

# BANNER

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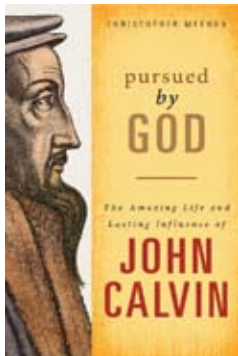
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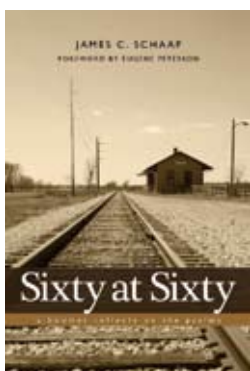
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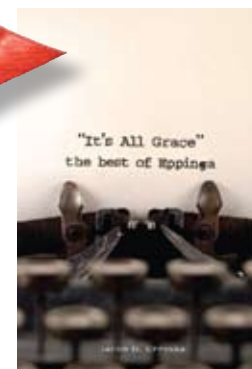
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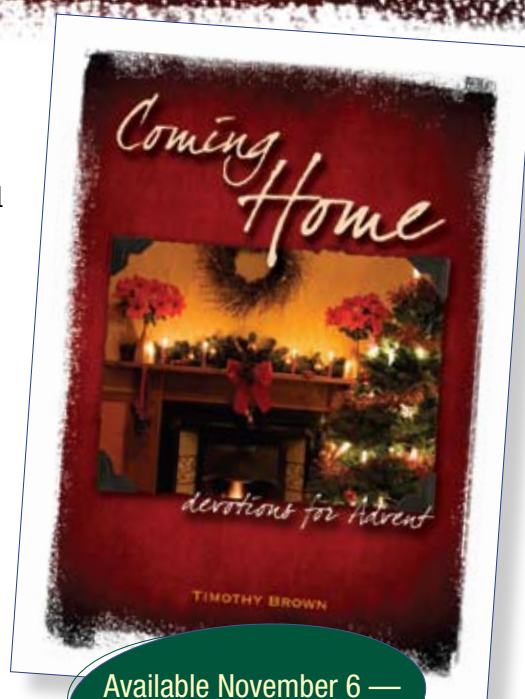
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# BANNER

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**Cover:** Leon Mulder, a member of First CRC, Toronto, depends on his Blackberry for work—and for Christian media. Like many of today's Back to God Ministries listeners, he accesses ReFrame Media programming whenever it's most convenient for him.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HANS MULDER



## So What Do You Think?

**WHAT GOOD IS NAVEL GAZING**, beyond determining whether we have an “innie” or an “outie”? The wrong kind of it just makes us more narcissistic and self-engaged than even our individualistic society prompts us to be. But a careful, honest look at ourselves may actually do us some good if we dare to cast a critical eye on

- where we can give humble thanks to our Creator, Redeemer, and Reformer for the new self already being formed within us;
- where we can identify the remnants of our old selves still desperately needing repentance, redemption, regeneration, and redirection.

Because we so easily delude ourselves, we'll need to use the right mirror—the mirror of Scripture as we read it, but also as it is interpreted and applied for us within the community of faith. There's nothing like a good and trusted friend who dares to keep you accountable and speak the truth in love!

What applies to persons also applies to teams, like the team that brings you your monthly *Banner*. We need friends to tell us honestly where we do well and where we need to shape up. We appreciate those responses very much, even when they hurt.

You are such a friend. Beyond the many conversations we have with our readers on a continual basis, we do a *Banner* survey every three years or so. We do this through a reputable independent polling firm because we know how prone we (all) are to self-delusion and rationalization.

Here are a few highlights from our most recent survey:

- the survey logged more than a 25 percent return rate (the survey firm was astounded by that, commenting that this shows almost unprecedented reader engagement);
- the median age of respondents has dropped from 60 years in 2006 to 56 years (possibly due to the fact that this was an online survey, while the previous ones were paper);
- most people who receive *The Banner* read it: 26 percent read it cover to cover (up from the 2006 survey), 42 percent read several items of interest, and 26 percent vary how much they read from issue to issue; only 2 percent say they never or hardly ever read any of it;
- most people who read *The Banner* are satisfied with it: 48 percent are very satisfied, another 32 percent are somewhat satisfied, 6 percent are neutral, 7 percent are somewhat dissatisfied with it, and 7 percent believe it belongs only at the bottom of a bird cage;
- more than half our readers are interested in the online mag: 43 percent read it online at least occasionally, 12 percent are interested in doing so (way up from 2006). (We'll need to direct some additional resources in that direction.)

Bottom line: the survey gives strong support for the notion that an every household *Banner* continues to be a worthwhile expense (see more detailed highlights online at [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)). To be sure, there are copies going to waste. But they are very few.

What's the most-read item in *The Banner*, nosing out even the editorial? It's Punch Lines—the page of anecdotes and jokes you yourselves send in.

I'm not hurt. I'm glad. In these challenging times, more than ever, we need our redeemed sense of humor. The joy of the Lord is our strength! I thank God for your holy laughter. ■



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

Alberta. See his blog at [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org).

## What's the most-read item in *The Banner*?

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## In a Funk?

### IT WAS AN 80-DEGREE

Saturday in the beginning of May—unseasonably warm for Wisconsin—and I was stuck at work.

I was in a foul mood. The door to the small-town grocery store where I clerked was propped open and the warm breeze teased me. I knew that the owner of the store, my boss, was golfing—and that a big stack of homework waited for me when I got home. All I wanted to do was bask in the sun, but instead I was sunk in the dramatic depths of self-pity.

Thankfully, that day almost 10 years ago did not end with me stomping home, blind with anger at the injustice of life. I was right in the middle of my funk when a couple I had never seen before stepped in front of my cash register.

“How are you?” I asked them politely. They smiled brightly. They were in their mid-30s; his hair was thinning, his jacket was worn, and she wore a floral scarf around her otherwise bald head.

The man burst out, “How could I be any better? My wife is home, the grass is green, the sun is shining, and we’re going to have a picnic in the park.”

I was startled by their joy. I hadn’t noticed them standing in line; they were just another couple passing through, but now I saw that they were *beaming* at each other. I’ve never seen two people look happier. When they left the store a minute later, carrying their bananas and deli sandwiches, I couldn’t stop thinking about them.

I assumed she had gone through chemotherapy. Was her cancer in remission? Would it be gone for good? How long had she been in the hospital?

I didn’t know the answers to those questions. I only knew they had made a choice not to dwell on what they had been through or might continue to go through. They were enjoying each other and the moment.

Suddenly the ridiculousness of my self-pity became clear, even shameful. God had given me a particularly beautiful day to rejoice in, and what was I doing with it?

About 20 minutes later, the couple popped back in the store carrying three huge waffle cones filled with thick vanilla frozen custard. The man held one out to me. “This is for you. When we left, we both thought you seemed sad, and we wanted to cheer you up.”

I was speechless. And thankful. To this day, I’m grateful to those kind benefactors—not only for the custard, but especially for their attitudes, which set them apart from the rest of the world that day. I don’t know whether they were Christians, but I suspect they were because their behavior was so in keeping with God’s Word.

Today I hope strangers will recognize me in that same light—by attitudes and actions of grateful thanks, praise, and joy, even when I’m talking to a clerk at my local grocery store and my 2-year-old is inconsolable in the checkout line. ■



**Heather Vallejos** is a full-time homemaker and part-time writer. She is a member of Racine (Wis.) CRC. If you ever find yourself in

Franksville, Wis., she recommends stopping in at Lou’s Custard for a scoop or two.



Gratitude takes  
nothing for  
granted. . . .  
You acknowledge  
that you are  
surrounded  
by God’s  
incredible  
generosity.  
You awaken to  
the fact that your  
life is a gift.

— DON POSTEMA

# No Need to Adopt Belhar

Our current statements of faith have proved more than adequate since the 1500s.



**IN THE EDITORIAL** titled “Shoes” (June 2009), the editor of *The Banner* supports adding the Belhar Confession to the creeds and confessions of the Christian Reformed Church.

However, Rev. Bob De Moor’s editorial doesn’t address the real issue: does the Belhar rise to the level of our current creeds and confessions (for example, the Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, and Heidelberg Catechism)?

De Moor notes that our current creeds and confessions touch only tangentially on the issues of racism, social injustice, and poverty that the Belhar addresses. But wouldn’t that be true for any issue in any culture at any time? Our current statements of faith have proved more than adequate from the 1500s until now for dealing with all manner of issues and doctrinal disputes—more than sufficient for the task of informing the church about its foundational understanding of the Word of God.

Perhaps the problem lies not in our statements of faith but in a lack of their prophetic application.

If we include the Belhar, might we need other confessions dealing with other issues that will inevitably crop up? By adopting the Belhar we open the door to a variety of creeds and

confessions, each one addressing an issue from a certain perspective that someone thinks is not articulated well enough in our current creeds. Simply adding a preamble to the Belhar, as De Moor suggests, papers over the problem.

I don’t oppose adding the Belhar Confession any more than I would oppose adding the Westminster Confession or the Barmen Declaration or Our World Belongs to God as official statements of faith. I affirm its place for reading and use in regional classes, and perhaps even in worship. I affirm the Belhar’s importance to the churches of South Africa. I affirm its biblical nature and ability to address current issues through Scripture.

But I cannot affirm elevating it to the level of our other creeds and confessions.

I find nothing objectionable in the Belhar. I just don’t find that it either undergirds or informs my faith in any way that is different from the statements of faith we currently have to face the issues with which we are confronted in this day and age.

Let’s preach prophetically and with conviction the truths of Scripture that permeate our current, longstanding statements of faith.

Working toward division (adopting a confession that does not rise to the level of what we currently profess) is beneath the heritage of our denomination.

Accepting the Belhar on par with what we currently profess in the Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort is not only unnecessary; it leaves the door open to future generations who would add to them, thereby diluting them and undercutting their clarity and authority. ■



Rev. Paul Hansen is pastor of First CRC, Hull, Iowa.



## Was the Reformation Necessary?

Thank you for the enlightening discussion “Was the Reformation Necessary?” (October 2009). Certainly there seems to be little dispute that reform was badly needed. Still, it is a sad fact of church history that we have spent too much effort on articulating our differences and too little on promoting our unity.

Just before leaving the Last Supper to meet his betrayer, our Lord prayed. It is the one time I know of when he prayed directly for you and me and his church. Though he well might have, he did not pray for the rapid spread of the gospel, for church growth, for protection from persecution, or even for the development of a robust theology. What he prayed for was unity, that we might be one just as he and the Father are one. It is our unity far more than our eloquent testimony that is to stand as proof to the world that Jesus is the real deal.

—Dave Smith  
Belding, Mich.

Bravo! Fantastic article. Growing up with Catholic friends made me appreciate their approach to the faith. I have always been attracted to the ancient roots of our faith, and this article does a very nice job of displaying much that I love about it. I am especially encouraged that the Christian



# LETTERS

Reformed Church is involved in this dialogue.

Now, since Calvinism is a branch off the Roman Catholic Church, which itself branched off from the original trunk of the tree known today as Eastern Orthodoxy, wouldn't it be nice if we could dialogue with the Orthodox too?

—Fred Hayward  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Mary being intercessor to reach the Throne of Grace in prayer was not addressed. This is not in the Bible, and unless Catholics change their stance, this would be the greatest hindrance to Reformed Christians and Catholics coming to agreement.

—Anne Tameling  
Hudsonville, Mich.

## View from Afghanistan

What a tremendous relief it was for me to read "A Note from Afghanistan" by Mark Hamstra (September 2009). The excellently written article challenges the modern-day Zeitgeist opinions offered by many Christians as they parade in the comfort of blood-bought freedoms under phony umbrellas of questionable pacifism and New Age social justice.

—Bill Kooman  
Red Deer, Alberta

Hamstra's argument for the use of military force makes a couple of good points, but his analysis is simplistic and fails to convince, starting with his take on the Korean War. Perhaps the Japanese are similarly grateful for Hiroshima and Nagasaki since the post-war Marshall Plan ultimately brought them democracy and economic prosperity? Regarding his reference to Jesus' encounter with the Roman centurion, Jesus didn't have to push a nonviolent agenda with every soldier he met. He lived that agenda with every breath he took. Rather than advocate armed revolt by the Jews or demand mercy from the Romans, Jesus confronted

the authorities with words of truth and gave himself up to their violence so that he could ultimately subvert it and emerge triumphant.

—Rebecca Sooksom  
Masstown, Nova Scotia

Hamstra notes that Jesus did not say anything to the Roman commander about nonviolence. Should Jesus have said something to Jairus about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees? Since that was also a perfect opportunity to speak, why didn't he? Using Hamstra's approach, that indicates something significant. I suspect that few would then agree with the argument of silence.

—Bert den Boggende  
Brooks, Alberta

Hamstra's is about the only church-related article I have read in the past 30 years that shows real insight into military affairs. Every day in Afghanistan he faces violent people who want to kill him to please their god. Yet he still finds time to defend himself from those who believe God hates his efforts to protect the people of Afghanistan and the world from violent thugs.

Someone needs to be "prophetic" to the anti-war movements. In the past century they have had a terrible record of excusing the crimes of and flattering some of the worst dictators in human history while exaggerating the flaws of the dictators' democratic opponents.

—Raymond Paul Opeka  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Parents in Pain

Karen Norris's article "Living Room Compassion," regarding adult children who have left the church, lacked one crucial component: a compassion for those children themselves.

We are acutely aware of the pain we bring to our families and loved ones and would have chosen to avoid it. I know my parents believe I am going to hell, and this grieves me. But I cannot claim this faith as my own.

This was not a failure on the part of the church or my parents; it is my own deeply felt conviction. My decision to leave was not made lightly. It is desperately difficult to walk away from the church, a community I have belonged to since birth.

I hope that meetings such as those described in the article provide solace to the parents of nonbelieving children, yet there is no structure in place to comfort those same children, who face rejection, isolation, and a deep misunderstanding from the church community.

I ask for understanding for believers and nonbelievers alike.

—Name Withheld

A few months ago I was talking to a member of my congregation. I complimented him on how well his daughter played with the worship team the previous week. He was upset because he didn't feel his daughter was dressed appropriately. I told him that if my son showed up at church wearing a swimsuit, I would not complain.

My adult son has left the church behind. I pray he has not left God behind. Many of us need a program like the one described in this article.

—Bruce Fowler  
Hayward, Calif.

## Correction

The photo identifying young people at this year's Youth Unlimited Convention on page 12 of the October *Banner* mistakenly identifies them as from Friendship Chapel in Allendale, Mich. They are from Friendship Chapel in Jenison, Mich. Sorry! Hope we didn't cause any identity crises.

See more letters in the November issue online at [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)!

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## Christian Reformed Staff Safe in Honduras

Christian Reformed missions staff in Honduras are safe but had their travel restricted in late September by the denomination's Crisis Management Team as a result of the political crisis there. The restriction was lifted Oct. 5, but travel for short term mission groups remained under restriction at that time.

On Monday, Sept. 21, ousted president José Manuel Zelaya returned to the capital city of Tegucigalpa, prompting the present government to impose a nationwide curfew that lasted until early on Wednesday, Sept. 23.

Several Christian Reformed personnel were stranded away from their homes and offices because of the curfew.

Irene deMurillo and Ana Joya work for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, the CRC's relief and development agency. They were on the south coast of Honduras for a project evaluation when the curfew was imposed.

Caspar Geisterfer from Christian Reformed World Missions was on the north coast of Honduras for a classis meeting of Honduran Christian Reformed churches.

"On Tuesday I observed anti-riot police disperse a crowd of protestors," he said. "Later, the police ordered everyone off the streets."

Geisterfer was able to return home two days later. "There was much evidence of protest the whole way: burned tires, rocks, and garbage all over the road," he said. He also said that all CRC-related staff in Honduras changed travel plans and stayed close to home during the crisis.

Geisterfer said they also helped the Honduran CRC organize a day of prayer and fasting. "For our Honduran brothers and sisters, this is a new initiative since there has never before been a coordinated effort at corporate prayer or fasting," he said.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Putting Community on the Menu

Welcome to the Front Porch Café. At this diner in a small northern Michigan town, community is the main entrée.

When Ellsworth, Mich., lost its only grocery store and diner within two months because of the struggling economy, members of Ellsworth Christian Reformed Church responded, knowing how important a diner is to a little community.

"We started thinking how we could restore fellowship in the community," said Bob Felton, outreach facilitator from Ellsworth CRC. "We needed to go to them, rather than expecting them to come to us."

The Front Porch Café opened last year.

Felton said nothing on the menu costs more than \$5, and there are \$3 lunch specials for high schoolers. All profits go back into supporting the program.

Once a week during the winter, five churches put on

family fellowship dinners for \$3 per person, with a donor offsetting some of the costs.

The café has four paid employees and lots of volunteers. All tips are shared with everyone from the dishwashers to the greeter.



Sue Tillotson serves Bob Vollmer at the Front Porch Café.

Bob Vollmer volunteers on Thursdays when the café serves senior citizens lunch for \$4 a plate. "The town was dying," he said. "Now there is traffic on the streets. ... People came back into town and began to help each other again."

—Karen Gorter

## Burundians Find Help from Michigan Church

**V**olunteers from Kelloggsville Christian Reformed Church in Kentwood, Mich., have helped at least 50 Burundian refugees learn to read and write in the English language.

"I want to read books, speak, and write. I want to read labels," said Jozerine Mutuyimana, 20, who immigrated two years ago. Burundians speak Swahili or Kirundi, making adjustment to life in North America a challenge.

Susan Kraght said Burundians have a harsh history in East Africa. "They've been through war, genocide, and life in refugee camps."

Last year, church member Lori Flower started teaching a family in her home, but soon the walls



**Jozerine Mutuyimana (left) and Therese Uwiragiyi enjoy literacy classes at Kelloggsville CRC.**

were bursting with learners. "We just grew," Flower said.

Kraght, Flower's daughter, launched children's literacy classes in church classrooms, not expecting adults to show up too.

"Whole families come," Kraght said. Volunteers from area churches of different denominations also teach at Kelloggsville.

Volunteer Kellie Bouma takes refugees to medical appointments and ethnic food stores and helps them fill out government forms. "When they get something in the mail, they don't understand," Bouma said.

Her most challenging task is finding dental care for the Burundians. "I call dentists and beg them to help the refugees. They have toothaches and abscesses," she said.

While tutoring, church volunteers offer friendship and spiritual encouragement as well. "We show them that God has not forgotten them," Kraght said.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. Marvin Konyonenbelt

1939-2009

Rev. Marvin Konyonenbelt, a man of deep faith, decorated Army chaplain, Vietnam veteran, focused listener, and thoughtful counselor, died Aug. 13 from congestive heart failure. He was 69.

Konyonenbelt graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1965 and joined the U. S. Armed Forces as a chaplain after his ordination in the Christian Reformed Church.

Konyonenbelt's Army career took him to Vietnam, Germany, and Japan, where he loved the soldiers entrusted to his care.

He was awarded the Purple Heart (after being wounded in Vietnam), the Army Commendation Medal with two "V" devices for combat heroism, the Air Medal for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight, and three Bronze Stars for bravery.

Konyonenbelt concluded his Army chaplaincy in 1993 and retired from the ministry in 1996.

He is survived by his wife, Harmina ("Ina"), three children and their spouses, and six grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

*For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Konyonenbelt, please visit [www.thebanner.org](http://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.*

## CRC Deficit Tops \$9 Million

The Christian Reformed Church has a deficit of more than \$9 million as of the fiscal year ended on June 30.

However, the church's board of trustees heard at its September meeting that the financial position of the church was improved by more than \$2 million from what it would have been without budget cuts made earlier in the year.

"When we began the [calendar] year, we knew we were in for difficulties, and we asked people to make contingency plans. We improved the bottom line by expense reduction, driven at least half by reduction in compensation," said John Bolt, the denomination's director of finance and administration.

Compensation cuts included a reduction in pension and benefits and a salary freeze for all denominational employees. The deficit was primarily driven by a downturn in the economy that resulted in less money coming into the denomination's coffers.

In the first two months of the current fiscal year, ministry share giving was stronger than what was budgeted. Ministry shares are the amount of money collected from local churches for shared denominational ministries.

The trustees also approved new employment policies, including one regarding CRC employees' use of social media such as Facebook.

That policy states that any personal blogs or other information shared online that could reflect on the CRC must have a disclaimer stating that the author does not represent the denomination. It also cautions employees that any of their actions captured via images, posts, or comments can reflect on the denomination.

—Gayla R. Postma

## CALLS ACCEPTED

From First CRC, New Westminster, British Columbia, to **Rev. Andrew E. Beunk** of Fruitland CRC, Stoney Creek, Ontario.

From Coopersville (Mich.) CRC to Candidate **Steve Bussies**.

From Church of the Servant, Grand Rapids, Mich., to Candidates **Anthony Curran** and **Rebecca Jordan Heys** to serve as resident pastors.

From Madison Square Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, to Candidate **Brad Knetsch** to serve as assistant pastor.

From Bethlehem CRC, Thunder Bay, Ontario, to Candidate **Albert Postma**.

From Maranatha CRC, Holland, Mich., to Candidate **Matt Stob**.

From Oakdale Park CRC to Candidate **Aaron Winkle** to serve as associate chaplain for Calvin College.

## Banner News Writers Needed

The *Banner* is looking for two additional news correspondents to write about Christian Reformed people and activities of interest to our readers. One opening is in lower Michigan (Classes Kalamazoo and Lake Erie), and the other encompasses Montana, Utah, Colorado, and Texas (Classes Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone). We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

All expressions of interest should be sent via e-mail only (no phone calls, please) to Gayla Postma, news editor, at [gpostma@crcna.org](mailto:gpostma@crcna.org).

**Michael and Rebecca Miller, Elaina, and Greta enjoy the Green Bean.**

## Taking Church to the People of Seattle

It's no secret that the Pacific Northwest is the most unchurched part of the United States. But Christian Reformed churches in and around Seattle, Wash., aim to change that.

The Seattle Cluster is a group of churches that is learning "it's not so much about getting people to go to church as it is about getting the church to go to the people with the liberating news of Jesus," said Rev. Benjamin Katt of Awake CRC.

Awake is one of eight Christian Reformed churches planted in the Seattle area in the past five years.

## A Seattle Coffeehouse Where People Listen

Michael Miller knows where to find a listening ear: at the Green Bean Coffee House in Seattle's Greenwood area.

Rev. Randy Rowland, pastor of Sanctuary Christian Reformed



EVANGELINE MAGEE DEMASTER

Ministry Associate **Tim Soerens** stands by the "Giving Garden," a gift to the Cancer Care Alliance patients nearby.

Another one is Dust, a nine-month-old church in South Lake Union near Seattle's Space Needle. There, Ministry Associate Tim Soerens works with Americorps

volunteer Jeff Rowe to learn the community's assets and bring positive transformation.

In Ravenna, Rev. Brian Turnbull, pastor of the four-year-old House CRC, is part of a group of young dads in a co-op preschool who have formed deep friendships. They've been meeting regularly in a local pub for the past two

Church two doors down, sometimes serves the coffee. Sanctuary CRC manages the neighborhood advancement initiative under which the Green Bean operates.

When Miller, who is studying for his master's degree, attends the "Notes from Job Search" group, Rowland greets him with, "How's school? How's the job hunt?" Miller says, "People here care. I can always ... find someone to talk to."

Other community people appreciate that listening ear too. A woman involved in drugs and prostitution walked in off the street one Tuesday and listened to the children's story time. A man battling cancer found a sense of family at the Green Bean, which he visited until he passed away.

The Green Bean serves as Sanctuary's front porch, and many people connect there first. Manager Summer Mohrlang reports, "Twenty-six groups from the Greenwood community used our space from January to June 2009."

Mohrlang invites people to the coffee house to hear from the "Artist or Non-profit of the Month." The aim is to "encourage individuals and foster connections between all who enter here," she says.

Sanctuary CRC is part of the Seattle Cluster (see "Taking Church to the People of Seattle").

—Evangeline Magee DeMaster



EVANGELINE MAGEE DEMASTER

years. Two of the dads have long tried to deny that God exists. Turnbull's wife and co-pastor, Rev. Elizabeth (Betsy) Turnbull, said of the two, "They are tired and ready to let go and fall into the embrace of Jesus' arms." She adds that their families have recently started coming to the House.

Emmaus CRC, the "teen" of the Cluster, and 70-year-old First CRC are also moving out into their neighborhoods. Near Emmaus, the community garden was fighting blackberry bushes. Emmaus members hewed them down, and one member, a licensed plumber, addressed drainage problems.

The pastors learned to use asset-based community development to work with their communities.

"The vision of the Cluster is to be incarnational in whatever way that may look in each neighborhood," Turnbull says.

Soerens adds, "It can continue the heritage of the CRC into a new day by connection and starting church with a kingdom vision."

—*Evangeline Magee DeMaster*

## Awake Goes Places Most "Church People" Don't

Awake Christian Reformed Church meets in the back room of a bawdy café on Seattle's Aurora Avenue motel strip, where sex shops and homelessness abound. The church is part of the Seattle Cluster (see "Taking Church to the People of Seattle").

Awake's pastor, Rev. Benjamin Katt, and his wife, Cherie, felt called "to spend time in places where 'church people' are never found."

Recently, the Sea to Sea 2008 Bike Tour gave Awake a grant of \$7,500 to help fight poverty. The grant will help carefully chosen residents of local motels work toward independence by providing training in budgeting, banking, and job skills, Katt said.

Karen Cirulli, an Americorps volunteer working with Awake, said that motel-dwellers are a

neglected slice of society. While they can afford weekly rent, they can't pay the first and last month's rent plus deposit required to secure an apartment.

Awake also regularly welcomes 40 to 60 homeless people to neighborhood barbecues. "It has to be through relationships," Katt said. "We need to be authentic."

—*Evangeline Magee DeMaster*

**Awake's neighborhood barbecues and a community garden attract 40 to 60 homeless people.**



BEN KATT

### IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Johan Tangelder**  
1936-2009

Rev. Johan Tangelder, 73, intimate friend of Jesus, diligent student and preacher of the Word, onetime missionary, avid reader and writer, and defender of the faith, died July 23.

After graduating from Central Baptist Seminary in Toronto, Ontario, and completing courses for a doctoral degree at the Free University of Amsterdam, Tangelder graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1967.

He served churches in British Columbia and Ontario, in addition to serving two years as a missionary in the Philippines. He retired in 1993.

Tangelder was foremost a student of Scripture, but also an ardent student of history and culture. He produced a steady stream of articles and book reviews for a variety of periodicals.

Tangelder is survived by his wife, Helen, four children and their spouses, and 10 grandchildren.

—*Louis M. Tamminga*

*For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Tangelder, please see [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org).*

## Calvin Faculty Wants Homosexuality Statement Withdrawn

At a meeting in late September, the faculty senate of Calvin College voted 36-4 to ask that the school's board of trustees withdraw its statement on homosexuality, adopted last May.

That statement said, in part, that advocacy by faculty and staff, both in and out of the classroom, for homosexual practice is unacceptable.

Calvin College is a Grand Rapids, Mich., school owned by the Christian Reformed Church.

Board chair Bastian Knoppers told *The Banner* that the statement was intended to confirm that the position of the college was in tandem with the position of the CRC. (See *Banner*, October 2009.)

Karin Maag, vice chair of the faculty senate, said that the faculty would like to see the college go back to its 2008 position: that faculty, administration, and board trustees need to talk about how best to address homosexuality in teaching, writing, and speaking. A task force was created at that time to do that.

Maag said there are key issues beyond this topic—about the place of academic freedom in a Christian college and how to discuss topics that are challenging for the church and society.

In a statement released to the media before the faculty senate met, Knoppers, president of Calvin's board of trustees, said, "It has become apparent in recent weeks that Calvin faculty, staff, and students believe our actions circumvented normal processes for the college. That was not our intention. It is clear that there are important issues that we need to address and work out."

—*Gayla R. Postma*

## Montana Church Celebrates 100

Conrad (Mont.) Christian Reformed Church was established Oct. 29, 1909, just one year after the agriculturally-based town of Conrad itself was incorporated. The congregation's first pastor was Rev. Menno Borduin.

This year, the congregation, with current pastor Rev. Maurice Vander Veen, will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the church with a special weekend of activities in November.

A Saturday-evening banquet will include special music, a slideshow, and sharing of memories with the congregation, the community, and former pastors. The church's theme for the weekend, "Celebrating God's Faithfulness Through All Generations," based on Psalm 89:1, will also shape the Sunday morning worship service.

—Alice Durfee

## After the Floods in Alaska

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's Disaster Response Service (DRS) is rarely called to Alaska.

However, when the U. S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) needed help to rebuild 23 homes destroyed by spring floods in the town of Tanana, DRS stepped in.

"Once [flood waters] came over the roads, there was no way out," said Kathy Roberts, a resident of the tiny village on the Yukon River. Residents were flown by charter to Fairbanks.



In Tanana, Alaska, Jay DeBoer, Lee Mys, and Harold Kuiper install soffit material to homes to secure insulation.

PHYLLIS KUIPER

Teams had about 60 days to rebuild, said Jay DeBoer, DRS regional manager. Planned completion was the end of September because "winter comes early in Tanana," DeBoer said. Houses had to be leveled, squared up, and cleaned out. Electricians found and rectified problems, said volunteer Ken Westveer.

Construction supervisor Mike Tigchelaar and coordinator Arnie Gustafso directed 63 people on five volunteer teams who traveled from Ontario, Michigan, British Columbia, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Alberta, and Washington.

—Evangeline Magee DeMaster

## Theological Points and Pints

Stop by the Right Brain Brewery in Traverse City, Mich., on Thursday nights, and you'll find an interesting menu: beer, conversation, and theology.

Rev. Bryan Berghoef, pastor of Watershed Christian Reformed Church in Traverse City, started a gathering called Pub Theology in the fall of 2008.

"We definitely get into deep stuff, and questions are both random and purposeful," said Berghoef.

Pub Theology is open to anyone and often includes other members from Watershed.



Rev. Bryan Berghoef (right) talks theology over beer in Traverse City, Mich.

Turnout has ranged from 8 to 23 people during the evening hours. When the turnout is larger they break into smaller groups.

A sign posted at the entrance of the pub notes which discussion topics are on the menu for the night. Topics have included what it means to "get" Jesus and discussion of the question "If God enjoys differences in human life and nature, why are differences often part of religious conflict?"

Berghoef said they see folks from the community, some who are Christians, some who are atheists.

"I didn't expect it to go over as well as it has," he said. "We want to engage people in our community and in an environment they are comfortable with. We did not want to assume they would come to us for [theological] questions and answers." —Karen Gorter

## Hat Day for Nancy

When Nancy Leistra (front row, sixth from left) of North Hills Christian Reformed Church in Troy, Mich., started losing her hair while going through chemotherapy treatments, the women of her church donned hats as a show of support. The congregation also supported Leistra by providing rides to her daily treatments and holding a "Support Nancy Potluck." Leistra said the hat day buoyed her spirits through the next week of exhausting treatments.

—Eileen DeVries



## New Network for Churches Launched

The Network, a new denominational program intended to connect and help local congregations, is becoming a reality.

Approved by the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees a year ago, the Network's operational plan was presented to the board in late September.

A centerpiece of the Network will be a website due to launch in January. It will connect local churches to resources available from the denomination on a wide variety of topics—from how to be a better elder, to how to start a Sunday school program, to how to reach out to the community more effectively.

The website will also provide a venue for people to talk to each other about what has worked well, and what hasn't, in their own church.

The Network will oversee existing denominational programs including the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence and Sustaining Congregational Excellence programs, as well as classis renewal ministry, youth ministry, and discipleship ministry.

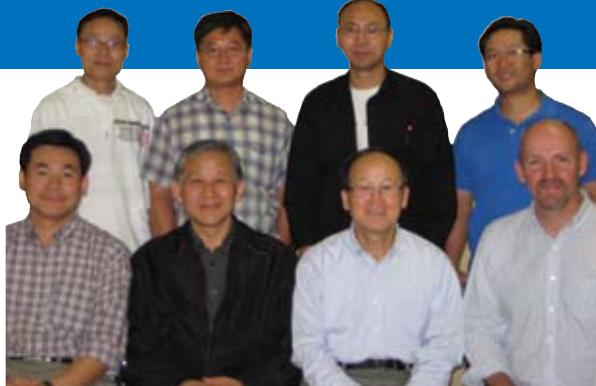
The Network will also have an advisory council similar to those of the denomination's specialized ministries.

Interim director Rev. Michael Bruinooge told trustees that this is a trial period—a time to see what works.

Initial strategies include encouraging meetings among denominational staff who offer coaching-related services, launching Internet networks for exchanges among congregational leaders, and identifying and eliminating overlapping resources in denominational ministries.

The Network plans to offer one-stop telephone access to denominational resources by the middle of 2010.

—Gayla R. Postma



Pastors from Canadian Korean CRCs, plus one from the state of Washington, gathered in Calgary, Alberta.

## Korean-Canadian Pastors Meet

Six pastors serving Canadian Korean Christian Reformed churches gathered in Calgary, Alberta, this summer for continuing education and mutual support, with an emphasis on spiritual revival and leadership for healthy church growth.

"This program is very helpful to check my current church's situation and also gives direction for the next steps," said Rev. Jong Phil Oh, pastor of New Life Korean CRC in Abbotsford, British Columbia.

After 30 hours of training over three days, Rev. Sung Soo Kim of Love CRC in Kamloops, British Columbia, highly recommended the program. "It is an intensive education," Kim said. "We are often lonely leaders in Canada, but we shared our burdens as well as our visions for the future."

Kim added, "I am here to learn a lot with my fellow pastors. This continuing study and fellowship is very much needed for other remote pastors."  
—Jonathan Kim

## Aiding Medical Care in Mexico

"What struck me most is how happy they are for how little they have," said Aaron Doorn, 16. Doorn was one of nine members of Orland Park (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church who traveled to Xalapa, Mexico, to provide medical and dental care in a poverty-stricken area known as El PorVenir.

The team partnered with the Luke Society, an organization that works with indigenous medical professionals.

The Orland Park church has worked in El PorVenir since 2003, helping to build a ministry center with a medical clinic and dental suite. Karen Doorn said, "It is impressive how the whole area changes

with good health care and nutrition."

Besides offering medical care, the group distributed clothes and Bibles, visited people who were sick, and taught songs in Spanish to children at a Saturday Bible school.

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung



PATTY DEJONG



## Providence Christian College Inaugurates Second President

On Sept. 19, J. Derek Halvorson was inaugurated as president of Providence Christian College in Ontario, Calif. Halvorson was previously director of constituent relations at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Ga. Halvorson replaces Jim Den Ouden, who retired in June after serving as president since the college opened in 2004. The Reformed, Christian liberal arts school currently has 55 students.

—Heidi Wicker

Dr. Richard DeJong of Orland Park CRC examines a patient in El Paisano, a mountainous village outside of Xalapa, Mexico.

## Michigan Families House Refugee Teens

Burma and Michigan are more than 8,000 miles (12,800 km) apart, but three families of Lakeside Community Christian Reformed Church in Alto, Mich., are bridging the distance by taking five teenage Burmese refugees into their homes.

The teens escaped persecution in their home country, also known as Myanmar, and arrived in the United States in the past year.

"There's no hope for a future [in Burma]," said Miriam Hinkle, one of the foster parents. "They can't go to school, and they would go to church on Sunday, but they didn't dare sing very loud because they'd get thrown in jail."

For the Brinks, Cooper, and Hinkle families, the connection began with a presentation about Burmese refugees by Bethany Christian Services.

"I already had three teenage boys at home," said Ronda Brinks. "But I got the nudge from God, and he kept nudging me that it would bless my family, and we went in from there."

Hinkle echoed those sentiments. "I thought, 'If I can't even do it for a kid who wants a good Christian home, who can I do it for?'" she said. "It tugged at my heart."

The Brinks ended up taking in two boys; the Hinkles took in two sisters; and the Coopers took in one boy.

Despite linguistic and cultural differences, the teens have been involved with the church community at Lakeside and in sports at their schools.

Although getting licensed as foster care providers was daunting, the families say the experience has been rewarding.

"It's been a lot of fun," Hinkle said.

—Christian Bell

## CRC Endorses Statement on Immigration

**A**t its meeting in late September, the Christian Reformed Church's Board of Trustees endorsed a resolution calling on the U.S. government to reform the country's immigration system.

The draft resolution was produced by the National Association of Evangelicals, of which the CRC is a member.

The resolution states that while the Bible does not offer a blueprint for modern legislation, it can serve as a moral compass and shape the attitudes of those who believe in God. "Policies must be evaluated to reflect that immigrants are

made in the image of God and demonstrate biblical grace to the foreigner," the statement says.

The NAE resolution says that current quotas do not grant enough visas to meet the needs of industries that rely on immigrant workers, and backlogs under family-based immigration law cause excessive periods of family separation.

It also states that immigrant communities offer fresh opportunities for the church, especially for evangelism, church planting, and raising up new leaders. "These spiritual realities remind evangelicals that . . . immigration cannot be reduced to economics and national security issues," the statement reads.

The NAE resolution calls on churches to treat immigrants with

respect and mercy, and calls on government to establish more functional legal avenues for the annual entry of a reasonable number of immigrant workers and their families, dedicate more resources to family reunification, and establish a process for undocumented workers to earn legal status and citizenship.

Trustee Rev. Sheila Holmes, pastor of Northside Community (CRC) in Paterson, N.J., says she supports the resolution, but wonders whether it says enough. "Our churches are full of people who don't know if they will be moved out or not. Just to call on government to do something doesn't mean they will do the right thing," she said.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Helping the Jobless and Homeless in West Michigan

Homeless families can find respite at Ivanrest Christian Reformed Church in Grandville, Mich., while parents search for a job and a new place to live.

On a rotating schedule with other area churches, Ivanrest opens its doors every night during its assigned weeks, giving parents and children clean beds, meals, friendship, and a warm atmosphere.

"They are so kind. If you need medicine, they'll go get it for you," said Regina, a homeless guest in July.

Gratitude shines in her eyes and smile, over an evening meal with her son, Keith, 24, who is disabled. The two were evicted when a bank foreclosed on the apartment building where they lived.

Michigan's 15.2 percent unemployment rate (as of July) and all-too-frequent bank foreclosures are behind some of the homelessness.

Ashley, a mother of three preschool-age children, was living with friends when the bank foreclosed and they all had to leave.

Leticia and her four children lost their residence when Leticia's job vanished. "I don't know where I would be if it wasn't for them," she said of the churches' assistance.



**Ashley, mother of three, plays with two of her children.**

Carole Pettijohn, ministry director for Ivanrest, said that hosting their guests gives church volunteers insight into the multitude of problems that come with homelessness.

"They allow us to have a glimpse of their lives. It gives us awareness that people who are our neighbors are hurting."

—Carolyn Koster Yost



# FAQS

## Relationships

**Q** My parents wanted to give my husband and me an advance on our inheritance because we've always been very close, and they wanted to help us buy a house. Now my siblings are furious with us because we accepted the gift. What should we do?

**A** There are a number of issues inherent in your question that might benefit from some further insight through reflection and discussion within your family.

For example, does your assertion that you and your parents are “very close” mean that your siblings are “less close” to your parents? And if that is so, is that because of proximity, because of religious differences, or because there has been a rift created over time?

In other words, is the overriding dynamic of your family that you and your husband are “in” but that the rest of your siblings are “out”? If the incident you describe is simply the latest example of a pattern that is ingrained, it may be time to talk with a professional family therapist to help your relationships heal.

Also, it is interesting that the burden of anger from your siblings is against you, but not against your parents. Is it possible that you and your siblings are still in a relationship of emotional dependence on your parents? Young children often turn on each other with anger when they perceive that their parents favor a sibling at the expense of themselves. This “sibling rivalry” is common and understandable between children, but when it occurs between adults it may signal an unhealthy emotional dependence on the approval of their parents. For this, counseling can help too.

Neither of the above may be part of your family's problem. If the “advance on our inheritance” is an isolated incident of family disharmony, it should not be difficult to restore harmony.

First, consider having a discussion with your siblings individually to understand why they are upset. Listen with an open mind,

without becoming defensive, and reflect back to your siblings what you understand them to be concerned about.

Next, meet with your parents for a frank discussion about how they plan to share “the inheritance” among all their children. Encourage your parents to alter their plans to enhance fairness, if that should be necessary. Do reassure your parents that “the inheritance” is their money, and that they do not “owe” it to their children to give it to them. However, in the interest of family harmony, treating children equally is important. Communicate in a letter or in person to your siblings the results of your conversation with your parents.

**In the interest of family harmony, treating children equally is important.**

And lastly, have a celebration—a family picnic or other family get-together where you express three things: regret for any hurt feelings between you and your siblings, love to both your parents and your siblings, and hope that family harmony is now restored.

—Judy Cook

*Judy Cook is a family therapist living in Hamilton, Ontario (jhcook@quickcliv.net). She is a member of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster.*

## Church

**Q** My church rarely reads the Ten Commandments or any other Scripture in regard to our call to confession, as is ordinarily done in the CRC. We also don't have catechism teaching in either service on

**Sundays. We feel this is against CRC policy. What should be done about this?**

**A** There is no CRC policy indicating which passages should be used as a call to confession. Unfortunately, Synod 1928 adopted an order of worship that used the Ten Commandments as a teacher of sin. Though such use is occasionally appropriate and though there is a responsive reading on page 1016 of the *Psalter Hymnal* that uses the law this way, a 1930 synodical advisory committee, correctly reflecting the “Reformed use” of the law, said, “God presents his law to [his people] as the rule of life for a people thankful for their redemption” (*Acts of Synod 1930*, p. 166). That's why the Ten Commandments are in the third section of the Heidelberg Catechism (Gratitude), not in the first (Sin). Though Synod 1930 dropped the order of worship adopted two years earlier, the unwise practice of using the Ten Commandments primarily as a teacher of sin continued for decades.

Church Order Article 54b spells out the denomination's policy on Catechism preaching: “At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, following its sequence.”

This is one of a number of Church Order details that synod should change. Not only is it widely ignored, but a growing number of congregations have only one Sunday service. In addition, pastors preach through the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Contemporary Testimony and present Reformed theology in other series and sermons. Naturally, pastors would do well to reference the Heidelberg Catechism when they present such teaching since many of us are well acquainted with it, and it is a wonderful teaching tool for the next generations.

—George Vander Weit

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



# The Suffering of Iraqi Christians

**N**O ONE KNOWS for sure how many Christians remain in Iraq. Certainly their numbers continue to rapidly decline, mostly through forced migration. In 2001, Christian population estimates ranged from 1.8 to 2.8 million. Now, those estimates have shrunk to 700,000 to 1.2 million.

There is no doubt that at least 40 percent of Iraqi Christians have left the country during the past six years. The population decline was taking place before the current war began in 2003, but at a much slower pace and for different reasons, most of which came down to economics. Many Iraqis were severely hurt by 12 years of U.N. sanctions imposed on the country.

The much higher rate of immigration by Iraqi Christians in recent years has been caused by the loss of law and order in the country. Saddam Hussein's ruthless regime didn't discriminate. Saddam ruled the country with an iron fist, which meant a lack of political freedom for everyone.

Yet his regime provided a high level of security. Baghdad was one of safest major

## HOW THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL TURMOIL HAS DECIMATED THE CHURCH

cities on earth. Criminals were kept off the streets, and religious discrimination did not exist. Anything that smelled "fanatical" or religiously divisive was put down decisively.

Saddam's ruling Baath Party was deeply rooted in secularism. It had zero tolerance for the use of religion for political ends and kept both Sunni and Shiite Muslim extremists on the run.

The Christian minority, on the other hand, was viewed more favorably; they tended to shy away from politics and lead active lives in civilian spheres such as business, health care, and education. They received more than their fair share of civil servant appointments in government departments—often because they were viewed as trustworthy and hard-working. And Saddam seemed to have personally made sure that churches and Christian neighborhoods were well provided for in the infrastructure of the country.

## The Collapse of Law and Order

It is noteworthy that as soon as law and order in the country collapsed with the arrival of the foreign occupation forces, exiled Shiite and Sunni religious-based political parties quickly took control of the streets. (Many of their followers hadn't dared to make noise as long as the Baathists were in power.) Their leaders brought well-armed militias from across the borders of neighboring Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Syria.

Initially, most of these Islamic militias allied themselves with the foreign occupation authorities, helping to dismantle the Baath political and military structure and to capture or kill many of its leaders. Rapidly-armed Shiite parties gained the upper hand, with tacit support from foreign authorities. They quickly controlled most of the predominantly Shiite southern half of the country and took over more and more of the historically Sunni-controlled capital, Baghdad. And they enjoyed the generous support of Shiite-ruled Iran.

In reaction, Sunni militias organized more zealously. With the financial support

# At least 40 percent of Iraqi Christians have left the country.

of Sunni Arab countries, they led a bloody rebellion against both the foreign occupation and the Shiite ascendancy to power.

Iraqi Christians became the target of both Sunni and Shiite extremists. They were viewed as sympathizers with the fallen secularist regime.

As resistance to the foreign occupation intensified, occupation forces focused attention on protecting themselves, fortifying an enclave in Baghdad called “the Green Zone,” as well as several other military bases. A new Shiite-controlled Iraqi authority was established in that enclave, leaving other areas far more vulnerable.

Most Christians abandoned their homes and businesses in their small communities in Basra and in the Shiite-controlled neighborhoods of Baghdad before much physical harm came their way.

Sunni militias have had more opportunity to inflict suffering on the Christian communities—mostly because they controlled the northern city of Mosul and areas of Baghdad where the concentration of Christians was highest. (Sunni Islam has historically tended to be much harsher than Shiite Islam in its treatment of Christian minorities.)

## Grave choices

Over the past 50 to 100 years, the growing Shiite Muslim population of south and east Iraq has edged Sunni Muslims north

and west. Sunnis view themselves as the main losers to Western occupation forces, who empowered their Shiite enemies.

Sunnis generally shared Saddam’s strong support for an independent Palestinian homeland—a rallying cause for most Muslims. And the foreign occupation is identified as Western “Christian,” intent on undermining Islam and supporting Israel’s “grab” of Arab land. Thus, already viewed as a privileged group under the previous regime, Christians have been increasingly resented.

Shiite areas are mostly secure against Sunni extremist bombing attacks. Shiites control the central government and most of the generous oil revenues. The very few Christians remaining in their areas have the means to pay protection money to local militias.

Not so for Christians in predominantly Sunni areas. Whatever means they had to pay for the protection of their churches and families has been depleted. They’ve been told to make one of three choices: convert to Islam, surrender themselves and their resources, or leave the country.

Many have been held by Sunni and Shiite militia for ransom. Some were killed even after the money was paid. Several Christian young women disappeared and are believed to have been forced to marry Sunni militia leaders. Other Christians escaped to Syria, Jordan, or Turkey, where most seek refugee status in the West. Families with no resources for protection money or travel abroad often smuggle their sons and daughters to the remaining Christian villages in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq. Finally, some have converted to Islam, subjecting themselves and their loved ones to intensive indoctrination.

As foreign troops vacate the cities and move to fortified military barracks, attacks against Christian churches have intensified. On one Sunday, eight churches in northern Baghdad were simultaneously bombed by Sunni extremists. At least 14 men, women, and children died, and scores more were seriously injured.

Although the central government moved in quickly with more police protection for church buildings, Iraqi Christian families still live in a constant state of fear, as even the police force is infiltrated by religious extremists.

## Reformed Churches and Ministries

Meanwhile, the Reformed congregation in Basra has dwindled to a handful of elderly people. All the younger ones have left.

The Reformed congregation in Mosul dispersed. Its building was closed by order of Muslim extremists who kidnapped and killed its senior elder. The Assyrian-speaking congregation in Baghdad also closed down.

The large Arabic congregation in Baghdad has dwindled significantly, but it remains active with important ministries to children and neighborhood families.

The congregation in Kirkuk, where security seems better, continues with different services. Both the Baghdad and Kirkuk congregations have active Bible study and diaconal ministries regularly supported by the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (see box).

A glimmer of hope can also be found in responses to Arabic gospel radio broadcasts, which show growing disenchantment with fanatical Islam within both Sunni and Shiite communities.

As we mark the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church Nov. 8, please pray for our brothers and sisters in Iraq. Pray especially for believers in Somalia as well, several of whom were recently executed by Muslim extremists. ■

## What Is MERF?

The Middle East Reformed Fellowship is a Christian, nonprofit, and nonpolitical charitable organization. It serves the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the Horn of Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Iran, Indonesia, and Pakistan. It emphasizes an indigenous outreach that focuses on building up and aiding local churches, using radio as a key evangelistic tool. In conjunction with Words of Hope and Back to God Ministries International, MERF broadcasts radio programs in Arabic to reach a potential audience of more than 340 million people. MERF has also established training and broadcasting centers for indigenous workers in Cyprus, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, and Indonesia. For more information, see [www.MERF.org](http://www.MERF.org) or e-mail [merf@merf.org](mailto:merf@merf.org).



**Rev. Victor Atallah** is founder and general director of the Middle East Reformed

Fellowship and Arabic broadcast team leader of a joint effort by Words of Hope, Back to God Ministries International, and MERF. **Lisa Atallah**, who is married to Victor, has been a volunteer with MERF for 25 years. At present she serves as MERF’s office administrator.



# A Silent Dwelling

WHEN A DISRUPTED ADOPTION LEFT THEM IN UNSPEAKABLE PAIN, GOD BROUGHT COMFORT WITHOUT WORDS. ➤

*I am not a psychologist. I have neither a degree in therapy nor in grief counseling. I can only relate to you the story that has been given by God to my wife, Dawn, and me. It is a story that revealed to us the love of Christ in a community of friends and family. And it has taught us how to better mourn with those who mourn.*

**D**AWN AND I STRUGGLED for four years with issues of infertility. Those years included two painful miscarriages.

After taking medical intervention as far as we wanted to, in early 2003 we started the adoption process.

Frankly, it wasn't much fun. A lot of classes and genograms and background checks.

However, within four months we were notified that a birth mom had tentatively chosen us as adoptive parents of her newborn girl. Our hopes grew.

Within a day or so, however, the birth mom decided she wanted her little girl placed in another city.

Three months later we were notified, just prior to departing for a vacation, that we had been chosen by another birth mom. She was due to give birth shortly after our return. We spent a good portion of our time away anticipating radically different identities as *parents*.

A couple of days after arriving home, we found out the birth mom had had her little girl and decided to keep her.

Our pain increased.

About two more months passed. Then, on a Friday afternoon in late September, we received another phone call. Dawn and I had been chosen again.

The birth mom had made her decision about us weeks earlier, but the adoption agency—with our history of disappoint-

ment in mind—chose not to tell us until they were confident she would go through with the adoption. The baby was due in a couple of weeks.

Much to our surprise, on Sunday evening we received another phone call. The birth mom had had her baby that morning. A boy!

We arrived at the hospital at noon on Monday. When we walked into the room, the birth mom was holding the baby. It was awkward. She seemed somewhat resigned and subdued. Dawn especially hurt for her. We found it a bittersweet time.

The birth mom allowed us the honor of naming the baby. We asked her to also add a middle name. We called him Silas Everett, and she added Maleek.

The next day we took Silas Everett Maleek Mulder home. We were very happy and so proud of our new son. We still vividly recall those days of great rejoicing.

Early the next week, the birth mom came for a visit to see Sy. Again she was very quiet as she tenderly held him. I remember her undressing him to see his little body and to caress him. Dawn again deeply hurt for her, yet feared the possibility of another disrupted adoption. But I was confident that would not happen—I couldn't fathom it.

Friday afternoon I received a voicemail message from Dawn. She was in tears. The birth mom had changed her mind.

I quickly left work and rode my bike home. As I entered our house, I saw Dawn holding Sy. The emotion of what was happening hit me, and I cried. I was angry too. Not at the birth mom. What she had chosen to do made sense: Sy was so precious and beautiful.

My hostility was reserved for a God who toyed with people's hopes. At the time we used the word *cruel*. We'd already had so many hopes turned into disappointments. And now this: we bring our little boy home for three weeks and love him deeply, only to have him taken away.

We were asked to return Sy within 48 hours to the adoption agency. We did so with deep bereavement.

We entered a strange time—not only for ourselves, but for our friends and families. How do you comfort a couple who has experienced a disrupted adoption?

But when I look back at that time, I'm amazed. I'm amazed because I think we were a drag. We felt hopeless and bitter. We withdrew our names from the pool of adoptive families. I said a lot of stupid things that were both self-pitying and wrong.

But, in retrospect, we were blessed with a community that loved us still. One couple in particular, whom we had known for only a year, came and dwelled with us in our misery.

I don't remember any wisdom they offered to make sense of things for us. (And I think that's because they truly believed that it *didn't* make sense.) Instead, they brought supper. They brought coffee and scones. Always they ate with us.

I think it would've been easier to leave the food and walk away. They let us know that we were still loved.

Similarly, our pastor and his wife spent time with us. Mostly quiet time. He admitted honestly that he had no Scripture he could give us for our situation. That was OK—I wasn't interested anyhow. Their presence, though, spoke to us about God's caring.

Another friend drove from five hours away to spend the evening with me. We went for a run, had dinner, and went out for a beer. He left first thing the next morning. We spent about 12 hours together. I remember very little of our conversation. I will never forget the effort he made to inhabit our space of hurt.

In all these instances, we were blessed simply by the *presence* of members of our community. They got it right. They hurt *with* us.

I think that often we want to make things right with our words. I also think that if we really unpack what we're doing, we'll realize that frequently our attempts to speak words of comfort to others are efforts to make *ourselves* feel better.

The reality, though, is that things are broken. The world doesn't function in the way God intended. With that in mind, we *should* hurt. We should long for a world where things flourish as God planned.

Words cannot make pain go away. But the presence of those who love testifies to the kingdom that is both here and not yet, the kingdom in which things are right.

Eleven days after we brought Sy back to the adoption agency, we received a phone call. We happened to be traveling back to Wisconsin. The call came from a foster mother, also in Wisconsin, who asked whether we'd be interested in meeting with a birth mom who had delivered that morning.

The call left us deeply confused.

We were still mourning for Sy—how could we start this process again so soon? We spent the evening consulting our community of family and friends and praying. In the end, we felt that obedience required that we at least meet the birth mother.

She chose us on the spot.

## I will never forget the effort my friend made to inhabit our space of hurt.

We were scared, but we trusted that God would somehow bless this. We named our son Seth, which means “set” or “appointed”—an appropriate description of how God had set him in our lives.

The story has one more twist. Two months later, much to our absolute surprise, we were pregnant. Case was born later that year, and we now had two sons we considered miracles.

We were indeed blessed, but our two sons did not “replace” the son we had lost. We still hurt and long for Sy, and I think we should. The pain we feel is not the way things are supposed to be.

I'm not sure what this episode taught us. I only know that we were given examples of how to quietly mourn with those who mourn. I only know that we saw the face of Christ in the very human faces that surrounded us. ■



**Mark Mulder** is associate professor of sociology and social work and adjunct professor of congregational and ministry studies at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. In May 2009 the Mulders adopted a baby girl, Noelle Grace.

## Finding God Outside Church

*ReFrame Media helps build community*

*by Nancy Vander Meer*



Judy Mosley

Judy and Donovan Mosley left the church.

“In the church, you expect to find friends, but we didn’t,” explains Donovan. “People were so busy with church things, and the only way to connect with anybody was to connect to church projects.”

The Mosleys are a young couple from Milton, Ky. They were raised in Christian homes and wanted to nurture their children in the faith.

“We wanted to do all the ‘right’ things,” says Judy. “I thought following Jesus was a set of rules. We followed all the ABCs.”

In trying to please God, Judy and Donovan served as youth workers and volunteered in many church ministries. They wore Christian T-shirts, read their children Christian books, and put Jesus bumper stickers on their car.

“I carried God in a box for most of my Christian life,” says Donovan. “I had the right lingo. But I observed the ‘lost’ forming bonds and friendships I had never seen through our local church.

“Judy and I prayed about this decision and felt moved by God to remain out of the brick and mortar for a period.”

Judy adds, “We had to figure out where the truth was in all of this.”

“We left the church to discover how to love and take care of people,” says Donovan. “But leaving the church also left a hole in our hearts.”

Searching for spiritual refreshment, Judy reconnected with the Christian community through a web-based program produced by ReFrame Media, the English-language ministry of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI), the electronic media ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

She discovered *Under the Radar*, an inspirational music program. Then she told Donovan about a link she found to the *Walk the Way* video blog. He appreciated its daily challenges to put his faith into action.

## Leaving the church left a hole in our hearts

Soon the Mosleys joined the *ThinkChristian* community, another ReFrame Media website sponsored by BTGMI, where they converse with people around the world about faith, culture, and what it means to be a Christian in today's society.

### Building Relationships

*Under the Radar*, *Walk the Way*, and *ThinkChristian* are three of ReFrame



Donovan with son Johnathan

Media's newest programs that help people see God's story in their lives. Reaching out to today's media-savvy but often skeptical culture, these programs join a family of evangelistic and discipleship resources that include *The Back to God Hour*, the *TODAY* devotional, *Kids Corner*, and *Spotlight*. The programs are designed to help nurture the faith of people of all ages.

"The Mosleys are a prime example of how ReFrame Media comes alongside

people wherever they are in life," explains Rev. Steven Koster, director of ReFrame Media. "Each of our eight programs [see "ReFrame Media at a Glance," p.25] uniquely uses media tools to reach people of all ages, building bridges to our other programs and to the wider Christian community."

"ReFrame Media holds the capacity to reach different people," affirms Judy. "I'm more into words and music, so *Under the Radar* and *ThinkChristian* feed me. Donovan gets more into *Walk the Way* and shares what he hears. It's a place to wake up your mind and your spirit, to get you to start thinking. I found out I was not alone. I heard God speaking again."

Like many younger adults, the Mosleys wanted more than a brick-and-mortar building with the latest bells and whistles. They have a passion for discipling new believers, and through their experiences God has opened doors for them to talk with others who have left the church. They pray that God will lead them to a new group of believers, and are open to the possibility of starting a new church fellowship in their community.

They do not recommend that everyone leave church as they did, but they pray that people in the church will live lives transformed by the Word of God and reach out to those who are struggling. ReFrame Media is helping the Mosleys to do just that. ■



Nancy Vander Meer is a staff writer for *Back to God Ministries International*.

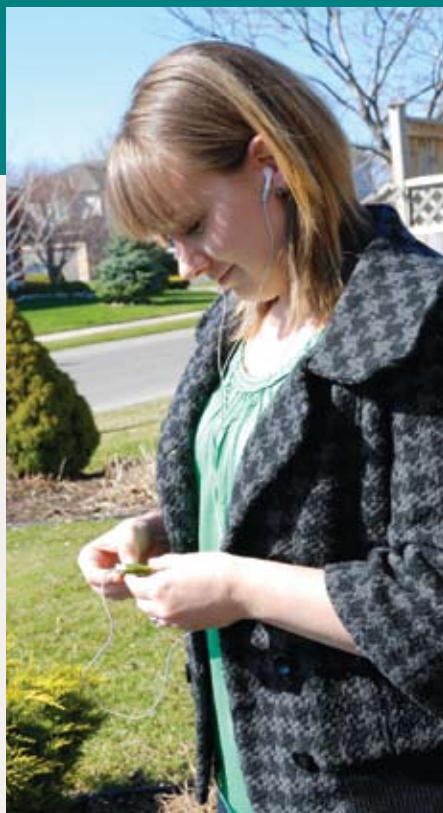


PHOTO BY HANS MULDER

**Back to God Ministries International is reaching today's generation through media.**

### Did you know?

- More than one-fifth of the world's population speaks or understands English.
- Through media we reach literally every country of the world. In fact, through its outreach ministries in 2008, the ReFrame Media team documented more than 659,000 contacts with people in 201 countries—and our impact is growing. We surpassed that number in the first eight months of 2009!
- Every month an average of 79,880 individuals log on to one of BTGMI/ReFrame Media's eight websites for discipleship and evangelism opportunities.

## Spotlight Clubs Turn Listeners Toward Jesus



Augusto Lenin: drawn to Christ through radio and relationships

**D**o you know someone for whom English is a second language? Are you or your church looking for a practical way to build relationships and offer assistance? Take a look at how *Spotlight* Listeners' Clubs are changing lives worldwide.

Back to God Ministry International's *Spotlight* radio program, produced in partnership with ReFrame Media, Feba, and Words of Hope, presents topics of international interest from a Christian perspective. Listeners' Clubs bring

together fans of the program, build relationships with those who wish to learn English, and open the door to introduce them to Jesus Christ.

Augusto Lenin, 38, from Quito, Ecuador, joined a *Spotlight* Listeners' Club at a local church. The Quito Listeners' Club was started in November 2002 by HCJB Radio, a ministry partner of Back to God Ministries International. Through *Spotlight's* specialized English broadcasts (spoken slowly, using a limited vocabulary), Lenin could listen to interesting programs, practice speaking English, and build relationships with English-speaking Christian volunteers.

Over time, he did learn English. But he was also the first person in the Listeners' Club ministry to come to know Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He recently wrote, "I would like to work for God so that my life can have meaning for the rest of my years." Following Lenin's step of faith, many others have come to know Christ through the Quito *Spotlight* Listeners' Club.

Clubs have also been started in Ecuador, Thailand, Vietnam, and the United States, and inquiries are coming in from

Nepal as well as from several countries in South America. Some *Spotlight* clubs draw up to 150 people who meet weekly to practice English and build relationships.

Robin Basselin, BTGMI's *Spotlight* coordinator, hopes that more North American churches will use the free *Spotlight* Listeners' Club materials as a tool for helping them reach out to their communities.

"Many churches have implemented ESL [English as a Second Language] courses as outreach programs. They provide a valuable service in order to build relationships with neighbors. But many ESL materials do not have an explicit Christian worldview. This is what sets *Spotlight* Listeners' Clubs apart. We can provide free audio programs, written scripts, discussion questions, and other resources for ESL classes."

If you or your church would like to reach people like Augusto through a *Spotlight* Listeners' Club in your own community, contact Robin at [rbasselin@crcna.org](mailto:rbasselin@crcna.org) or visit [www.SpotlightRadio.net/slc](http://www.SpotlightRadio.net/slc).

—Nancy Vander Meer, Back to God Ministries International

### Welcome, Sister

The people of Faith Covenant Church in Farmington Hills, Mich., sponsored a moms' support group to reach out to the many Japanese women living in their neighborhood. Soon they realized a greater need was to help the women learn English so they could function better in their new community.

Jean Jacquin and her leadership team started a *Spotlight* Listeners' Club. Each week around 30 women meet to listen to *Spotlight* programs, discuss the topics, and practice speaking English.

As they built relationships through conversation, several women began asking questions about the Christian faith. Chikako and Sen meet weekly with Jean for in-depth Bible study. What started as a support program for women has become an important avenue for welcoming them into the family of God.

The Farmington Hills *Spotlight* Listeners' Club ministers to Japanese women.







BTGMI's ReFrame Media team

## Seeing God's Story in Your Life

**W**e minister to a world that is ever more skeptical of Christianity.

David Kinnaman from the Barna Group wrote the popular book *unChristian* based on research into how young non-Christians view Christianity. Kinnaman's study finds that many 16- to 29-year-olds see Christianity as negative, opposing more things than it embraces. The study also notes a common perception that "Christianity has changed from what it used to be. Christianity no longer looks like Jesus."

Although Kinnaman's study focused primarily on young non-Christians, people who identify themselves as Christian are also becoming disillusioned with the church. A long-time listener to *The Back to God Hour* and *TODAY* reader asked, "What do you have for my grandchildren? How are you reaching them?"

A key challenge for the church is to help the next generation see God's relevance in their lives. In 2009, Back to God Ministries International renamed its English-language ministry "ReFrame Media" to more effectively reach people

of all ages in various stages of their faith journey.

As the ReFrame Media team works to share God's Word, our goal is to authentically help people see God's story in their lives. When people see God's story in their lives, their whole world is "reframed" within the gospel perspective. We are here to walk beside people, wherever they are in life. We want to show them how God is already at work restoring, refreshing, renewing, and reforming their lives.

Whether you are meeting Jesus for the first time, looking for ways to grow in faith, or desiring to disciple others, *reframe-media.com* will help you find resources to nurture your faith and that of your friends and family.

—Rev. Steven Koster is  
ReFrame Media director for  
BTGMI.

Thanks to your support, BTGMI and ReFrame Media are reaching English-speaking people worldwide and providing tools for you to use to disciple people in your own neighborhood.

### ReFrame Media at a Glance

ReFrame Media's eight ministry programs offer a variety of resources delivered in traditional and new ways. Here's how ReFrame can help you rediscover God's story in your life or nurture faith in others. Where do you see yourself in these media ministries?

- Add *BackToGodRadio.net* to your website favorites list so you can listen at your convenience. You can also hear *The Back to God Hour* on one of 106 local radio stations in Canada and the U.S. (and 41 international stations). CDs of the messages are also available.
- Sign up to receive your *TODAY* devotional by e-mail, podcast, or as a print copy at *ThisIsToday.net*. Every other month 350,000 printed *TODAY* booklets are distributed worldwide; 3,671 people subscribe to the daily devotional by e-mail.
- Introduce your children or grandchildren to the resources at *KidsCorner.net* to help them become lifelong followers of Jesus. *Kids Corner* also airs on 392 radio outlets.
- Learn how to live out your faith in everyday life at *WalkTheWay.net* with our daily video blog challenge. *Walk the Way* airs on 412 outlets and can be accessed on Facebook or delivered via SMS to your phone.
- Tune in to *RadarRadio.net* to hear the best undiscovered music from Christian artists, along with *Under the Radar* interviews and stories. *Under the Radar* is also available on 60 stations and through iTunes.
- Share your faith at *ThinkChristian.net*. An average of 25,649 people check out the Think Christian website each month, and hundreds participate in the ongoing blog with those who may be wondering how Christians can impact today's world. Think Christian is also gaining fans on Facebook.
- Start a *Spotlight* Listeners' Club to help people learn English as a second language. See *SpotlightRadio.net* for materials produced from a Christian perspective. The *Spotlight* radio program airs on the Internet and on 73 stations worldwide.
- Check out *ChurchJuice.com* for resources your church can use for effective local media outreach. Watch for how this developing website will provide tools for energizing your church's witness.

—Steven Koster



High school students in Ontario view the *Walk the Way* website.

## That They May Be One

**E**ach year on Oct. 31, Protestant churches around the world remember a simple but revolutionary act: Martin Luther's decision to nail what is now commonly known as the "Ninety-Five Theses" on the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517.

Luther's actions started a reformation that would eventually impact the entire Christian world. His work, together with that of many other reformers, revitalized the church. Christians began to read and understand Scripture in new and wonderful ways.

But the Protestant Reformation also produced a phenomenon that Luther and the other reformers could not have anticipated. In 1517 there was only one Western church. Luther had the courage to challenge its teachings, practice, and theology. Because the church was unwilling to hear his call to repentance and renewal, he was excommunicated and a new denomination was born.

That division in the church was repeated again and again, until today there are thousands of denominations and independent churches around the world. These churches, divided by language, culture, theology, worship styles, polity, and a multitude of other differences, make up about 40 percent of Christian churches worldwide.

The one church of Jesus Christ has become the church splintered, and the prayer of Jesus that "they may be one" has not yet been answered.

Such divisions are not what God intended. Scripture reminds us again and again that we are called to be one in Christ, yet we also are called to hold fast to the truth of the gospel. Sadly, in a sinful world, it is often difficult to maintain a balance between unity and truth.

Even within the Christian Reformed Church we experience this challenge. Throughout our history, the CRC has been divided over issues of theology and practice. In fact, the CRC

separated from the Reformed Church in America (RCA) over issues that have, for the most part, now disappeared.

How then do we, as the church, express the unity of Christ and also maintain our different understandings and practices?

Might I offer one suggestion? Rather than focusing on what divides us, denominations can work together in the name of Jesus, even as we continue to discuss the issues that keep us apart.

A good example of this is our present relationship with the Reformed Church in America. Few people realize that the CRC and RCA are working more closely together today than at any time in the past 150 years. CRC churches may freely call RCA ministers, and RCA churches may call CRC ministers. A number of congregations are both RCA and CRC.

Faith Alive Christian Resources, formerly CRC Publications, is now a combined ministry of the CRC and RCA and is governed by a board made up of members from both denominations. Materials and curricula produced by Faith Alive have a broad appeal to churches beyond the RCA and CRC that seek to interpret and teach the Bible from a Reformed perspective.

Recently the RCA established an office to address disability concerns in partnership with the CRC's Office of Disability Concerns. Our two denominations will work closely together to equip and encourage congregations to become hospitable, inclusive, healthy communities for people with disabilities and their families.

We also conduct church planting efforts together as we seek to reach more people by establishing new churches. There is a new level of cooperation in disaster response and community development.

In these and many other ways, the CRC and RCA are demonstrating the love of Christ and grace of God around the world. I am thankful that God has provided opportunities for us to engage with the RCA, and I hope that such efforts will continue as we engage with other churches and denominations around the world.

Together may we reflect the unified body of Christ, his church, where all parts form one body, proclaim one Lord, and work together in ministry. ■



How do we express the unity of Christ and also maintain our different understandings and practices?



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

## Russian Evangelist Thankful for Ministry Shares

Rev. Sergei Sosedkin, ministry leader of Russian outreach for Back to God Ministries International, says he is amazed by the generous support that Christian Reformed Church members give to the work of the church through ministry shares—a method of funding denominationwide ministries by assessing an amount per adult church member.

“So many committed people in the CRC give so willingly,” he says. “In Russia, for various reasons, it is difficult for churches to give money to support other ministries.

“CRC members have no idea how their love and generosity is affecting people around the world when they put their checks in the collection plate.”

When he is not in Russia or at the BTGMI office, Sosedkin frequently preaches in CRC congregations, describing the ministry as well as thanking them for their willingness to participate in the ministry shares program.

About 40 percent of BTGMI’s ministry budget comes from the ministry shares program, which has been a godsend during a depressed economy when other types of giving are scaled back, Sosedkin said.

“Ministry shares are extremely helpful. [They are] a blessing. Every CRC member can be assured that each dollar they give is making an impact.”

Having grown up in the former Soviet Union, Sosedkin had no concept of tithing when he was young. In fact, he had a hard time finding a Bible, let alone a church. “I grew up in a family of non-believers,” he said. “Almost everyone around me, except my grandmother, was a profound atheist.”

He said he tried to pray like his grandmother when he was 6 years old and started listening to Christian radio programs when he was 14 or 15. One program that influ-



Rev. Sergei Sosedkin broadcasts the gospel in Russia.

enced him deeply was *The Back to God Hour*, the flagship program of Back to God Ministries International.

“By listening to *The Back to God Hour*, I learned that it was God who created me,” he said. He eventually came to the United States to attend Reformed Bible College and then Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich. In 2001 Sosedkin became ministry leader of the BTGMI Russian media outreach, for which he records two radio programs and oversees the production of four additional radio programs, plus numerous specials. He also manages an interactive website, a growing text-message ministry, and the distribution of print materials in collaboration with Christian partner ministries.

Sosedkin’s radio messages are broadcast over stations reaching across Europe, Central Asia, and North America. They are also published in various Russian Christian magazines and newspapers.

The ministry shares program raises about \$25 million a year to help support CRC ministries in North America and around the world. Congregations are asked to contribute to ministry shares based on the number of active adult members in each church.

A key attribute of the ministry shares program is that there is almost no overhead cost. To raise the same amount of money through fundraising campaigns would require spending several million dollars a year—money that, thanks to ministry shares, the CRC can spend on ministry programs instead.

To learn more about the ministry shares program, search for “ministry shares” at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org). ■

—Chris Meehan,  
CRC Communications

To learn about the CRC’s response to flooding in the Philippines and disasters elsewhere in Asia, visit [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org), and click on Newsroom under News/Events.

## No Other Place for Me

“There’s no other place but the CRC for me!” Victor Perez-Ballesteros gave that testimony as he began his studies at Calvin Theological Seminary this fall. He expressed deep gratitude for the support he has received from God, from his wife and family, and



Victor Perez-Ballesteros (right) talks with Professor Mariano Avila (left) at a retreat for new students.

from the Christian Reformed Church through Third CRC in Denver, Colo., his regional classis, and the seminary.

Perez-Ballesteros’s journey to ministry has been a long and winding road involving significant sacrifices, but one that shows God’s faithfulness.

Born in Mexico into a Roman Catholic family, he took care of his younger siblings while his parents worked. He remembers entertaining them at times by dressing as a priest and preaching to them.

At age 18, Perez-Ballesteros moved to the U.S. and worked to support his family back home. His life shifted away from the church during those years, but he says God was always watching out for him. As he took classes to complete high school and get a college degree in electronics and engineering, he kept wondering about going into the ministry, but thought it was an impossible dream.

Then he met his future wife, Sandra, and began attending Third CRC in Denver with her. “From the very first day, I felt like this was my church,” he says. “I fell in love with the congregation.” When Victor and Sandra married, he joined Third CRC and they shared the custodial position there, in addition to their other jobs.

A few years later, Perez-Ballesteros could not sleep because the call to ministry was so strong. When he went into Pastor Tom Draayer’s office to clean, Draayer asked him, “Do you ever think about becoming a minister?” Perez-Ballesteros told him how he hadn’t slept for three nights thinking about exactly that.

He applied for seminary, but first had to take courses at the community college because his electronics degree did not provide the necessary prerequisites. He started his training at Denver Seminary before moving to Grand Rapids, Mich., this summer to study at Calvin Seminary.

Asked why he switched to Calvin, Perez-Ballesteros said, “It was the CRC faith that allowed me to know Jesus at a different level. That means a lot. I owe the CRC. If I want to be a minister, it has to be through the CRC.”

“I could stay in Denver and have a job along with school, and not pay extra rent, but I know that Calvin Seminary is the seminary of the CRC. I want to learn to read the Bible properly and interpret it rightly, get the best education, and be faithful to my newborn life in the CRC. There’s no other place but the CRC for me!” ■

—Kathy Smith is director of continuing education for Calvin Theological Seminary and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.

## Garbage Evangelism

When you think about evangelism, taking out the trash is probably not the first thing that comes to mind—unless you’re involved with the Christian Reformed campus ministry at William Paterson University (WPU).

For the past year, students at the Paterson, New Jersey-based school have participated in “Garbage Evangelism,” an outreach program that usually takes place following weekly campus ministry meetings.

Typically, at least 10 students go into student residence halls, knock on doors, and introduce themselves as members of the WPU Christian Fellowship. They then offer to take out residents’ garbage and ask if they have any prayer requests.

The “garbage evangelists” have knocked on almost every residence hall door, says Rev. Ken Vander Wall, who leads the campus ministry at WPU. The ministry is one of 24 North American campus ministries supported by Christian Reformed Home Missions. “Our vision is *Changed Lives, Changed Campus, Changed World*,” Vander Wall says.

“One goal is to have a prayer group in each living area dorm on campus, and for that group to serve that location and pray for their neighbors. This is certainly helped because we have students from the Christian Fellowship who are Resident Assistants, meaning that they are leaders of floors in the dorms.”

So far the program has succeeded in introducing the gospel to students on campus. “Last spring we had a coffeehouse gathering with the theme of transformation,” Vander Wall states. “The first three students that came through the door that night said to me, ‘We’re here because you guys took out our garbage last night!’ One was a new convert to Christianity, and two others had rededicated their lives to Christ.” ■

—Ben Van Houten, Christian Reformed Home Missions

## CRC Missionary to Speak at Urbana

**R**uth Padilla DeBorst, a Christian Reformed World Missions missionary in Latin America, will be one of the keynote speakers for Urbana '09, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship's biennial student missions conference.

Set for Dec. 27-31 in St. Louis, Mo., the conference is expected to draw more than 20,000 students from around the world. Padilla DeBorst, who is also general secretary of the Latin American Theological Fellowship, will be one of seven main speakers at the event.

Kathryn Shane, placement coordinator for CRWM, said, "We're really excited about this and hope to have some great ways to connect all of the CRC Urbana attendees this year," perhaps by holding a special CRC event at which Padilla DeBorst will speak.

Retired missionary Gordon Buys says that when he worked as a missions recruiter, "it was important to move among persons whose lives were consumed by a passion for fulfilling the Great Commission. I always felt inspired and renewed by the plenary sessions . . . and by a venue filled with nearly 20,000 persons, mostly college-age students, who were honestly wrestling with God's call on their lives, expressing themselves in heart-warming praise and worship!

"For me, each time I went was a little bit like what I



Ruth Padilla DeBorst with her husband, Jim.

expect heaven to be. For students it was a bit like drinking from a fire hydrant with a straw, trying desperately to take in the seminars,

workshops, and plenaries, visiting the hundreds of mission displays offering opportunities from Capetown to Calgary, Beijing to Buenos Aires, and getting enough sleep to face the next day of similar activities.

"I encouraged my kids to go, and now my grandkids are at that stage and looking forward to participation as well," Buys says.

Several Christian Reformed Church agencies are offering

grants to assist with travel expenses for Christian Reformed youths to attend the Urbana conference. To apply for a travel scholarship, visit [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) and look for the Urbana link. Applications will be accepted through the end of November.

The theme of this year's conference is "The Word Made Flesh." For more information, visit [www.urbana09.org](http://www.urbana09.org). ■

—CRC Communications

## News from Calvin College

**C**alvin College is a leader in **Academic All-America awards**, the national honor given to student athletes who excel both in the classroom and in competition. Since 2000, Calvin has had 49 Academic All-Americans, eighth-best among all NCAA and NAIA institutions. Calvin is the only Michigan college or university represented in the top 15, which includes such schools as Notre Dame, Penn State, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Calvin College is considered a "**Top Up-and-Coming School**" by *U.S. News & World Report*, fifth in that category this year, up from 14th a year ago. That ranking, and several others for the college, are part of the 2010 edition of *America's Best Colleges*. "Top Up-and-Coming Schools" are those that *U.S. News* said have recently made the most promising and innovative changes in academics, faculty, students, campus or facilities—schools that are "firmly focused on improving the job they're doing today." Calvin also tied for 17th in the category of "A Strong Commitment to Teaching."

Calvin geography professor Deanna van Dijk and chemistry professor Crystal Bruxvoort received a **National Science Foundation grant** of \$185,003 for "First-Year Research in Earth Sciences (FYRES): Dunes." The project will develop a Calvin geosciences course in which first-semester students learn science while researching Lake Michigan coastal dunes.

The Calvin College music department has received **continued accreditation** from the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) for the college's bachelor-of-arts in music program and earned final accreditation for its bachelor-of-arts in music education program. Music department chair Bert Polman noted that the current Calvin Fine Arts Center renovation project was a plus for accreditation, as it addressed concerns NASM had about practice and private teaching space.

*Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, a new book by Calvin philosopher James K.A. Smith, received a **four-star review** in *Christianity Today*. In the book Smith calls for a temporary moratorium on the notion of worldview. Reviewer Eric Miller, a professor of history at Geneva College, writes, "Now, from the very fountain-head of the Dutch Calvinist stream, Smith intends to disrupt what has become business as usual and push the evangelical academy hard on its fundamental sense of identity." ■

—Calvin College Communications

# Thank God for Food

Take a moment to think of your favorite Thanksgiving food fresh from the oven or steaming from the stove. How does it look? What does it smell like? How does it taste? Is your mouth watering right now? Good!

Thanksgiving is a wonderful time for family gatherings and it's a joyful time for home-cooked food!

You have probably heard the story of the first Thanksgiving feast in the United States, but you may be surprised to learn what foods were actually on the Pilgrims' menu.



## More Lobster, Please!

The adventurous Pilgrims landed at Plymouth (in what is now known as Massachusetts) in 1620. They had grand plans for starting a new life. None of them, however, was prepared for the hardships to come. They arrived in the middle of winter, so they were not able to plant crops for food. The winter was so harsh that about half of them died after only a few months.

Thankfully, some Native Americans in the area (ever heard of Squanto?) befriended the Pilgrims and taught them how to fish, hunt, and plant crops. The next fall the Pilgrims received a rich harvest of corn and other vegetables. The Pilgrims were so overjoyed that they decided to throw a party. They wanted to celebrate the harvest and thank God for providing food for their colony. The grateful Pilgrims invited the native Wampanoag people and their powerful leader, Massasoit, to a huge feast. The food on the Thanksgiving menu included venison (deer meat), goose, wild turkey, fish, corn, bread, pumpkin, and, yes, *lobster!* We may not have buttered lobster tails on our dinner plates this Thanksgiving, but like the Pilgrims, we can definitely thank God for food!

*(from History Alive! Teachers' Curriculum Institute; Palo Alto, Calif.)*



SCOTT HOLLADAY

## God Provides

*"He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." Acts 14:17*

Thanksgiving is all about being grateful. The Pilgrims were thankful to God for providing them with enough food to eat. How about us? Sometimes we forget to thank God for the small things in life, like a bowl of Cheerios in the morning or a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich at lunchtime. We may not have to grow and gather our own food like the Pilgrims did, but we can certainly thank God for farms, grocery stores, and refrigerators!

## The First Thanksgiving

The Pilgrims were not the first settlers in North America to celebrate Thanksgiving. The first Thanksgiving took place in Canada, decades before the Pilgrims arrived. An English explorer by the name of Martin Frobisher set sail on the fierce waves of the Atlantic Ocean in search of a water passageway to China. Instead of finding a water route to the East, he stumbled upon new territory he named Newfoundland. In 1578, Frobisher held a special ceremony to celebrate an abundant harvest, and to thank God for safe arrival in a new land. This became known as the first Thanksgiving in North America. Other European explorers settled in Canada and continued Frobisher's tradition of ceremonies and harvest feasts. Centuries later, in 1879, Canada's federal government declared Thanksgiving an official holiday. Today Canadians celebrate Thanksgiving in October with lots of food and feasting.

## Turkey Treats

Try making this "turkey" for your Thanksgiving table or as a gift for family members.

### Here's what you need:

- toothpicks
- paper plate
- one apple
- one large marshmallow
- one piece of candy corn
- two raisins
- fruit such as strawberries cut in half, blueberries, raspberries; or candy such as jellybeans, gumdrops, or small colored marshmallows



### Here's what you do:

- Place the apple on a paper plate.
- Poke a toothpick through the top of the apple, a little off to the side.
- Insert a large marshmallow on the other end of the toothpick. The marshmallow will be the head of the turkey.
- Take three or four more toothpicks, and push a few pieces of fruit or candy onto each toothpick. Leave enough space on the bottom of each toothpick to insert it in the apple, around the bottom end, to look like turkey feathers.
- Break off a small piece of another toothpick and poke the pointed end through a piece of candy corn. Stick the other end of the toothpick into the front of the marshmallow to form a turkey beak.
- Break off two more small pieces of toothpick and poke their pointy ends into the two raisins. Stick the raisins onto the marshmallow for eyes.
- Enjoy your tasty turkey!

## What's on Your Menu?

In the first column write down the Pilgrims' dinner menu. In the second column make a list of your favorite Thanksgiving foods. How does your menu compare to the Pilgrims'? How is it different?

### Pilgrims' Menu

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### Your Menu

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## Thanksgiving Jewish-Style

Since the time of the Old Testament, Jewish people have celebrated the seven-day harvest festival known as *Sukkot* [soo-coat], which is often translated as "Festival of Booths" or "Feast of Tabernacles." While Moses and the Israelites traveled through the desert to reach the promised land of Canaan, they lived in portable huts called *sukkah*. Jewish farmers also slept in these tent-like homes during the harvest season.

Today Jewish families celebrate Sukkot by building their own *sukkah* and decorating it with dried fruits and vegetables. If weather permits, they also sleep and eat meals in the *sukkah* to remember the Israelites who lived in these homes during the time of Moses.

—information from *Judaism 101*, <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday5.htm>



**Christin Baker** is a 4th- and 5th-grade teacher at The Potter's House Christian School in Grand Rapids, Mich. She attends Resurrection Fellowship Church with her husband and baby daughter.



# Gratitude in Tough Times

*Encouraging each other through story*

**A** S WE CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING this year, times are tough. Economic troubles affect us all, in addition to whatever other personal struggles we or those dear to us face. We're reminded almost daily that our faith doesn't spare us from hardship, pain, grief, or loss. So how do we give thanks in the midst of troubled times?

The Psalms, the great prayer book of the Scriptures, sets an example for us. Psalm 118 begins, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever." And it goes on, testifying to God's actions, testifying to God's faithfulness, even in the face of death.

We trust and give thanks because of God—what God has done and who God is. This whole psalm points continually to God, affirming over and over that God is for us and therefore we have nothing to fear and everything for which to be grateful.

Give thanks to the Lord—not because you have so much that you should be grateful for, but because God is good. Give thanks to the Lord—not because of how everything is going for you, but because God's love endures forever.

Sometimes we need to remember together that God is good and that God's love endures forever. But we can't always do this on our own.

**My Story** I have Crohn's disease, and twice in the past 12 years I've had to have emergency surgery. I felt God's peace and presence during these times. I knew my life was in God's hands. I am thankful for my health, my family and friends, and all the prayers raised for me. I will never forget God's grace and goodness in my life!  
—Jackie Van Ginkel  
Sioux Center, Iowa



## My Story

When I read the *Banner's* request for thankfulness articles, I scoffed, "Ha!—thanksgiving this year?"

With the economic crisis, many people's lives have been turned upside down. For us, the downturn in the pork industry meant we had to sell the hog farm I grew up on.

This summer was the hardest I remember. We spent it moving not only our home but an entire business, including thousands of pigs, tons of corn, and wagonloads of farm equipment.

I spent many hours power-washing our pig barns and had lots of time to think. I came to realize that I am so thankful for the people in our lives these past several months.

I have been moved to tears many times by the way people have pitched in to help and support us. From friends and family members who volunteered many days of help, to a 16-year-old from another town who helped his uncle disassemble a bin; from those who cared for our children to those who came to share a kind word or bring us a meal or took on church duties for us—God's love has been evident through the people he has placed in our lives. Thank you all. You have no idea how much your love and care has meant.

—Sarah Haanstra  
Listowel, Ontario

The person singing Psalm 118 knew that we need to give thanks *together*. That's why in the first few verses the singer addresses the people as a whole. The psalmist identifies the people of Israel, the house of Aaron, and all who fear the Lord; telling them to say together, "God's love endures forever."

Sometimes we need each other's testimonies to remember that God is good. So the person singing this psalm tells the congregation about a personal experience of the enduring love of God. Woven throughout the psalm is the story of God rescuing someone.

*In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free. . . .*

*The nations surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord, I cut them off. . . .*

*I was pushed back and about to fall, but the Lord helped me. . . .*

We each have stories of God's help and God's care, times when we were in trouble and somehow things came out all right; times when we received help when we needed it most. This is a good time to remember those stories, to remind each other that the Lord is good; God's love endures forever.

This is a good time to remember what the singer of this psalm knew and what those who have gone before us knew: God is for us.

When we know that God is for us, it's possible to live in faith instead of in fear, even in the face of death.

And when we know that God is for us, we can have an attitude of trust—an attitude that sees God's hand at work in our lives and in the lives of those we love.

We each have stories of God's help and God's care. This is a good time to remember those stories.

Everything in this psalm points to what God has done and what God is doing:

*The Lord is with me; he is my helper. . . .*

*The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. . . .*

*The Lord has done this. . . .*

*This is the day the Lord has made. . . .*

*The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. . . .*

In ancient Israel, psalms of thanksgiving like this one were a regular part of worship. People would tell their individual stories of experiencing the goodness of God, but those stories were always understood to be a part of the larger story of God's goodness to the people of Israel. Stories of personal deliverance were understood to be a part of the larger story of God's rescuing the people—first from Egypt and slavery and Pharaoh's army, and later from famine and war, eventually bringing them back from exile.

This is a psalm God's people used when celebrating Passover, giving thanks for God's enduring love shown in their deliverance from death. »

## My Story

I had just finished up time as a Christian Reformed World Missions volunteer in Tijuana, in the Mexican state of Baja California. I came back to the U.S., to California, to look for a teaching job. Praise the Lord, I was able to work a part-time job along with substitute teaching. But I had to wait a month before I would get my first paycheck. Meanwhile, I had moved in with another girl, and rent was almost due. Having no idea where I was going to come up with the money and feeling quite overwhelmed by my other financial concerns as well, I prayed.

The next day I received a check from a friend at my home church in Michigan who had supported me while I volunteered. The check was exactly the amount due for rent. Along with the check my friend included this note: "Thought you might need some help getting on your feet. Use this with joy."

He had no idea what I needed, but God did.

—Andrea L. Baschal

## My Story

I am thankful that our local church is vibrant. We have a small congregation of about 100 children and adults in a small town. Although the building is not large, it has eight classrooms for Sunday school, with the sanctuary occasionally doubling as a classroom too. We have a husband and wife team who serve coffee and juice every Sunday. Two adult Bible study groups. A choir that participates in community festivals twice a year and sometimes leads other community programs. A brass, wind, and percussion band. Another musical group that uses guitars, drums, and vocalists. Several pianists.

One member is a missionary in Kazakhstan. A family directs a Bible camp nearby. Several members have gone on mission trips. Along with five other local churches we provide services to the area's nursing home and senior residences and contribute to the food bank.

While we recently had members with health problems, they are mostly recovering well. We celebrated 25 years together last summer. This is only part of the story, but wouldn't that make you thankful?

—John Zylstra

You remember the story—death was coming for the firstborn child in every home in Egypt, but God told his people to put the blood of a lamb on their doorposts so death wouldn't come to their houses. The people did so, and they were spared. The whole nation of Israel experienced God's enduring love for them and their children, and they remembered it.

This is the psalm the people sang when Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem before his death on the cross: "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" This is where we come into the picture, where our stories become part of the broader story of God's never-ending love.

Jesus, in his life, death, and resurrection, welcomes us into a loving relationship with God. Because of what Jesus has done, we belong to God. God is for us.

We "shall not die but live, and proclaim what the Lord has done" (v. 17). This is where we ultimately encounter the enduring love of God—in the face of death. Because of Jesus these words are true for us. We will not die; we will live and proclaim what the Lord has done. What a cause for thanksgiving and for hope in the face of hard times!

We know, as those who have gone before us knew, that God's love endures forever because of Jesus. God chose to become one of us and to die so that sin's worst power over us could be broken—and to rise to new life so that we too will rise. God's love endures forever.

What can separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing! We can give thanks in these troubled times because we belong to God. As the Heidelberg Catechism reminds us so beautifully, our only true comfort, and our deepest reason for gratitude, is knowing "I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." ■

## My Story

October 8, 2007. Thanksgiving Day in Canada. I sit at my husband's hospital bedside, wondering if he will ever come home again. Spinal surgery has robbed him of the ability to walk or to move.

God sees my need. Many church members drive me to and from the hospital. We feel their prayers.

Harry says his goodbyes.

At night I cry out, "Oh, Lord, if it must be so, thy will be done. Give me, give Harry your peace and a good sleep."

Each day Harry waits for me. He cannot do very much. We are together.

October 20. Harry has lymphoma. He now battles two cancers. He dreams that he is dying. He sails away, while I stay behind. He struggles with God, "Thy will be done." Peace comes for me and for him.

I find Harry's rings on the hospital floor. They fell off his fingers, he is so thin.

After the first treatment, Harry comes home. I am so glad. Also concerned. Can I handle this? Four more treatments coming up. Harry falls often, grows weaker each time.

Christmas. New Year's. We're glad to be together. We order a spring crabapple tree for our 50th anniversary in May. Harry's so ill, he needs my constant care. I struggle. I feel for him so, but I am not burdened. God walks beside me—I know this!

Treatments are stopped. Harry is too weak. I watch over him. God watches over both of us.

May 2, 2008. Our anniversary. I feel so blessed; we are treated so well. The next day I take Harry to Emergency. He has congestive heart failure.

The anniversary tree arrives. A neighbor helps me plant it. When Harry comes home, the tree is in bloom. He loves that. So do I.

Summer. I take Harry outside and for rides. The sun does him good. His color improves. He walks with a walker. He even goes for short coffee times with friends. I am delighted about that. Each day is a gift.

October 13, 2008. Thanksgiving. I share our story of God's faithfulness with the members of our congregation. *Ebenezer*—God has helped us this far (1 Sam. 7:12). We have just been told no more treatments are available for Harry.

March 17, 2009. My husband dies at home, in my arms, while I sing Psalm 23 to him. I am grateful that Harry is with the Lord. I am lonely but not alone. God is with me.

—Tina Schuld  
Edmonton, Alberta



Rev. Elizabeth Vander Haagen co-pastors Boston Square CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., with her husband, Rev. Jay Blankespoor. She is also a spiritual director and a thankful mother of two small girls.

# Always Reforming

## I CAN STILL HEAR MY GRANDPA'S REFRAIN ABOUT

"Ninth Street," our home church in Holland, Mich.: "Don't change anything. If you change, you'll lose something." So he voted no on every proposed change to the congregation's pattern of worship and lifestyle. It was his way of trying to "stay true to what's Reformed."

What an un-Reformed attitude! John Calvin would have called him on it.

Grandpa disregarded a central Reformed affirmation: the Lord's Spirit is ceaselessly at work in the church, ever making her new, continually moving her toward a final, perfect future. As Calvin wrote, "The Lord is daily at work in smoothing out wrinkles and cleansing spots [in the church]. [It] is . . . daily advancing and is not yet perfect: it makes progress from day to day but has not yet reached its goal of holiness" (*Institutes*, IV.1.17).

Similarly, the Spirit is continually active in the life of every believer.

Christ's people have become united with him in his resurrection. That all-important fact, that singular relationship, forms the foundation upon which all spiritual progress can happen, the nourishing center from which believers can flourish and grow.

Growing to maturity in Christ doesn't happen in an instant. "This restoration is not accomplished neither in a minute of time nor in a day, nor in a year; but God abolishes the corruptions of the flesh in his elect in a continuous succession of time, and indeed little by little" (*Commentary* on 1 Cor. 1:8). God continues this renewing process in us until we die; and in the church, until the Lord returns.

Given these twin facts—our union with our resurrected Lord, and the Spirit's enduring work—believers must be forward-looking, continually open to being changed, daily eager to receive the Spirit's reforming work. We must keep striving to dwell *in* Jesus, to become *like* him, to fellowship *with* him, and to live *for* him—four crucial prepositions by which we can chart our spiritual progress.

To oppose change, to fossilize theologically and spiritually, is to disobey God. But Calvin also cautions against any thoughtless jettisoning of the past. Thankless disregard for ancestors in the faith, the "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1), leaves believers wide open to falling for every whim or fad that comes along.

Though earlier saints were not infallible in their beliefs and practices—only God and God's Word are—Calvin didn't act as if they were any more foolish and stupid than we are.

To oppose **change**  
—to fossilize  
theologically and  
spiritually—is  
to disobey God.

Thus Calvin's counsel for making spiritual progress: 1) Keep moving forward—always. 2) Do so by going back to God's Word, the source and font of all Christian teaching. 3) While doing the first two, don't bypass generations and centuries of faithful Christian teaching and testimony.

One measure of Christian maturity is how well we handle one another's sins and imperfections and our doctrinal and lifestyle differences. On matters of teaching and lifestyle, of course, honest Christians often honestly differ. Mature believers keep in mind that "not all the articles of doctrine are of the same sort."

Some teachings are fundamental—"so necessary to know that they should be certain and unquestioned by all," as Calvin says. But others are "nonessential matters [and] should in no wise be the basis of schism among Christians." That's a wise distinction to keep in mind, lest "we . . . thoughtlessly forsake the church because of petty dissensions" (*Institutes*, IV.i.12).

Summing up matters, here's the Calvinist tradition's motto—its marching orders: "*Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda—secundum Verbum Dei*" (A Reformed church must always keep reforming—according to the Word of God).

Calvin believed that the Christian church has potential to become the most revolutionary force on the planet. Never, therefore, should her members become set in cement. ■

**WEB Q'S** See discussion questions at the end of this article on *The Banner's* website: [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org).



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

## Day at the Museum *A gift that keeps on giving*



BIGSTOCK PHOTO

**LOOKING FOR A STOCKING STUFFER** that will bring your family together this holiday season and inspire everyone's creativity? Give one and all—including grandpa and the toddlers—a ticket to a museum.

According to education experts, exposure to both creative arts that reveal the past and innovations that give glimpses of the future is critical to our learning and creativity. At museums and art galleries we see the world through other lenses and juxtapose our worldviews with diverse ideas.

Museums and art galleries are full of *possibilities*. The way a sculpture has been “freed” from a block of granite; the way color and contrast give us a picture of a landscape as it was 100 years ago; the way an artist from the 1600s interprets the crucifixion. Possibilities also abound at museums where models of high-rise urban farms are on display or genome exhibits inform us about our DNA.

**It's like looking through a microscope at God's fertile imagination.**

Walking around a museum is like looking through a microscope at God's fertile imagination.

In recent years children's museums have popped up in cities across the globe in an attempt to expose kids to art, history, and innovation. Since children are kinesthetic learners, good children's museums are heavy on play. Take your young ones to children's museums often.

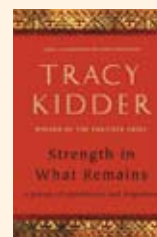
In the past few months I have visited several museums and art galleries. The Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto offers a fantastic mix of historic art and new media. The Museum of Modern Civilization in Ottawa allows visitors to experience Canadian history firsthand and is also home to one of the best children's museums I've visited. At the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, my family was blown away by visions of the future and technology.

Earlier in the year I visited both the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Natural History in New York City. Some of the great works of art are on display at MoMA, while the MNH is fantastically three-dimensional and the inspiration for the popular children's movie *Night at the Museum*.

While not everyone can get to New York City, you can find museums and art galleries in most cities. Do a bit of research. Find the museum or art gallery that best matches your family, and treat yourselves to the best of the past and the future. ■



Ron DeBoer is vice principal of Eastwood Collegiate Institute and a member of The Journey in Kitchener, Ontario. He is also the author of *Questions from the Pickle Jar: Teens and Sex*.



### **Strength in What Remains: A Journey of Remembrance and Forgiveness**

by Tracy Kidder  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

A Burundian Tutsi who escaped genocides in both his native land and Rwanda, Deo arrives in New York City and ekes out a living in a place where “you were simply not a human being.” Contact with a church community eventually led him to caring people who assisted him in returning to university, to medical school, and, finally, to Burundi to build a clinic. By turns horrifying and hopeful, Deo's story, told by Kidder (author of *Mountains Beyond Mountains*) is a testimony to God's providential care in his life. (Random House)



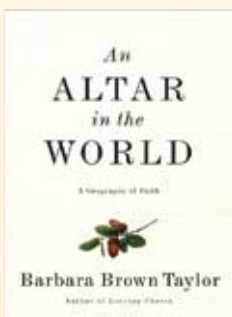
## A Few of Our Favorite Things: 2009 Gift Ideas



### The Girl in the Orange Dress

by **Margot Starbuck**  
reviewed by **Sandy Swartzentruber**

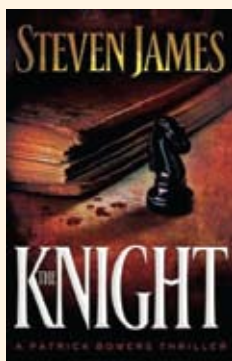
As a girl, Margot Starbuck was immune to pain. She claimed to have no feelings about being relinquished by her birth parents, adopted into a family affected twice by divorce, and ignored by her rediscovered birth father. But when Starbuck started her own family, she learned just how deeply pain and rejection had rooted themselves into her life and her faith. In this bittersweet memoir, Starbuck displays a refreshingly quirky sense of humor as she chronicles her search for human connection and divine love. (InterVarsity Press)



### An Altar in the World

by **Barbara Brown Taylor**  
reviewed by **Joyce Kane**

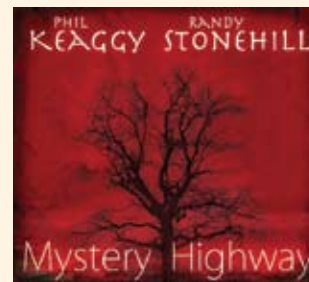
In her latest book, Barbara Brown Taylor shares her belief that when we pay “exquisite attention” God is found not only in church but also in living real human life in the real world. She reminds us that God “shows up in starry skies, burning bushes, and in perfect strangers.” With her unmatched honesty, wit, and wisdom, she offers 12 practices “that help us wake up to everyday mysteries and to the deep understanding that faith is a way of life.” (HarperOne)



### The Knight

by **Steven James**  
reviewed by **Jena Vander Ploeg**

FBI agent Patrick Bowers tracks serial killers. But this time he’s the one being hunted—by someone gruesomely recreating scenes from an ancient manuscript. Bowers faces trouble on the home front, too, in his tenuous relationship with his whip-smart, motherless teenage stepdaughter. *Knight* is the third installation in a first-rate, edgy Christian thriller series (which is best read in order). More of a Clive Cussler-type beach read than a book club pick, *Knight* is tightly woven and keeps readers guessing till the end—wrestling, along the way, with the good and evil dividing all our hearts. (Revell)



### Mystery Highway

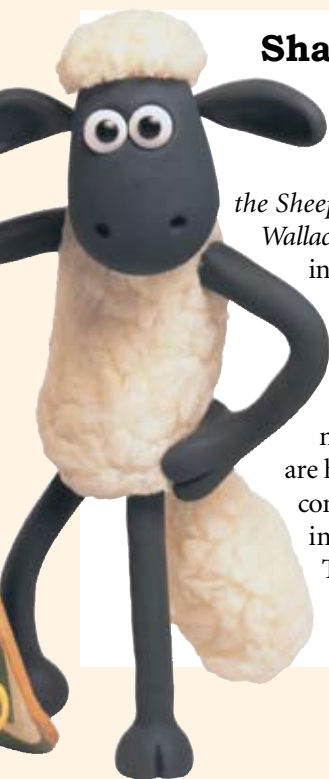
by **Phil Keaggy and Randy Stonehill**  
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

CCM music legends Keaggy and Stonehill, almost 40 years into their respective careers, team up for the first time for a full-length studio album of original music with this new indie release. The result is an enthusiastic collaboration from the 50-something rockers featuring winsome, reflective lyrics and a celebration of ’60s British Invasion power pop. Keaggy’s nostalgic electric guitar riffs echo the best of the early Beatles and Cream. Boomers will enjoy hitchhiking down *Mystery Highway*, while younger listeners will be introduced to two of the pioneers of “Jesus music.” (Oddbody Music)

### Shaun the Sheep

reviewed by **Lloyd Rang**

A massive hit internationally when it debuted in 2007, *Shaun the Sheep* (from Nick Park, creator of *Wallace and Gromit*) is only now making waves in North America. The latest DVD release is *Shaun the Sheep: Volume 3—Sheep on the Loose*. Young children will love these stop-motion animated, dialogue-free shorts that are heavy on slapstick and light on conflict, and parents will enjoy the inside jokes and witty visuals. This one really is fun for the whole family. (Lyons)



## Flesh on Steel

by **Isabelle Gunn**  
reviewed by **Ron DeBoer**

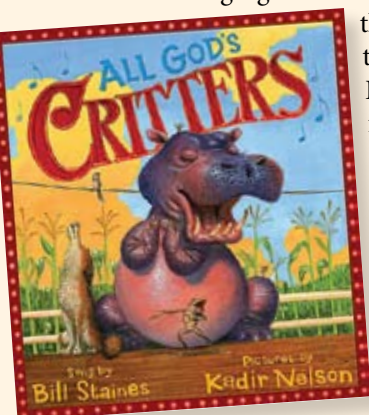


*Flesh on Steel* is the debut album of Isabelle Gunn, an award-winning Canadian trio whose sound and style evoke comparisons to Sufjan Stevens and Emmylou Harris. The lyrics peel back the surfaces of things and are sung in beautiful harmonies that settle deeply into the listener. Themes range from abuse and break-ups to a vision of heaven in "Silver," the album's final song: "The day is over, my pain is older / and to my Savior do I ride." Isabelle Gunn performed at the Canadian Country Music Awards in September and will be playing several venues in southern Ontario in December. ([www.isabellegunn.com](http://www.isabellegunn.com))

## All God's Critters

by **Bill Staines**  
reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

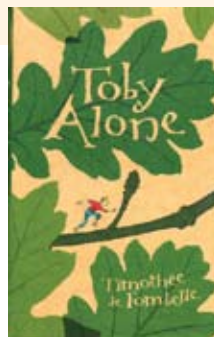
Kadir Nelson's rollicking picture book interpretation of Staines's folk song is delightful. Nelson's bright and boisterous animal illustrations paint a joyful vision of a diverse world singing in harmony. The music for the song is printed in the back of the book. Pair it with Staines' fun family CD *The Happy Wanderer*, which includes a recording of the song on which the book is based. Ages 4-7. (Simon and Schuster)



## Toby Alone

by **Timothee de Fombelle**  
reviewed by **Kathryn Hoffman**

Toby is a boy who stands 1.5 millimeters tall. He lives in the Tree, a world remarkably like ours but on a smaller scale. When Toby's scientist father discovers a new way to use the sap that is the life-source of the Tree, it is up to Toby to protect this resource from exploitation. Described as eco-satire, *Toby Alone* is a comedic and insightful (if rather dark) look into how we live in community with each other and the world. Ages 9-12. (Candlewick)



## Up

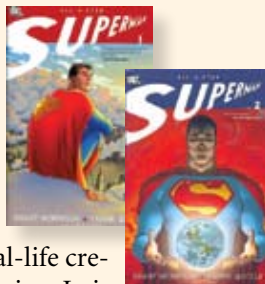
reviewed by **Ron VandenBurg**

After nine straight hit feature films, Pixar's *Up* tells the story of Carl, a widowed former balloon salesman who rigs his home to fly off for a long-deferred trip to South America. Enter Russell, the 8-year old Wilderness Explorer who happens to be on Carl's front porch when the house lifts off. Together, they and Pixar thrill audiences with flightless birds, talking dogs ("Squirrel!"), and a long-lost explorer. The opening vignette showing the 60-year love affair between Carl and his wife, Ellie, is a film unto itself worthy of an Academy Award. (Disney)

## All-Star Superman, Volumes One and Two

by **Grant Morrison, Frank Quitely, and Jamie Grant**  
reviewed by **Phil Christman Jr.**

When Superman is injected with deadly radiation, he discovers he has only a year to live. So what does he do? Well, he arm-wrestles Samson; saves the Earth; meets his real-life creator, Joe Schuster; and gives Lois superpowers, for starters. This series' writers apply the same inventiveness to the task of reconstructing superheroes that has long been devoted to deconstructing them, and the result is a masterpiece, restoring luster to a mythos that itself seemed half-dead. Ages 13 and up. (DC Comics)

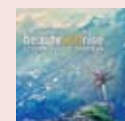


## THE LOWDOWN

### Christmas Gift Edition



**Letters of Joy: Out of My Bone** is a collection of the letters of Joy Davidman, the wife of C.S. Lewis. Edited by Don W. King. (Eerdmans)



**Up from the Ashes:** Steven Curtis Chapman's new album, *Beauty Will Rise*, is a collection of songs written in the wake of his young daughter's accidental death. (Sparrow)



**Getting Closer:** The latest book from Richard J. Foster and coauthor Gayle D. Beebe is *Longing for God*, which offers "seven paths of Christian devotion." (IVP)



**Good St. Nick:** VeggieTales adds to their prolific DVD collection with *Saint Nicholas—A Story of Joyful Giving*. (Big Idea)

### A Few More Favorites

What do the movie *The Soloist*, the book *The White Tiger*, and the album *You Are Here* by thenewno2 have in common? They've each been selected as a "Favorite of the Year" by *Banner* reviewers. To see all of their top picks, go to [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).



Check [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) for links to find out more about these titles

## Advertising Information

**Deadlines:** Dec. 2009 issue is 11/2/09. Jan. 2010 issue is 12/2/09. Visit [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org) for complete details.

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

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

Publication of advertisements implies neither endorsement nor approval by *The Banner*, Faith Alive Christian Resources, or the Christian Reformed Church. We reserve the right to refuse or edit any ad for appropriateness.

## Denominational and Classical Announcements

### Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that **Kevin C. Vande Streek** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

We are pleased to announce that **Matthew McClure** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

### General

Congratulations to Dr. Melvin Hugen who completed 50 years of ministry in the Chr. Ref. Church. He with his wife Sylvia, served churches in Richton Park, IL, Eastern Avenue in Grand Rapids, MI, and Honolulu, Hawaii. He taught 28 years at Calvin Seminary.

**New from the Faith Formation Committee** The committee encourages churches to check out our website for resources to engage members in study and conversation around the issues of sacramental practice and faith formation. For years the 1 Cor. 11 passage has been central in shaping the practice of Communion in the CRC, yet many wonder if its interpretation truly honors the intent of the passage. Visit our website ([www.crcna.org/faithformation](http://www.crcna.org/faithformation)) for a downloadable, five-session Bible study on 1 Cor. 11 that will help your congregation explore these significant verses.

Qualifying persons who wish to be candidates in 2010 for ordained CRC ministry should request application procedures by December 15, 2009. For further information, please email Karlene Werner at [kaw5@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:kaw5@calvinseminary.edu) or write her at Calvin Theological Seminary, 3233 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

## Congregational Announcements

### Church's 50th Anniversary

**IMMANUEL CRC HAMILTON, ON** hopes to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Former members and friends are invited to join us for events on November 21 and 22. See our web site at [www.immanuelministries.ca](http://www.immanuelministries.ca)

### Retirement

Rudyard CRC announces the retirement of their pastor, Rev. Robert Steen, after 38 years in the ministry. He had his farewell service on Oct. 18, 2009 & has moved to his new home at 11109 E. Meadow View Drive in Suttons Bay, MI 49682. We wish Pastor Bob & Joyce God's richest blessings in their retirement & in their new home.

## Announcements

**MESA & APACHE JCT. WINTER VISITORS:** Worship with us at Marantha CRC Dec. 6 through April 11, 10:00 A. M. at 6159 E. University Dr., Mesa, AZ. Rev. Gary Hutt, Pastor. Info: 480-668-0478

**CENTRAL FLORIDA LOCATION —CRC/RCA, MINISTRY** Winter Haven-Orlando area off Rt. 17/92. Services at 10:30 a.m. and 5:50 p.m. Nov.-Dec. Gene Los; Jan. Ralph Robrahn; Feb. Peter Hogeterp; Mar.-Apr. Allen Jongmsa. For info call 863-422-6442 or go to [www.lakealfredministry.org](http://www.lakealfredministry.org)

With joy and thanksgiving to God, East Martin CRC in Martin, MI will celebrate the 35th ministry ordination anniversary of Rev. Jacob Weeda on Sunday, December 13, at the 9:30 am service followed by lunch. Friends are invited. For more info e-mail [rjbouman@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rjbouman@sbcglobal.net) or call 269 672-5129.

**MOMS OF TWEEN GIRLS** You won't want to miss the Faithgirlz Beauty of Believing event featuring Nancy Rue at Sunshine Church in Grand Rapids, Sat. Nov. 7 at 9 am. Girls are \$10, moms and youth leaders are free! Includes sessions on friendship, loving the way God made you and more. Free book, craft and refreshments, giveaways. More info at [www.faithgirlz.com/tour](http://www.faithgirlz.com/tour). Call 616-364-4242 for tickets or [www.sunshinechurch.org](http://www.sunshinechurch.org). Sponsored in part by GEMS. See you there!

## Birthdays

### 100th Birthday

**KATHRYN GELDERLOOS**, 877 Village Ln. Jenison, MI 49428 will celebrate her 100th birthday at an open house on Nov. 22, from 1:30-3:30p.m. at Ridgewood CRC, 1571 Baldwin, Jenison. Her children give thanks for her long life. Great is God's faithfulness.

**EDWARD MARING** of 2520 Lake Mich. Dr. Grand Rapids, MI 49504 celebrated his 100th birthday on Oct. 16. His daughter Alice (Jim) Homan, grandchildren & great-grandchildren give God thanks for his long life of health, faith, service and love to all.

### 95th Birthday

**GERTRUDE ELSENBROEK** (Van Buiten), 2619 Kalamazoo SE Apt. 307, Grand Rapids MI 49507, is celebrating her 95th birthday on Nov. 5. Happy Birthday from all of us your family, and thanks to God for His amazing grace!

### 90th Birthday

**ALICE (VAN ZANTEN) BURGERS** will celebrate her 90th birthday on November 30, 2009. Her husband, Walter, went home to be with his Lord in 2004. Her children Carole (Warren Wissink), Jim (Sharon), Cal (Glenda), Ruth (Ray Bozung) and Dan (Michele) along with 19 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren thank God for her life and her example of faith and love. Alice's address is P. O. Box 305, Colton, SD, 57018.



**GRACE BYKERK** expects, the Lord willing, to celebrate her 90th birthday on Nov. 7. Grace enjoys good health as she resides at Oak Grove Retirement Village in DeMotte, IN. She still attends worship services each Sunday at First CRC of DeMotte. Her children, Jay & Sheri Bykerk, Henry & Debra Bykerk, Jim & Rosemary Bykerk, her 14 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren are grateful for the long life of their loving mother and grandmother. We love you, Mom!

**ELSIE ESSENBURG** of Borculo celebrated her 90th birthday on October 31. With love and admiration, her entire family gives thanks to God for her life of faith and love.

**HENRY HOLSTEIN**, 3110 Midas Ct, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494, will celebrate his 90th birthday on Nov. 5. His family join in congratulating him for his strong faith and love. Happy Birthday Dad!

**ELIZABETH OSTERINK** (Willemstyn), 5162 Brant Ct, Hudsonville, MI 49426, will celebrate her 90th birthday on November 22. Husband Lloyd deceased. Children: Marilyn & Don Brunsting, Char & Bruce Horling, Carol & Keith Umbarger, Lloyd & Crys Osterink, Steve & Marijo Osterink, 17 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren all thank God for her strong faith and good health. "Great is thy faithfulness." Lam. 3:22-23.

**ELAINE VANDER KAM**, 6600 Constitution Blvd #102, Portage, MI 49024, will celebrate her 90th birthday on Nov. 30. Congratulations and love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**LAVERNE VAN ZYL** of 18559 Escanaba Av, Lansing, IL 60438 celebrates her 90th birthday on Nov. 29th. She is a blessing and inspiration to all of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Great is God's faithfulness.

### 86th birthday

**HELEN (VAN ZWOL) COMPAAN** (725 Baldwin #235, Jenison, MI 49428) celebrated her 86th birthday on the 27th of October. Her children are: Colleen Brook and Sharon Knooihuizen. Grandchildren: Andrea (Ryan) Minks (Addison, Avey); Elizabeth (Joe) Kearby, Rebekah (Jamie) Stedman (Aniya); Ben & Francis Abby Osborne, and Matthew. Praise the Lord for His faithfulness.

### 80th Birthday

**JOHN S. HELDER**, 2500 Breton Woods Dr. SE, #1000, GR, MI 49512, celebrated his 80th birthday on October 4. He celebrated with family and friends on June 19. John's wife, Gertrude, children Karen, Ron, Mary, and Bob and Cathy along with 7 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild join in congratulating him and praising God for his love and deep commitment to our family.

**DELLA JELGERHUIS** (Docter), 1007 7th St. NE, Apt. 612, Orange City, IA 51041 will celebrate her 80th Birthday on November 4. Her entire family celebrates with her and thanks God for her life, faith and beautiful spirit!

H. Henry Meeter Center

### Scholarships for High School Seniors

The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies is pleased to offer the Hugh and Eve Meeter Calvinism Awards for High School Seniors. Awards are given annually for research papers on a topic pertaining to John Calvin and Calvinism. Awards are payable to student tuition accounts at the following colleges: Calvin, Dordt, King's (Canada), Redeemer (Canada), Kuyper, and Trinity Christian. The topic for 2010 is "Assessing John Calvin: Strengths and Challenges." There is a first prize of \$2,500 and a second prize of \$1,250. Papers must have a **January 15, 2010**, postmark.

For application guidelines and information on the research paper, please visit <http://www.calvin.edu/meeter> or contact

**H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies**  
Hekman Library  
1855 Knollcrest Circle SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4402  
1-616-526-7081 / fax: 1-616-526-6470  
[meeter@calvin.edu](mailto:meeter@calvin.edu)

CALVIN  
College

**JOE VANDER HORST**, 6646 Salvia Court Arvada CO 80007 celebrates his 80th birthday on Oct 26. Married to Vera for 58 years, their children; Deb(Jim), Linda(Gary), Kurt, Rita(Jim), Lisa(Craig), 18 grandchildren & 2 great-grandchildren wish him a happy birthday. We thank him for his example of faithfulness, devotion and his lifelong application of God's Word.

## Anniversaries

### 65th Anniversary

**KOOY**, John and Dena (Withage) of 1511 C St., Lynden WA, 98264, married November 1, 1944—will celebrate 65 years of marriage. They are the only living couple who were baptized, professed their faith, and married in Nobleford, AB, CRC (1st CRC in Canada). Congratulations from Wayne (Mary); Bea (Mike); Brenda; Greg (Diana); Garth (Andrea); and Ted, 13 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren. We acknowledge God's faithfulness in your lives!

**STOIT**, Jacob (Bud) & Madelynn, married October 6 1944. 10310 Village Circle Dr #203 Palos Park IL 60464. Children: Nancy & Larry Starr, Carol & Ken Bayens, Bob (deceased) & Debby, Jim & Mary, Tom & Ruth. 19 grandchildren, 23 great grandchildren. We praise God for our loving Christian parents!

**TEUNE** John and Ruth (Huisenga) celebrated 65 years of marriage on October 21. Ed and Jean, Margie Prince, Tim and Carolyn Douma, Ken and Marybeth Hekman, Jon and Sue, Jim and Jean, 18 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren.



**VANDE VOORT**, Henry & Gertrude (Bandstra) 701 E Independence, Pella, IA 50219, Nov. 27. Praising God with them are their children: Linda & Larry Vander Molen, Jan & John Vander Linden, Deb & Bob Bruxvoort, Doug & Barb Vande Voort, 10 grandchildren and spouses, 18 great-grandchildren. Great is Thy faithfulness!

### 60th Anniversary



**HELDER**, John and Gertrude (Diekevers) 2500 Breton Woods Dr. SE, #1000, GR, MI 49512, celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 11. They celebrated with family and friends on June 19. Congratulations and much love from your children, grandchildren, and great-

grandchild: Ron, Karen, Mary (Lisa, Matt and Emily De Haan; Jonathan and April Van Noord), and Bob and Cathy (Elizabeth, Andrew, and Jessica). We thank God for blessing our family with love, joy and the deep and lasting commitment of our parents to God, to each other, and to their family. Great is Thy Faithfulness!

**ZINKAND**, John & Mary (Standley) observed 60 years of marriage on August 26. Thanks to our children and grandchildren, and our family of faith at Fourteenth Street Christian Reformed Church, for words and deeds of love and encouragement. God's love endures from generation to generation.

## Church Positions Available

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.

**ARE YOU OUR ANSWER TO PRAYER?** Duncan CRC on Vancouver Island, British Columbia is seeking an Associate Pastor of Congregational Life passionate about 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 Wikkerink. Or Call 250-748-2122, or email: crc.duncan@shawcable.com

**SULLY CRC** a multi-generational congregation of 145 families, in the heart of Iowa, is seeking a full-time pastor, due to retirement of our pastor in October, 2009. We place a high value on the ministry of the Word from a solid Biblical worldview. We are seeking an effective preacher and good communicator committed to the Reformed faith, who will challenge us to be obedient in our daily lives. The candidate should be able to establish Christ-centered relationships, be compassionate, and have strong inter-personal skills, not only with adults, but also youth. Direct inquiries to Rick Fopma, 641-891-0483, rcfopma@netins.net

**BETHEL CRC** in Edgerton, MN, is seeking to fill a pastoral vacancy. Interested applicants should contact Marlin Van Schepen, search committee chair, at (507) 442-3076, mvsdvm@iw.net, or send information to Bethel CRC, PO Box 79, Edgerton, MN 56128.

**CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES DIRECTOR** Caledonia CRC is seeking applications for a part time Children's Ministries Director. Please send your resume to Caledonia CRC, Attention: Sue Sikma, 9957 Cherry Valley SE, Caledonia, MI 49316

**GOOD NEWS CRC** in London, On is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a diverse, creative, and energetic congregation serving the Lord in east London. A church profile and vision and mission statements

are available upon request. Contact Clarence Wassink at clarence.wassink@gmail.com or 519-268-6685.

**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, email maranathasearch@hotmail.com.

**CROSSPOINT CRC OF** Brampton, Ontario is seeking staff for its Congregational Care, Discipleship, Outreach, and Worship ministries. We are looking to expand our mission to Celebrate God, Communicate the good news, Cultivate faith, and Care for one another and the world. For a more detailed description, including how to apply, please go to [www.crosspointcra.ca](http://www.crosspointcra.ca) and the "Job Opportunities" link.

**CHURCH PLANTER** Fellowship CRC has been led to reach out with the gospel in a fresh way to the large sector of our area population who are unchurched. We are inviting applicants who may be interested in planting a church in St. Thomas, ON to contact our church plant team. [churchplant@fellowship-church.ca](mailto:churchplant@fellowship-church.ca)

**First Rocky Mountain House Christian Reformed Church**, located in Central Alberta's lovely Parkland area, is seeking a part-time, gifted person to assist the congregation in its ministries and "prepare God's people for works of service." The Coordinator of Ministries will work with the pastor and many volunteers in the areas of education, evangelism, youth and summer camp ministry. The position requires a strong grounding in Scripture and the Reformed tradition as well as gifts of administration and oral and written communication. An information package is available upon request as [rockycrc@telus.net](mailto:rockycrc@telus.net). Mail resume to: First Rocky Christian Reformed Church; RR # 3, Site 4, Box 6; Rocky Mountain House, AB T4T 2A3

**CUTLERVILLE EAST CRC** in Grand Rapids, MI is seeking a full-time pastor who has the ability to lead our congregation through the preaching of God's Word and by connecting with people of all ages. Please contact the search committee at [search@cutlervilleeast.org](mailto:search@cutlervilleeast.org) or call the church office at 616-455-0410.

### 55th Anniversary

**PLAISIER**, Harold & Arlene, of 6772 Ashbury Ct. Jenison, MI 49428, in September celebrated their 55th anniversary. Children: Roger & Jean Plaisier, Brenda & Edward Hoekstra, Julie & David Armstrong. 8 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren. We thank the Lord for His promises of love, His saving grace, and faithfulness.

### 50th Anniversary

**DEKRYGER** David and Sharon (Lambers) will celebrate 50 years of marriage on Nov. 6, 2009, children Scott & Sheila DeKryger, Phill & Dawn DeKryger, Dean & Cheryl DeKryger, Eric & Tara DeKryger. 13 grandchildren. An open house will be held on Nov 14, 2009 from 1-4 at First CRC 721 Hillcrest Fremont, MI (no gifts please)

**DEVRIES**, Henry & Janet (Tolsma) 558 County Route 49, Middletown NY 10940 will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Nov. 6. Doug & Darlene, Steve & Vicki, Duane & Lisa, Tim & Christy Fritsch and 14 Grandchildren. Thanks be to God!

**DUTHLER**, Harvey & Edna (Masselink) Grand Rapids, MI, celebrated their 50th anniversary on October 16th. Their children are John & Mary Leese and Robert Duthler. 5 grandchildren. God is good and we are thankful for all of his blessings.

**HOLMAN**, Dick & Jane (Kalverda) of Mount Brydges, ON celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary September 7, 2009. Thank you Lord for this blessing. Our prayer is that you may enjoy many more years together. Congratulations!

**TIGCHELAAR**, Irving and Lorraine (Eisenga) celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on October 17. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren. We thank God for the blessing you are to our families.

**VAN DELLEN**, Ken and Pearl (Kiel) of Grosse Pointe Park, MI, celebrated their 50th anniversary on August 21. Children and grandchildren: Lisa & Greg Bremer (Allyson, Austin, Andrew, Anna) and Kara & John Doyle (Ian). We thank God for abundant blessings.

**VAN PROOYEN**, Jack & Pat (Van Der Aa) will celebrate their 50th anniversary on Nov. 6, 2009. We praise God for His faithfulness! Bruce & Sue Mitchell (Paul, Amy & Melissa), Paul & Linda Van Prooyen (Jackie & Luc Leavenworth, Tom & Ben), Mark & Debbie Van Prooyen (Jacob & Tessa), Tim & Laura Clyne (Sadie, Jessie & Ivy).

### 40th Anniversary

**REINDERS**, Bernie and Lorna (Klienwolterink), 603 Kansas Ave., Orange City, IA 51041. Happy 40th Anniversary on Nov 28 With Love from your children and grandchildren. Maria & Tim De Jong (Erin, Allison, Erica). Bert & Kristi Reinders (Clayton & Carissa)

## Obituaries

**BLAUWKAMP**, Hattie, age 97, Sept. 11, 2009 (BD 9-12-1911), Zeeland, MI. Hattie was preceded in death by her parents, Gerrit & Sena Blauwkamp, brothers, sisters, and their spouses, Dick Blauwkamp, Henrietta & Art Sterken, Bert & Ruth Blauwkamp, Janet & Stan Voss, Sid Teusink, Gladys Blauwkamp. She will be lovingly remembered and deeply missed by her brother and sisters, Harold & Lucille Blauwkamp, Mrs. Sid (Ethel) Teusink, John & Joyce Dark, sister-in-law Bertha Blauwkamp, many nieces & nephews and great nieces & nephews.

**BLIEK**, Tena, age 97, May 14, 2009, Wisc. Rapids, WI. She was preceded in death by her husband, Martin, and infant daughter. Survived by her children: Martin Jr. (Mary), Alan (Donna), Cathy (Lou) DeGraaf, Eldon (Peggy), Marie (Frank) Queener, and grandchildren. Ps. 116:15 —Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

**BOS**, Ralph J. 78 years old went to be with the Lord on October 2, 2009. He was survived by his wife, Margaret, of 56 years, five children and spouses, nine grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and a brother, Abe Bos.

**BUCKLEY**, Mrs. Hilda; aged 91; September 24, 2009; of Grand Rapids; She was predeceased by her husband F. Jay Buckley, her parents, Berend and Jennie Roeters, brothers, Evert and Hank Roeters, and sister, Anne Van Beek. She is survived by her daughter: Jan and Ron



Carney; sons: Tom and Kathy Buckley, Curt Buckley and Terri Heffron; 8 grandchildren; 14 great grandchildren; 1 great great grandchild; sisters: Tillie Vander Veen, Jean De Hoog, and Bernice Freeman; sister-in-law: Wilma Roeters, brother-in-law: Richard Larsen.

**FEENSTRA**, Ernest; age 91; August 31, 2009; 4374 W. Fox Farm Rd. Manistee, MI 49660. Husband of Janet (Kwantes), father of Barbara McCune (Jim-deceased), Ginny Postma (Jim), Joyce Tyler (Rick). 4 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren. Welcome home good and faithful servant.

**FLIETSTRA**, Ruth Arlene; age 80; September 28, 2009; 2488 Sandcherry Dr. S. E., Kentwood, MI 49512; Ruth was preceded in death by her parents, Joe and Elizabeth van de Geest, sisters, Wilma van de Geest, Harriet Folkema, and Betty TenClay. She is survived by her husband: Allen; children: Kathy (Mike) Bremer, Jack (Carolyn) Flietstra; grandchildren: Jason (Emily) Bremer, Eric Bremer (Mandy Brydges), Keri (Chris) Buma, Andy Flietstra (Alysha Wolven).

**FRENS**, Ruth E., age 91, of Jenison, was called home to Glory on Sunday, September 13, 2009 and joins her husband, Howard Frens. She will be dearly missed by her children, David and Sheila Frens, Mary and Robert Dykstra, Robert and Lynn Frens; 9 grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren; sisters-in-law, Gertrude Jurgens, Florence Vande Vusse; many nieces, nephews and friends. Funeral services were held Wednesday, September 16 at Sunset Manor, in Jenison. Interment Grandville Cemetery. Condolences may be sent online at [www.mkdfuneralhome.com](http://www.mkdfuneralhome.com).

**GROEN**, Rein J.; age 86; went to be with our Lord August 5, 2009. 275 California Avenue, San Martin, CA 95046. Preceded in death by his wife of 40 years: Jane (nee Maaskant). He is survived by his children: Martin (MaryAnn) Groen, Barbara Groen, Tom (Aimee) Groen. One sister and seven grandchildren.

**HUYCK**, William James "Bill," Jr. went home to his Lord free of Alzheimers on September 19, 2009. He is survived by his wife Mary Ellen, daughter Mary Lynn (Harold) Gallegos, son Jim (Julie) Huyck, grandchildren Sarah

Huyck, Joshua (Nicole) Huyck, Alex Gallegos and from Michigan brother Walter Huyck, sisters Ruth Ann (Ron) Rosenberg, Flora Jean (Bill) Russo and Dorothy Sbordien. Preceded in death by sister Grace Stacey.

**KATERBERG**, Mr. John, Jr.; age 82; September 16th, 2009; 579 Maryland N. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503; He is survived by his wife; Ruth; children: John III (Sue) Katerberg, Linda (Maynard) Sikkema, Jack (Donna) Katerberg; 6 grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren.

**KOORN**, Rosa; 82; went to be with her Lord, Sept. 6. She is survived by 4 sons. Gene (Sharon), Marv (Marge), Terry and Greg. 10 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

**LUCAS**, Alvin Jay, 86, of Modesto, CA was called to his eternal home Aug. 26. He was preceded in death by his wife Lois. He is survived by his 5 children Dennis (Judy) Lucas, Gordon (Marge) Lucas, Ron Lucas, Bob (Lynn) Lucas and Karen (John) Nydam; 9 grandchildren, Craig (Erin), Cyndi (Walt), Kevin (Caryn), Josh, Jordan, Jared, Miranda & Luke and 2 great grandsons Ayden & Ryan. He also leaves a brother Glen Lucas and sister Donna Morris.

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**NIEWOONDER**, Grace, age 84, July 27, 2009, Kalamazoo Mi. She is survived by brother: Marvin (Jo) Niewoonder, sisters: Wilma (Leo) VanderHorst, Barbara (Phillip) Nieboer; brother-in-law: Frank (Eileen) French and many nieces and nephews.

**NYDAM**, Elizabeth J., age 94, born June 13, 1915 went home to be with the Lord Sept. 18, 2009. She was a resident in the Pleasant View Home in Corsica, S. D. for 46 years. She will be really missed by all who knew her. She was preceded in death by 4 brothers and 5 sisters.

**ROMKEMA**, Arlene Elizabeth, 79; Sept. 22, 2009. Preceded by parents Roy & Lena, brother John and sister Nellie & Peter Sankey. Survived by sister Martha, nieces & nephews: Charlene & Gary Prins; Terri, Jeff, Jade & Savannah and Carmen & Richard Hellinga; Sonja, Vanessa & Jacqueline.

**SCHURMAN**, Betty J.; aged 81; September 12, 2009; 2500 Breton Woods Dr. SE, Kentwood, MI 49512. She was preceded in death by her father, Richard Tolsma. She is survived by her mother: Bess Tolsma; husband: John; children, John II (Mary) Schurman and their children, Jennifer (Barry) Leslie, John III, Julie, and Jeffrey Schurman; Mary Beth (Richard) Mencarelli and their children, Matthew, Eric, and Chad Mencarelli; sister: Mary (Roger) Boerema.

**SONKE**, Harry Hiram (999 2nd St. Apt 115, Ripon, CA 95366), age 86, went to be with his Lord on May 22, 2009. Survived by his loving wife, Clara (Buma) of 62 years. Children: Harry Jr. (Samantha), Cathy (Hank) Pott, Jeanne (Dennis) Rempel, Jacob (Denise), Michael (Carrie), Virginia (Joe) Hoftiezer, 16 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild. Brother: Dan Sonke, and sister-in-law Susianna Smits. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Ps. 116:15.

**TEN PAS**, Mrs. Marie (nee Ippel); age 97; September 12, 2009; 2121 Raybrook SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She was preceded in death by her husband, George Ten Pas, mother and father, Mary and Cornelis Ippel of Sheboygan, WI; siblings Anton and Elizabeth Eggebeen, Peter and Hanna Ippel, Herbert Brasser, and Johnny Ippel; daughter, Bonnie and grandson, Randall K. Vander Weele. Surviving are her children: Phyllis (Ray) Vander Weele and Ken (Gardie) Ten Pas of Waupun, Wisconsin; grandchildren: Patty (Doug) Haan, Jeff (Dawn) Vander Weele, Karla (Dave) Weemhoff, Kyle (Gina) Ten Pas; Tammy Cyr; and 14 great-grandchildren—Marissa, Colin, Dylan and Karsyn Vander Weele; Colby, Andrew, Allison and Scott Haan; Kassidy, Anne Marie, Chloe and Zander Weemhoff; and Abigale and Caleb Ten Pas; brothers and sisters: Henry and Marian Ippel, Lester and Janet Ippel, Ann Brasser and Ruth Ippel.

**VANDER MEULEN**, Freda, age 94 went to be with the Lord on 9-10. Surviving are 1 son Gerald & Wife Joan of Ocheyedan IA. 3 grandchildren, 11 great, & 2 great-great.

**VAN GILST** Harriet (DeBruin), 94 of Oskaloosa, Iowa died June 30, 2009. Preceded in death by husband Bass. survived by 3 sons: Ken, Carl, Mark & 3 daughters: Elaine Van Wyk, Diane Van Wyngarden, Joleen Vanderheide

**VELZEN**, Bernard Henry; 89; September 6, 2009; 3644 Cook Valley Blvd. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He is survived by his loving wife of 67 years, Jane (Ryskamp) Velzen; children: Pat and Gary Nederveld of Grand Rapids, Mary Jane and Jim Voogt of Colorado, Ginny and John Bylsma of California, and Jack and Sally Velzen of Minnesota; grandchildren: Allen and Emily Nederveld, Anne Nederveld and Bob Frazho, Steve and Cindy Nederveld, Eric Voogt and Alison George, Rachel Voogt-Clayborn and Trevor Clayborn, Jason and Tara Voogt, Dustin and Cindy Bylsma, Joel Bylsma and Jeanette Feddes, Andre Bylsma, Ben Velzen, and Chris Velzen; 17 great-grandchildren; sister: Lillian Grissen; brother: Frank and Sylvia Velzen; sister-in-law: Bernice Velzen.

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(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication Title: The Banner; 2. Publication No. 0041-300; 3. Filing Date: Oct. 1, 2009; 4. Issue Frequency: Monthly; 5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 12; 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$24.00; 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49560-0001; 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49560-0001; 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49560-0001; Editor: Rev. Robert DeMoor, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49560-0001; Managing Editor: Joyce Kane, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49560-0001. 10. Owner: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Kent, MI 49560-0001; 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None; 12. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.

13. Publication Name: The Banner; 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2009.

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total No. Copies (Net Press Run)	99,082	98,571
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	63,372	62,610
(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions	0	0
(3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	28,919	28,559
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c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	92,365	91,176
d. Free Distribution by Mail		
(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	32	31
(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541	0	0
(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	1	0
(4) Free Distribution Outside the Mail	6	6
e. Total Free Distribution	39	37
f. Total Distribution	92,404	91,213
g. Copies Not Distributed	6,678	7,358
h. Total	99,082	98,571
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*Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.*

## Punch Lines

A new in-law was visiting and inquired about my writing progress. She wondered whether my career was worthwhile, considering the pay is based on word totals.

She couldn't stop teasing me about searching for the right words and honestly felt it was all a waste of time. Before I could reply, my wife came in from the garage, frustrated again with the kids across the street leaving their bicycles in our driveway.

She wanted some way to change their behavior without starting a verbal war with really nice neighbors. Instantly I had one of those creative moments writers consider blessed.

I asked my wife to get me some pieces of cardboard and a magic marker.

Then I wrote on each the words "FOR SALE."

With one of those spousal eye-glances to the heavens, my wife followed my advice and attached the signs to the forgetful kids' bicycles, making sure the signs faced across the street.

Within minutes the kids were sent over to retrieve their bikes as their mother acknowledged with hands in the sky her own frustrations and her satisfaction with this resolution by laughing with my wife.

Our neighbors loved the "For Sale" sign scare, and no more bikes have been left in our driveway. And my new in-law has stopped bothering me about my constant search for the right couple of words.

—Cannon Barclay

A well-worn dollar bill and a similarly distressed 50-dollar bill arrived at a U.S. Federal Reserve bank to be retired. As they moved along the conveyor belt to be shredded, they struck up a conversation. The 50-dollar bill reminisced about its travels all over the country. "I've had a good life," it proclaimed. "Why, I've been to Las Vegas and Atlantic City, the finest restaurants in New York, performances on Broadway, and even a cruise to the Caribbean."

"Wow!" said the dollar. "You've really had an exciting life!"

"So tell me," said the \$50, "where've you been?"

The dollar replied, "Oh, I've been to the Methodist church, the Baptist church, the Christian Reformed church . . ."

The \$50 interrupted, "What's a church?"

—George Vander Weit

I had a class of kindergartners and first-graders for vacation Bible school this summer. Each day the children wore pullover costumes to give the feel of life in Old Testament times. On the last day the children were prohibited from wearing the costumes because of a report of head lice. My class was extremely disappointed. In an attempt to console them, I gave them a lengthy explanation about the nature of head lice and why we had to quarantine the costumes. After I finished my speech, one kindergarten boy raised his hand and asked, "What's wrong

with head lice? Don't we need those to drive cars in the dark?"

—Bruce Vaandrager

Driving along a country road, a man ignored a "bridge out" sign and continued driving—but in a few miles came to a stop. The road was completely barricaded. So he retraced his route. That's when he saw the sign on the back of the first one: "It was, wasn't it?"

—John Veltkamp

Random thoughts from a 3-year-old:

Son: "I have lots of plans for what I want to be when I grow up."

Mom: "That's nice."

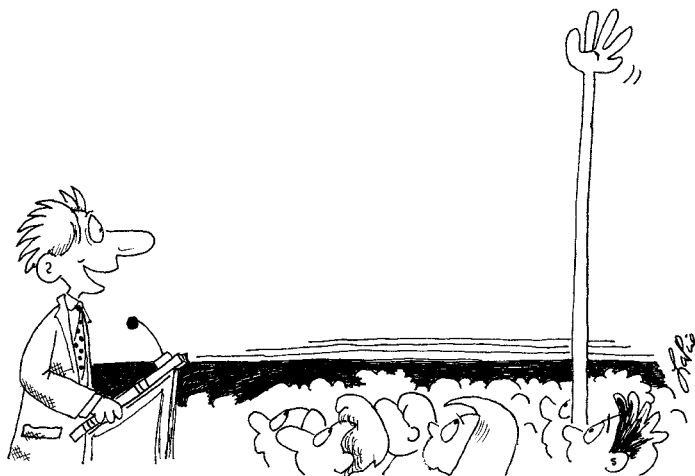
Son: "I will be whatever God wants me to be."

Mom: "That's great! I'm so glad."

(Pause)

Son: "I think God wants me to be a pirate."

—Jenni Breems



"Bless you. I see that hand."



John Calvin recently joined an intergenerational ministry trip to Israel sponsored by Cornerstone CRC of Chilliwack, British Columbia. His adventures there included living with Palestinian Christians and traveling to Bethlehem, Jerusalem, the Negev Desert, Galilee, and more. Here he stands by the famous Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Though John found the trip inspiring, he admits that jetlag is a killer when you're 500 years old.

PHOTO BY JACQUES ANEWIA



# Who better to take the Gospel to Africa than Africans?



At one time a diligent student of the Qur'an, Dr. Ousmane Soh became a Christian while attending medical school. In his youth, Dr. Soh argued fervently for the Muslim faith - now he proclaims Jesus Christ to his own people, the Fulani, in Senegal. Who better to minister to the

Fulani, whose dominate religion is Islam, than a Fulani man who is a former Muslim? Dr. Soh is breaking barriers by spreading the Word to the Fulani. Because he once followed Islam and is familiar with Fulani traditions, he is especially equipped to share the Gospel with the Fulani. The Luke Society endeavors to support indigenous medical professionals who minister to their own people by addressing their physical and spiritual needs.



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