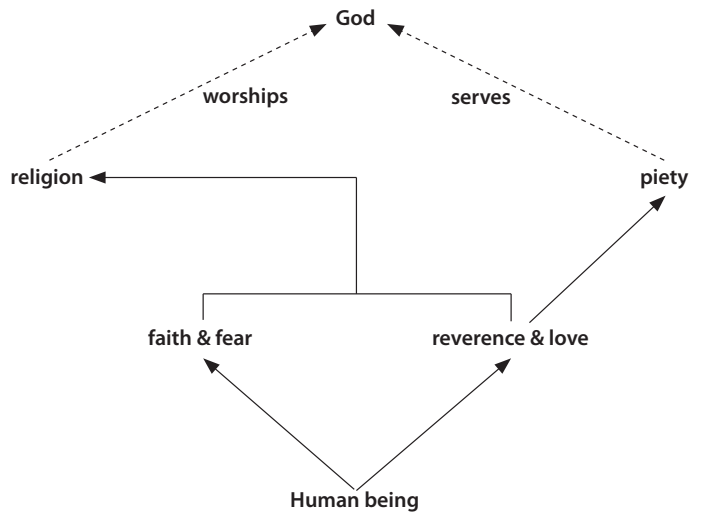
It all starts with paying careful attention to **God’s goodness**.

of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces. For until [people] recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good, that they should seek nothing beyond him—they will never yield him willing service” (*Institutes*, I.ii.1).

Religion, though slightly different in feature and purpose from *piety*, is her joined-at-the-hip twin. “Here indeed is pure and real religion: faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that this fear also embraces willing reverence, and carries with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed in the law” (*Institutes*, I.ii.2).

But how to understand the interrelation of all these heavy words—*piety*, *religion*, *faith*, *fear*, *reverence*, *love*, *knowledge*? My teacher, Ford Lewis Battles, an esteemed Calvin scholar who “Englished” Calvin’s *Institutes* in 1960, helped me to understand with the diagram above.

Pay attention to the lines, the brackets, and the direction of the arrows. God is at the very top. All arrows point toward God. To God alone is due the entire devotion of a person’s life—thus, both worship and service.



The act of giving God daily service arises from and flows out of the work of cultivating *piety*, which is the rousing of one’s spirit toward God daily in both *reverence* and *love*. The act of giving God daily worship, on the other hand, arises from and flows out of the work of cultivating *religion*, which is the rousing of one’s spirit toward God in *faith* and *fear* (*awe* and *respect*). Thus, as a person works daily—hourly and by the minute—to grow in reverence and love, in faith and fear toward God, he or she generates and offers God both worship and service.

And where does the whole dynamic of my living before God’s face with the awareness that I am his favored child begin? It begins, says Calvin, with summoning to my mind “the knowledge of [God’s] benefits.” When I make it my daily calling, my chief aim, to remember my Lord’s goodness toward me, then, in turn, my heart will be moved with gratitude and my lips will long to tell God, “Thanks, Lord, thanks, thanks, thanks!” In response, I’ll set my sights on worshiping and serving my good and faithful Father with all that I’ve got—with my hands, my feet, my lips, my will, my emotions, my conscience, my everything.

It all starts with paying careful attention to God’s goodness toward you, and then telling God “thanks.”

I did my best. It’s your move. ■

WEB Q’S See discussion questions at the end of this article on *The Banner’s* website: www.thebanner.org.



Rev. Dale Cooper is chaplain emeritus of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. He’s writing a special series for *The Banner* this year on the teachings of John Calvin.



Reflection for Independence Day

Promoting peace rather than victory

LAST JULY 4 WEEKEND I came across the following church announcement: “Our Verse of the Day is Psalm 33:12: *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.* Let’s thank God for our freedom today, and pray for the safety and success for the mission of our soldiers around the world as they bring justice to the terrorists so that we can be safe and free from tyranny, here on our country’s soil.”

Typical Independence Day language, but it started me thinking: Is this the kind of language we should be speaking in the church? Is our confidence for well-being based on our military might? What about the remaining words of the same psalm?:

No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him. . . . We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield (33:16-20).

I noticed that the church announcement and suggested prayer lacked an important word: *peace*.

Shouldn’t our prayers go out for peace rather than victory (which equals peace at the cost of more deaths)? Certainly we should pray for the safety of our soldiers, but what about prayers for Iraqi and Afghani civilians? Many more of them are dying every day. What is Jesus’ message to us in all this?

A Thin Line

Approximately 100,000 Iraqi civilians have died since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 (see iraqbodycount.org). And experts agree that is a conservative estimate. One 2006 study showed the number of civilians dead at that time to already be between 400,000 and 600,000 (Lancet study, as covered in the *New York Times*).

Those are startling numbers. On Sept. 11, 2001, when nearly 3,000 civilians died in the United States, we appropriately reacted with outrage. But somehow our outrage subsides when the innocent dead are farther away both geographically and culturally.

Given such statistics, you wonder what makes terrorism so terrible and war so legitimate. In reality, the line between terrorism and war is a thin one, as Wen-

dell Berry notes: “The National Security Strategy defines terrorism as ‘premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents.’ This is truly a distinct kind of violence, but to imply by the word ‘terrorism’ that this sort of terror is the work exclusively of ‘terrorists’ is misleading. The ‘legitimate’ warfare of technologically advanced nations likewise is premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents. The distinction between the intention to perpetrate violence against innocents, as in ‘terrorism,’ and the willingness to do so, as in ‘war,’ is not a source of comfort” (“A Citizen’s Response to the National Security Strategy of the United States”).

Jesus as an Iraqi?

I find it alarming to see many Christians so supportive of such revenge-motivated foreign policy. In our patriotic fervor, we seem to forget Jesus’ call for us to love our enemies, not destroy them with the largest and wealthiest army the world has ever known.

“But,” we say, “Jesus was just talking about interpersonal relationships, not national politics.” Was he? The world Jesus lived in was in some ways very different from our own, but in other ways he was on the other end of a very similar context. His Middle Eastern nation was occupied by the largest superpower in the world at that time. And that empire claimed to spread peace, freedom, civilization, and security. We like to imagine Jesus as an American wearing a “God Bless America” T-shirt. In fact, we’d do better to imagine him as an Iraqi.

Many in Jesus’ audience were eager for armed revolt against Rome. It was to them that Jesus said, “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles” (Matt. 5:39, 41). Roman soldiers felt free to remind the occupied Jewish people who was in

charge with a physical blow. Roman law required people living under Roman rule to carry a soldier’s gear one mile if requested. Jesus addresses people involved in real conflicts with real governments and real soldiers, not simply interpersonal relationships.

Jesus’ entire life and ministry could be viewed as a contrast to what the world offers. In the end, about to face the might of Rome, Jesus told Pilate (Rome’s local representative), “My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, my servants would fight . . .” (John 18:36). He wasn’t saying that his kingdom is apolitical; rather, he was saying *how* his kingdom is political: “the essential difference is that in my kingdom, we do not fight to maintain the kingdom” (Shane Claiborne and Chris Haw, *Jesus for President*, p. 110).

New Testament scholar Marcus Borg notes that Jesus’ words would have had an unmistakable meaning in the politically violent situation of first-century Palestine: “For a public figure to speak of loving one’s enemies in such a setting would unambiguously mean to disavow the path of violence and war” (*Jesus: A New Vision*, p. 139). The church for its first 300 years understood this and maintained a path of nonviolence. It was only when the church went from being a minority in the Roman Empire to the official religion of the empire under Constantine that it began to endorse warfare as sometimes legitimate—indeed, even necessary.

Biblical Ambiguity

Some will say that we can support war because in the Bible it is sometimes even sanctioned by God. John Dominic Crossan addresses this ambiguity: “The ambiguity of divine power suffuses the Christian Bible in *both* its Testaments and therefore presses this question for us Christians: how do we reconcile the ambiguity of our Bible’s violent and/or nonviolent God? The Bible forces us to witness the struggles of these

two transcendental visions *within its own pages* and to ask ourselves as Christians how *we* decide between them. My answer is that *we are bound to whichever of these visions was incarnated by and in the historical Jesus*. It is not the violent but the nonviolent God who is revealed to Christian faith in Jesus of Nazareth and announced to Christian faith by Paul of Tarsus. That is how we Christians decide between a violent and nonviolent God in the Bible: Christ is the norm of the Bible, the criterion of the New Testament, the incarnation of the Gospel” (*God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now*, pp. 94-95).

Are we to blame for not taking Jesus at his word? Marcus Borg notes that it is understandable that the church has largely denied the political thrust of Jesus’ words: “Through time the church became enculturated, and it is very difficult for an enculturated religion to stand in tension with culture. For the church to have said that following Jesus meant nonviolence would have made the church into a counterculture. Only occasionally has it been willing to be so since the time of Jesus and his earliest followers” (*Jesus: A New Vision*, p. 139).

Perhaps it is time for a countercultural church and message to re-emerge. In this day of multibillion-dollar war budgets, may we remember that the Bible from its very beginning calls us to bless the world, rather than rid the world of evil. The latter is God’s business, as Paul reminds us in Romans 12: “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary . . . do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (vv. 19-21). ■



Rev. Bryan Berghoef is pastor of Watershed Church in Traverse City, Mich., a Christian Reformed church plant.

union. We attended the ceremony and the festivities afterward, though with pain in our hearts. Mark said to us, “I know that you do not agree with this, but we are very happy.” Not coming to the ceremony would have hurt him deeply. He is a very good son and a wonderful brother to his siblings.

It pains us when we look at their picture and we see a young man instead of a young woman as Mark’s soulmate. It is difficult for me to speak about this, and as a rule I avoid getting into a long conversation about homosexuality out of fear of losing my composure. Writing is a little easier. My wife is the stronger in this matter. It is her words that gave me some peace: “We have done our work; we showed Mark the way, and now we must leave it up to our heavenly Father.”

Yet the agony is still there.

We visit Mark and Paul regularly, and for the past number of years they have hosted Christmas dinner for the whole family, which most attend if they have no other family commitments. Both Mark and Paul come to our house just as often as most of our other children and their families. They were instrumental in organizing our 50th wedding anniversary, an evening to which all our children contributed. We truly experienced the blessings that our heavenly Father has bestowed on us.

At our church this winter we studied the book *What’s So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey. Chapter 13, which talks about people who are generally not accepted, mentions the experience of Yancey’s closest friend, Mel, who realized he was gay. It brought tears to my eyes to read how Yancey supported his friend, who was married and who was a lay preacher in the church. Mel divorced his

The church I’ve served and love has no place for our son.

wife, convinced that he had to do so. I quote from the book, which shows the attitude of most people:

His former colleagues and employers, famous Christians whom he had hosted, who traveled with him, and who made hundreds of thousands of dollars off his work, suddenly turned away. In an airport Mel walked up to a leading Christian statesman he knew well and held out his hand. The man scowled, turned his back and would not even speak.

Mel was ostracized by many, and Yancey received his own share of criticism for standing by his friend.

The question “Where is my son welcome?” is partially answered in that book: many will not want to associate with your son. Some will, but will not want to broach the Subject. Most of Mark and Paul’s friends are gay; several are professionals, not many are CRC members.

Your son may meet someone with whom he will establish a monogamous relationship. My advice is this: love your son very much. More than any of your other children? No, not more—differently. Support him whenever possible, and don’t be ashamed of him. Pray continually to God for wisdom and his compassion.

I leave you with another quote from the book, this one about Rev. Ed Dobson from Calvary Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., who does not agree with the position of the gay community but has reached out to many:

In time Ed Dobson won the trust from the gay community. One gay person said, “We understand where you stand, and know that you do not agree with us, but you still show the love of Jesus and we are drawn to that.” Ed said to me [Yancey], “If I die and someone stands up at my funeral and says nothing but ‘Ed Dobson loved homosexuals,’ I would feel proud.”

I could go on. We have experienced some of the above, but Mark has been ostracized by the church community. Many people accept him for who he is, but members of the CRC are not in the majority. I could go on, but it would serve no additional purpose. One thing remains: the church I’ve served and love has no place for our son.

I hope that this letter means something to you. You are not alone with your question. Suggest to your son, “Live as God would want you to live.” And never lose your faith. God is compassionate.

In all of this the hurt remains, but the love never fades. ■

Advertising Information

Deadlines: July 2009 issue is 6/1/09. August 2009 issue is 7/6/09. Visit www.thebanner.org for complete details.

Prices: Most ads are \$0.33^{US} per character (min. 150 characters including punctuation and spaces). A discounted rate of \$0.26^{US} per character applies to Anniversaries, Birthdays, Obituaries, Denominational and Classical Announcements, and Congregational Announcements. Photos are \$22^{US} extra.

To Advertise: Place your classified ad online at www.TheBanner.org/classifieds. If you are unable to submit your ad online you may continue to email it to classifieds@TheBanner.org or fax it to 616-224-0834. If you have questions, call 616-224-0725.

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Denominational and Classical Announcements

The council of Elmhurst CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois, hereby calls all duly elected delegates to Synod 2009 to meet in the Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois, on Saturday, June 13, at 9:00 a.m.

All area members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday afternoon, June 14, 2009, at 3:00 p.m. at Elmhurst CRC, 155 West Brush Hill Road, Elmhurst, Illinois. Rev. Bert De Jong will deliver the message.

All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 7, and on Sunday, June 14.

Council of Elmhurst CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois

Admitted into the Ministry

Classis Wisconsin, in session on April 20, 2009, examined Candidate Mary Bosch for ordination and, with the concurring advice of the Synodical Deputies, admitted her to the ministry of the Word in the CRCNA. Mary will be installed in her calling church, New Hope Community CRC of Wisconsin Rapids, on D. V. Friday, May 29, 2009. May Pastor and Church be empowered to abound in the work of the Lord and may Jesus Christ be praised!

Rev. John Bylsma, Stated Clerk - Classis Wisconsin

Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that David L. Spoelma has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

Change in Time of Service

Bethany CRC, Gallup, NM, will have one Sunday worship service at 10:00 a.m. from May 24 through September 6.

Financial Aid

Classis Northern Illinois is now accepting student aid applications from students pursuing word-related ministries. Contact committee chair, Fred DeJong, 12410 VanDyke Road, Plainfield, IL 60585 phone 815-254-3800 email admin@aplacetoconnect.com. Application deadline June 30.

Congregational Announcements

Church's 75th Anniversary

Hollandale CRC, Hollandale, MN. will be celebrating 75 years of God's faithfulness the weekend of Sept 5 and 6. Friends and former members are invited to join us. For information or to order banquet tickets, please e-mail padklout@frontiernet.net or call 507 437-1334

First CRC Sarnia, On. will be celebrating the 75th Anniversary of its organization the weekend of May 30 & 31. A banquet will be held on Saturday night with special services held on Sunday. All friends and former members are certainly invited and welcome to join in this celebration. For more information or to order banquet tickets please e-mail us at 1crr75@gmail.com or call the church office at 519-336-8808.

Church's 50th Anniversary

All former members and friends of Calvary CRC, Wyoming, MI are invited to attend a special worship service in celebration of its 50th Anniversary on Sunday, June 14, 9:30 a.m. A cake reception will follow. For further information, call the Church office at (616)534-0934 or e-mail Laurie Gummere at lgummere@calvarycrc.us

Church's 25th Anniversary

Faith CRC (Burlington, ON) invites friends and past members to celebrate with them 25 years of God's faithfulness. On Saturday, June 13, we are planning a BBQ and evening of fellowship at the church. Sunday, June 14, an afternoon worship service will be held at Compass Point Bible Church (formerly Brant Bible Church) on Eaglesfield Drive, Burlington. All are welcome. For complete details, access our website www.faihcrc.ca or contact the church office at 905-336-5353. We also welcome your stories, memories and pictures at 25years@faihcrc.ca

Retirement

Pastor Rod VanderLey is retiring after 36 years of faithful service to God at Tacoma Christian Reformed Community Church. We will celebrate and honor him and his wife, Judy, on August 1 & 2. For more info email: tacomacrc@comcast.net or phone: (253) 838-5276

Rev. Bob Walter has retired after serving the CRCNA for 38½ years; 5 churches as a settled pastor (29 yrs.), and 7 churches as a specialized transition pastor (9½ yrs.) He thanks the Lord for these opportunities, and hopes to continue serving as an interim pastor. He and Donna can be reached at 480-421-9158 or waltercactus@msn.com

Announcements

50th Anniversary: South Bend CRC will celebrate its 50th year as an organized church July 26. Friends and members from the past and present are invited to a special morning worship followed by lunch and festivities. Please RSVP so we can plan on you! E-mail lindambolt@comcast.net or call 574-272-8424.

The Evergreen Chorale of Holland, Michigan is touring Washington state in June 2009 and performing concerts at the First CRC of Seattle, June 25 at 7:30pm; First Reformed Church of Oak Harbor, June 26 at 7:30pm; Bethel CRC of Lynden, June 27 at 7:00pm, and the First CRC of Mt. Vernon, June 28 at 6:30pm (service concert). The concerts are free and open to the public. Tour and concert arrangements by Witte Travel & Tours, Grand Rapids, Michigan, www.wittetravel.com.

Birthdays

95th Birthday

John Rauwerda, #308, 2850 - 51st Street SW, Calgary, AB T3E 6S7, Canada will be celebrating his 95th birthday on June 21. His daughters Trynette (Allen) Brander, Gerrie (Henry) Vanderveen, Dora (Dirk) Schonewille and Judy; his 12 grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren wish him God's blessings and give thanks to God for his faithfulness for these many years.

Angie VanOmen of Holland MI, member of Graafschap CRC, will celebrate her 95th birthday on June 10. Her brother, sisters, nieces, and nephews will honor her with a family party. Ange's family is grateful to God for her strong faith, good health, sharp mind, and testimony of God's grace in her life.

90th Birthday

Carl Eggebeen, 3500 Breton Woods Dr., Kentwood, MI 49512 celebrates his 90th birthday on June 16. Married to Trudy for 63 years on June 21. Children: Pat (deceased), Carl & Veda DeJongh, Tom & Jane Eggebeen, Julie & Bob Lindeman, Jack & Mary Eggebeen, Heidi Crews. 21 grandkids. Happy Birthday, Dad! We love you!

Rev Herman Hoekstra, 7423 Pine Grove Ct. Jenison, MI 49428 will be 90 on June 11. His wife Dorothy of 63 years and children Thomas Kent, deceased, Rev. Paul and Ellen Hoekstra, Judy and Larry Bergman, Phil and Dee Dee Hoekstra, Jim & Karen Hoekstra, 14 grandchildren, 8 great grandchildren are thankful for God's blessings and Dad's steadfast trust in God's love and faithfulness. Friends and family are invited to an open house on June 13 from 1-3 PM at the Baldwin St. CRC in Jenison, MI.

William (Bill) Rysdam of 5734 Hardwick, Lakewood, Ca. 90713 will celebrate his 90th birthday on July 4. His children, Rich & Sharon Haagsma, Dennis & Julie Rysdam along with his grandchildren and great grandchildren give thanks to God for his life of faith and love.

80th Birthday

Ann (VanVelzen) DeWit, 708 S. Stephen, Sioux Falls, SD 57103 will celebrate her 80th birthday on June 22. Celebrating with her: husband Al; children Carol and Tom VanDenBosch; Dale and Jeanne; Diane and Vince Bonnema; 10 grandchildren; 5 great-grandchildren.

Maxine Luchies Schuiteman, 5039 S. Luce, Fremont, MI 49412, celebrates her 80th birthday on June 16. Her entire family praises God for her life of faith and love.

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary



Joling, Bert & Dena (Smits) 920 21st Ave. South, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495 will celebrate their 70th anniversary on June 1, 2009. Children: Alan & Donna Blik, John & Joanne Vander Lugt, Dave & Karen Van Vuren, Alden & Beverly Altana, Morry & Rose Blankespoor, Ken & Shirley Engelsman along with 21 grandchildren & 46 great-grandchildren. We thank God for His many blessings through all these years of marriage and for their faithful and consistent witness to God's love and grace.

Tameling, Henry & Marie (Essenburg), 1020 S. Prospect, Elmhurst, IL 60126; will celebrate 70 years of marriage on June 7. Our family is thankful for God's love and faithfulness in their lives and ours. Children: Rog & Ticks Groenboom, Ben & Corrie, Rog & Leona Boerema; 9 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.

65th Anniversary

Schripsema Herm & Fran (Faber) 979 Andover Ct SE Kentwood, MI 49508 celebrate their 65th on June 6. Children: Herm & Nancy, Linda & Henry Visscher, Faye Walburg, 2 grandchildren, 5 greatgrandchildren

60th Anniversary

Baker, Ralph & Verna (Vreugdenhil), 7136 Churchill St, Jenison, MI 49428, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on July 6. As a family, we thank God for his grace to and through them. David & Mary, Ron & Julie, Laurel & John Ourensma, Tim, Ken & Brenda, Glenda & Brent Wassink, and 11 grandchildren.

Huyser William and Alvina (Sjaardema) of 4220 Redbush, Grandville, MI celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on June 3, 2009. Their children are Mark and Sally; Thomas and Paula; David and Betsy; Stephen; Richard and Faith. 9 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. Thanks be to God.

Oordt, Herm and Jackie. Proudly announcing the 60th anniversary of our parents/grandparents on June 23, 2009. Congratulations and much love. Ellen (Oordt) and Jerry Gabrielse, Colleen Oordt, Ken and Joan

(Van Horssen) Oordt, Gary and Lisa (Gruwell) Oordt, Abigail Gabrielse, Joshua and Abby (Bormann) Gabrielse, Deborah (Gabrielse) and Nick Cioffi, and Kathleen Oordt. 915 Heather Circle, #5, Mt. Vernon, WA 98273.



Kuizema Harold & Jessica (DeBoer). 2001 Mallard, SE. Grand Rapids, MI 49546. June 28. Your lives have been an example of God's faithfulness. You have been an encouragement to many and we are grateful for your prayers. With love from your children: Diane (Mark) DeHaan; Ellen (Norm) Thomasma;

Carole (Al) Valk; Joan (Kock-Seng) Chee; 7 grandchildren.

Scholten, Herman and Helen (nee Rozema), of Grand Rapids MI celebrated their 60th anniversary on May 5. Their children, grand and great-grandchildren are grateful for their loving presence in this family.



Oosterhof, Anno and Margaret (deJong) #137, 32331 7th Avenue, Mission, BC V2V 6T7 on June 1st. We love you and thank God for you! Congratulations from your children, grandchildren and great-great children. "For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations."

Sneller Carl and Virginia (Hooker) will celebrate 60 years of marriage with an open house at Sunset Manor & Villages at 725 Baldwin Street (W side from Sally Drive) in Jenison, MI on Sunday, June 21, 2009 from 2:00 to 5:00 PM (no gifts please). Come and join us. Congratulations from your children, Kathy, Pat (Arie), Andy (Celia), Norm (Kathy), Tom (Leigh), Mark (Ann), Ron (Cindy), Scott (Sue), Cal (Joy), Jodi, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you...and so do we.

Church Positions Available

Covenant CRC, Edmonton, Alberta, whose membership is about 400 persons, is looking for a PASTOR OF EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT. The successful candidate's responsibilities will be to coordinate children, youth and young adult programs by building a team of lay leaders passionate about living out and extending Covenant's vision and mission, and to coordinate and develop healthy and challenging adult education programs focussed on training and spiritual growth. The candidate should be ordained or have a desire to be ordained as a minister or ministry associate. To forward a resume or to request more information, please contact Kevin Visscher at kmvissch@telus.net.

New Hope Community CRC, Kincheloe, MI, is seeking a pastor. We have an exciting, diverse congregation with a passion for community outreach. We have strong ministries in place, and there is the potential for more to be developed. We are a small rural community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Our current membership is about 40 member families. To obtain more information or a church profile please contact Joni Andary at 906-478-3205 or jandary@centurytel.net.

The Owen Sound First CRC is located on beautiful Georgian Bay in Southwest Ontario. We are seeking an experienced pastor who is an effective preacher and good communicator committed to the Reformed faith. You should be a nurturing caregiver, a caring mentor for our youth, and be willing and able to challenge us to obedience in our daily lives. We offer a congregation with a high number of willing and gifted members that has given 60 years of service to our area, and is eager to be led in more. If you sense God calling you to be part of His plan for this community, please send us your profile c/ o Pastor John Veenstra, our interim minister, at jveenstra@bmts.com or call his cell at 519-374-9946.

Orangeville CRC in beautiful Orangeville, Ontario, is seeking a full time pastor with strong leadership skills as well as a passion for evangelism and community outreach. The ideal candidate is a gifted speaker, able to apply sound biblical preaching to daily life, and is comfortable leading both traditional and contemporary worship styles. Orangeville is a growing rural community of 30,000, located within one hour of the cultural delights of downtown Toronto as well as outdoor activities such as skiing, hiking, boating, camping, etc. Please contact John Oorebeek at 519-928-9796 or jmoorebeek@sympatico.ca for more information.

Burdett CRC, a small but gifted congregation on the prairies of Alberta, is seeking a full time pastor who will lead us in God's Word, encourage and challenge the youth, provide leadership in the church's spiritual journey and develop a small group ministry. D. V, we will celebrate our 100 Year anniversary in 2011! If you feel God's leading please contact Jos @ 403-833-2299 or solanumt@shockware.com

Georgetown CRC is looking for an energetic, committed full-time Youth Pastor to join our ministry team. For more information please contact us at 905-877-4322 or at gcrcrecruiter@live.ca.

Senior Pastor: First Reformed Church of Byron Center, MI is seeking a senior pastor to lead a congregation of 200+ members. We are looking for an ordained minister who is passionate about God's Word,

believes strongly in the power of prayer, is eager to reach out to surrounding areas and is able to be a faith-driven leader and visionary in our church. For inquiries and to view our church profile please contact Bob Koopman at koopmanrob@yahoo.com or the church office 616.878.1709

First Christian Reformed Church of Visalia, CA is seeking a full-time Director of Music and Worship. A job description is available on our website: www.visaliafirstcrc.org. Please send inquiries to kenzylstra@sbcglobal.net.

Webster CRC is seeking a full-time pastor to help grow our community of believers. Our congregation of about 70 families is located in Webster, NY, a suburb of Rochester on the shore of Lake Ontario. We desire a pastor who is passionate about preaching the word of God, is comfortable with a blended style of worship, can relate to all age groups, and desires to reach out to the community. An interest in potluck suppers, softball, or volleyball is a plus. To learn more about us, visit wrc1.home.mindspring.com, contact the search committee at wrc1@mindspring.com, or call Jean at the church office, 585-872-2352.

Maranatha CRC Pastors, our congregation is actively praying that God will soon bless our search for a new pastor by working in the heart of the person we believe He is preparing to lead us in ministry in our community. Are you that person? If you feel led by the Spirit to inquire about this position, we ask you to contact us by mail or e-mail. Inquiries should be mailed to Bob Schippers, Pastoral Search Team, Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, 918 Central Ave, Holland, MI 49423, or e-mailed to Bob Schippers at rwschippers@sbcglobal.net. Maranatha CRC (www.maranathachurch.info) is a church of over 300 professing members celebrating over 50 years of service in God's kingdom.

LaGlance Christian Reformed Church is seeking a full time pastor. The hamlet of LaGlance is located in North Central Alberta. A church profile is available from the search committee by emailing natasha.vandellen@hotmail.com or by calling Nick (780)568-3906 or John (780)568-4141.

Maranatha CRC of Woodbridge, Ontario, is seeking a full-time pastor. The candidate should be compassionate, welcoming, have strong interpersonal skills with youth, and be a solid, Bible-based preacher. Our small, loving church, just north of Toronto, is looking for leadership to develop an outreach ministry in our neighbourhood, and encouragement for our spiritual journey. If you have any questions, or to submit your resume and profile, please email maranathasearch@hotmail.com

Senior Pastor Are you looking to lead God's people? We are on a journey to seek His will in our lives. We are a family of God in need of a leader. We are Maranatha, a diverse church of 300 members in Lethbridge Alberta. Interested Pastors please contact Darren Milne chair of the calling committee (403)320-1365 or milnefamily@shaw.ca

Pastor for Edmonton church Bethel Community Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta is seeking an ordained and experienced man or woman after God's own heart to be our spiritual leader, mentor and leader of our staff team, teacher, preacher, and pastor

to all, in a two-pastor setting (the second position is also vacant) We are an active, large suburban church of about 170 mainly young, growing families with a mixture of many long-term, committed members and a number of new members from varied cultural and faith backgrounds. We have two morning worship services, a thriving modern music ministry and a number of other ministries that serve both our congregation and our community, including Tae kwon do, a local food bank, GEMS and Cadets, summer outreach ministries, children's and youth ministries and staff, women's and men's ministries, small groups and pastoral care and deacons ministries. Interested pastors please contact our Calling Team leader, Dan VanKeeken at: danvankeeken@hotmail.com

Grace CRC in Kalamazoo MI is seeking a senior pastor who will powerfully proclaim "Thus saith the Lord" in traditional worship, compassionately shepherd our church family, and creatively guide us to reach our community. Send inquiries to: johnjvanderploeg@charter.net or 269-217-4683.

Youth / Worship Coordinator Are you interested in ministry in the heart of Vancouver Island? The Alberni Valley CRC is looking to hire a Youth and Worship Coordinator. For a detailed description of this full time opportunity please visit www.avcrc.org Please send inquiries to AVCRCsearch@live.ca

Great opportunity in the NW The Tacoma Christian Reformed Community Church in Tacoma, WA seeks a senior pastor to serve a vibrant, committed and diverse congregation. The ideal candidate will be a gifted communicator, with a heart for pastoral care and a desire to serve the community alongside a team of devoted staff and volunteers. We are a supportive and united congregation of 250 members that combines diverse backgrounds with CRC values and traditions. Please send inquiries to Stan Vander Pol at PastorSearchTacomaCRCC@comcast.net.

Youth Pastor: Third Christian Reformed Church of Kalamazoo, MI, is seeking to fill this full-time position by the fall of this year. If you are a servant leader, would value the opportunity to do ministry with a dynamic ministry staff, share our commitment to intergenerational ministry, and have a passion to encourage youth and young adults (middle school through college) in the life of discipleship, then we would love to hear from you. Preference will be given to persons with at least a B. A. in a related field and/or youth ministry experience. Inquiries should be directed to the Search Team at office@3rdcrc.org (phone 269-343-2400). Applications can be sent to that same email or by post to 2400 Winchell Ave, Kalamazoo, MI, 49008.

Are you our answer to prayer? Duncan CRC on Vancouver Island, British Columbia is seeking an Associate Pastor of Congregational Life passionate about youth and young families. If you are enthusiastic about helping others discover their gifts, facilitating church programs, building relationships and preaching occasionally.... the Spirit may be calling you to work alongside our senior pastor. Innovative and energetic persons to apply to: Duncan CRC 930 Trunk Rd. Duncan, BC V9L 2S1 Attn: Bill Wilkenink. Or Call 250-748-2122, or email: crc.duncan@shawcable.com

Vander Molen, Ken & Jeanne(Tuinstra), 2500 Breton Woods Dr. SE, Suite 3017, Grand Rapids, MI 49512-9130, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on June 17, 2009. Children: Ken & Trudy, Dave & Ruth, Andy & Gayla, Dori & Evan, Karla & Bill, Susan & Nico; 18 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren. We thank God for His many blessings!

55th Anniversary

Alsum, Seymour & Kay (801 E. Asbury Ave. Denver, Co. 80210) will be married 55 yrs, June 4, 2009. We thank God for His grace, care and family that loves the Lord. Brenda & Lou Van Essendelft (Esther & Pete Johnson, Dirk) Bob & Terry (Joel, Shaun, Kira) Thea & Steve Corder (Erica, Jamie)

50th Anniversary

DeKruyf, Tony & Gert (Mensonides) of Gig Harbor, WA, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 17, 2009. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren. Great is God's faithfulness!

Dykman, Jerry & Carol, 5765 N. Genoa Way #1-102, Aurora, Co. 80019, will celebrate 50 yrs. of marriage on June 2, 2009. Children: Kim Price, Kevin (Kory, Kasey, Kody) Kristopher & Leslie (Noah & Whitney) Kraig & Lauren. An Open House & renewal of vows were held in Phx, Az. on March 21st. Thanks be to God and all family and friends who blessed our 50 yrs. together. 303-375-9412

Jacobs, Stan and Carolyn (Sturing), 19 Old Mill Drive #25, Holland, MI 49423, will celebrate their 50th anniversary on June 30. Blessings from your children and grandchildren, Sue and Chuck Bakker (Kara), Lynn Stuk (Aaron, Alyssa, Aubrey, Austin), Jill and Bob Ziomek.

Klein, John and Donna (Woldring) of Grand Rapids will celebrate their 50th anniversary on June 9. Congratulations and love from your daughters Linda Kenney, Joni Klein, Betsy Parolini and their families.

Roeters Peter & Marilyn (Dekker), 95 571 Lorraine Dr., Hinsdale, IL 60527, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 5. Love and congratulations from your children: Beth & Robert (Stephanie & Emilia), Daniel & Maria (Angelina). Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Slachter, Marv and Marilyn (VanderWal) 7105 Southwood Dr., Jenison, MI 49428 will celebrate their 50th anniversary on June 12. Children: Steve & Brandi Slachter, Phil & Amy Slachter, Jeff & Marcia Bour, and Jennifer Jelsema. Nine grandchildren. God is good!

Start Ed & Sharon (LaGrand) will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 11. Congratulations and much love from your children and grandchildren!

Vander Ploeg Dave & Sheryl (Kragt), 2214 Lakeshore Dr. St. Joseph, MI 49085, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on June 26. Congratulations and love from your children: Dan & Dixie Vander Ploeg, Jim & Dawn Hartwell, Mike & Jan Visser and 10 grandchildren. Praise God for His faithfulness.

Van Dyke, Clarence & Sylvie (Friesema), 18630 Pine Lake Dr. #2A Tinley Park, IL 60477 will celebrate their 50th anniversary on June 5, 2009. Child: Kenneth. We thank God for His many blessings. Open House June 13, 1-4PM, Calvin CRC, Oak Lawn.

Van Wiene, Bill and Margaret (De Young), West Olive, MI, celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 12, 2009. Congratulations with love and thanksgiving! Children are Marcia and Mark (d.2/08) Van't Hof, Mark Van Wiene and Anne Windholz, and grandchildren Braden, Ben, Miranda, and Nathaniel.

VerHage, Eugene and Terry (Brummel) 3512 Oak St., Hudsonville, MI, 49426 will be married 50 years on June 9. Children: Jackie and Tom Tellier, Bonni and Bob Alexander, Lenee Weber, Pat Herring. 8 grandchildren. God bless our family.

Wassink, Lee & Dee (Slenk), 8301 Harlow SW, Byron Center, MI 49315, will celebrate their 50th anniversary on June 18. Giving thanks to God with them are their children and grandchildren: Brent & Glenda (Brad, Ben), Kurt & Sue (Kyle, Jenna, Ryan), Mark & Heidi (Kelli, Brett, Jon, Anna).

Obituaries

Bajema, Ruth (nee Weemhoff); age 87; April 11, 2009; 1845 Boston SE, Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. Henry Bajema, brother Neal Weemhoff and brother-in-law Marvin VerMerris.

She will be deeply missed by her loving children: Ruth and Mike Reitsma, Mary and Larry Gerbens, Chris and Don Prys, Phil and Edith Bajema, Laura and Randy Laninga, Amy and Paul Johnson; 20 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren; sisters-in-law: Sue VerMerris and Elaine Weemhoff.

Bylsma, Magdalene (Madeline), died on April 5, 2009 at the Christian Rest Home in Grand Rapids. Surviving are her children: Ann and Wayne Van Zomeren, Lorene and Robert Spoelhof, Gordon and Ruth Bylsma, 8 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and sister Cornelia Ooms.

Corbin, Ann (Vander Molen) age 84 of California passed away March 8, 2009. Children: Daryl & Bonny, Greg & Debbie, Marla & Warren Anchors, 6 grandchildren & 2 great grandchildren.

Hamstra Samuel "Sam" E. At rest April 26, 2009. 3939 Saratoga Av, #103, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Husband of Bernice, nee Post. Father of Rev. Sam, Jr. (Debbie) Hamstra, Don (Joyce) Hamstra, Marcia (Pete) Bolt, Jr., Dan (Lynn) Hamstra, and Julie (Dean) Schrader. Grandfather of eighteen. Great-grandfather of two. Brother of the late John (the late Anna Mae) Hamstra, the late William (Mary) Hamstra, the late Peter (Audrey) Hamstra, the late Joe and Jean Hamstra. Uncle of many nieces and nephews.

Hollander, Lois M.; age 82; Thursday, April 30, 2009; 1950 32nd St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508. She was preceded in death by her husband, Sidney Hollander in 1969; and sister, Connie. Surviving are her sons: David (Pam) Hollander, Ronald Jacob Hollander; granddaughters: Tara, K. C., and Elisha Hollander; several brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, nieces, nephew, and cousins.

Hulsman, Gerry (Heideman), age 77, of Ponoka, Alberta. She went to be with her Lord on March 29, 2009. She will be missed by her loving husband of 55 years, Bill; 5 children and 13 grandchildren.

Moorlag John, age 85, went to be with his Lord, April 10. 923 Aaron Dr. Unit 105, Lynden, WA 98264. Wife: Edith (Smit). Children: Gary (Beth), Ron (Joy), Kathy Lankhaar. 7 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Mulder, Peter - age 87 - 10933 Fountain View Circle, Holland, MI 49423. World War II veteran; loved by all. Married for 65 years to Gladys, who survives. Children: Dar & Jerry Alferink, Lynn & Sally, Bev & Jon Klynstra, Chris & Lori. 9 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren.

Vander Ploeg, MARK, 80, of Pella, IA passed away on April 13, 2009. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Carol; children Emily (Mark) Sybesma, Mary (Jerry) Post, and Joel; 7 grandchildren; brother to Darl (Miriam) Vander Ploeg (deceased), Elaine (Donald) Postema and Ruth (Edward) De Vries.

Wiersma, Mr. Kenneth G.; age, 81; April 12, 2009; 2151 N. Cross Creek Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508; He was preceded in death by his wife Ruth. He is survived by his wife Mildred, sons and daughter: David and Brenda of Tucson, AZ, Steven and Linda, Lynn and James Stouten of Grand Rapids; step children: Janice and David Scholten, Judith and Richard Hungerford, Dale and Joan Rosema, Dan and Linda Rosema, Ronald and Sheryl Rosema; 6 grandchildren; 11 step grandchildren; 4 great grandchildren.

Witte, Jason, 27, from Jenison, MI on March 2, 2009. Survived by his parents Alan and Brenda, brother Dan, sisters Christine and Amanda, and grandfather John W DeVries.

Employment

Position Opening Trinity Christian College invites applications for Director of Community Partnerships and Service Learning. For more information and application procedures, see www.trnty.edu/jobopenings/.

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Director of Development Sunnyside Christian School (PreK-12th), located in the Yakima Valley of Washington state, seeks candidates for a full-time Director of Development. Responsibilities: promote Christian education to prospective families; encourage financial support for endowment. For complete job desc. & appl. contact SCS at scfounded@embarqmail.com or 509-837-2050.

Chaplain Bethany Home, a multi-level care facility in Ripon, CA, is looking for a part time chaplain to serve its residents. Must have love for the elderly and warm heart. Competitive salary. Affordable housing available. For position description, e-mail to execdir@bethanyripon.org, or call Andrew Lee, at 209-599-4221, ext. 248

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Real Estate: Sales and Rental

Condos—Anna Maria Island, FL: pool, beach access, linens, housekeeping, completely furnished. 2 hrs. to Disney. \$650/ wk (1 bdrm) and \$750/ wk (2 bdrms). D. Redeker, 941-778-1915

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Maine oceanfront cottage, in Bar Harbor, near Acadia National Park. Available May through Oct. \$600 May, June, Sept. and Oct. - \$700 July and Aug. 603-964-8788 or brentaverill20@yahoo.com.

Weekly Rental: Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Walk to beaches of Lake Michigan from this newly remodeled vacation home, 7Br, 4Ba—comfortably sleeps up to 14. Close to downtown Saugatuck & Douglas. Call 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com for info & reservations.

Cottage for Rent Weekly; Hess Lake, Newaygo, Michigan. 4 bed/4 ba, sleeps 12, sandy beach, newer home, \$1200/week. Call Lonnie at (616) 942-0048.

Holland MI nice 1 bedroom guest house across from south Lake Macatawa. \$375/ week \$80/ night www.hollandplace.com call vickie at 616-335-8766

Summer cottages on Selkirk Lake, 30 min. south of Grand Rapids, MI. 2-3 bedrooms, 600-700/week. 616-335-5202

White Lake Cottage For Rent Montague MI. Located in Maple Grove. Sleeps 4-6, Cable, Internet, Washer & Dryer. \$700 per week. Contact Chad 6165161303

Lake Michigan Cottage Rent lakefront, private beach, deck, remodeled, sleeps 6. Walk to CRC Conference Grounds. Walk beach/ bike 4mi to Grand Haven. 616-878-0622

Summer Fun! 2BR Holland, MI cottage located near Holland State Park \$750/wk or 2BR waterfront condo on Silver Lake in Mears \$875/wk. 616-786-0199 or dykert@charter.net.

Lake Michigan Cottage Weekly rental. Private beach, deck, very nice, sleeps 6. Walk to CRC Conference Grounds. 4mi to Grand Haven. 616-878-0622 or crop@utoledo.edu. Banner reader discount

Cottage Rental Miner Lake, Allegan, MI. All sports lake. New 2 Lrg BR/2BA, sleeps 7-8. \$650-750/wk. 616-669-6534 or minerlkrbs@att.net

Cottage for Rent: Lake Missaukee, Lake City Michigan. Two bedroom, w/ extra sleeper sofa. Located on a dead end black top street, ending at a city beach on the East side of Lake Missaukee. One lot from beach, w/ attached garage & cement drive. Cozy knotty pine interior, fully equipped, very clean. \$350/week. Call for open weeks 231-839-4544 or ddeboer@voyager.net

Cottage for Rent: West side of Lake Missaukee, Lake City Michigan, 3 bedroom, two bath cottage. Private subdivision, great lake view from elevated shore. Dock, hoist, fire pit. Boat house. Very nice, well equipped. \$900/week. Call for open weeks 231-839-4544 or ddeboer@voyager.net

Home for sale 1635 Woodcliff SE. Four bedroom, 2.5 bath home with lots of recent updates (wood floors, Master bath, roof, Heat/AC, etc.). Close walk to Calvin (out the back gate a few blocks) with wonderful corner lot. Asking \$210,000. Please call Stacy Jackson at 314.373.3773 if interested.

Lake Michigan Home For Sale 3-4 bedroom - 2 bath home/cottage in Private Association on Lake Michigan between Muskegon and Grand Haven, MI. Asking \$295,000. Go to www.TomEllens.com for more details

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Grandville, MI Apt. For Rent in a 2-family home. Two bedrooms, garage, pay own utilities, no smoking, no pets. Call 616-896-9468.

Cottage Hess Lake Newaygo, MI. 2 lg bd. Bth & 1/2. Slps 8. Fire plc, ht tub avail. Shallow Sndy bch. 125 ft. frntge. Avail all yr. \$750 wkly. 616-669-3953

For Rent - Stony Lake cottage. All sports with dock. 2 BR, 2 baths, sleeps 8. Paddleboats, treefort. Call 616.866.3946.

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Oberammergau Passion Play Tour — Join Dave and Lois Hollemans, Carolyn Wharton, and Johannes Witte on a remarkable journey across Europe from June 21 to July 2, 2010. Set in a beautiful Bavarian village, the Oberammergau Passion Play is the most famous and visually stunning presentation of Christ's Passion in the world. Along with the Play, the tour includes travel in France, Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Austria. For more information and brochures, contact Witte Travel at Groups@wittetravel.com or 800-469-4883 or visit our website at www.wittetravel.com.

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Punch Lines

While working for an organization that delivers lunches to elderly shut-ins, a mother often took her 4-year-old daughter on her afternoon rounds. The little girl was unfailingly intrigued by all the canes, walkers, and wheelchairs. One day her mother found her staring at a pair of false teeth soaking in a glass. Instead of the usual barrage of questions, her daughter turned and whispered, "The tooth fairy's never gonna believe this!"

—Bob and Ina Vandermaas

My grandson, a kindergartner in Dublin, Ohio, was given the opportunity to ask God's blessing for his family's evening meal: "God! Thank you for the delicious food you gave us. I hope we like it!"

—George Haun

A well-known seminary professor was preaching in a local church. One person who attended was not a native English speaker, and after the sermon this person greeted the professor with great enthusiasm, saying, "Oh, pastor, thank you so much. Your sermon was absolutely superfluous!" The professor choked down a chuckle and responded, a bit tongue-in-cheek, "I'm glad you liked it. I'm thinking of having it published posthumously." With equal enthusiasm the person shot back, "Oh! The sooner the better!"

—Gary Roosma

A Sunday school teacher asked, "Susie, do you suppose Noah did a lot of fishing when he was on the ark?"

"No," replied Susie. "How could he, with only two worms?"

—John Veltkamp

A man, standing in front of the bedroom mirror, was not happy with what he saw. He said to his wife, "I feel horrible; I look old, fat, and ugly. I really need you to give me a compliment."

His wife responded, "Honey, your eyesight's perfect."

—George Vander Weit

John's wife had preceded him in death, so when he arrived at the Pearly Gates she was there to show him around.

"Here is the dining hall—all you can eat."

"How much does this cost?"

"It's all free. No charge."

"And here is the golf course," she said.

"What is the fee?"

"This, too, is free. Everything you see here is free."

"Free. Free. Free. I can't believe it!" John said. "Why did you feed me all those bran muffins? I would have been here 10 years ago!"

—Walter VanderBeek

We often care for our 2-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter so her parents can have a night out. Before putting her to

bed we go through the usual nighttime ritual and encourage her to go potty. One night, after she was successful, I praised her. She promptly replied, "Potty Freak! Potty Freak!" It was so cute I shared her response with my wife. The next day I of course also told my daughter how cute it was that Sidney had called herself a "Potty Freak."

"Oh," my daughter replied, "She said 'potty treat' and just wanted to be rewarded for her success!"

—C.R. Lindemulder

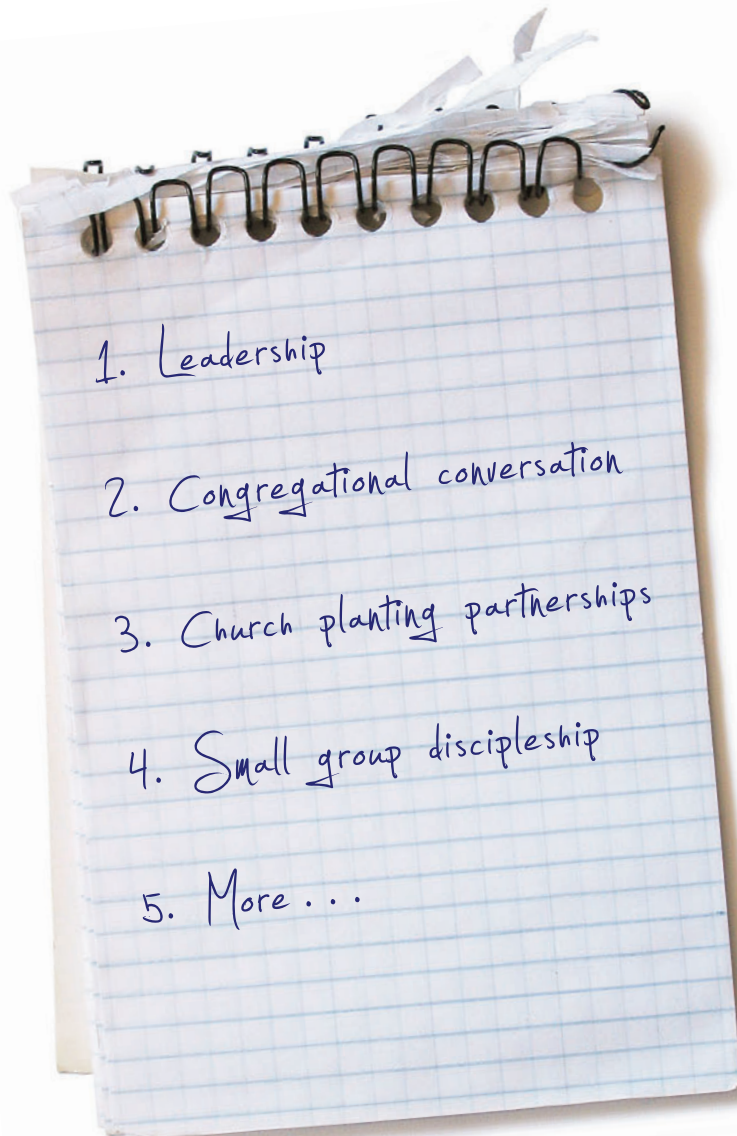


John Calvin visits the famous lion statues at the Boston Public Library. The lions, sculpted in 1894 by Louis St. Gaudens, are a memorial to the 2nd and 20th Massachusetts Regiments of the Civil War. But John enjoys them for their biblical allusions and their uncanny resemblance to Aslan in C.S. Lewis' *Narnia* books. On this trip, John joined "The New England Saints"—a Calvin College class that studied nineteenth-century American literature as they visited sites in and near historic Concord, Mass. The Saints were led by English professors Gary Schmidt and Jerry Fondse.

Photo: Melissa Claire Lowe



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