

³⁰ The Promise
of God's Guidance

³⁸ John Calvin's Big Dream

²⁴ Orange Fish
Turns 30

¹⁸ WAS THE
REFOR
MATION
NECES
SARY?



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See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?*

—Isaiah 43:19 NLT—

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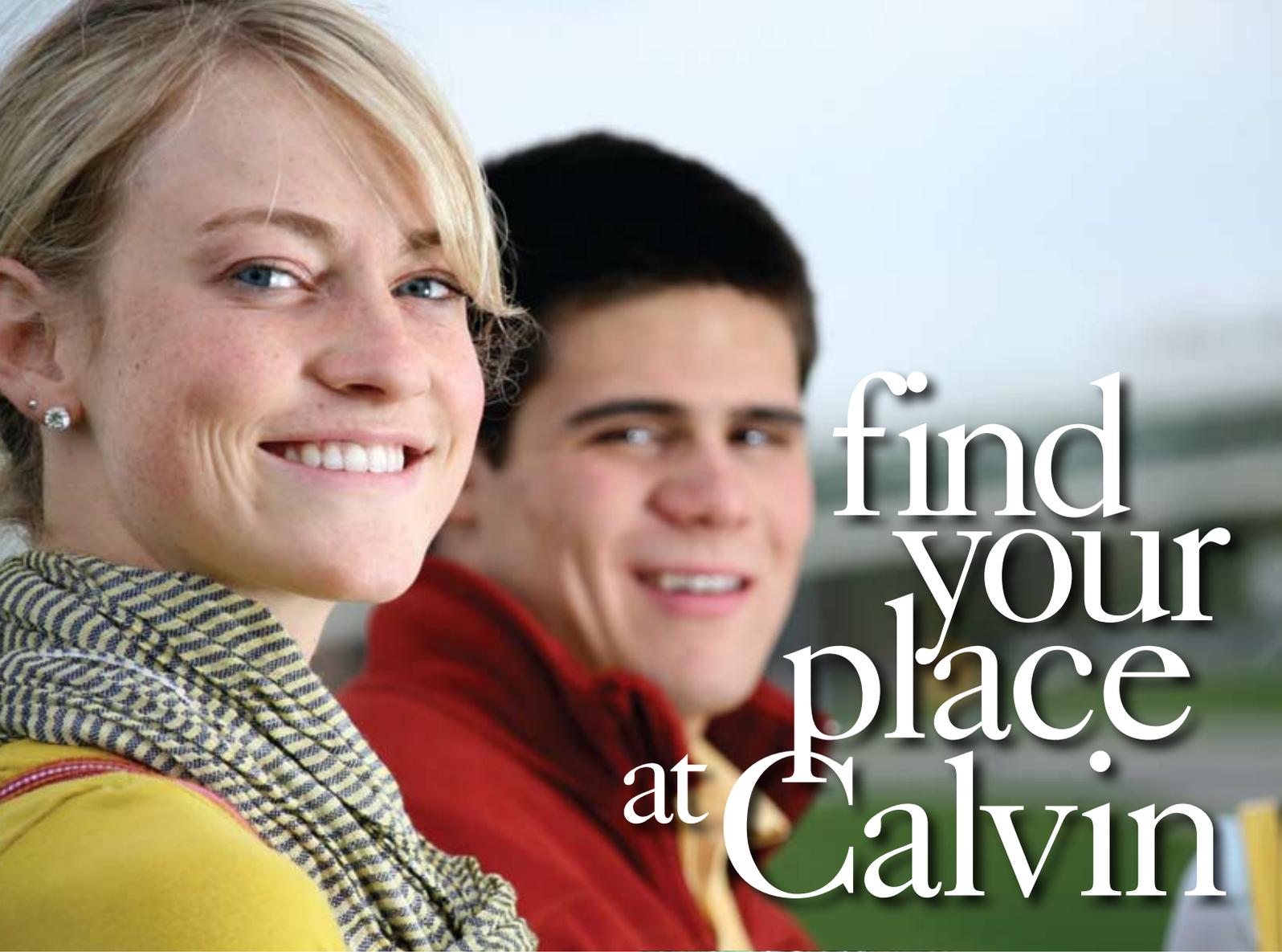
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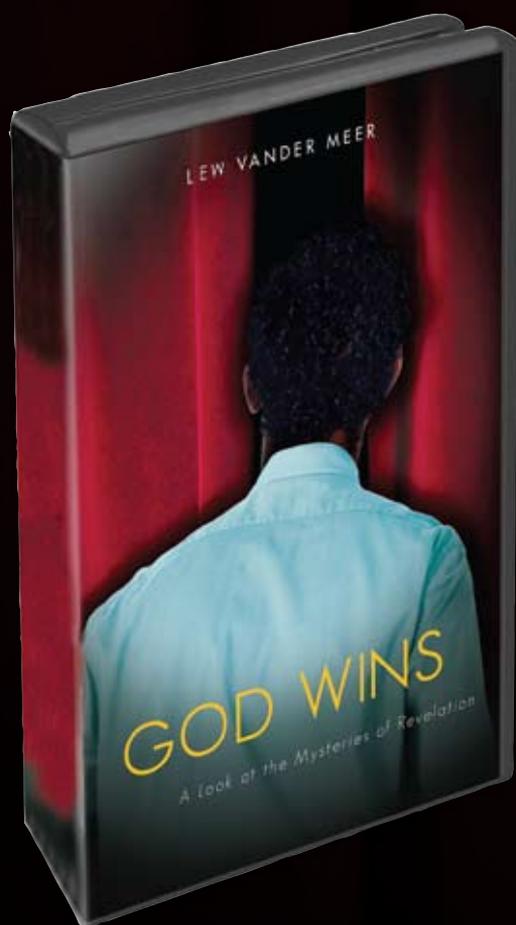
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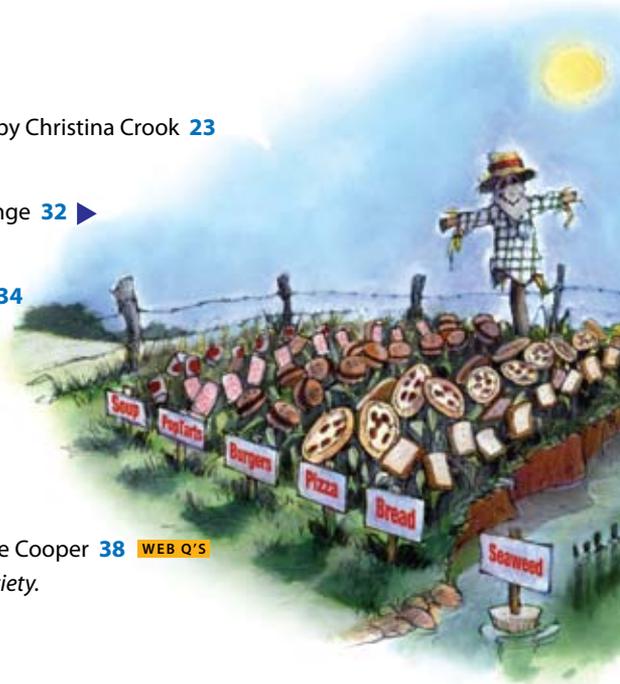
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Thanks, Guys!

I WAS A CALVINIST CADET FOR FOUR YEARS. I failed the program. Here are my only significant accomplishments:

- I earned only two merit badges and never made Recruit (the starter level).
- I was kicked out of the room for fooling around and lipping off to a counselor.
- I won the clandestine “karate chop the popsicle sticks” contest by breaking the most—so many there weren’t enough left to build the model fort.
- On the camping trip, I helped form the human chain across the river in the Elora Gorge so that we could raid the girls’ camp and drag one of their counselors’ tents into the river (with said counselors therein).

I was a Cadet counselor for one evening. I failed the program. As a second-year student at Trinity Christian College, I signed up with the Oak Lawn (Ill.) CRC program. I rode my Schwinn ten-speed out there and survived the Bible study and the round of dodge ball. But the only personal connection I made was during the craft session when a Pathfinder (second-level Cadet) asked if I was the new counselor. Yup. For reasons unknown, he then sucker-punched me in the bread basket.

I pedaled back to the dorm (in pouring rain), ending possibly the shortest counselor stint in Calvinist Cadet Corps history.

I failed the Cadet program. It did not fail me:

- The counselors always treated me with patience and respect, even when I was being a brat.
- In the Bible studies they showed love for God’s Word and modeled for me how to apply it in our everyday lives.
- They gave us fun stuff to do and showed interest in us and our lives while were working on our projects.
- They took us camping (though I haven’t forgiven them for making us sell lightbulbs door to door to pay for it).
- Humbly, lovingly, and—when necessary—firmly, they showed us Jesus.

Fast-forward 30 years, when I started working at the Christian Reformed Church’s U.S. denominational building. One of the gents in shipping turned out to be one of my former counselors. What amazed me about him was that he clearly remembered me and my participation in the program. But he had completely forgotten my (many) sins. If that isn’t being Christlike, what is?

What exactly is the Calvinist Cadet Corps?

Under the umbrella of Dynamic Youth Ministries, a partner organization with our denomination, the Cadet and GEMS (Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior) programs have, for decades, been a very rich blessing to so many boys and girls growing up in our congregations. (DYM also offers Youth Unlimited, but that’s another story—see page 12 in this issue.)

Through the dedicated service of volunteer counselors from our churches, these ministries provide inspiration, nurture, challenge, fellowship, and joy to our youths. They serve also as wonderful means of showing hospitality and fellowship to non-churched kids, giving them positive experiences and role models and helping them to find Jesus and a spiritual home.

It’s a huge commitment to become a GEMS or Cadets counselor. But the benefits you provide (and reap) are many—and often don’t become visible until decades later. Take it from a failed Cadet. You matter(ed). A lot!

Thanks! ■

I failed the Cadet program. It did not fail me.



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.

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Abstract Thinking

I **HAVE A PICASSO** on my bedroom wall—a cheap print of a Picasso, that is. It’s a realistic portrait from his “blue period” called *The Old Guitarist*, depicting an aged man bent over his guitar. But don’t ask me to describe any of Picasso’s cubist paintings in detail because, for the most part, those have never made sense to me, leaving only faint and generally negative impressions.

I confess I’m no art connoisseur and have little theory to help me understand what makes the *Mona Lisa* better than *Dogs Playing Poker*. It’s a matter of taste, I suppose, though some might say it’s the difference between having some taste and having none. I won’t get into that argument. For me, both paintings share with my favorite Picasso a quality that makes them at least comprehensible, whereas for me, something like Jackson Pollock’s *Lavender Mist* lacks that quality altogether.

The former three pictures can be described as representational. They depict something recognizable, contain identifiable and fairly realistic objects, characters, or scenes. They might even suggest some sort of story. The Pollock I mentioned, however, is abstract. Specifically, it is a frenzy of splotches and crosshatches, quick lines in different colors and thicknesses, intersecting from all directions and layered in no decipherable pattern.

When I was younger I reacted strongly to paintings like Pollock’s, almost taking offense that something so chaotic and, well . . . messy, got away with calling itself art. I felt art should be orderly, should somehow reflect my understanding of God’s beauty, symmetry, and harmony. But my biggest bias was an expectation of (nay, insistence on) a readable narrative. I wanted visual art to offer an easy answer to the question, “What is this about?” or “What does this mean?”

My prejudices remained largely undisturbed until recently, when I stumbled across a contemporary painter’s explanation of the basic idea behind abstract art. One part especially caught my attention: that is, when the brain sees a realistically depicted subject or object in a painting, it processes what it sees, trying to connect it with familiar concepts and images. In many ways, he explained, the rational mind’s preconceptions and familiar associations can be distractions, preventing deeper engagement. But when the mind is not distracted by patently meaningful images, the unconscious is freer to connect with the work on an emotional, possibly even spiritual, level.

That resonates with me. I like the idea that the unconscious, or the spirit within a gifted artist, can communicate directly with the spirit of the viewer. I speculate that the reaction a Christian viewer might have to abstract visual art, if he or she

were undistracted and truly open to it, might correspond with the extent to which the artist’s unconscious message lined up with biblical truth as affirmed by the Holy Spirit.

OK, maybe I’m reaching a little. But what if the very faculty that our creator gave us to hear from him when he speaks directly to our spirits is also given to us to discern the spirits in the created and crafted world around us? And what if my intellect—that rational part of me that leaps to identify what it thinks it already sees and hears and knows to be true—at times gets in the way of what I’m supposed to receive?

Of course, reason and intellect are God’s gifts too, and not to be disdained. But thanks to the indwelling Holy Spirit, sometimes we are simply given to know or feel something powerfully, beyond reason or intellect. So the next time we are compelled to dismiss what is before us as nonsense, whether a cubist portrait or a seemingly irrational step of faith, perhaps that’s the time to whisper a prayer and just keep staring. As we look deeper, much may remain mysterious, but we can trust God to make his truth manifest within us—and to grant us the grace to respond accordingly. ■



Jennifer Parker is a writer, teacher, and children’s librarian in West Point, Miss., and former news editor for *The Banner*.



Mystery can be experienced, sensed, felt, appreciated, even loved, without being understood.

— GERALD MAY

Will More Words Really Help?

OPINION

Adopting the Belhar will add more words to the many words we've already spoken about racism.

AT SYNOD 2009, several delegates said that adopting the Belhar Confession as one of our doctrinal standards will help us face racism, one of our besetting sins (July 2009 *Banner*, p.32). But will adopting more words really help us?

Synod's 1996 report titled "God's Diverse and Unified Family" listed many declarations on race that synods have made since 1959. The report concluded, "Notwithstanding laudatory goals and the long road the Christian Reformed Church has already traveled in race relations, the process and progress have been slow—and there are still many miles to go on various fronts (*Agenda for Synod 1996*, p. 217).

Thirteen years later those words are still true and can be illustrated by our response to the decisions of Synod 2005 (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 748, 755-756):

- Synod encouraged each classis (regional group of churches) to include at least one ethnic minority delegate to synod, beginning with Synod 2006. Less than one-third of our 47 classes do that.

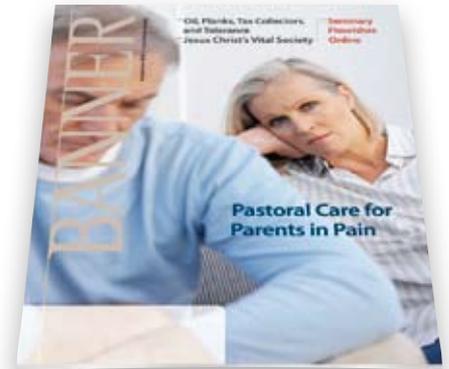
- Synod requested all classes to develop a strategy to intentionally incorporate ethnic minorities into the life and government of the local church and broader assemblies and to submit their plan to the denominational Board of Trustees by March 15, 2007. That did not happen.
- Synod instructed our Board of Trustees to report in the annual *Agenda for Synod* and to make recommendations, if necessary, on the denomination's progress in attaining its goal of at least one ethnic minority synodical delegate from each classis and on the denomination's progress in incorporating ethnic minorities on denominational boards. Synodical agendas do not include such reports.

Sometimes words remain only words. That doesn't happen because we're unconcerned or mean-spirited. It happens because it's so easy to continue to do things the way we've always done them. It takes a concerted, sustained effort to be inclusive—to notice the other person and to invite that person to the table while stepping back ourselves.

Adopting the Belhar Confession will add more words to the many words we've already spoken about racism. That might be a good thing, but our denomination will be best served when there is at least one person on each church council, in each classis, and on each denominational board who keeps reminding us of our words so those words more quickly translate into reality. ■



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



Thank You

Just finished the September *Banner*, and it was one of the best ever. I loved "Songs in the Night, Songs in the Day." I am 82 and often wake with a song on my mind. The one I repeat most often throughout the day is the chorus "This is the day the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it."

Almost every article in this issue touched in some way on reaching out and things like tolerance and intolerance (for example, "Oil, Planks, Tax Collectors, and Tolerance"). When we reach out, we will of necessity encounter differences. Differences are a basis for conflict. It is a problem to me to have many promote reconciliation as the road to travel. I feel quite strongly that there is one call to reconciliation, and after that we should "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto us." I don't pretend this is easy, and this issue states very well the obvious in many of its articles. Thank you for so much thought-provoking material.

—Roland Kamps
Gallup, N.M.

I was pleased to see coverage of the ongoing needs in Katrina-ravaged New Orleans ("Katrina Relief Groups Say Work Is Half-Finished," September 2009). The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee has been responding on behalf of the Christian

TTERS

Reformed Church to the needs of Hurricane Katrina survivors since the storm struck. To date, we've spent more than \$5.4 million and sent 1,750 volunteers and 300 church and school groups to the affected area to repair and rebuild homes. While this has resulted in more than 1,100 rebuilt homes, the needs continue to be great. Thousands of families are still living in "temporary" homes, waiting for assistance. Thank you for reminding people of the continuing need.

—Bill Adams
CRWRC Disaster Response Services
Director

Thank you for publishing "31 Ways to Pray for Your Children" (August 2009). As a family with young children, we often find it hard to find time to read *The Banner*, but this article stuck out to us, and I'm so glad we read it. My husband and I have found it so practical for teaching our kids about many virtues we are called to have as Christians, then praying about them together. What a wonderful way to think about a small area in our lives each day. Our children's prayers have also become more deep and meaningful since we've started using these suggestions. I will be leading a parenting class next month at our church, and I plan to share this fantastic article. Thanks again.

—Michelle VanderHeide
Caledonia, Mich.

Thank you so much for "Mother's Day in a Three-Way Mirror" (May 2009). Advocacy of motherhood is too often lacking in our culture. Praising all "mothers who make the tough decision to carry children they won't raise and mothers who make the tough decision to raise children they didn't carry," should be a priority for us as Christians.

—Matt and Jen Viel
Edgerton, Minn.

Oil Sands

The news article about the KAIROS delegation visiting the oil sands of Alberta caught my eye (August 2009, p. 12). As a Calvin College biology graduate and current graduate student in ecology, I believe that extraction of oil from the Alberta oil sands is the most inefficient and environmentally damaging method used today.

While I am pleased that local churches are taking an interest in the issue, I was concerned by the comments made by Rev. Van Sloten and Dennis Vroom. Our world *does* belong to God and we are called to be stewards of *his* creation, which is exactly why we should be concerned about such reckless exploitation.

(See the March 2009 issue of *National Geographic* for a more in-depth look at the Alberta oil sands.)

—Steve Roels
Lawrence, Kan.

New Calvinism

In the *Time* magazine article Rev. Al Hoksbergen references in "The New Calvinism" (August 2009), David Van Biema provides clear insight as to how Calvinism is attracting new followers. He quotes Albert Mohler, "The moment someone begins to define God's being or actions biblically, that person is drawn to conclusions that are traditionally defined as Calvinist." God's sovereignty and the concept of predestination are key components of this movement.

Calvin defined the priorities of the Christian life, preaching and biblical studies, to be the knowledge we gain of God and ourselves. Early Calvinist denominations and the broader evangelical community sacrificed these commitments for other emphases and a "friendly, fuzzy Jesus."

We as a denomination stand at a crossroads. Our choice is the other emphases or remaining committed to biblical standards

that recognize that it is not about us but about God. Our problem with election hinges on this point.

—Jack Kremers
Winfield, Ill.

Maybe the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America were not included in the *Time* article because, to our shame, we are not part of the "New Calvinism"—or really all that Calvinistic anymore.

—Jo Schouten
Burnaby, British Columbia

Tea Party Redux

We would like to commend Pastor Tyler Wagenmaker for his actions regarding taxation ("Pastor Coordinates Tax Tea Party," August 2009). The government, in the current trend of increasing taxes, is usurping the church's vital responsibility of caring for the poor. The church can most effectively distribute true physical and spiritual help, and Christians need to stop relying on the government to do the dirty work. Let's see some self-sacrifice on the part of Christians today in our budgets and in our schedules.

—Clarissa Bonnema
Alicia Sluis
South Holland, Ill.

I am honored to call "brother" one who challenges the immorality and injustice of mortgaging our great-grandchildren's future, and who challenges the idolatry of trusting in government rather than in God. Thank you, Brother Wagenmaker, for your courage in using your office as citizen to speak truth to power!

—Rev. Les Kuiper
Oostburg, Wis.

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Calvin College Memo About Homosexuality Draws Fire

A statement issued by the Calvin College board of trustees, addressing how faculty and staff write and speak about homosexuality, touched off a significant response from college faculty and staff in August and September.

While some staff and faculty feel the trustees' actions unilaterally changed policy and circumvented normal process, the board chair said it was simply clarification, not a change in policy or process.

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

The board statement, intended as internal only to faculty and staff, declared in part, "Advocacy by faculty and staff, both in and out of the classroom, for homosexual practice and same-sex marriage is unacceptable."

The statement was issued in response to a letter received from a Christian Reformed church council that asked the board to clarify the college's position on homosexuality.

But when the statement was issued to faculty and staff, many of them interpreted it as a change in policy handed down from the board without consultation from the rest of the college.

"The board of trustees' action does not work with the way we usually do things at Calvin," said Karin Maag, who serves as vice chair of the Calvin faculty senate. "They should be in consultation with the faculty and staff."

"The issue is understanding how an academic community works, and it is one in which difficult topics are talked about, and wholesale bans are not helpful and don't work in an academic context."

The board insists, however, that the statement was meant only as a clarification of the college's existing position.

"What we're trying to do is to provide some clarity to our faculty," said Bastian Knoppers, chair of the board. "We didn't intend for there to be any change in process, procedures, or anything else at all. The faculty's perception that this is a change in both procedure and process is unintended. The board was working to clarify and confirm that the position of the board and the college was in tandem with the position of the CRC."

The statement also declares, "This is a difficult task, but we want to be clear as to the college position on this issue—a position perhaps not conservative enough to suit many on the right nor satisfactory for many on the left."

The statement concludes, "If there were ever to be a change to the college's position on the issue, it would have to come from synod." Synod is the annual leadership meeting of the CRC.

—Christian Bell

For more details, please see online story at www.thebanner.org.

Hitting the Jackpot Against the Lotto

It was the "holy rollers" versus the "high rollers" in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, and the holy rollers won.

The battle was over whether video lottery terminals (VLTs) should be allowed in the town's bars and pubs.

Rev. Leonard Batterink of First Christian Reformed Church in Rocky Mountain House, together with other local clergy and their congregations, started a quiet campaign for the "no" side and came out the winners with 600 votes more than the "yes" campaign.

"Between a fifth and a quarter of players admit to serious over-



Rev. Leonard Batterink

use," said Batterink. "It is inappropriate for a provincial agency to be operating VLTs when the government should be guarding the welfare of the public."

Batterink said he recognizes that charities benefit from gaming in Alberta but said supporting

charity" has to be done in a cleaner way than this."

There are 6,000 VLTs scattered around Alberta, and this referendum affects only the town of Rocky Mountain House.

"The Christian Reformed community was quite keen on the issue," said Batterink. "It's a very small victory. We'd love to think that this triggers a larger discussion about VLTs and their use as revenue-generators for the government. But I fear that the government and the Liquor and Gaming Commission will hope for the issue to blow away. Nevertheless, in God's kingdom, the tiny mustard seed grows into something really big. So we'll see."

—Rachel de Koning Kraay

Redeemer Gets Stimulus Money

Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, will receive \$2.9 million of economic stimulus money from the Canadian federal government.

Private Christian institutions are not usually on the receiving end of government funding in Canada. "Not only is this the largest single grant in Redeemer's history, it marks the first time we have received capital funding from the federal government," said college president Justin Cooper.

The investment will cover one-half of the total cost of 25 different projects that make up the Academic Complex Renewal project at the school. "These funds will allow us to upgrade our science labs and increase our capacity for



MICHELLE DREW

Redeemer University College President Justin Cooper (left) with Canadian Member of Parliament David Sweet.

research and teaching in the natural sciences. We will also be using this investment to upgrade the efficiency and sustainability of our academic building," said Cooper.

The investment is part of the Canadian government's two-year, \$2 billion plan to repair and expand research and educational

facilities at Canadian colleges and universities. The program provides economic stimulus and promotes employment by creating jobs for engineers, architects, tradespeople, and technicians. It will also help generate the advanced technological infrastructure needed to keep Canada's colleges and universities at the forefront of scientific advancement.

David Sweet, the Member of Parliament for the riding where Redeemer is located, said, "Building knowledge infrastructure is so critical to our economy in the short term and long term. . . . This is a great day for Redeemer University College."

—Sophie Vandenberg

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Paul C. Zylstra

1921-2009

Rev. Paul C. Zylstra, faithful witness of Christ, gifted musician and writer, and accomplished athlete, died Aug. 2 from congestive heart failure. He was 87.

After serving in the U.S. armed forces, Zylstra attended Calvin Theological Seminary. He served Christian Reformed churches in Michigan, California, New Jersey, and Arizona before retiring in 1987.

Zylstra was a pastor of broad interests and considerable gifts. His first love was the pastoral ministry. He also excelled in several sports: softball, ski jumping, and long-distance running. He ran the Boston Marathon when he was nearly 70 years old.

He was also an accomplished violinist and a member of the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra for many years. He used his writing skills to tell stories about the Zylstra family and life on the West Side of Grand Rapids, Mich.

Zylstra was preceded in death by his wife, Suzanne, and a daughter. He is survived by three children and their spouses, a son-in-law, 11 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

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

Ontario Church Reaches Out in Own Backyard

After years of short-term service trips, members of Bethany Christian Reformed Church in Fenwick, Ontario, decided it was time to do long-term ministry with families right in their own backyard.

That decision prompted the birth of "Rose City Kids," a ministry for children from nearby Welland, a city hard hit by industry closures and unemployment. The church focuses on a neighborhood that's home to 900 single-parent families.

Starting with 15 children last year, the program now gathers 100 kids every other Saturday for games, activities, teaching, worship, and food.

"Our mission is to inspire each child to believe that they have been created for a purpose by a God [who] loves them . . . and to inspire them to dream big dreams," said Sonya Wierenga, one of the ministry's founders.

Wierenga said it takes a different sort of commitment to sustain a long-term local ministry.

As volunteers get to know the children's families, needs come to light. Church members have helped some families with basics such as food and with extras such as Christmas and birthday gifts for children.

Rose City Kids recently received a grant from funds raised by the CRC's Sea to Sea bike tour in 2008. It also partners with other local Christian agencies to meet the needs of their neighbors.

This spring the ministry acquired a building able to accommodate up to 600 children. The facility will house after-school and Friday-night youth programs, parent seminars, speakers, concerts, and worship.

—Sophie Vandenberg



MARTINUS GELEYNSE

Teens Learn About "Living Inside Out"

Relevant. "Put together well." "Challenging." Those were some of the ways teens described the 2009 Youth Unlimited Convention, held this year in Ridgecrest, N.C., in late July.

Nearly 700 teens gathered in the Appalachian mountains for five days to learn about "Living Inside Out."

"What they called 'living inside out' was living for Christ and letting that show from the core of my being," said Hannah VanBeek, 17, from Pella, Iowa. "That struck me. It's like I'm totally flipped, and it's all Christ."

A third-time conventioneer, VanBeek said this summer's convention "completely blew away all my expectations. . . . [I was] really sad on the last day when we had to leave."

In addition to worship, sports, and other activities, conventioners had many seminars to choose from.



A group from Friendship Chapel, Allendale, Mich., enjoyed a climb in the Appalachian mountains.

This year the most popular seminar was led by Jarrod Jones, a 6-foot 7-inch former NCAA (college-level) basketball player. In his seminar titled "Backward Dating," Jones urged teens to set godly standards in their dating lives, to be a "godly example and purity leader in relationships."

This was Scott Staal's first convention. The 17-year-old from Mokena, Ill., said Jones' seminar stood out as his favorite.

"Basically, I saw how we should act as Christians and how to be pure—that was made clear," said Staal. "I had some questions, and those questions were answered."

Jones also led four Mainstage sessions—sessions that Brian Haak, 17, of Zeeland, Mich., enjoyed. "I got a lot out of what [Jarrod Jones] spoke about. I was challenged to take my beliefs and

share with people around me. It was something I had to re-evaluate, and it was really cool and challenging."

Haak had some good conversations with a friend who also came to the convention, he said. He plays drums and his friend plays guitar in their "garage-type" band. The convention inspired them to make their band "exclusively Christian": "We might as well make the things we do glorify God," said Haak.

Worship at the conference was led by Remedy Drive, an independent rock band from Lincoln, Nebr. The band played worship songs and songs from their most recent album.

Other speakers included Rob Roozeboom of RISE Ministries, and Jean Stevens, a former student ministry pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, Ill.

Convention organizer Millie Hoekstra said more kids attended this year than last. "In this economy we are very thankful to have an increase instead of a decrease like many organizations are experiencing," she said.

—Roxanne Van Farowe



Carley Hoogendorn from Rock Valley, Iowa, enjoys worship.



Jarrod Jones, a former NCAA basketball player, was a popular Convention speaker.

Korean-American Teens Enjoy Youth Camp

Teens from Korean Christian Reformed churches in southern California and Nevada gathered this summer for Camp Kainos 2009, held at Big Bear Lake, Calif.

The camp attracted 77 junior high and high school students, along with 24 counselors and 10 staff, from seven different churches.

Michael Pang, one of the camp's directors, said, "It was great how the college students are coming forward to be trained as future leaders—they want to help out with Camp Kainos and their own churches." Pang said former camp participants are "working to be role models for the youth groups and to give the younger students the same great experience, both in fellowship and in God, that they had."

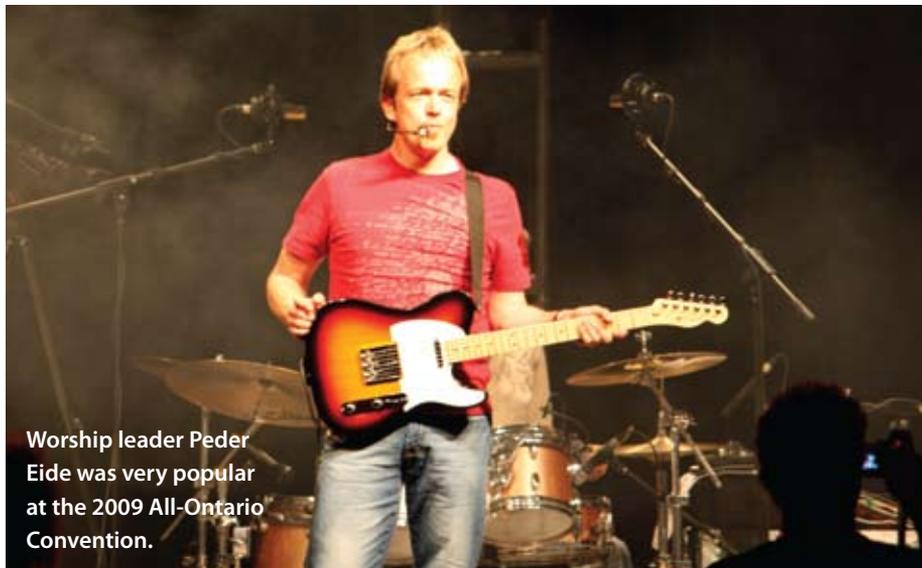
"All helped to create an excellent atmosphere of fellowship and a true experience with God," said staff member David Chung. "The last night of camp, almost 30 students rededicated their lives [to Christ]."

The Korean Council of Christian Reformed Churches helped campers with the cost of attending this year's camp.

"I would like to not only bring together these small churches, but also help them become the next generation of leaders, future administrators, and preachers who can run church retreats, revivals, youth groups, and activities to spread God's Word and love," said Pang.

—Jonathan Kim

Ontario Youth Convention Sets Attendance Record



Worship leader Peder Eide was very popular at the 2009 All-Ontario Convention.

The poor economy did not stop an all-time high number of teens from flocking to the 2009 All-Ontario Youth Convention.

A record 830 teens trekked to Waterloo, Ontario, for four days full of camaraderie, music, and—in a lot of cases—enlightenment.

The theme “Keeping on Track” inspired conventioners not only to keep on their personal tracks, but also to make sure they show it.

“I realized that with my friends I sometimes try and hide my faith,” said Natanya Heeres, a first-time attendee from Listowel, Ontario. “I

need to change that and be more proud of it.”

Melissa Peacock was moved while attending speaker Brett Ullman’s talk. “He was talking about self-injury, and I didn’t think there were so many people doing it,” she said. “He asked how many people knew someone [who purposely injured himself or herself], and almost everyone raised their hand. I realized God cares about everybody—no matter what, he’s always there.”

Rebecca Stieva, from Smithville, Ontario, came to the convention for the third time—but under difficult circumstances. “My father left for military service that week,” she said.

“He’s 25 hours away from home now, and I struggled with whether I was mad at God for what [God] was doing to our family, but the prayer sanctuary and counseling were very helpful, and I was able to get somewhere in my personal struggles.”

Among the good-time distractions conventioners could indulge in were a Wii challenge, a scavenger hunt in a local mall, and various performances, including rising singer/songwriter Christine Evans, illusionist Danny Ray, and worship leader Peder Eide, who drew raves from those in attendance.

—Mike Postma

Teens at the 2009 All-Ontario Convention had opportunity to hear up-and-coming bands as well as the headliners.



Teens from The Other Way Ministry in Grand Rapids, Mich., attend “Where U At?”

Where U At? Draws Urban Teens

More than 250 teens gathered in Ewart, Mich., in April for “Where U At?”—an urban youth conference sponsored by Youth Unlimited.

This year’s theme, “WORD,” was based on Proverbs 18:12. Speakers were Eric Tolbert and Christy Carlin Knetsch, and activities included teen testimonies, worship, skits, dramas, small groups, zip lines, three-on-three basketball, and bungee bounce.

Having attended the conference the past three years as a student, Mario Adkins, 19, from Grand Rapids, Mich., attended this year as a leader. “It was an amazing experience,” he said. “Witnessing the effect the Holy Spirit had on the youth. Even the toughest of the adolescents were broken down by His Spirit.”

Now in its fourth year, “Where U At?” has more than doubled in attendance, according to Youth Unlimited events manager Millie Hoekstra. “Each year many students have committed their lives to following Jesus, and others have grown in their faith,” she said.

—Karen Gorter

Mystery Service Trip

None of the 13 young people from Heritage Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Mich., knew where they were headed when they left for a service trip this summer.

"We kept guessing where we were going. [The leaders] kept it a secret the whole time," said Julie Schrottenboer, 16.

Ross Tanner, 18, said the intrigue kindled curiosity. "It was sort of frustrating that they wouldn't tell us anything, but it was a lot more fun that we didn't know," he said.

When they arrived in Oakville, Iowa, a small river town that flooded a year ago, the residents greeted the Heritage youths with open arms.

Garbed in masks and hard hats, the teens pumped water from a basement and gutted the home's damaged interior.

At night they bunked in a United Methodist Church basement with a Baptist youth work crew from Pennsylvania.



JULIE SCHROTTENBOER

Teens from Byron Center, Mich., helped gut a flooded home in Oakville, Iowa.

Oakville residents provided food for the workers. "It was wonderful how the town fed us and supported us. It brought many people closer to others," observed Aaron Mingerink, 18.

Hearing experiences of flooded-out residents captivated Brianna Mulder, 17. "We learned personal stories firsthand," she said.

—Carolyn Koster Yost



Mieke Dykhouse and Celeste Komodore help children paint toy cars during craft time.

A Generation of Mission Trips to Mexico

For 17 consecutive years, young people from Third Christian Reformed Church in Denver, Colo., have been traveling to Mexico to help in mission work.

This year was no exception. In July, David De Ridder, the church's minister of discipleship, took 21 students to Tijuana, where they coordinated efforts with Scott and Marcia Geurink, missionaries with Christian Reformed Home Missions.

The students spent their mornings teaching children and their afternoons on construction at a drug rehabilitation center.

"These kids learn good, practical skills," said De Ridder, "and they learn much more—about faith, compassion, and Christian love."

It can be a life-changing experience. After an excursion to see where their VBS children lived, one team member wept. "They have nothing," she said, "and yet they're so happy."

Many youths who participate in the service trips return for Third CRC's adult Mexico mission teams.

—Alice Durfee

Fathers and Sons Bond over Bait

For more than 40 years, fathers and sons from Second Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Mich., have bonded over bait and fishing tackle.

Every other summer, they travel 700 miles (1,100 km) to a remote site in Canada to fish for a week. The trip is organized by the church's Cadet club (a ministry for boys in many Christian Reformed churches).

"We spend prime time together. It really helps us to get to know the boys," said Cadet counselor Mike Oudbier, whose father, Russ Oudbier, started the trips.

This year's group included 20 dads or grandfathers and 20 boys ages 10 through 16.



MIKE OUDBIER

Tom Warners (left) and Nate Sculley show off their catch of the day.

"I like being cut off from what we usually do," said Colin Wiers, 15.

Brad Van Sledright, 16, likes being outdoors. "It gives me a strong appreciation for the beauty of God's creation."

Woods and water make an ideal setting to bond with each other,

Mike Oudbier said. "The boys get a closer relationship to their dads, and being in nature promotes closeness with the Lord."

The boys are more relaxed and are themselves, Oudbier notes. "It's a free atmosphere for conversation," he said. "It makes a stronger [Cadet] club when you do a big outing. It's been a good thing for our boys."

—Carolyn Koster Yost

Upside-Down: Teens in Charge

A service project was turned upside-down this summer when the youths were in charge, issuing instructions to the adults of Lee Street Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Mich.

Thirteen teens directed more than 60 volunteers ages 10 to 75 in a weekend service project that gave church members a taste of the knuckle-busting weeklong service trips young people often take.

"I think it showed them how hard it is and how much fun and what a growing experience it can be," said Michael Berghuis, 16.

Amid light-hearted banter, volunteers cleared trash, trimmed bushes, and did repairs for people



The Lee Street service project team.

KARI DOUMA

in the neighborhood around the church.

"Teams were divided into Hammers, Screwdrivers, or Saws to illustrate that we are all just tools that God uses to serve for his glory," said Lee Street member Vince Douma, who originated and organized the project with Rich Steenstra.

The youth-led devotion times proved challenging and rewarding, said Ellyn Hoeksema, 17. "It was definitely a step out of my

comfort zone, but it was good for adults to see that young people can have a strong faith and leadership."

An added bonus was that the project brought together church

members who usually do not interact, said Alex Douma, 14. "Some of the people I didn't know. Now it's easier to talk with them on Sundays."

—Carolyn Koster Yost

Minnesota Church Hosts Art Camp

Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Princeton, Minn., replaced its vacation Bible school with a summer art camp five years ago. From the very start it has been a success.

This year, 163 children from second to eighth grades attended the July camp. Twenty-three more participated in a mini-camp for younger children.

Students could select from 75 different classes on subjects from creative writing, drama, sign language, and story telling to dance, making smoothies and ice coffees, paintball, and basket weaving.

"I learned how to paint on eggs [and] how to make stamps," said 11-year-old Carrie Rosenberg.

Rev. Cal Friend, pastor of Bethel, said the most popular class was woodworking, in which students constructed Adirondack lawn chairs.

"Some of the kids came to make a present for their mom or dad," he said.

Students also heard about how deeply God loves them. Biblical messages during the focus time centered on the theme "Be Rooted," in which campers learned that life is best when rooted in God's love.

Director Julie De Haan brought the camp idea to Minnesota after her two oldest children attended an art camp in Michigan. She knew her church included many talented people interested in creativity. Leaders range from teens to 90-year-olds.

—Paul Delger

CRC Grant Funds Creation Care Camp

"How many of you have planted a tree?" asked camp leader Ron Oostra.

Some of the 15 children in grades three through five had, but all were eager to try it on the fourth and final day of Creation Care Camp at Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa.

The camp was the winning U.S. idea out of dozens, and won the first annual \$500 "Green Congregation" grant awarded by the Christian Reformed Church.

In Canada, Houston (British Columbia) CRC won a grant for their community garden where refugees, single parents, and others in the neighborhood can grow vegetables for their families.

The camp at Covenant CRC focused on caring for the soil, discovering the value of trees, and learning about organic gardening. "Students learned that the choices we make affect climate change," said Matt Drissell, who co-directed the camp with Becky Drissell.



SHERRY KOOIKER

Alan Hulstein (left) and Caden Zonnefeld admire the tree they helped plant.

Children learned that trees provide shade, protection from wind, paper, homes for animals, and beauty. Students eagerly participated in tree identification and the planting of a new tree.

The deadline for applications for the 2010 Green Congregation grants is Nov. 1. For more information, please visit www.thebanner.org, scroll down to October news, and click on the link for "Green Grants 2010."

—Sherry Kooiker



From left, Lynn Van Soelen (Georgetown, Ontario), Jen Vlietstra (Edgerton, Minn.), Judy Knoper (Allendale, Mich.), and Julie Norrgard (Fort Collins, Colo.)

GEMS Leaders Gather for 40th

More than 500 GEMS Girls' Club counselors gathered at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, for the 40th annual GEMS leadership conference.

GEMS, an acronym for "Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior," is offered in many Christian Reformed churches in the United States and Canada, and now also in Zambia.

The counselors came to the conference for training, inspiration, spiritual growth, encouragement, and fellowship.

"It's the kind of thing every counselor should go to," said Ettie Wybenga, of Hagersville, Ontario, who is eager to take what she learned back to the

girls in her local club. "[GEMS Executive Director Jan Boone] was inspiring," she said, adding that she also was reminded that "we can take everything back to God. There's nothing too small."

The theme of this year's convention and GEMS year, "Prayer:

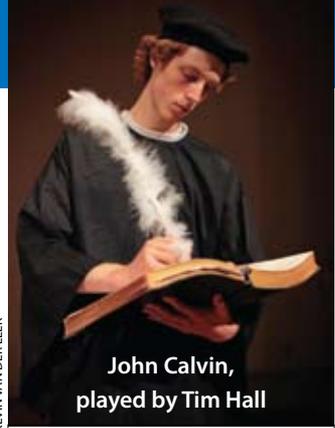


Tracy Adema of Waterford, Ontario

No Worries," is based on Philippians 4:6.

GEMS, established 50 years ago under the original name "Calvinettes," ministers to 23,000 girls in more than 800 clubs, with 5,200 women serving as counselors.

—Sophie Vandenberg



John Calvin, played by Tim Hall

Meeting John Calvin

Worshippers in Surrey, British Columbia, had a chance to meet John Calvin "up close and personal" during July.

Tim Hall, an amateur actor, played John Calvin for a series of services at Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church. He used monologues written by Wilma van der Leek based on Calvin's own words.

"This series was a way to celebrate our spiritual ancestor," said Rev. Tom Bomhof.

Because the order of worship was loosely based on Calvin's 1542 Genevan liturgy, the congregation celebrated communion every Sunday. "Calvin believed the sacrament could nourish us better from week to week," Bomhof said.

"It was a rich experience," said Hall. "I discovered so much about Calvin's personal life and theology." —Jenny deGroot

WORLD NEWS

Christians Weigh In on Both Sides of Health Care Debate

Please visit www.thebanner.org for the story.



North Hills Christian Reformed Church in Troy, Mich., recently hosted their second annual Car Lovers' Day.

Church members in this Detroit suburb mingled with those who came, serving supper, awarding trophies, and handing out door prizes to make new connections in the community.

Left, enjoying the 1947 Ford Sportsman are Zac, Sid, and Brad Dotinga, along with show organizers Patti Door, Anita Beem, and Mark Hunsberger. Next to the 1963 Pontiac Lemans, Jonathan Engle and Rev. Randall Engle smile for the camera with two car owners.

—Eileen DeVries



Braden Cok

Perfect Score!

Braden Cok, who can solve a Rubik's Cube in 74 seconds and excels at soccer, volleyball, and math, achieved a perfect score in a Canada-wide grade 8 math contest.

Braden, 13, is the youngest of Rev. Vicky and Dennis Cok's three children. He attends Laurentian Hills Christian School and is a member of Waterloo Christian Reformed Church, where his mom is the pastor.

The Gauss Contest is a multiple-choice test written over 60 minutes, created and administered by the University of Waterloo. Last year, it was taken by 80,000 students. Braden's perfect score puts him in the top one-third of one percent of kids who took the test.

"I like anything to do with math concepts, really. I like theoretical stuff," said Braden, who enjoys studying space and loves learning new things. "I didn't know for sure that I had gotten perfect, but after taking the test I knew there was a pretty good chance that I had."

—Raquel Flores Lunshof

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. John Blankespoor

1914-2009

Rev. John Blankespoor, a compassionate pastor, innovative teacher, devout student of the Bible, world traveler, and accomplished golfer, passed away July 8 of pneumonia. He was 94.

Blankespoor graduated from the Protestant Reformed Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich., serving Protestant Reformed churches in Iowa and Michigan. He taught Bible classes at Holland (Mich.) Christian High School and served two Christian Reformed churches in Michigan. He retired in 1979.

Blankespoor was a generalist in the best sense of the word. He served with distinction and diligence in preaching, teaching, pastoral visiting, and administration. Long before "visual aids" gained widespread use, he effectively used object-helps in preaching and teaching.

Blankespoor and his wife, Margaret, traveled extensively, visiting every continent. They golfed together well into old age.

Blankespoor is survived by his wife, four children and their spouses, 14 grandchildren, and 28 great-grandchildren. One grandchild preceded him in death.

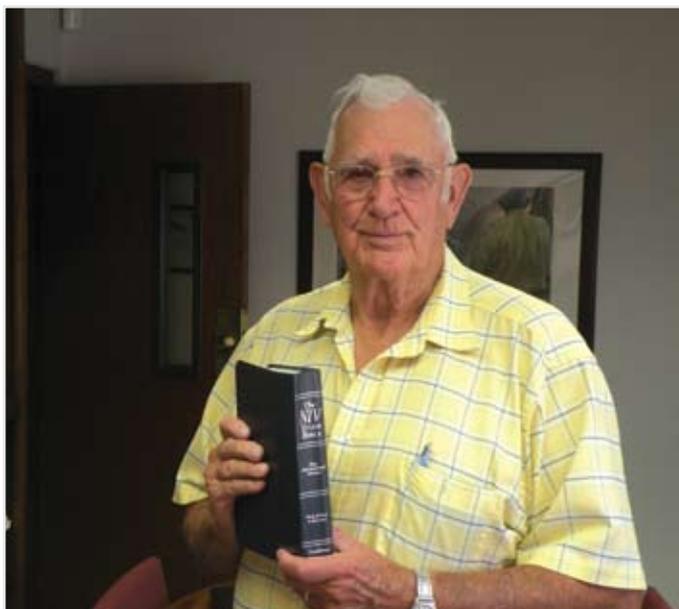
—Louis M. Tamminga

For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Blankespoor, please see www.thebanner.org.

Colorado Church Provides Bibles for Prisoners

What started as a weekly prison ministry by Cragmor Christian Reformed Church has evolved into a large-scale distribution of study Bibles.

The Colorado Springs, Colo., church was holding weekly worship services for inmates when



Frank Verhey collects study Bibles for prison inmates.

Frank Verhey and Rev. Steve Alsum saw a need for study Bibles.

Verhey received support from the congregation and arranged to purchase some Bibles at a discount.

A visit with the chaplain at the federal prison in Florence, Colo., led to another request for Bibles, bringing the total number of study Bibles distributed to more than 200.

"Those who have received a study Bible cannot say enough about how much it has helped in their walk with the Lord," Verhey said.

Verhey said the vision is to spread this ministry beyond Colorado. He hopes other Christian Reformed congregations will consider joining in.

—Alice Durfee

Banner News Writer Needed

The *Banner* is looking for a news correspondent in lower Michigan (Classes Kalamazoo and Lake Erie) to write about Christian Reformed people and activities of interest to our readers. We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

All expressions of interest should be sent via e-mail *only* (no phone calls, please) to Gayla Postma, news editor, at gpostma@crcna.org. Please submit a short resume, including your writing experience and two recent samples of your work.

BY RONALD FEENSTRA

WAS THE REFORMATION NECESSARY?

AN ECUMENICAL DISCUSSION WITH
CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC THEOLOGIANS

As part of our commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, The Banner asked Ronald J. Feenstra to invite members of the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue to talk together about the Protestant Reformation. The following members of the Dialogue participated in this exchange:

- **Dr. Richard J. Mouw**, a member of the delegation from the Presbyterian Church (USA) and Reformed co-chair of the current round of the dialogue, is president of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.
- **Sr. Joyce Ann Zimmerman**, C.P.P.S., a member of the Roman Catholic delegation to the dialogue, is founding editor of Liturgical Ministry and director of the Institute for Liturgical Ministry in Dayton, Ohio.
- **Dr. Ralph Del Colle**, a member of the Roman Catholic delegation to the dialogue, teaches in the Department of Theology at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- **Fr. Dennis Tamburello**, O.F.M., a member of the Roman Catholic delegation to the dialogue, teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at Siena College near Albany, New York.

DURING THE 16TH century, John Calvin engaged in a fascinating exchange with Jacopo (James) Cardinal Sadoletto, the Roman Catholic Church's Bishop of Carpentras.

Cardinal Sadoletto wrote an open letter to the people of Geneva, Switzerland, in 1539, calling them to follow the path to salvation laid out by the Catholic Church, which had been leading people to salvation for 1,500 years, rather than the "innovations" introduced during the previous 25 years by the Reformers.

Calvin responded to Sadoletto's letter with an open letter of his own, arguing that the Reformers were restoring the teachings of the early church—teachings that had been distorted by the "Roman Pontiff and his faction." The debate between Sadoletto and Calvin touches on justification by faith, the Eucharist (Lord's Supper), the nature of the church, and other key topics in the 16th century.

The exchange between Sadoletto and Calvin summarizes the main issues that have separated Roman Catholic and Reformed Christians for nearly 500 years. Only in recent decades have both communions engaged one another in dialogue that tries to identify and understand some of the main points of difference, as well as to come to agreement where that is possible. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), with its heartening call to ecumenism, sparked this renewed engagement and dialogue some 400 years after the Reformation era.

Soon afterward, the Roman Catholic Church opened dialogues with various churches around the world. In 2003, the Christian Reformed Church joined the Roman Catholic-Reformed dialogue in the United States as that dialogue entered its seventh round, which has focused on baptism and the Eucharist.

In view of this ecumenical dialogue, and on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth, it seems appropriate to ask some basic questions about the 16th-century Reformation, its effects, remaining differences between the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches, and prospects for our reconciliation.

1. Were the reforms advocated by Martin Luther and John Calvin in the 16th century needed? Could the 16th-century schism in the Western church have been avoided? If so, how?

Richard J. Mouw: "I believe the reforms were necessary, but I do need to nuance that assessment by pointing out that there were important continuities—more than often acknowledged when we celebrate the Reformation—between the thought of Calvin and Luther and their not-so-distant predecessors. At the very least, what needed reforming was an array of practices that had become prominent in popular Catholicism—ones that distracted attention from the important biblical themes of salvation by grace alone, and a trust in the once-for-all sacrifice that occurred at Calvary."

Joyce Ann Zimmerman: "By the 16th century . . . reform was definitely needed. . . . [Many] of the liturgical reforms of Vatican II were precisely some of those called for by Luther and Calvin: [worship in the] vernacular, greater participation by the laity in liturgy, more hymns, communion under both species [bread and wine], for example.

"Whether the Protestant Reformation could have been avoided is a difficult »

question to answer because the issues are far more complex than they appear. An easy answer would be that the Roman Catholic hierarchy would have heard the cries for reform, implemented them, and all would have been well. However, the foment at the time goes much deeper than that, in my opinion, and, interestingly enough, [similar issues] still challenge the church today . . . : the relationship of clergy and laity, authority and its exercise . . . how the principle *lex orandi, lex credendi* [regarding the relationship between worship and belief] is received and applied (indeed, even whether it is accepted as a working principle), to name some other deeper issues.”

Ralph Del Colle: “Most likely, without the Protestant reformers and their challenge, Trent [the reforming council on the Catholic side] might not even have happened. But . . . many of the practical reforms could have taken place sooner. Pastoral abuses and such were always in the purview of the possibility of reform and were being called for some time before Luther. . . . Trent’s doctrinal clarifications were essential to the program of pastoral reform and were met in turn by the vast spiritual renewal that accompanied magisterial efforts. . . . So, were the reforms necessary as advocated by Luther and Calvin? Yes, some of the pastoral reforms were, but as I have suggested those were carried out on Catholic terms by Trent.

“Additionally, I don’t believe schism is in the will of God. Yet I must believe by virtue of divine providence that the new forms of Christian witness that arose out of the Reformation manifest the gospel in new ways and therefore enrich the Church.”

Dennis Tamburello: “There is no question in my mind that reform was needed in the church at the beginning of the 16th century. I do not think a schism was needed—but given the mentalities that were prevalent at this time in history, it was probably inevitable. One aspect of that mentality was that truth has to be univocal. There seemed to be little aware-

ness by any of the Reformation players that truth could be multifaceted, or that various viewpoints could complement and correct each other, rather than having to contradict each other. I often tell my students that ‘tolerance was not a hallmark of the Reformation’ (including the Catholic Reformation!). This, to me, is one of the great tragedies of the Reformation era, but that’s the way it was.

“I believe that many of the reforms advocated by Luther and Calvin were needed. They were reacting to some definite corruptions that had crept into church teaching and practice. At the same time, this sometimes led to overreaction, which, in my view, manifested itself in a shift from a both/and to more of an either/or mentality. Thus we ended up with fights over Scripture versus tradition and faith versus works. I think the Protestant Reformation sometimes ended up driving too much of a wedge between things that belonged together.

“For example, I don’t think that the New Testament really distinguishes faith and works to the extent that Luther was claiming. (Frankly, I think Krister Stendahl was right that Luther was reading Paul through the lens of Augustine and taking ‘works’ to mean ‘personal good works’ rather than ‘the works of the Mosaic Law.’) I hasten to add that I think Calvin had a more balanced view of this issue, in his teaching on the twofold grace of Christ—justification and sanctification as distinct yet inseparable.”

2. What good effects has the Protestant Reformation (or the Reformed tradition) had? What bad effects? Has the good outweighed the bad?

Richard J. Mouw: “The Reformers introduced solid, biblically-based preaching into a situation where that was seriously lacking. And the lack continued for a long

time in Catholicism. The bad effects, though, were many. Quite often the Reformers’ claims about ‘sound theology’ masked motives—political, self-promotion, and the like—that were a travesty on the gospel. Worst of all, the Reformation unleashed a lot of violence—including the terrible things that we Calvinists did to Anabaptists, such as drowning them as a way of mocking their insistence on baptism by immersion.”

Joyce Ann Zimmerman: “From my point of view, the good effects are that it has heightened [Catholic] sensitivity to the role of the Holy Spirit, our attention to and appreciation of sacred Scripture, and our understanding of worship as being celebrated by the whole church, not just the clergy for the laity.

“As for bad effects, the multiple splintering of Protestantism since the 16th century has brought on a denominationalism that is hard to address when seeking unity. With some of the denominations, there seems to be no central authority whatsoever, so local congregations shape their own theology and liturgy. No fixed [liturgical] texts or no authority attached to ‘recommended’ texts tends to bring into doubt many basic liturgical principles, especially as they might be gleaned from the patristic period. Across the board I don’t see any sense of celebrating the ‘one’ liturgy that makes present the mystery of Christ.

“I think the ‘goods’ are more weighty in some respects than the splintering, because they are the principles that need to inform theology and will eventually overcome differences (as we have seen happening in many ecumenical discussions).”

Ralph Del Colle: “Overall, the bad has outweighed the good simply in terms of the continued fracturing of the Church, simply within Protestantism itself. And it has not stopped! However, the development of Christian and ecclesial life on the Protestant (and Reformed) side has led to many laudable forms of Christian witness. Clearly, preaching and the pursuit of Christian vocation in the secular realm

would be high on my list. What I do see providentially in the Reformation is the promotion of the gospel, the evangel. At its best the clear articulation in proclamation and teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ delivers the power of God unto salvation. I also associate this with the best of the pietistic traditions in Protestantism wherein doctrine and life are held together in existential depth and transformation (despite some pietist protests against sterile scholastic orthodoxies)."

Dennis Tamburello: "I think the Reformed tradition has had many good effects. . . . I would agree with my colleagues who point to an increased attention to the importance and centrality of sacred Scripture as a good effect of the Reformation. While I don't think that the Catholic Church had lost this to the extent that the Reformers claimed, a lot of church teaching and practice had become more rooted in canon law than in Scripture.

"There certainly were some bad effects. As Richard pointed out in his response, the persecution and violence that were perpetrated by both Catholics and Protestants were shameful—especially for a religion that spoke so much about forgiveness and loving one's enemies. In some ways, the churches themselves were to blame for the (not-very-enlightening) Enlightenment's rejection of traditional religion as provincial and intolerant and thus contrary to reason.

"One bad effect of the Reformation was to open the door to a more individualistic or even subjective reading of the Scripture. I do not believe Luther or Calvin ever intended that the Scripture be read in this isolationist way . . . , but it was an inevitable result of removing an official 'referee' from the hermeneutical process. . . .

"Has the good outweighed the bad? I don't know. It is not a good thing that the church was and is so fragmented. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit has moved in so many ways in our respective communities. If only we could find the right formula to have 'unity in diversity.'"

3. Are the main differences between Reformed Christians and Roman Catholics the same today as they were in the 16th century? Which differences or disagreements have decreased since the 16th century? What are the most important differences remaining today?

Richard J. Mouw: "Things are very different today. Our shared differences with those today who oppose the gospel as such are much more important than our own differing ways of emphasizing this or that element of the gospel. Many of us are also seeing that we sin when we ignore the great liturgical and spiritual-practices traditions of Catholicism. And only the most fanatical and mean-spirited Protestants today will deny that Vatican II was one of the great spiritual and theological renewal events in the history of the universal church."

Joyce Ann Zimmerman: "I think the differences are different because we've had a half-millennium to grow and change. . . . In the mainline (more liturgical) Protestant churches, the order of service is very similar to [the] Roman Catholic; both have studied more thoroughly the patristic sources and regained much that was lost over the centuries. Some of the theological issues (e.g., sacrifice, faith and works, use of Scripture) have already brought an amazing amount of ecumenical convergence.

"I suspect the two main remaining differences are questions of authority, hierarchy, and the papacy, on the one hand, and the understanding of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, on the other. Both of these issues are 'identity' ones, so they are not easily resolved."

Ralph Del Colle: "There are still outstanding differences, especially in the area of ecclesiology. . . . Liturgical renewal (as Joyce mentioned) is extremely important. Ecumenical dialogues have demonstrated how far we can go (or not! Some Reformed folk will not sign the Joint Declaration [on Justification]). I think both Catholics and Reformed are quite willing to recognize that we share a common faith and baptism. Yet we need to still work at the particulars of that faith and press for what is not church-dividing in our diversity. This latter requires more work and definition."

"THE ISSUES ARE FAR MORE COMPLEX THAN THEY APPEAR."

Dennis Tamburello: "I think some of the differences are the same; for example, there is much to be done in the areas of ecclesiology and church authority, as some others have pointed out. At the same time, I think we have come to see that we have much more in common in these areas than we had thought.

"Generally, disagreements about the issue of justification have decreased considerably since the 16th century. Now that we are really listening to each other and trying to understand—rather than hurling anathemas—we realize that there is much agreement on the basics here. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, while not accepted by all, is a good example of the convergence that has taken place on this doctrine on an official level.

"For a long time, I have thought that one of the most important—and not sufficiently talked about—differences between Reformed and Catholic Christianity, both in the 16th century and today, is in the area of anthropology. How much damage did sin do to human nature? I see Catholicism as having a more optimistic anthropology—human nature was damaged but not totally destroyed by sin. Protestantism, as I understand it, holds that human nature was virtually devastated by sin. »

(Calvin, of course, says that the *sensus divinitatis* [awareness of God] and *conscientia* [conscience] were the sole things not wiped out by sin.) This may explain, in part, why Catholicism has not separated justification and sanctification to the extent that Protestants have.

“THE REFORMATION SOMETIMES ENDED UP DRIVING TOO MUCH OF A WEDGE BETWEEN THINGS THAT BELONGED TOGETHER.”

“Both Catholicism and Protestantism take sin very seriously, and I’m not sure how much practical significance this anthropological difference has for Catholics and Protestants today. But I’d like to see more discussion in this area, so that together we can more adequately address one of our culture’s biggest problems: its denial of sin. I have often found it both amusing and frightening that many American Christians can readily identify evil in the world, but don’t see any in themselves!”

4. Will we ever be able to reconcile the differences between us? If so, how might that be accomplished? What would a reconciled Western church look like?

Richard J. Mouw: “I think we have seen signs of hope in this regard at many moments in our own dialogue. This happens especially when we are willing to take an honest look at our own preconceptions in the spirit of Psalm 139’s ‘Search me and know me’ prayer. The important thing is to begin to want to reconcile, so much so that we are willing to take on the hard work of getting at issues that seem impossible to tackle successfully. And an absolute requirement for moving forward is to accept the fact

that a ‘reconciled Western church’ will not look like anything we can now describe. . . . There are some things about which we must say—in order to move forward effectively—‘It doth not yet appear what we shall be.’”

Joyce Ann Zimmerman: “I don’t think it will be possible to reconcile all the differences between the Roman Catholic Church and all branches of Protestantism. However, I do think down the line there will be reconciliation between the Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant churches. Whether that brings the kind of unity we think we had in the early church period is another issue. . . . In the early church there were schisms, so this is nothing new. In the early church liturgical practices were very diverse and very localized (with an amazing amount of commonality in the essentials).

“I think reconciliation is already happening, especially witnessed to by the ecumenical movement. . . . Now in most towns or cities there are regularly scheduled ecumenical prayer opportunities, pulpit exchanges, clergy of more than one denomination participating at weddings and funerals, and so on. These are all good signs of mutual respect and how much we really do have in common.

“A reconciled Western church might look something like the Eastern and Western churches: different laws, liturgies, disciplines, ways of exercising authority. But nonetheless one church with common essentials.”

Ralph Del Colle: “I envision a ‘full communion’ model as is already operative among various Protestant communions (for example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America entering into such agreements with Episcopalians, then with Reformed, Moravians, and—it looks like—United Methodists). But this would be altered slightly to reflect how our Eastern Catholic Churches are in full communion with the Holy See. So, yes, I still see the Petrine office as the site of unity. How Reformed churches might enter into full

communion I am not sure. The issues of ecclesiality still loom large, and not just for Catholics.”

Dennis Tamburello: “I frankly was more optimistic earlier than I am today that we’ll be able to reconcile our differences on an institutional level. I am . . . fearful that my own church is retrenching on ecumenical and interfaith issues. Reconciliation would definitely involve coming to agreement on ecclesiological issues, which I think right now are generally the bigger obstacles than the theological ones.

“It is hard to know what a reconciled Western church would look like. I think people’s experience of the church would probably be at the same time more intimate and more liturgical, drawing from the strengths of both Protestant and Catholic traditions. For some Protestants, it would be more organized than what they are used to (in that organization will go beyond the individual congregation). For some Catholics, there might be more of a sense of community than they are used to. But I’m just fantasizing here!” ■



Ronald J. Feenstra teaches systematic and philosophical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. He is a member of the CRC delegation to the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue.

Wooden Pews to Altar Calls and Back Again

IT BEGAN ON A LONG WOODEN PEW.

I grew up on *The Banner*, Calvinettes (now GEMS), rolls of King peppermints, and the steadfast traditions of my Christian Reformed church in suburban British Columbia.

I used to believe that at some point all Christian Reformed kids had to spread their wings, fly the CRC coop, and explore the wider world of Christianity. We'd travel like vagabonds to charismatic revivals and Pentecostal worship services—finally, *finally*, experiencing the omnipotent God we'd learned so much about.

The moment my last high school bell rang, I hopped a plane to New Zealand. Eventually I settled in a prominent Baptist congregation in the heart of Queenstown, where my brother and I lived.

My memories of the church are sparse. I remember my brother, in a testosterone-induced flurry, scaling the church's roof with his bare hands. I remember the calico church cat who'd comb through the pews looking for bored churchgoers' attention. But the memory that stands out clearest is the particularly bright Sunday morning the minister read aloud the following passage:

Now listen, you say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. . . . Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that" (James 4:13-15).

Those words helped me, at the age of 18, first understand God's bigger story. I could make my own plans, but ultimately God was guiding my path.

Upon returning from New Zealand, I endeavored to reinvigorate my Christian Reformed experience. I made my profession of faith, began leading the senior high youths at Student Dynamics, and helped raise funds for Mexico missions efforts. Each proved a wonderful, life-giving experience, but I still

felt I was missing something—something of the experience of God.

Two years later I began attending a non-Christian Reformed church—an evangelical community some close school friends had helped plant in a nearby city. The church had a feeling of newness and mission that captivated me. After much prayer and with the blessing of my Christian Reformed pastor, I began participating in this community and didn't look back.

Until now, more than five years later.

Perhaps it was the theological and doctrinal questions I began to wrestle with as I entered adulthood. Perhaps it was because I discovered that my new church, like my old one, had problems too. But as I have come into my mid-20s, the experience of the CRC tradition has begun to soothe my weary evangelical soul.

Reading Albert Wolters' *Creation Regained*—a wonderful exploration of beauty, faith, and creation given to me by a friend working with the Reformed think-tank *Cardus*—I began to find language to understand the teaching of my youth. The encompassing nature of God's great narrative resonated with me; and the call to sanctify the world, not repress it, set fire to foundations long laid in my Reformed upbringing.

My return to the Reformed tradition is still in process, but what I've learned so far is that the Christian Reformed Church has much more to offer than I'd first realized. With ministries like the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Aboriginal Ministries, and the Office of Social Justice—not to mention pews filled with intellectuals, artists, and environmentalists—the CRC is a vibrant and dynamic community of faith. ■

Christina Crook (nee Groot) is a Vancouver-based writer and editor. She grew up attending the Christian Reformed churches of New Westminster and Burnaby, British Columbia.

NEXT



The experience of the CRC tradition has begun to soothe my weary evangelical soul.



30 Years of Fighting Hunger

by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

Each year in early October, deacons and church secretaries in Christian Reformed congregations across North America go into their storage closets and church basements to pull out boxes of orange plastic fish.

By mid-October, the fish-shaped banks become a source of energy and excitement as Sunday school children and their parents fill them with coins and bring them to church for World Hunger Sunday, designated by synod as the first Sunday in November.

It's a tradition that Christian Reformed churches have observed for years—a tradition that makes a difference in people's lives around the world.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's annual World Hunger Cam-

paign celebrates its 30th birthday this year. In 1978, synod (the broadest decision-making body of the CRC) stated that "the alleviation of hunger at home and abroad is an integral part of our Christian responsibility."

To assist with this mandate, the church set aside a special Sunday once a year to focus on world hunger and asked CRWRC to provide educational and support materials for this day of prayer and fasting.

The first World Hunger Sunday was held in 1979. While the themes and promotional elements of the campaign have changed over time, the overall mission of CRWRC's World Hunger Campaign remains the same: to help members of the CRC remember the needs of people around the world and become part of the solution to end hunger and poverty.

One Church, One Day, One Country

In its early years, the World Hunger Campaign focused on a single country: Sierra Leone. The denomination chose this West African nation and sent CRWRC and Christian Reformed World Missions staff there.

The first four years of CRWRC's World Hunger Campaign focused on the work of the church in Sierra Leone and encouraged congregations to pray, fast, and give as they considered the needs of their neighbors.

By 1983, however, the outreach of the CRC and CRWRC had grown, and the content of the annual World Hunger Campaign was expanded to include facts and stories from around the world. CRWRC was also receiving requests from churches to provide more education,

activities, speakers, and presentations than could fit into one Sunday service.

As a result World Hunger Sunday expanded into a multi-week World Hunger Campaign usually starting the week after Canadian Thanksgiving in October and extending to the first Sunday in November.

A Fish Is Born

Perhaps the most memorable part of CRWRC's annual World Hunger Campaign is the bright orange fish bank. These "Peter Fish" were designed as part of the 1995 World Hunger Campaign to provide children and families with something enjoyable and visual to get them excited about the campaign.

The name "Peter Fish" refers to the story in Matthew 17 where Peter catches a fish that has a coin in its mouth. It also refers to a fish in the Sea of Galilee that carries its young in its mouth to protect them. When the young go out on their own, the mother fish fills the gap in her mouth with a coin, a bottlecap, or some other round object she finds. The locals call the fish "St. Peter's Fish." When they catch one, they sometimes find a coin in its mouth.

The 1995 campaign included education around the proverb "If you give someone a fish, they eat for a day. If you teach them to fish, they'll eat for a lifetime." The campaign explored CRWRC's long-term and sustainable approach to helping communities in poverty.

Since 1995, Peter Fish banks have continued to be an integral part of the annual campaign. So much so, in fact, that when Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., distributed the banks around campus in support of the campaign, students remembered them from their childhoods and eagerly took them back to their dorms.

Today, every CRWRC World Hunger Campaign includes daily giving suggestions to raise awareness of the needs of people around the world and give sup-

🏠🏠 The alleviation of hunger at home and abroad is an integral part of our Christian responsibility.



porters an opportunity to put money into their Peter Fish banks.

What Good Does It Do?

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the percentage of hungry people in the developing world has dropped dramatically over the past 30 years. In 1970, approximately 37 percent of people in the developing world were hungry. In 2007, that number had decreased to 17 percent, due

in part to efforts such as the one launched by the CRC through CRWRC.

Last year, more than 500 churches, schools, and businesses participated in CRWRC's World Hunger Campaign and raised about \$1.1 million for CRWRC's work around the world. As a result, CRWRC was able to work in 30 countries to help individuals, families, and entire communities improve their lives, income, and food production in lasting ways.

There is still much to do. The Food Agricultural Organization estimates that there are 963 million hungry people in the world today. Join CRWRC in responding by participating in this year's World Hunger Campaign or attending a World Hunger Sunday service on Nov. 1. For more information, visit www.crwrc.org. ■



Kristen deRoo VanderBerg is communications and marketing coordinator for CRWRC.

CRWRC at a Glance

- CRWRC was incorporated in 1962.
- Today CRWRC works in 30 countries around the world, plus areas that have recently suffered from disaster or conflict.
- Provides training and consultation to more than 105 local churches and community organizations to help them improve their communities in lasting ways
- Provides immediate and long-term aid to communities in North America and around the world following disasters
- Last year, more than 888,000 people improved their lives thanks to CRWRC programs.

CRWRC has offered materials for World Hunger Sunday to the Christian Reformed Church since 1979. This year's campaign, ONE TABLE, reminds us of our global family in the body of Christ. As we strive for unity with God's people everywhere, we are reminded of the disparity between us. While some sit down at tables of plenty, others are left hungry. The campaign offers suggestions for how to go about changing this. For more information, or to order materials, see www.crwrc.org.

- In addition to the World Hunger Campaign, CRWRC works with the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action to offer suggestions on things we can do to change our lifestyles and advocate with our governments to benefit those in need. For more information, see www.crcjustice.org.

Forging Global Partnerships

“There are two types of people in the world: those with hope and those without,” says B.J. Wolstenholme of Calgary, Alberta.

“[There are] men sitting on porches because there is nothing to do, no job prospects, no reasonable expectations that anything will change, because nothing has changed in the past. These people hedge their bets by not reaching out for new ideas, for new relationships, for new hopes that have yet to be realized. They’re content with the status quo.

“Then there are those who are willing to try something new for the chance of a good reward. They try new techniques;

they learn new things; they share. They are doing something to improve their lot.”

The people of Kamanzi, Malawi, are an example of the latter. And the people of New Hope Church in Calgary are hoping to learn from them. Through the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), the two groups have formed a partnership to support each other, learn from each other, and grow as communities in Christ.

The relationship began last year. New Hope approached CRWRC with an interest in going beyond church offerings and support for CRWRC’s World Hunger Campaign to develop a relationship with a community in need.

CRWRC staff identified the community of Kamanzi, just west of Lilongwe, Malawi, as a good candidate. There was a level of need that New Hope Church

could respond to, but Kamanzi was also already taking steps to improve itself and would be a good partner.

Through CRWRC’s local partner, Nkhoma Relief & Development, the community already had five women’s groups that were meeting regularly, learning to read, and supporting each other with small loans. The people of Kamanzi were also working to prevent malaria in their community.

In May 2009, four people from New Hope Church traveled to Malawi to visit Kamanzi and meet with community members to decide on how their partnership should move forward.

“Our goals in forming relationships with a church or community overseas are to deepen connections between Christians, to allow for learning from each other about what life is like in a different country or culture, and then to become involved in the other’s efforts to make each community closer to the vision that God has for them,” said CRWRC staff member Crystle Numan.

At the end of the two-week trip, a partnership agreement had been written up that included plans for New Hope Church to assist Kamanzi in building latrines, providing food for orphans at the community nursery school, providing loans of seed to community members, and running a revolving goat program to provide goats to needy families. The agreement also included plans for letters, stories, and prayers to be shared back and forth between the two groups in order to build relationships and learn from each other.

CRWRC is working with Christian Reformed World Missions, Back to God Ministries International, and Partners Worldwide to offer more of these global partnerships to congregations in the United States and Canada. For more information, visit the interagency website on global partnerships: www.crcna.org/igps.

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

Glorifying God Through Goats

Because of goats, Zakka Chomock sees John 3:16 in a new light.

“Because God so loved, he gave,” said Chomock, regional team leader for CRWRC’s ministry in southern Africa. “We love the poor, so we also give. And the transforming power of what you give is amazing.”

Chomock saw the transformational impact that goats can have on the lives of those who receive them as he participated in an evaluation of CRWRC’s work, including the goat project, with the Reformed Church of Mozambique.

In Mozambique the goat project is funded through donations from people in North America. Goats are given to families in need; when offspring from those goats are born, the baby goats are given to another family in the community.

“Those who received a goat have shared that the goats are producing milk for orphans and vulnerable children, providing manure to grow more and better crops, and meeting other needs within the family,” reported Chomock.

But the impact of the goats goes much further. Because the goat program is administered through the local Reformed Church of Mozambique, it is also a testimony about Christ’s love for those in the community. Just ask Kenelessi Phiri.

After Phiri’s wife was chosen to receive a goat, he was so touched by the gift that—even though the community knew he didn’t attend church—he decided to start going. Today he is an elder with the Reformed Church of Mozambique.

“If that is what Christianity is all about, I wanted to go to church,” he said.

In total, the Mozambique project has provided goats to 1,236 families over the past seven years. Because these families then gave goats to others in need, the impact and Christian witness is even greater.

“It’s amazing how God uses the ordinary to express the extraordinary,” Chomock says.

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

Saving Lives in Bangladesh

It is estimated that 25,000 children worldwide die every day from hunger or other preventable causes. Thanks to CRWRC and a \$1 million grant from the United States government, the number of child deaths in parts of Bangladesh has decreased dramatically over the past five years.

In 2004, CRWRC was awarded \$1,098,152 by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to carry out a child survival program in two rural districts of Bangladesh and four slums in the capital city of Dhaka.

Working through its existing community partners, CRWRC helped people organize themselves into community-based organizations (CBO), receive training, and address numerous factors that were contributing to childhood disease and death.

“During the five years, we saw great health outcomes,” reports CRWRC staff member Kohima Daring. “More women having safe deliveries with skilled attendants, more mothers and children vaccinated, increased prenatal medical care, improved child nutrition, and more babies being exclusively breast-fed.”

“In many of the target areas, health facilities are several kilometers away and are poorly staffed,” notes CRWRC staff member Nancy TenBroek. “By training community health volunteers and community birth attendants, we saw health statistics for mothers and children improve dramatically.”

Another part of the child survival program involved creating an emergency health fund. One of the big problems in poor communities is lack of funds for medical treatment. If people can't afford to pay for transportation to a clinic or hospital, or if they don't have funds to purchase medicine, they often die from easily treatable diseases.



Through a \$1.1 million grant from the U.S. government, CRWRC is helping community members improve the health of mothers and children in Bangladesh.

The CRWRC program helped CBOs start an “emergency health fund” that could be accessed as interest-free loans for medical care and transportation. Members of the community each contributed a small amount to the fund each week. Teachers, professionals, and other middle-class members of the community also contributed to the fund. The fund is now accessible to anyone in the community who has a need. The CBOs work out a repayment plan that fits the circumstances of the family that has the health emergency.

“We've heard numerous stories of how this fund has been used,” says TenBroek. “For example, a young mother with a complicated delivery needed to get to the hospital. The birth attendant arranged for a loan from the fund and traveled on a rickshaw with the mother 12 kilometers to the nearest health facility. Mother and child are both doing well. It is exciting to hear these stories and see the community working together for better health care.”

In June 2009 a team of 15 people, led by International Health Systems consultant Dr. Frank Baer, evaluated the child survival program. The team was impressed by what they saw.

“Many people interviewed felt that [the CRWRC child survival program] has significantly reduced child and maternal deaths,” said Dr. Baer. “It is estimated that there has been a 34 percent reduction of under-5 mortality in the project area.” A 34 percent reduction in child mortality is the equivalent of saving the lives of 399 children in the target area over the five-year period.

Based on the success of this initial program, CRWRC has applied for another five-year child survival project in Bangladesh and has been recommended for another USAID award. The new project is scheduled to start in October 2009, pending final approval.

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

Planting for the Future

A number of years ago, I was invited to read some stories to a class of fourth-graders. I accepted with trepidation. I could not imagine holding the attention of 25 busy 9- and 10-year-olds. But to my delight, they listened with attentiveness and appreciation.

I love a well-told story, and I know I'm not alone. Perhaps that's why Jesus used stories to describe his kingdom. Stories not only stir our imaginations; they also have a wonderful way of shaping and motivating us.

My own life has been shaped by stories—not only stories from the Bible, but stories of men and women of character, compassion, and courage. As a child these stories piqued my imagination and shaped the way I thought about life.

One such story is the legend of Johnny Appleseed. Perhaps you remember it. John Chapman was born in 1774, just as the American Revolution was beginning. In spite of significant hardships, he grew into a man of integrity, honesty, and generosity. He lived a simple life, traveling throughout North America planting apple seeds. His efforts became legendary: the landscape was altered through the efforts of one man and his vision for the future.

This story taught me the value of long-term investments, and it taught me about investing for the benefit of others.

Recently my wife, Linda, and I decided we needed to think about the future. What would happen if one or both of us were gone? How would our estate be handled? Who would take responsibility for our health and our affairs?

As we sat with a representative from the Barnabas Foundation, we counted our blessings. We were amazed by what we discovered. We realized how abundantly God has blessed us. We also became aware that with blessings come responsibilities. I remembered the words of Jesus, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where

thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). We also considered Jesus' teaching on the talents: that good servants return two, five, and even ten times what their master has entrusted to them (Matt. 25:14-30).

After prayerful consideration, we decided to make an investment in the future of the Christian Reformed Church. We have both been part of the CRC all our lives. We've been shaped and molded by her customs, culture, and theology. Our children and their children have been touched by God through the church. As we look back, we see the hand of God in our lives and in the life of the CRC.

We realized that if the church is to continue in its calling to transform lives, it will need resources. It will need good, well-trained clergy. It will need men and women who are willing to give their lives for the gospel message. It will need people who are willing to invest in its future.

We chose to do that through the Christian Reformed Church Foundation; others make gifts directly to specific ministries and institutions. Regardless of how or how much one gives, such gifts are an investment in the future of the church. They are the seeds that will produce fruit in the future—treasures stored up in heaven.

I encourage you to think about planting seeds for that future. Prayerfully consider how much God has blessed you and what God is asking of you. How might the seeds you plant transform this world?

These are not easy questions. They require careful self-examination. But they are questions that God expects us to ask and wrestle with. Whether we have much or little, everything we have is a gift from God. I invite you to join me in investing in the future of God's church and kingdom. ■



“ How might the seeds you plant transform this world? ”



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

IMAGE BY SUPERSTOCK

Professor Remembered as NIV Translator

Rev. John Stek didn't promote himself. But the Calvin Theological Seminary Old Testament professor was known in some circles as the godfather of the popular New International Version of the Bible.

More than 300 million copies of the NIV have been published since it was released in 1978. The NIV is highly accessible to contemporary readers, and yet, partly because of Stek's insistence, is full of important details that adhere to the original Greek and Hebrew translations.



Dr. Douglas Moo speaks at the memorial service for Rev. John Stek.

Stek died June 6, 2009. A memorial service in his honor was held at Calvin Seminary.

"John Stek has had a greater role in the translation of this Bible than any other person," said Douglas Moo, professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and a member of the committee that oversees publication of the NIV.

Moo spoke of Stek's tenacity for detail and commitment to listening to the text. He expressed his amazement at Stek's long leadership of the project that included creation of the popular NIV Study Bible. He said that only Stek's wife, Nadine, could truly appreciate how many hours of her husband's life had been given to this effort.

Stek made a singular contribution in his translation of the Psalms and his Study Bible footnotes on the Psalms. His passion was not only to be technically accurate in translating them, but also to understand and communicate their broad theological vision.

He maintained that the gravitational center of the

Psalms as a whole is the message "God reigns." Psalm 103, which Stek interpreted as a compendium of the content of the entire psalter, was his first love and formed the liturgical framework for his memorial service.

"For the rest of my life when I read the Psalms I will hear, along with the Lord's voice, the voice of John Stek," Moo said.

Born and raised in Oska-loosa, Iowa, Stek graduated from CTS in 1952 and served a Christian Reformed congregation in Raymond, Minn., before teaching at the seminary.

—Duane Kelderman is vice president for administration at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Surprise Guests

Every June, the Back to God Ministries International Japanese staff holds an open house at its Tokyo office. This year two unexpected visitors, who listen to BTGMI's *Morning Word* program, showed up for the event.

Michiko S. tuned in to the program last November and has since become a faithful listener. She has not yet committed her life to Christ, but has taken a sincere interest in the Bible and the Christian faith. Michiko listens to *Morning Word* not only on the radio, but also receives the transmission on her cell phone. She noted that when she is unclear on the message, "I repeatedly listen to the message on my phone."

The other surprise guest was Yuri K. She found the BTGMI website when she bought a new computer and began connecting to the Internet. Yuri was a member of a local cult, but now she is



Yuri K. speaks into a tape recorder about what BTGMI means to her.

beginning to realize that she was being misled. She is seeking the true Christian faith and has begun attending a Christian church near her home. Yuri told BTGMI, "Your daily radio programs are helping me in my search for truth."

The open houses are a way for Christians and seekers in Japan to come together for fellowship and encourage-

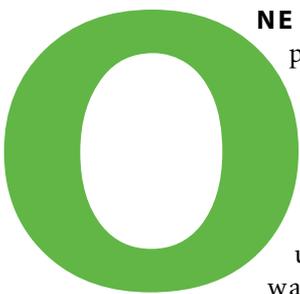
ment, which is a great need in Japan, where Christians tend to be somewhat isolated.

In addition to this year's new guests, another visitor was Miki U., who has listened to BTGMI programs for more than 12 years. Miki shared that she had been baptized last December. Because of opposition from immediate family and other relatives, it is not uncommon for Japanese people to take a long time to declare their Christian faith publicly. Miki acknowledged, "It took a long time before I was baptized, but I feel that everything that happened during that time had meaning."

Please pray for people like these women who are finding Christ through media. Pray that many more people in Japan may become true believers in Jesus Christ.

—Rev. Masao Yamashita, Japanese Leader, Back to God Ministries International

The Promise of God's Guidance



ONE OF THE SWEET promises of Scripture is God's guidance.

Psalm 23 captures the heart of this hope: a good shepherd leading us beside quiet waters, guiding us along right paths. God's guidance provides rich comfort to people prone to wander and get lost.

Yet, while a great promise, divine guidance proves a troublesome reality to live out. It's filled with important questions,

and on either side lie two dangers: we can either quench the Spirit, being quick to explain away any supernatural reality of God; or we can fall into an uncritical credulity, quick to accept far-fetched claims or sketchy signs as God's leadings.

So how do we receive this promise of God's guidance for our lives? It often involves asking the right questions. And the big question on everyone's mind is usually this one: how can I find God's will for my life?

Lurking behind this question is a big assumption—that divine guidance is hard to find and mostly inaccessible.

Ancient legends are filled with heroic figures who embark on quests to uncover secret knowledge or discover oracles of wisdom. These legends have shaped our understanding of God's guidance so that we seek a secret divine will by trying to crack a cryptic code of signs.

The view implied here is that we serve a secretive God who holds his cards close to the vest, allowing a peek only to those who are heroic or spiritual enough. Is that the God we meet in the Bible? Hardly!

But let's go further into the idea of finding God's will, since it's so dominant in our understanding of God's guidance.

A Nuanced View

The Bible presents a nuanced view of God's will. On the one hand, "God's will" is God's unchanging decree—God's eternal purpose clearly revealed in Jesus Christ (Eph. 3, Col. 1:26).

This is ground zero for our "divine guidance anxiety." If there is only one unchanging will of God, then one wrong choice outside God's will becomes our own personal "butterfly effect" of ruined life consequences. So many Christians who hold to this notion of God's will live cautiously, afraid of making a wrong

True, all were at one time part of seeking God's guidance. But have you ever noticed that after Pentecost there is not one reference in Scripture to any of those practices? Because God's Spirit has come, the presence of God lives with his people. We live in the context of revelation, not groping in the dark.

GPS vs. Guide

This revelation is not merely a tool for us to use. It's the difference between God giving us a GPS device or a guide.

You're going to groan at what comes next if you were hoping for a shiny, new way to hear God's voice. But the core practice of listening to God is to immerse yourself in Scripture.

Unless we listen to this Word from God, we'll never know God or learn to trust God. And don't read your Bible to acquire information or crack some code—read it personally, letting God speak to your life through it.

Here's my challenge for you: do this, if not daily, at least three to four times a week for about 30 minutes, and for no

[We live in the context of revelation, not groping in the dark.]

decision. But remember, God's plan or decree is firmly set—do we really think that our choices could somehow undermine or sidetrack God's decreed will?

But then, aren't we more than puppets on God's stage? Isn't there some plan for each of our lives?

The Bible does speak of another "will of God"—God's desire. This will of God is not sovereignly predetermined but rather something we can either embrace and obey or disregard and disobey. Jesus refers to it when he says, "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35). Some call this God's "moral will," which is no mystery but clearly taught and understood, like in Micah 6:8 or the Sermon on the Mount.

So the question to ask is not "How can I find the will of God?" That only paralyzes us with worry and leads to worrying ways in seeking God's will—often forms of pagan divination practices dressed up in Christian garb. Many other religions are filled with divination practices (choosing sticks; reading tea leaves, palms, or stars; rune stones) and for good reason—their gods were far off and you had to work hard to get them to show their cards.

But the gospel tells us that God has come near to us in Jesus.

I can almost hear some of you saying, "What about Gideon's fleece? Or the Urim and Thummim? And didn't the disciples cast lots?"

In seeking guidance, let's be honest—many of us simply want information from God to make our life work better. But God is relational and gives us himself, inviting us into a relationship of trust.

Jesus speaks of this dynamic of trust, referring to a shepherd and sheep—his followers know him and listen to his voice (John 10). Receiving guidance is a process of listening to the God who guides, discerning from the clamor of voices that of the Good Shepherd's.

But we're unschooled in listening for God's voice, much like the crowd in John 12, where a voice comes from heaven, but most of the crowd hears only thunder. That begs the big question in guidance: how do we discern and hear God's voice?

Discerning God's Voice

For starters, ask yourself if you're at all open or receptive to God's guidance. Are you open to the reality of a God who addresses you? Do you honestly believe in a loving God who is present and desires to guide your life? If not, you're not likely to receive guidance.

Once you work through your ideas of God, move to your own heart. What is it your heart desires? Ask yourself, "What do I want from God?" Are you open to the unexpected, to the reality that God may lead you into something difficult? An honest heart check helps uncover whether you want actual guidance or just for God to make your life easier.

less than six months. Spend time quietly, leisurely listening to God address you through Scripture, and you'll begin to pick up the capacity to spot God's voice from among all the others.

If you're facing a decision, remember that discerning God's voice is the skill of deciding between the good and the best, not between what's in or out of God's will. There are many decisions that may be good and part of God's spacious will—say, deciding between a career as an entrepreneur or health-care giver or campus chaplain, yet your personal circumstances and the opportunities of life will help you decide which is best.

And don't do this alone. I often say, "The Holy Spirit speaks to me all the time, and mostly he sounds like my wife." It's a reminder to me and others that God's voice is heard clearest and best in community.

Finally, as much as you can, rid yourself of any anxiety about making a wrong choice that will put you outside of God's will and ruin your life. Fix in your mind the image of the Good Shepherd; recall the good news that even when sheep wander they are never fully lost because the Shepherd goes out to find them and bring them back. ■



Rev. Phil Reinders is senior pastor of First Christian Reformed Church, Calgary, Alberta.

Plants on Your Plate

Have you ever looked closely at broccoli before you ate it? Then you already know this: it's a plant! Pretend you are holding a chunk of it right now. "Look" at those thick stalks. See those little flower buds on top? Yes, indeed, broccoli's a plant.

But then, *all* our food comes from green plants in some way! Even the "food" part

of "fast food" comes from plants. Your hamburger, when it was alive as a cow, ate plants. Your soy burger skipped the cow step and came straight from soybean plants. Every part of your pizza was once part of a plant.

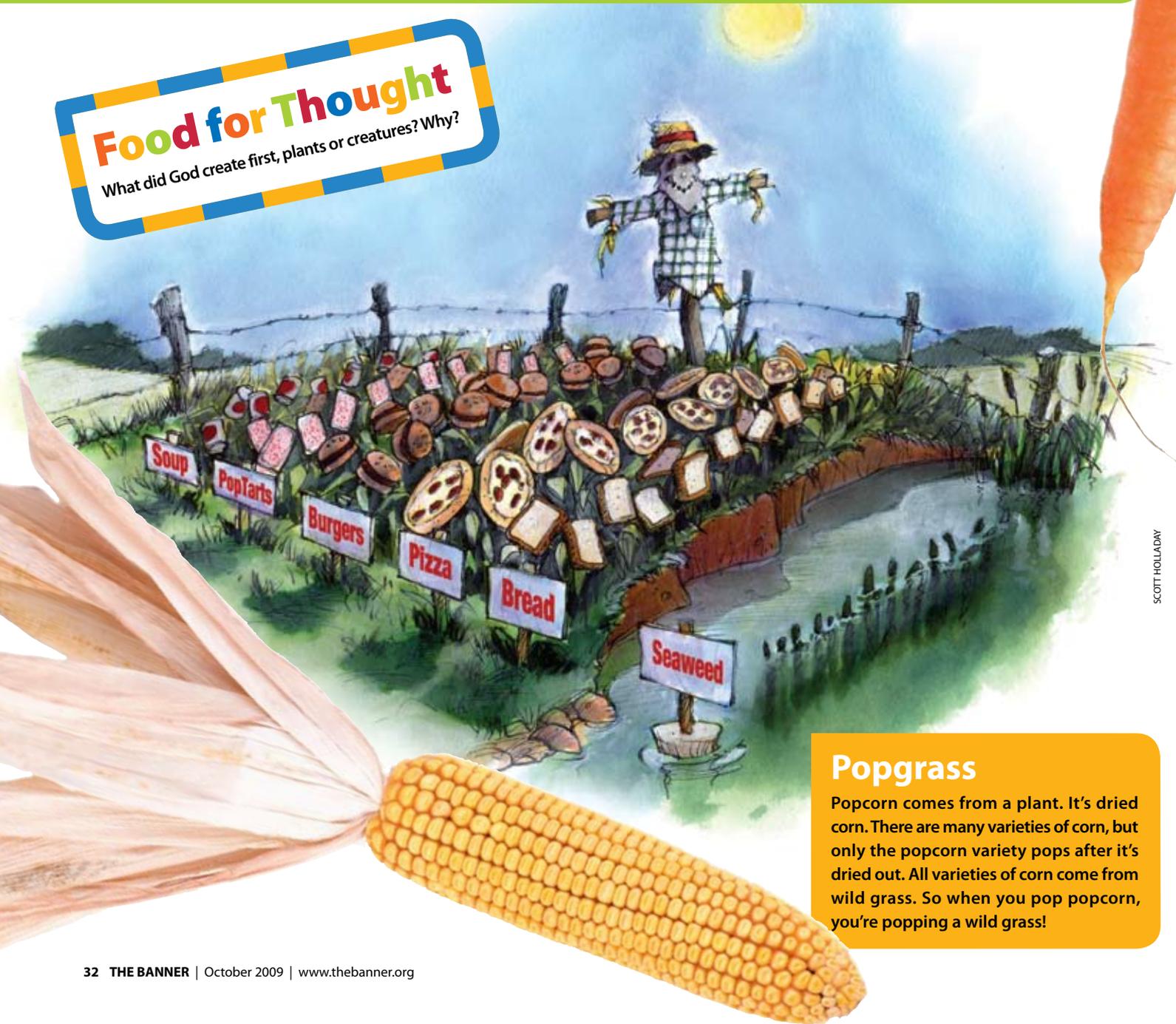
Why? Because that's the way God made Creation. All living things—that includes you—need energy. That energy comes from sunlight. Your body can't turn sunlight into energy. Only green plants can do that. Plants

make food from sunlight, and that food contains the energy you need. So to get the energy you need to live, you must eat plants. Or eat something that ate plants. Or eat something that ate something that ate plants. That's the way God made you.

But that's only part of the story. Here's another: Some plants are really cool. Some are really quirky. That's the way God made them. Read on to discover the cool and quirky plants on your plate.

Food for Thought

What did God create first, plants or creatures? Why?



SCOTT HOLLADAY

Popgrass

Popcorn comes from a plant. It's dried corn. There are many varieties of corn, but only the popcorn variety pops after it's dried out. All varieties of corn come from wild grass. So when you pop popcorn, you're popping a wild grass!

Rooting Around

Carrots are roots. Sometimes they don't look like roots because they've been pulled, washed, peeled, sliced, and maybe even cooked for you.

Like beets, carrot plants have a two-year life cycle. They make leaves during the first season. They make flowers and seed during the second season. Between the two seasons, they store their energy in big fat roots—carrots!

On a farm or in a garden, carrots usually don't survive until the second season. The farmer or gardener pulls out the whole plant to get the carrot.

But if you let a carrot plant grow through the second season, you would see it send up a shoot and a flower. That flower would look a lot like the wildflower Queen Anne's lace. That's because Queen Anne's lace is the original wild carrot. Pull up a Queen Anne's lace plant some time and smell the root. It will smell like carrots!

Nutty Peas

Peanuts are a variety of pea. That's why peanuts in their shells resemble peas in their pods.

Most peas grow above the ground. You pick peas—pod and all—off a bush. But peanuts develop underground. So to pick peanuts, you need a shovel.

Although peanuts grow underground, they're not roots. They're seeds. Confusing, isn't it?

Most plants have their roots below ground and their seeds in some kind of pod or fruit above ground. Even other peas have their seeds above ground. Yet peanut plants have both their roots and their seeds beneath the ground.

You might say that the peanut plant plants its own seeds.

Peanuts really ARE nutty peas!

Want to grow a peanut plant? You can find out how at this website: www.goodearthpeanuts.com/aboutpeanuts.htm#anchor1.

Try This!

At supper tonight, try to name one food on your plate that cannot be traced to a green plant.

Sweet!

Some plants make sugar and store it to use as energy later. Beet plants and sugar cane are good at this.

Beets were made for colder climates. They're two-year plants. They sprout and grow during the first growing season. They bloom and set seed during the second season.

Near the end of the first season, beet plants prepare for the next spring. They store sugar in their roots. The top part of the plant may freeze during the winter. But the roots will have enough energy to sprout in the spring. Those roots are called sugar beets.

Some sugar is made from sugar beets. If you have a bag of sugar in the house, check it. It may say "beet sugar." Or your bag might say "cane sugar."

Sugar cane was made for warm climates. It doesn't need to store sugar in roots. There's usually no frost to kill the top part of the plant. So sugar cane stores its energy as sugar right in the plant stalks, which we call sugar canes!



Seaweed for Supper?

Kids who eat sushi love seaweed! Others say "no way!" to eating this underwater plant.

But maybe you've come closer to eating seaweed than you think. Look at your plate. See that tuna sandwich? That shrimp? Those anchovies on your pizza? Where did those critters get their energy? From seaweed!

Well, maybe not seaweed exactly. Maybe they ate algae or other tiny or slimy green stuff. That tuna probably ate a smaller fish, which ate a shrimp, which ate something green.

Here's the point: Everything on your plate that lived in water got its energy from seaweed or other tiny or slimy green things that live in water. If you eat seafood of any kind, your energy comes from green stuff like seaweed.

Thank God for that watery food chain. Because of it, you'll never have to eat seaweed for supper if you don't want to!



Joanne De Jonge knows about all kinds of plants. She's a U.S. National Park Ranger in northern Michigan. She belongs to West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.

Payback and Paying Back



PHOTO BY ISTOCK PHOTO

“WHAT IS ‘DEBT’ by which we’re so bedeviled? Like air, it’s all around us, but we never think about it unless something goes wrong with the supply.”

This question doesn’t come from a banker or politician, but a writer: the celebrated Canadian poet and novelist Margaret Atwood. In the midst of the financial meltdown one year ago, Atwood’s profound reflections on debt were broadcast on CBC Radio as part of the Massey Lectures and published as a book, *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth* (Anansi), proving that the best artists, like prophets, can see disaster coming.

Foreclosures, bankruptcies, salary cuts, layoffs—most everyone feels in some way the “payback” brought about by our society’s reckless lending, borrowing, and investing. But Atwood isn’t interested in accountancy. She examines debt as something that shapes our lives. “Are we in

Atwood examines debt as something that shapes our lives.

debt to anyone or anything for the bare fact of our existence? If so, what do we owe, and to whom or to what? And how should we pay?”

Atwood weaves her words through history, literature, popular culture, and religion. Most appealing are her childhood memories of opening her first bank account or wondering about “debts” versus “trespasses” in the Lord’s Prayer. The first chapter on justice in ancient societies lost me, but subsequent sections on “debt and sin” and “debt as plot” represent a fascinating blend of social critique, literary analysis, and religious exploration.

Summarizing Christianity, Atwood notes how “original sin” is our “debt load of sin,” one redeemed by Jesus. Atwood, however, appears unconvinced of that redemption—in her mind, “you never know” if you are truly debt-free, truly *saved*.

She ends the book by retelling Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* with a modern Scrooge who must answer to the Ghosts of Earth Day Past, Present, and Future. Atwood warns us that the ultimate payback for today’s economic sins is not car plant closures, but worldwide environmental disaster. Her challenge: “Maybe we need to calculate the real costs of how we’ve been living.”

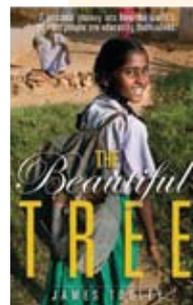
Atwood’s concluding “green” take on debt falls fairly flat, particularly after the depth and range of previous sections. Much in the book, however, will challenge or even resonate with Reformed readers, such as her Scrooge’s catechistic parting thoughts: “I don’t really own anything. . . . Not even my body. Everything I have is only borrowed. I’m not really rich at all, I’m heavily in debt. How do I begin to pay back what I owe?” And so, how can we best pay our debt of gratitude for this life, this world, and salvation? ■



Otto Selles is chair of the French department at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., and was the 2008-2009 Calvin College Wordview Lecturer. His lectures examined the boundaries of tolerance.

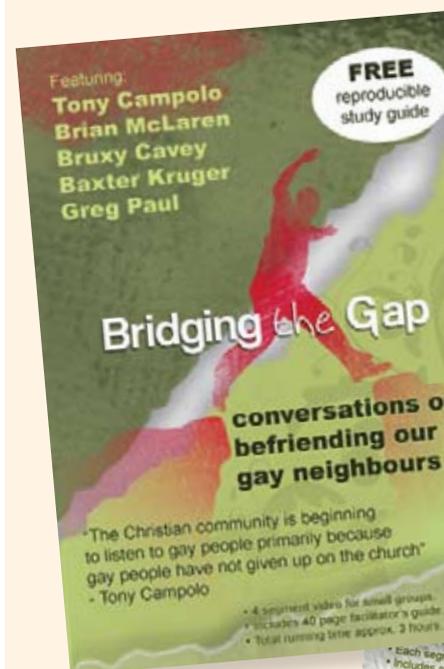
The Beautiful Tree

by James Tooley
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



Passionate, insightful, and based on sound research, James Tooley’s good news story contradicts the conventional wisdom of international aid organizations, which asserts that

the world’s poor need handouts to attain universal education. In the slums and rural areas of India, Africa, and China, Tooley discovered that “the poor have found their own viable alternative.” Out of meager livelihoods, poor parents—“keen education consumers”—willingly sacrificed much for their children’s education. (Cato Institute)





www.nfb.ca

by **National Film Board of Canada**
reviewed by **Ron Vandenburg**

An agency of the federal government, the National Film Board of Canada produces and distributes innovative, socially relevant documentary, animation, alternative drama, and digital media productions, to the tune of some 13,000 productions since its inception in the late 1930s. And now the films are available online! With more titles added each month, NFB offers both recent and classic works. By exploring themes, teachers and film buffs alike can sort through both vignettes and feature-length films to suit their needs

The Missing

by **Tim Gautreaux**
reviewed by **Kristy Quist**



Sam "Lucky" Simoneaux is the guard on duty when a young girl is kidnapped from a New Orleans department store in 1921. Searching for clues and hoping to redeem himself, Sam joins up with the same riverboat that employs the girl's parents, entertaining and subduing the rough crowds. At the same time, he contemplates the terrible crime that took his family from him when he was just an infant. Catholic novelist Gautreaux doesn't shy from the worst in humanity (including profanity), yet there is an element of hope in this absorbing meditation on justice and the consequences of violence and revenge. (Knopf)

Taste and See

by **Peder Eide**
reviewed by **Ron DeBoer**



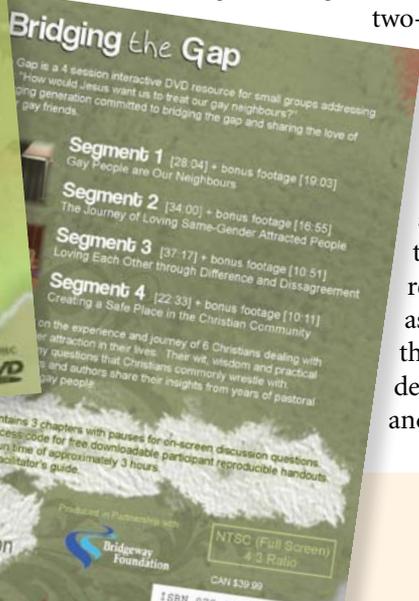
Looking for an uplifting worship CD that will have everyone in your family singing along? Look no more. Peder Eide's *Taste and See* is both playful and spiritually uplifting. You can sense the twinkle in Eide's eye in "As Is," when he lists the shortcomings of biblical characters followed by a resounding chorus of "He chooses us *as is*." The title track, "Taste and See," invites listeners to experience the Lord's goodness. Still not convinced? Eide recently led worship for 800 youths at the All-Ontario Youth Convention, and my teens have been blaring his music from their iPod docks since. (Worship Records)

Bridging the Gap: Conversations on Befriending Our Gay Neighbours

reviewed by **Rev. Bob De Moor**

This four-segment DVD presentation introduces small-group participants to ways of forming meaningful relationships with people of a homosexual orientation. The two-disc set includes a 40-page facilitator's discussion guide to

help the group leader(s) navigate the turbulent feelings, attitudes, and convictions that many may experience and express on this hot-button topic. Featuring evangelical heavy hitters like Tony Campolo and Brian McLaren, the video series does a good job of presenting the real lives and personal journeys of gay people, showing viewers how to extend them Christlike acceptance and love. While repetitive at times, this resource is well worth a closer look as a small-group study in your church. It won't resolve the theological differences but will definitely help participants develop a healthier way of relating to their homosexual sisters and brothers. (New Direction Ministries of Canada)



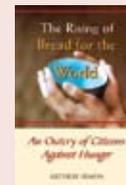
THE LOWDOWN

Best Foot Forward:



Hello Hurricane is the newest CD/DVD from ever-popular rockers Switchfoot. In stores this month. (Sparrow)

Food for Thought:



Arthur Simon's book *The Rising of Bread for the World* chronicles the story of the organization that he founded to help end hunger. (Paulist Press)

Let the Wild Rumpus Start:



Offbeat film director Spike Jonze brings Maurice Sendak's often-banned and often-beloved *Where the Wild Things Are* to theaters near you this month. (Warner)

Earplug Alert:



Beware of young girls with iPods. Christian pop princesses The Rubyz are due to release their second album, *Rubyz Tuesday*—sure to incite a sing-along! (iShine Records)

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



Bicycle Jesus

WHO IS JESUS TO YOU? I'm not nosy, just curious. For me, God is in the details, not the generalities. I like to see the colors and commitments unfurl—the ones that hide beneath the surface of the label “Christian.” I'm eager to learn new angles on my Lord and so enrich my experience of him.

Reformed Christians, I suggest, see Jesus as both gritty and playful. He glows with the glory of heaven and smells of the dust of the earth. Imagine this: his hands raised high to bright clouds and his feet clipped in whirling bicycle pedals. There is a helmet-crown on his head—a mix of gold, thorns, and wild berries. He sweats.

Heaven? Yes. But not apart from the gritty, green earth. The best Reformed books ring with a holy worldliness: *Heaven Is Not My Home: Learning to Live in God's Creation, Bringing Heaven Down to Earth: Connecting This Life to the Next, Creation Regained, Engaging God's World, In the Fields of the Lord, and Praying at Burger King*. They champion the part of the Lord's Prayer where we say “on earth as it is in heaven.”

When I describe the character of the Reformed Christian community, I often say we are a Middle Way. At least that is how I experienced my place in a secular university: somewhere between the earthy activists of the mainline camps and the heavenly-minded folks of the evangelical groups. I would find myself worshiping with the evangelicals while partnering with the mainline and multi-faith groups on matters of ecology and justice. Many of our Christian Reformed campus ministers planted on secular campuses act as a bridge in this way.

We want to model heaven on earth. This ancient Reformational theme of “finding your calling” runs deep. It means that no matter what our gifts, skills, or passions, they are part of a divine task assigned to us by God. The world is not secular territory to be shunned. Our work matters. Our world belongs to God, and we can embrace it with abandon.

Often the best place to nurture this “all of the universe” faith is in school. The Reformed Christian tradition loves the discipleship of schools. I've even heard the Christian Reformed Church called “the Protestant Jesuits” because of our pedagogical passion. There are many other agencies and institutions we prize, to be sure, but if we were to die as a denomination tomorrow, it would be the Christian grade schools, high schools, colleges, and graduate schools that would be our enduring legacy on the small page of history that would describe us.

Because education is a deep commitment, we ought to be better learners too. We still have lots to learn about diversity, the Holy Spirit, and embracing young people in church. We can learn how to make worship less of a lecture and more of a contemplative—and even charismatic—liturgy. Oh, we have lots to learn!

Why imagine Jesus on a bicycle? Because that image celebrates the divine playfulness that erupts in us from time to time. If I had to choose one picture of the CRC to hold up to those who ask, it

would be a bright, colorful photo from one of our three cross-country bicycle tours (2005, 2008, and Nicaragua in 2009). In those crazy, creation-cradled camping carnivals we demonstrated ourselves be a down-to-earth people buoyed by constant prayer and worship. Poised between sky and concrete, we rode green machines that zap consumer fat into tough Christian muscle. Gritty and playful. Sweating, aching. A holistic Jesus spirituality—for the world. ■

We see Jesus
as both
gritty and
playful.



Peter Schuurman just finished five years as binational campus ministry coordinator for Christian Reformed Home Missions. He is now working on a Ph.D. in religious studies at the University of Waterloo in Ontario.

Nothing to Fear

I'M SCARED because of the diagnosis the doctor gave me. I'm scared because I lost my job. I'm scared because I've finished school and don't know what I'll do next. I'm scared of the direction my country is headed.

Have you struggled with any of those fears? Maybe yours are different, but just as scary.

There is a certain comfort in knowing what to expect in our lives, but when our lives take unexpected turns, it's easy to get scared. Fears attack our insecurities, prevent us from doing many things, and cause us to doubt that there can be a positive outcome.

Yet Scripture promises, "Come near to God, and he will come near to you" (James 4:8). When we take our fears to God, we receive God's help, which God provides in any number of ways: by increasing our courage, giving us peace of mind, or providing us with support and encouragement from family and friends.

I think one of the biggest fears we face is that of change. I spent the first 15 years of my life walking and looking healthy; then doctors found a malignant tumor in my neck. After an 18-hour surgery and 31 strong radiation treatments, I was left extremely weak. I regained some strength, but not enough to walk again, so I needed to get used to doing everything from a wheelchair. That was a big change in obvious and not-so-obvious ways. I learned to accept my new way of life, but not without frustration now and then over the years.

I continued to live with my parents in the house where I grew up. The next big change came when my parents decided to move into a condo. I didn't know whether I wanted to go along or live on my own, but my mom wanted me to stay with them more than I wanted to leave,

God will give me what I need for whatever situation I may face.



so once again I accepted a new way of life. The condo was better in some ways, but not in all ways.

The most difficult change in my life—one we all face sooner or later—came earlier than I expected. My mom was sick all of summer 2007 and passed away at the end of that August. I am still learning to adapt.

A few months after my mom passed away, my family moved my dad into an assisted-living home. He was diagnosed with Alzheimer's a few years ago, and it was no longer safe or healthy for him to live in the condo. That change left me alone—an easier transition to make emotionally, but tougher financially.

God has been with me through all these changes. Each one could have left me crying "I'm scared!" because it was not what I wanted in my life. But I know God has given me the strength I've needed. I agree with the psalmist: "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song" (Psalm 28:7).

So what about tomorrow, next week, or next year? I know at times I will still give in to my fears—that's my imperfect human nature. I also know I can look to my past and see how God has helped me and know that whatever changes come along, I do not have to be scared. God will give me what I need for whatever situation I may face.

How can we have that faith and trust? Through an ever-growing relationship with God. The more time we spend reading the Bible and praying, the more our faith grows. And as our faith grows, we begin to trust God in more ways.

Life is always going to present us with fearful situations. We cannot avoid that. What we can control is how we face them. As 2 Timothy 1:7 tells us, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." With God by our side, we really have nothing to fear. ■



Cheryl Kroll is a member of North Street Christian Reformed Church in Zeeland, Mich.

Advertising Information

Deadlines: Nov. 2009 issue is 10/5/09. Dec. 2009 issue is 11/2/09. Visit www.thebanner.org for complete details.

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Denominational and Classical Announcements

INSTALLATION: With gratitude to God, Fuller Avenue CRC (Grand Rapids) announces the installation of Rev. Beth Guikema-Bode and Rev. Lucas Rodenhouse to a team ministry in our congregation and community.

Announcement of Candidacy

We are pleased to announce that Albert Postma 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 David Salverda 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 Joshua Van Til 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 Nathaniel Al-Attas Bradford 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

Change in Time of Service

Bethany CRC, Gallup, NM, now has two Sunday morning services, at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. 505-722-6444

Meetings of Classis

CLASSIS ALBERTA SOUTH AND SASKATCHEWAN will meet in regular session on Friday, Oct. 30, 2009 at Emmanuel CRC, Calgary. Agenda items should be sent to the Stated Clerk, Mr. Al Brander at clerkabss@gmail.com or at 1203 High View Point, High River, AB. T1V 1N9.

Retirement

After 40 years of ministry in the CRC, **Pastor Jack Gray** will deliver his farewell message at the Sully CRC on Oct. 25. A noon luncheon will follow. Join us in honoring Pastor Jack and Wanda. For details, email: jengbers@netins.net.

REV. TOMAS E. DYKMAN, after 38 years of ministry in the CRC, is retiring. Pastor Tom is currently serving at Sunrise Community Church in Austin, Tx. His farewell party and 'Roast' will be held on November 13 at the church. We would love for everyone to come for the party or just send cards. For additional information please contact Gary MacKay at g_mac_k@sbcglobal.net or call at 512-282-6011. Please help us send off Pastor Tom in style.

Congregational Announcements

Church's 100th Anniversary

ADA CRC, ADA, MI In praise of God's goodness through the generations, Ada CRC will hold a service of celebration on October 11, 2009, at 9:30 a.m., commemorating its 100th anniversary. Former members and friends are invited to attend. A reception will follow. For more information contact the church office (616-676-1698) or go to www.adacrc.org

Church's 50th Anniversary

IMMANUEL CRC, HAMILTON ON hopes to celebrate its 50th Anniversary on November 21 and 22, 2009. Former members and friends are invited to join us for events on those dates. See our web site at www.immanuelministries.ca

Announcements

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 or write her at Calvin Theological Seminary, 3233 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

Winter Visitors When in the Phoenix/Sun City Az area, please visit the West Valley Christian Fellowship Church. 10:00AM & 6:00 PM Sundays. www.westvalleychristianfellowship.org

Taking a color tour in Northern MI? Atwood CRC invites you to worship with us Sunday at 10:30 AM. Call 231-599-3290 for more info.

Birthdays

95th Birthday

REV. JOHN H. OLTHOFF, emeritus, celebrated his 95th on Aug. 23. Congratulations can be sent to him at 3500 Lower West Branch Rd., Iowa City, IA 52245

90th Birthday

ROBERT C. BUIKEMA, SR. of 8336 West 160th Place, Tinley Park, Ill. 60477, celebrates his 90th birthday on October 2. Married to Anne for 63 years, their children: Robert (Linda), Kathleen (Gary), David (Ruth) and Howard (Sharon), 14 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren all join in saying "Happy birthday Dad and Grandpa!"

80th Birthday

DR. JOHN B. HULST, 1114 1/2 Houston Pella, IA 50219, celebrated his 80th birthday and the 55th anniversary of his ordination to the ministry on September 3. With love and admiration, his children and grandchildren give thanks for his faithful example of loving and serving his Lord. (Deuteronomy 6:6-8)

JENNIE VANDER WOUDE (DE BOER) 230 S. State St. Apt. 75, Zeeland MI 49464 will celebrate her 80th birthday on October 18. Husband Russell deceased. Her children are Karen & Bob Steenwyk and Marianne & Ken Gritter. Her grandchildren are John Steenwyk, Joel (Jenifer) Gritter, and Bradley (Ariel) Gritter. She has 4 great-grandchildren. We are blessed to call you Mom!

THERESA TIMMER of 11833 James Street, Holland MI 49324 will be celebrating her 90th Birthday with an open house on Oct. 4 at Oak Crest from 3-5. Her family thanks God for her strong faith and love.



PAULA (MAST) VANDERMEER celebrated her 90th birthday on September 24 with her husband Willem of 66 years. Congratulations and love from your family: Nick & Ann Vandermeer, Ary & Martha Vandermeer, and Pim & Evelyn Boekestyn, grandchildren and great grandchildren

Great is God's faithfulness. Address: Holland Christian Homes, Hope Tower Apt 703-7900 McLaughlin Rd. Brampton, Ontario L6Y 5A7

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This conference for pastors' spouses is sponsored by the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Project of the CRCNA which is made possible by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

75th Birthday

PHYLLIS TALSA of Grandville, Michigan, will celebrate her 75th birthday on Nov. 9. Her family and friends thank God for her continuous testimony for the love of the Lord in her life. She is a wonderful blessing to all who have met her!! Cards can be sent to her at Brookcrest Nursing Home, 3400 Wilson Ave. Grandville, MI 49418.

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

KETT, John & Marciel (Vander Sluis) Newaygo, MI & Marco Island, FL. Celebrating 65 yrs of marriage Oct. 6. Children: David & Gloria (Ellens), James & Jeri (Beenen), Larry & Kathi (Walstrom), Ronald (deceased) & Laura (Hoffman), Randy & Sara Wondergem, 13 grandchildren & 9 great grandchildren. We praise God for his many blessings.

60th Anniversary

BERG, Herman and Nellie (Joose) 1937 Avenue Road, Bright's Grove, Ontario, NON 1C0 celebrated their 60th anniversary on August 26 with their family.

DEPPE Frank & Bernice (TerVeen) of 2198 N. Thrush Ct. SE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546 will celebrate their 60th anniversary on October 22. With love and thanks from your children: Dean & Julie Deppe, Tim Deppe, Ross & Mary Post, and Bob & Patti Harris, your 11 grandchildren, and your 4 great-grandchildren. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

DEVISSER, Henry & Agnes (DeRooy), of 6018 Chelsea Ln, Portage, MI 49002, celebrated their 60th Anniversary on October 14. Praising God with them are Ruth & Jim Bacon, Jim & Dianna DeVisser, Joyce & Charlie Van Laar, Kathy & Keith Hurst, Paul & Chris DeVisser, Tom & Marge DeVisser, Deb & Bob Withee, Mark & Sue DeVisser, 20 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. Great is Thy Faithfulness!

VERHOEF, Al & Janet (VerHeek), September 29, 2009; 725 Baldwin St., Apt. 3047, Jenison, MI 49428. Children: Marcia & Dave Vanderploeg, Sue & Tom VanDyk, Sherry & Dirk VanWyk, Karen VerHoef, Steve & Barb VerHoef; 15 grandchildren; 6 great-grandsons. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

55th Anniversary

DYKHOUSE, Lester & Nancy (Den Braber) celebrated 55 years of marriage on September 10 with a family dinner. Congratulations and love from your children: Tim & Kristy Dykhouse, Duane & Linda Elders, Doug & Dawn Dykhouse, Dan & Beth Dykhouse, Sandy Dykhouse and Mike Dykhouse, 13 grandchildren & 4 great grandchildren.

50th Anniversary

BILL, Louis & Martha (Hogeterp) of Jarvis, Ontario, Canada, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on Oct. 9, 2009. Celebrating with them are their children, Pam and Harry Stam, Jennifer and Bram Drost, Renée and Randy Nieuwsma, Barb and Ron Douwes, Chris and Kelly Bill, and 20 grandchildren.

DRIESENGA, Harold and Patricia (Howerzyl) of 7367 Cactus Cove SW, Byron Center, MI 49315, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on October 9, 2009. Children and grandchildren: Scott and Renee (Jessica and Alicia), Sheryl (deceased), Todd and Amy (Trevor and Claudia), Mike and Sara Conway (Noah, David, Isaiah). We give thanks to God for all His blessings. We love you and are thankful for you.

KONYNENBELT, Herman & Carol (Bos) Lethbridge, AB. Praising God with them for 50 years of marriage on Aug 18 are their children: Joan & Ed Vandenboogaard, Joy Konynenbelt, Vince & Heather Konynenbelt, James & Heidi Konynenbelt, Phil & Gwen Konynenbelt, & 13 grandchildren. Thanks for your love!

NATELBORG John & Marlene (Van Engen) of Grand Rapids, celebrated their 50th anniversary on August 28. Children: James Natelborg (deceased), (Nicole), Daniel & Kathy Natelborg, (Megan & Krista), Steven Natelborg, (Karen), 1 great-grandchild. We give thanks to God for His grace, love and faithfulness.

Church Positions Available

The **Owen Sound First CRC** is located on beautiful Georgian Bay in Southwest Ontario. We are seeking an experienced pastor who is an effective preacher and good communicator committed to the Reformed faith. You should be a nurturing care giver, a caring mentor for our youth, and be willing and able to challenge us to obedience in our daily lives. We offer a congregation with a high number of willing and gifted members that has given 60 years of service to our area, and is eager to be led once more. If you sense God calling you to be part of His plan for this community, please send us your profile c/o the Calling Committee at office@owensoundcrc.com or call 519-376-2787.

BETHEL CRC of Waupun Wisconsin is accepting resumes for a Youth Pastor position available May 2009. Please submit resumes by email, waupunbethelcra@att.net.

SOUTHSIDE CHICAGO PULLMAN CRC has 240 worshippers: 62% African American, 27% European American, 11% Caribbean/mixed; flourishing Family Night and youth programs; spirited gospel music ministry; other programs in a dynamic congregation. We seek a faithful, articulate, and socially-ethnically aware pastor, committed to Biblically Reformed perspective to minister in an enduring, intentionally multiethnic setting. To contact Search Committee, see <http://pullmanchurch.org>

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

ANN ARBOR CRC The Ann Arbor CRC (Michigan) has an exciting ministry opportunity for a full-time pastor. We are looking for a qualified person to join our pastoral team taking on primary responsibility for the needs of family and youth. He/she will also participate in worship leading and preaching with our Pastor of Worship Ministries. The job description comes with the built-in flexibility to shape the position based on the selected candidate's gifts and interests. To learn more, please visit: <http://www.aacr.org/about/pastor-position>, e-mail AACRCSearch@aacr.org, or call 734-255-1452.

COOPERSVILLE CRC of Coopersville, Michigan is seeking an ordained full time pastor to lead our congregation and have abilities to connect with our young people and young adults. Direct inquiries/profiles to: Calvin Dyke, Search Committee, 9273 Garfield St., Coopersville, MI 49404 or cjdfarm@gotmsky.com 616-837-6861

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.

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.

SCHAAP, Dr. Luke & Pauline (Klompjen) 2440 186th Street Apt. J2 Lansing, IL 60438 will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on October 2. Children and grandchildren: Paul & Lori (Benjamin, Hannah, Matthew, Jonathan) Ruth & Dave Dykstra (Mark, Sarah) Jean & Rod Korthals (Scott, Brian) Mary & Brent Yurschak (Nathaniel, Rebekah, Ella). Congratulations!

SCHREIBER, Bertus and Alice (Van Rooyen) 17 Quinpool Cres, Nepean, Ontario, K2H 6H9, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on October 2nd, 2009. Congratulations from your children and grandchildren: Tymen and Sylvia Van Stryland (Kyle & Vykki), Martha Schreiber and Shiao Chong (Alyssa, Bethany, Mathea), John, Derek & Jane (Kessie & Ben). Psalm 84:12 "O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you."

VANDERMEER Al and Ruth (VanCingel) 15887 Chapel Park West Drive, Noblesville IN 46060 will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on October 8, 2009. Congratulations and love from your Children and Grandchildren: Laurie & Bob Gordon (Robbie & Andrea), Craig VanderMeer (Cassie), Curt & Lisa VanderMeer (Anna, Katrina, & Jonathan). We thank God for the Christian home He provided us through you!

VAN HUIZEN, Henk and Willy of Surrey, B. C. celebrate their 50th anniversary October 17. We praise God for His faithfulness. With love from their 4 children and their spouses, and their 12 grandchildren.

Obituaries

BALL, Cornelius (Casey); age 91; went to be with his Lord on July 31, 2009. He is survived by his wife Lorraine (Timmer); 2 children, Barbara (Mark) Gelderloos and Richard (Diane) Ball; 5 grandchildren, Dan (Vicki) Gelderloos, Laura (Brian) Polese, Lisa (Travis) Schmid, Megan Ball, Janell Ball; 3 great grandchildren, Ryan, Will and Luke Gelderloos; sister Celia Dykstra; sister-in-law Ruth Ball.

BOOMSMA, "Archie" Arnold, 79, went to be with his Lord, May 28, 2009. 111 St. Andrews Dr., Schererville, IN 46375. Husband of Marilyn (nee VanderZee). Father of Brian (Mariellen) and Bruce (Mary) Boomsma. 5 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren.

DAVIES, Arthur, 91, called to a new life in Jesus, died on August 5, 2009 in Holland MI. He's survived by his wife Olive, children Mark & Judy (Lynden WA), Jim & Jane Lise (Caledonia ON), Calvin & Jan (London ON), Paul & Nancy (Shelbyville MI), 14 grandchildren, & 20 great-grandchildren. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Institute for Christian Studies (Toronto) & the Association for Public Justice (Washington DC).

DEN DULK, Casey (317 Robins Lane Sparta, MI 49345) age 99, went to be with his Lord on August 10, 2009; He is survived by his loving wife, Carrie of 76 years, 3 children, 9 grandchildren, 13 great grand children and 7 great great grandchildren.

DOEZEMA, Gerry; age 75; June 17, 2009; 3662 Chamberlain SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508; She was preceded in death by her parents, Gerrit and Johanna DeRuiter and sister, Eleanor Rademaker (DeRuiter). She is survived by her husband, Jim; her children: Patti (Mark) Heyboer,

Jim (Joan) Doezema and Bob (Theresa) Doezema; 10 grandchildren; and brothers: John and Ray (Florence) DeRuiter.

KONYNENBELT, Marvin, US Army Chaplain (Ret), age 69, went to be with his Lord on 13 August, 2009 in Indianapolis, IN. Surviving are spouse Ina, Mark and Henrietta Konynenbelt, Lisa and Curtis VanderMeer, Andrea and Joel Greenwood, six grandchildren, and two brothers and two sisters.

LANTING, Nellie, age 92; passed away on August 2nd. Children: Arlyn and Marcia Lanting, Glennis and Jack Ludema; 5 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; sister: Leona and Alvin Huysler; brothers and sisters in law: Lena Plooster, Julia Plooster, Linda Hunter, Pauline Lanting, Harry and Eunice Lanting, Shirly Vredevoogd, and James and Clarine Lanting; many nieces and nephews

NIEWENHUIS, Ethel (Lucas), 81; died May 25, 2009, at home in Zeeland, MI. Lovingly remembered by her husband of 55 years, Calvin, and their 4 children—Joel, Ellen, Kären, Jim—and 18 grandchildren

PEGMAN, Burton; age 74, Aug 18, 2009. He is survived by his wife of 51 yrs, Evelyn F. Pegman (London); daughters, Mary VanDrunen, Sue (Pete) Beintema, and Marge Mitz, and seven grandchildren.

POEL, James; 66; August 16, 2009; 1259 Tanager Ln, Kalamazoo, MI 49009: Husband of Lois (DeKruyter); children: Joel Poel, Kara Poel, Marc (Jamie) Poel, 2 grandchildren. Brother: Robert (MaryJo). Sisters: Joyce (Glen) Walstra; Marilyn (Paul) Braman.

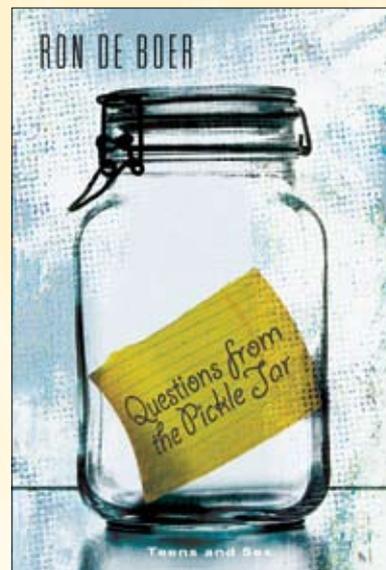
ROEDE, Gertrude (De Groot), 90, Aug. 19, 2009. Preceded in death by her husband Bert, son-in-law James Clark, 7 brothers and 5 sisters. She will be missed by children Ernest (Norma), Gay Clark, Iris (Robert) Dykstra, sister Agnes De Groot, 12 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren.

VANDERMEULEN, John, 91, of Falmouth, MI. Formerly of Oak Lawn, IL. Born July 23, 1917, entered glory June 16, 2009. Beloved husband of the late Julia (nee Aardema). Dear Father of Gordon (Lin), Don (Shirley), and Ed (Kathy). Dearly loved grandfather of 8 and their spouses, great grandfather of 13. Also survived by sister Winnie Euwema. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Ps. 116:15.

VAN DYK, Elaine; Dec. 26, 1931 - August 24, 2009; 2036 Mallard Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; Preceding her in death were her parents, Bastian and Lena VanderWilt of New Sharon, Iowa. Elaine is survived by her husband of 56 years, Rev. Wilbert M. (Bill) Van Dyk; children: Bill (MaryEllen), Leanne, Susanne Jordan (Bob), Dan (Rhonda) and Marlene Greenberg (Ward); grandchildren: Steve (Kristi), Rebecca (Kyle), Sarah, David, Maria, Rachel, Jessica, Kaatje, Jackie, Jillian, and Naomi; and great granddaughter: Kayleigh Elaine Van Dyk.

VAN DYKE, Mr. John G., aged 82; August 17, 2009; 2496 Autumn Ash Dr. SE, Kentwood, MI 49512. He was preceded in death by his brother, Irvin G. Van Dyke. He is survived by his wife of 59 years: Vivian (Jeltema); children: John G. and his children, Catherine "Katie", and John G. IV; Mary and Stephen Cohle and her children, Kristen, Andrea and Mike Vander Laan; Barb and Tim Boomstra and their sons, Russ and Scott; Jane and Tim Otley, and their daughters, Amy and Rachel; great grandchildren: Jordan and Olivia Boomstra; brother: Clarence and Mary Van Dyke; sister-in-law: Marge Van Dyke.

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VAN HALSEMA, David Emo, aged 59, left us for heaven on 6-14-09 from Grand Rapids MI after a sudden heart attack. Missing him intensely are his wife, Darlene, children, Thea-John Brophy and Scott-Heather Nickelson, 3 young grandsons, 4 siblings, and his mother, Thea. Pre-deceased by daughter, Dana, and father, Dick.

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For more information please visit our website at www.adachristian.org or to request an application packet, please contact searchcommittee@adachristian.org.

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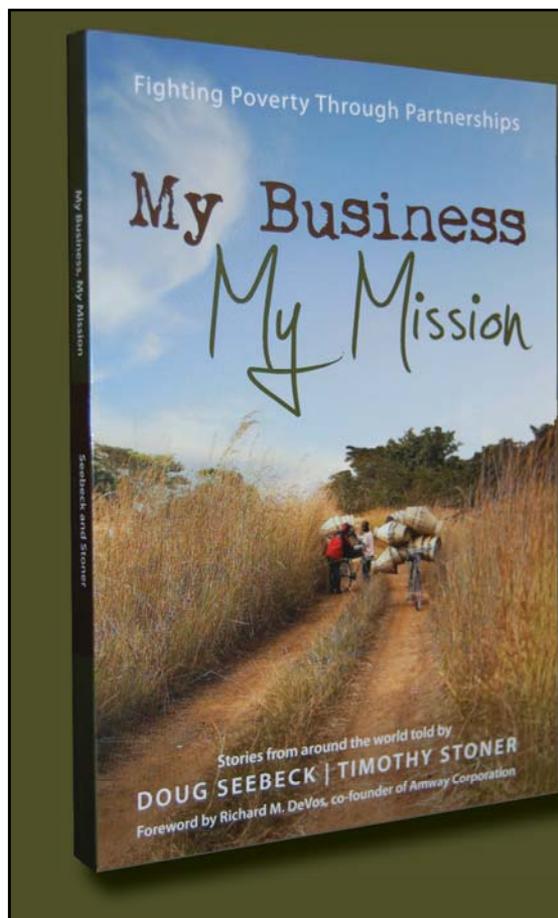
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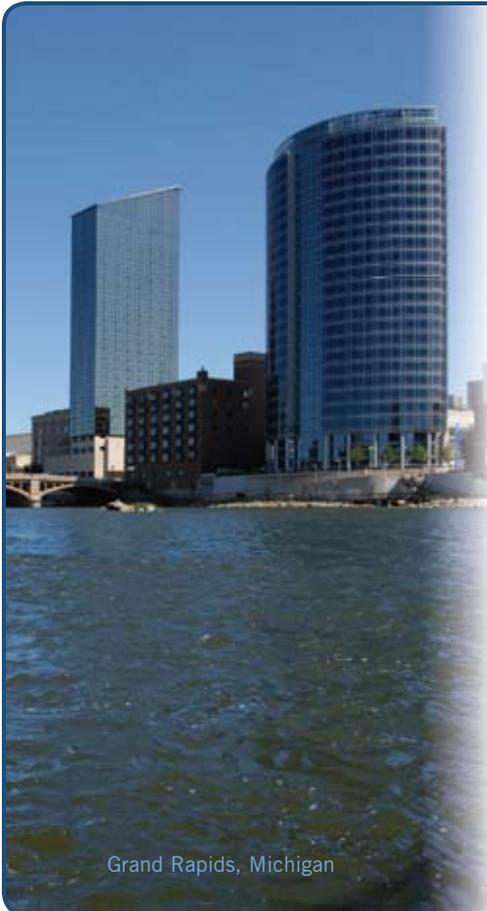
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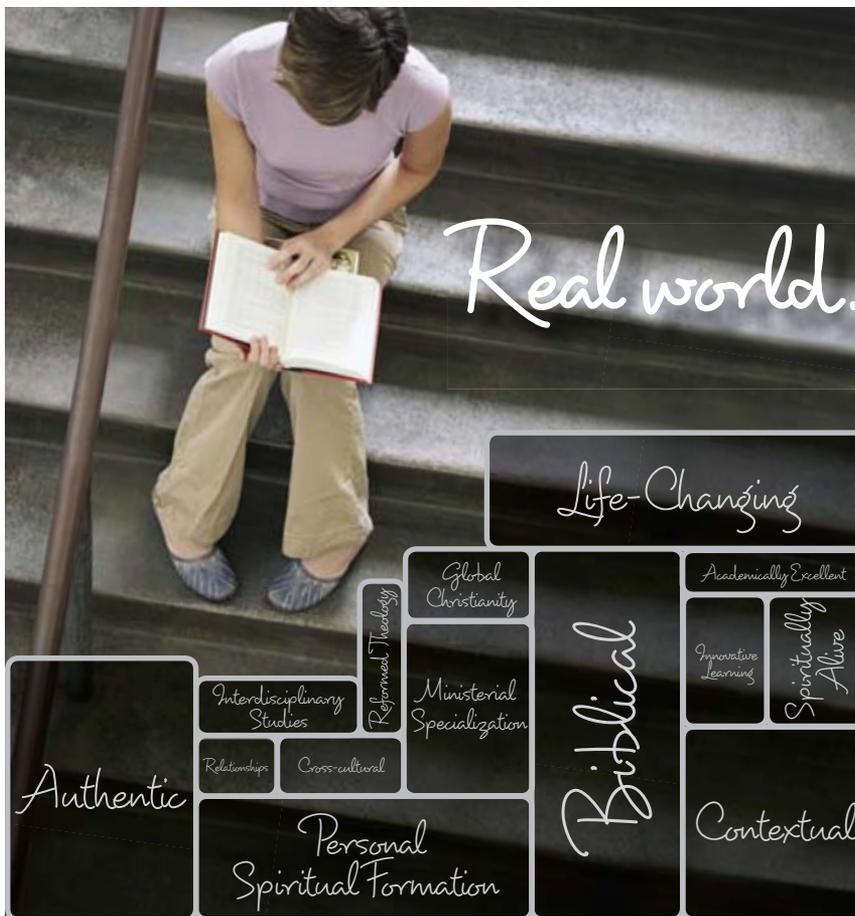
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John Calvin's Big Dream

W.A. VISSER 'T HOOFT ONCE WROTE the following thought-provoking words about John Calvin:

“If [people] had paid attention to Calvin, certain great misfortunes would never have happened. I will offer only one example. Everybody now knows the immense importance which the slogan ‘To each according to his needs, from each according to his capacities’ has had for Communism. Lenin thought that Communism would reach its final goal the day this slogan had become a reality. Lenin said that this slogan came from Marx. . . . But neither Lenin nor Marx was aware that three hundred years before Marx, Calvin had already formulated this thought in his exposition of 2 Corinthians 8:13-14. Calvin had there said: ‘God wills that there be proportion and equality among us, that is, each [person] is to provide for the needy according to the extent of his means so that no [one] has too much and no [one] has too little.’

“If the churches had really taken seriously and practiced this teaching, Communists could never have been enabled to take this basically biblical thought out of its Christian context and transplant it into their materialistic and totalitarian outlook” (in *The Social Humanism of Calvin* by André Biéler, 1964).

When John Calvin accepted the plea of his friend William Farel to lead Geneva's Evangelical Reform, he laid plans for a change far greater than the mere correcting of a few wayward theological errors.

Calvin aimed to shine the gospel's light on every facet of Genevan society—its economics, its politics, its healthcare, its education, its culture. He wanted the city to become a lived-out model of the gospel's promises and commands—a “city set on a hill” (Matt. 5:14) for all of Europe to see and imitate.

So Calvin set to work. Under his leadership, Genevans built hospitals, reformed schools, tackled poverty, and welcomed refugees—to name but a few of the sweeping changes. And all of this was done in conscious devotion to Christ, whose gospel commands, Calvin boldly declared, help people flourish and live well together as God intends.

One scholar calls Calvin a “social humanist.” Perhaps so. But at heart Calvin was a mere Christian who wanted to apply Jesus' teachings. Nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

Take Calvin's ideas about the role of money in society as an example. Money, Calvin said, is an effective tool in the Lord's hands—or at least it can be. Through it God can accomplish his will for both the rich and the poor. Richer people, through

Calvin aimed to shine the gospel's light on **every facet** of Genevan society.

generous giving, can become “ministers of the poor.” And the poor, in turn, through grateful receiving, can serve the rich as “solicitors of God.” Through such a flow of money, both rich and poor bring delight to God.

With prophetic boldness Calvin encouraged his fellow Christians toward a “liberal and kindly sharing of [what we possess] with others. . . . Let this, therefore, be our rule for generosity and beneficence: We are the stewards of everything God has conferred on us by which we are to help our neighbor, and are required to render account of our stewardship. Moreover, the only right stewardship is that which is tested by the rule of love. Thus it will come about that we shall not only join zeal for another's benefit with care for our own advantage, but shall subordinate the latter to the former” (*Institutes* III.vii.5). How's that for a radical—and thoroughly Christian—economic manifesto!

And that's but a narrow sliver of Calvin's big dream for an entire society renewed in Christ's name.

Given our present sad and desperate hour—life today shot through with self-maximizing individualism and callous disregard for others—Calvin's utopian Christian dream deserves another look.

Heirs of John Calvin, it's your move. ■

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



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

Punch Lines

A rabbi, a priest, and a minister walk into a bar, and the bartender looks up and says, "What is this, a joke?"

—Michael Boerman

A parts manager for a small electronics shop had occasion to order part number 669 from the factory. But when he received it, he noticed that the part was marked 699 instead.

Frustrated by the factory's incompetence, he promptly sent the part back, along with a letter giving the manager a piece of his mind.

Less than a week later, he received the same package back with a brief note: "Turn the part over."

—John Veltkamp

Ann D. goes to her first show at an art gallery and looks at the paintings. One is a huge black canvas with yellow blobs of paint splattered all over it. The next is a murky gray color with drips of purple paint streaked across it. Finally, Ann walks over

to the artist and says, "I don't understand your paintings."

"I paint what I feel inside me," explains the artist.

Ann asks, "Have you ever tried Alka-Seltzer?"

—John Veltkamp

The Sunday school lesson was on the parable of the Prodigal Son.

"And what happened when the lost son returned?" asked the teacher.

"His father went to meet him and hurt himself," replied one of the students.

"Hurt himself?" asked the teacher. "Tell us where you learned that."

"From the Bible, sir. It says his father ran to meet him and fell on his neck."

—Lucy Kampstra

It was the beginning of the Lenten season, and my husband and I were trying to explain to our young children the concept of giving up something for "40 whole days." When we asked if they

thought our family should pick something to give up for Lent, they enthusiastically agreed. Feeling quite proud of my "holy" little ones, I then asked what they thought it should be. After a moment our oldest daughter, then 5, said, "Um . . . how about church?"

—Jennifer DeYoung

Our church recently had the joy of receiving a family with three young daughters ages 8, 6, and 4. The 8-year-old had previously been baptized, but not the

younger two. When they were baptized, the 6-year-old came forward joyfully to receive the sacrament, but the 4-year-old held back and was visibly apprehensive. After the service, the girls' grandmother explained why. The 8-year-old had told her youngest sister that when she was baptized, she would be dunked. Naked.

—Bill Vis



"For the last time, Randall, quit text-messaging me!"



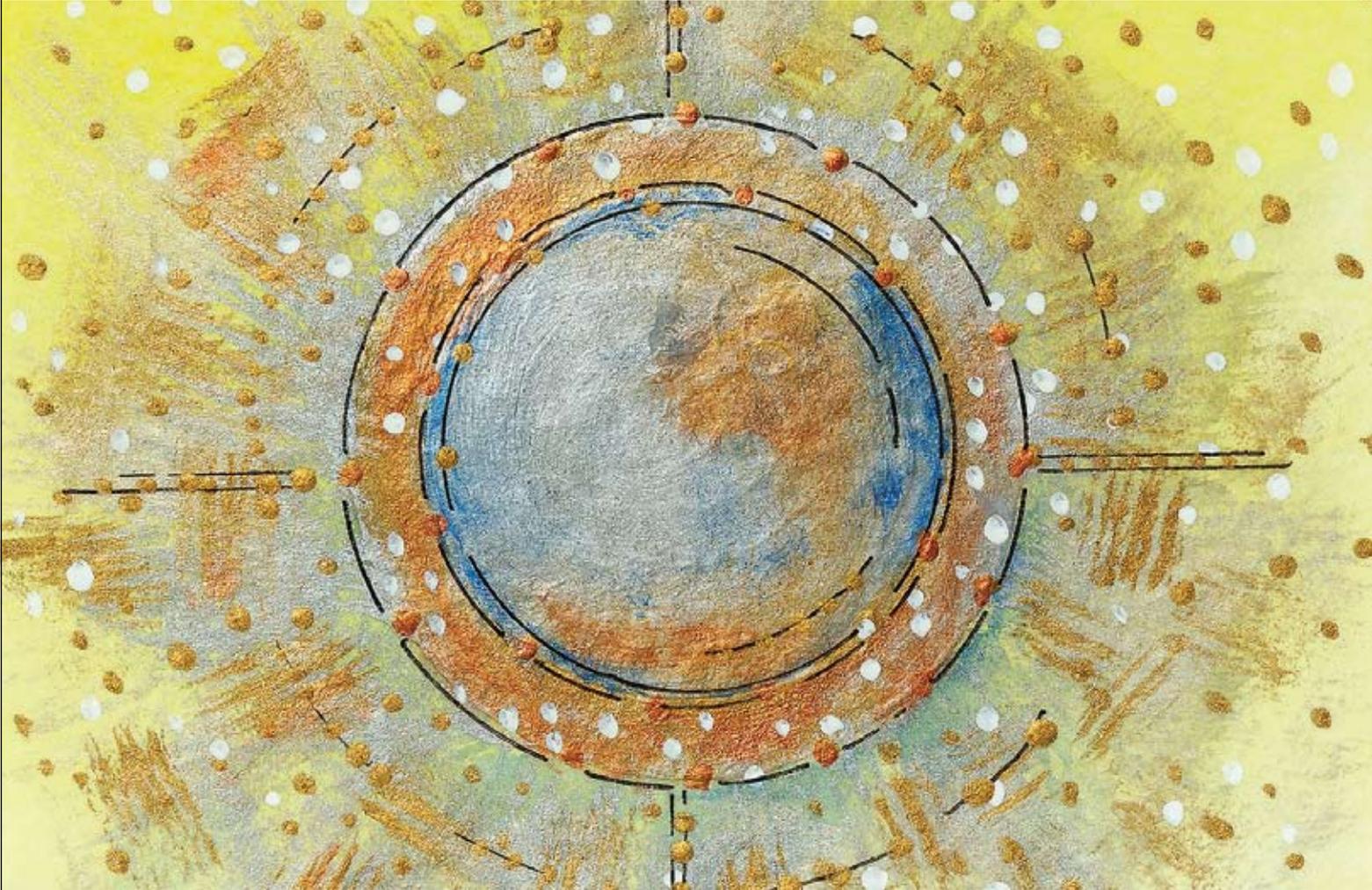
Continuing his birthday tour, John Calvin traveled to ancient Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey) with Jim and Sharon Payton. Here John stands in front of the ruins of the Celsius Library of ancient Ephesus.

The Library was erected in the second century A.D. by the consul Aquila for his father, Celsius Polemaeanus, who lies entombed in a burial chamber beneath the floor. John reports rumor has it that Celsius's body is remarkably well preserved.

John's hosts, Jim and Sharon, are members of Ancaster CRC in Ontario, where Jim is a professor of history at Redeemer University College.



transformation (reformation) Sunday



*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”
(Ephesians 2:8)*

On Reformation Sunday, October 25*, we honor an historic moment in church history during which Martin Luther emphasized God’s grace over human actions.

But this day is truly about **transformation**: thanks to God’s great gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, we are **being transformed** into new creations every day!

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**Synod encourages Christian Reformed churches to receive an offering for Home Missions on Reformation Sunday.*

