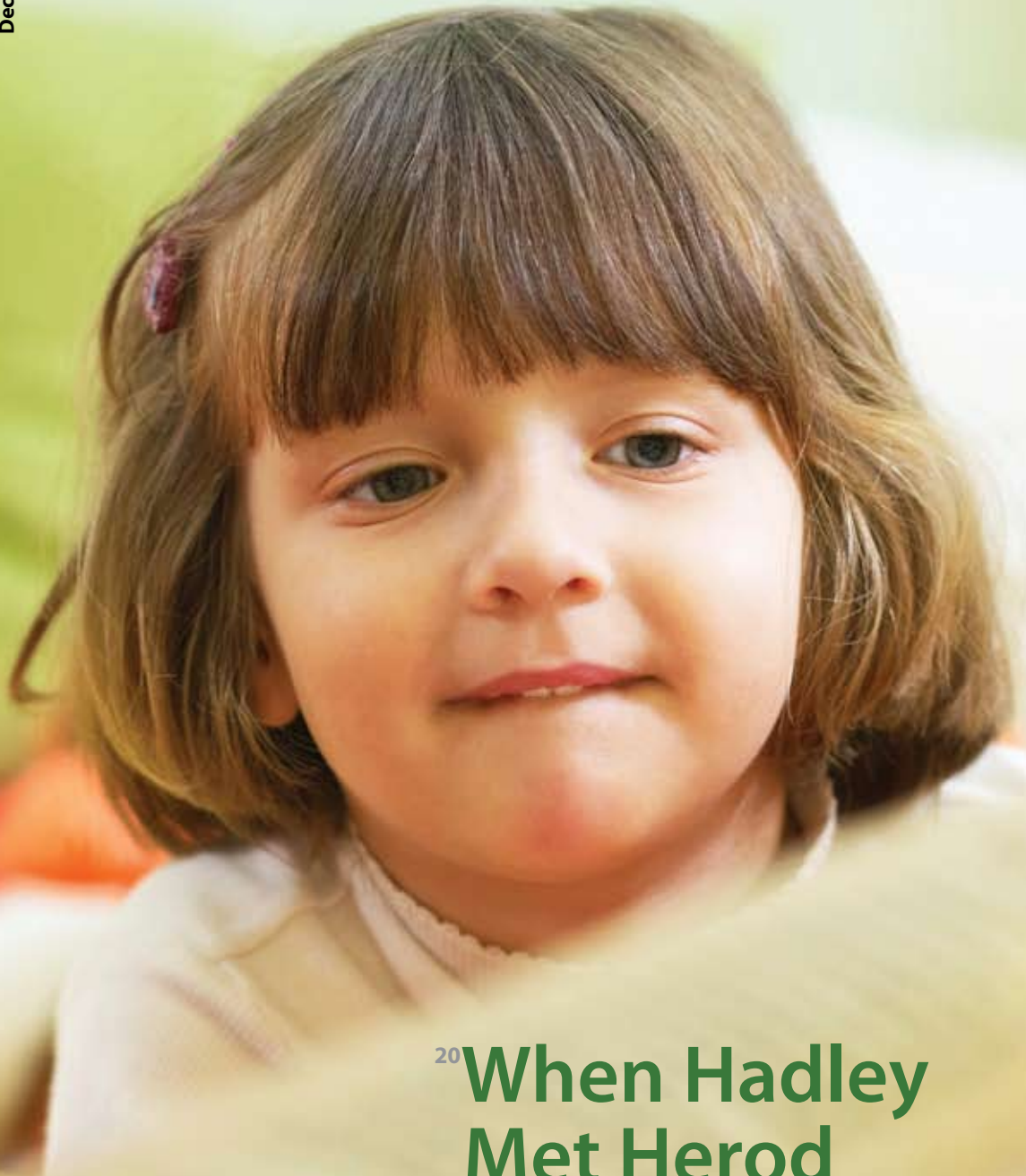


# BANNER

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<sup>34</sup> A Modest Proposal

<sup>26</sup> Our Reason  
for the Season



<sup>20</sup> When Hadley  
Met Herod

# Year-End Giving Guide

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Use this list of organizations advertising in this issue to help plan your year-end contributions.

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**Rehoboth Christian School**  
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**Trinity Christian College**  
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**Worldwide Christian Schools**  
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### Other important organizations advertising in this issue

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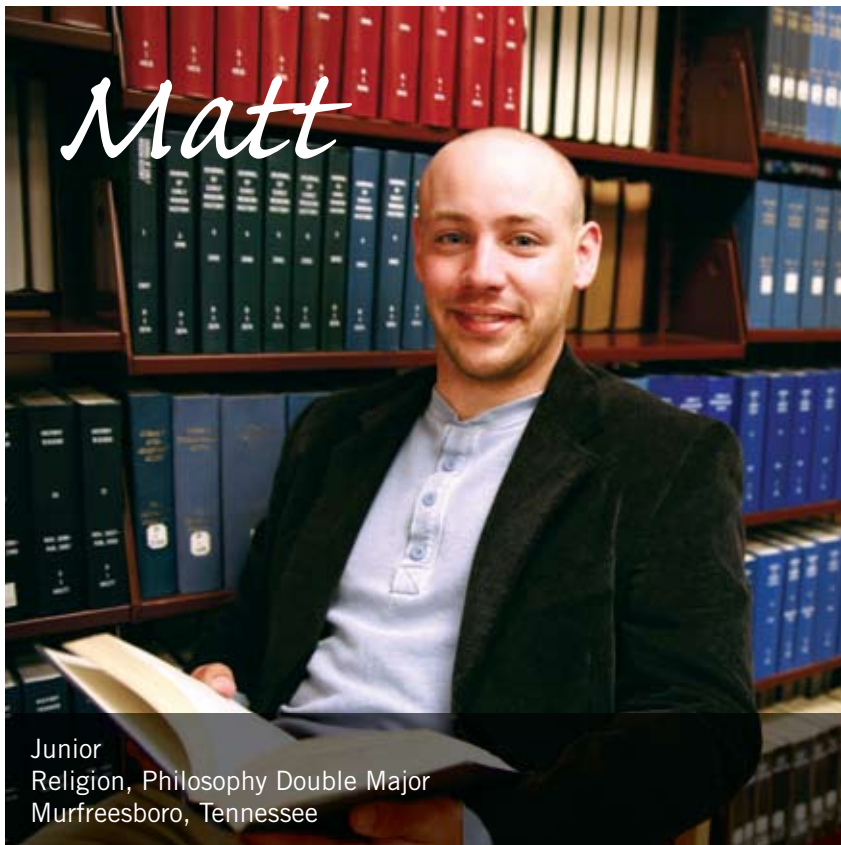
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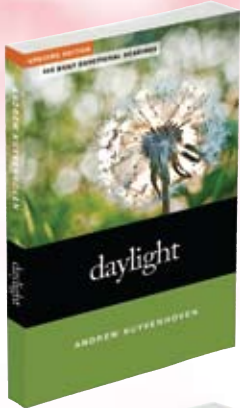
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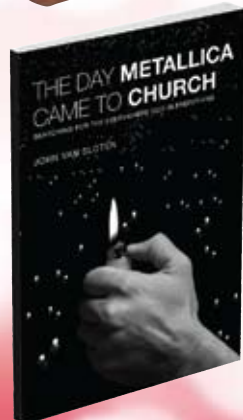
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**Seeking God's Face: Praying with the Bible through the Year** Philip F. Reinders

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A Conversation with Scripture through  
Image and Word (Eerdmans, 2010)

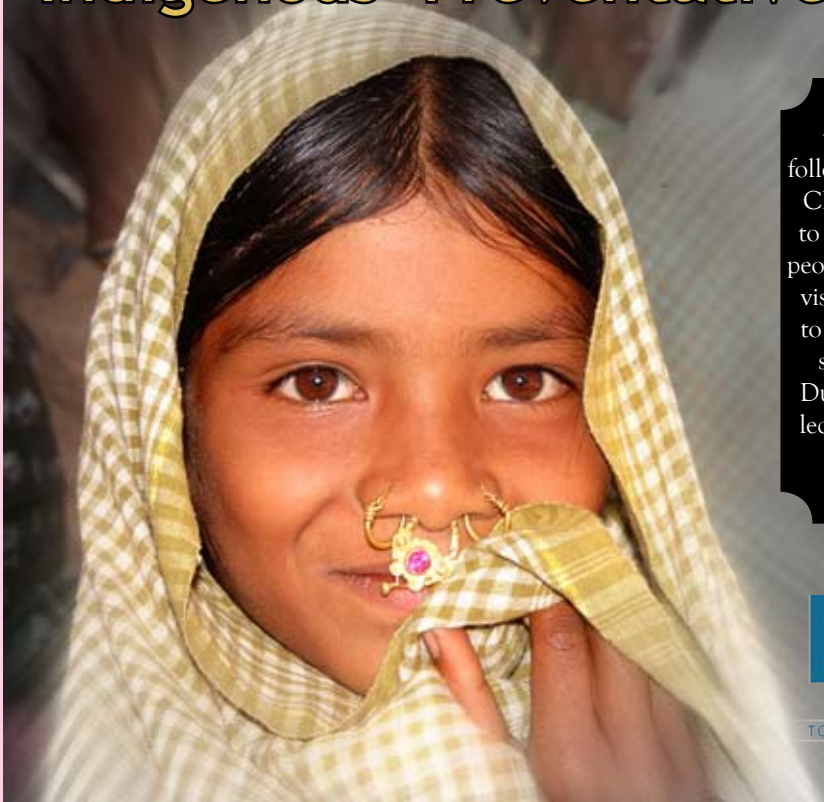
- This rich, inviting book illumines Paul's letter to the Philippians through images, hymn texts, poetry, and other worship-related arts with theological reflections, prayers, and more.
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- Co-published by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.



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Bunyan*

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# BANNER


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# See What We're Looking At

**YOU'D THINK AROUND CHRISTMAS** the Almighty would have more important things to worry about than a young preacher agonizing over a biblical text.

This was some three decades back. The preacher's text was for the day after Christmas, a Sunday.

With the full crèche of Christmas characters already paraded before the faithful, the young fella found himself stuck with Anna, an old woman whom Luke dates as either 84 years old or more than a century—the Greek is ambiguous. The preacher was too green to have built up a repertoire and bereft of any inspiration or energy for the task at hand. He breathed a despairing, plea to the Almighty.

No Gabriel appeared with flaming sword to strike the preacher mute. His own procrastination had rendered him more than sufficiently speechless, oblivious to what the Word right in front of him was saying.

Yet despite having many more important things to do, God answered. The preacher still sees it as a genuine miracle—the way the light suddenly flashed into his desperate dullness. The Word burst into life quite apart from any merit or creative genius on his part. It was a gift from above, plain and simple.

I'd plodded through the passage 20 times—Greek, English, annotated, commentated. But this time I tripped over a genealogical detail I'd overlooked.

Anna, co-witness to the presentation of the Messiah at the temple, was from the tribe of Asher. Where did *that* come from?

Because of their endless rebellion God had disinherited Israel, as he'd warned often enough. The 10 northern tribes, including Asher, went first, then Benjamin/Judah. Only a shattered remnant of the latter ever returned to linger on under cruel, foreign domination. Those 10 tribes were annihilated—gone, all gone.

So how did this senior citizen end up at the temple? Anna “never left . . . but worshiped there with fasting and prayer day and night” (Luke 2:37). A lone “blast from the past” in the centuries-long gloom of God's righteous judgment over a splintered people. But *still* calling out *every* day and night for God. Goodness! Faith is *tough*!

And God hears, remembers, responds. God takes this living relic, shows her the Messiah, and makes her an official witness to us all.

Through Anna, God reaches back through the centuries and allows the 10 tribes of Israel, too, to bear witness to the Light of God's Salvation. They too participate in the Messianic Age promised so long ago.

Through Anna's witness the 10 tribes did not live in vain. They mattered. They made a difference. Through her they, too, become reinstated in God's good graces. Because Anna is there, *all* Israel is represented at the Messiah's dedication.

A much older preacher now, still so unforgivably blind to the Word in front of him, is, nevertheless, also invited to discover the goodness of Jesus the Messiah. So are you, however bright your intellect or dim your soul may be.

See the Wonder. Behold the Light. Like Anna, “praise God and . . . speak about the child to all who [are] looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (2:38). Preach it, sister, brother! And *never* underestimate the importance of an old woman.

Have a wonder-full Christmas. ■

## How did this senior citizen end up at the temple?



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

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## Wearing Out the Concrete

**T**HOUGH I've lived in this neighborhood for seven years, when I stop to think about it, I'm still surprised by that fact. Years ago I parked in front of the house I now call home to visit a church down the street, and I distinctly remember finding the house a little scary. Soon after, my not-yet-husband bought the place because the price was right, not intending to make it his long-term home. Now we have no intention of leaving.

Such rootedness was not part of my Original Plan. I used to imagine the path my life would take as an elegant line winding its way around the globe into shapes that would look interesting from space. Instead, it more closely resembles a knotty tangle—like the web I weave as I walk through the kitchen to prepare yet another meal.

The sense that we'll be here for a good long time has turned me into a literalist—at least when it comes to the command to “love thy neighbor.” As a child in Sunday school, I felt awed to understand that my neighbor might be half a

world away. Now the revelation is that my neighbor is the one who walks his pug past my house at the same time each morning.

The things that build community among our neighbors surprise me: ringing the doorbell without calling first; running out of cumin or eggs; escorting home the black lab who shows up on the porch again, wriggling with joy.

I could also call these things interruption, need, and inconvenience.

Our neighbors tend to be cross-the-street, wear-ruts-in-the-pavement kind of people. Maybe it's partly because we know for certain that we need each other. When we find ourselves wondering who tore the boards off the fence yet again or which teenager sliced the window screen to break in and steal, we need to be reassured that we're in this together. Our human vulnerability draws us closer to each other.

And then there are the mundane chores of life. I'm grateful to discover that a communal mountain of mulch can transform first into a shared meal and then into the balm of carrying sorrows

together. My neighbors' care gives me hope. It helps me trust that the soil in this place is rich enough for a lifetime of growth and rebirth. It was made by the God of faithful seasons, the God of abundant and persistent seeds.

My 3-year-old urges me to join him in the backyard sandbox. As we pat wet sand into mounds over our planted feet, I pray that our neighborhood will be invaded by tangles of roots, tender sprouts, fragrant blossoms—and by people who cross the street so often that concrete wears through to earth. ■



**Gwen Penning Genzink** works part-time for Friendship Ministries and belongs to Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



### Inseparable

are the life path of our neighbor and our own way through the world.

—JOHN S. MOGABGAB

# Our Discomfort with the Belhar

It's ironic that this is where we find ourselves as a church today.

**WE DISCUSSED** the Belhar Confession at our regional classis meeting recently. I found it striking how much opposition I heard to adopting it. You'd think we were talking about a change to the biblical canon.

As we discussed the Belhar in our local church community, an older, wiser member made an interesting comment. He noted that the three confessions we Christian Reformed folks already have (the Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort, and Belgic Confession) in large part tell us how to think or what to believe, whereas the Belhar tells us how to live. He noted that we seem uncomfortable adopting it because it will have some say in how we act day to day.

It's ironic that this is where we find ourselves as a church today. In the Jewish mind-set, doing always held a higher place in life than simply thinking (or believing). In other words, when considering a text of Scripture the Jewish reader would ask, "How does this tell me to live?" A Greek or Hellenistic mind-set, however, focuses on the greatness of the human mind, on ideas and how to think. When

studying Scripture it asks not so much how to live, but what to believe.

If you read the gospels, you'll see that Jesus spends nearly all his time focusing on how we should live, not on details of doctrine or belief. This should come as no surprise, given Jesus' Jewish context and the fact that he was Jewish himself.

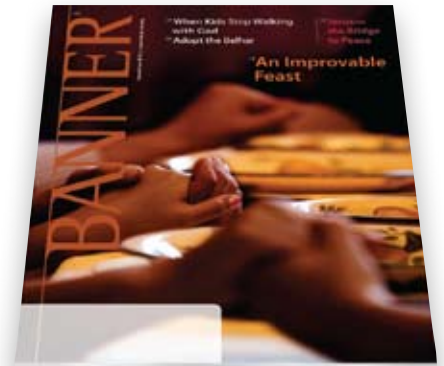
Over time, as it detached from its Jewish roots, the church increasingly adopted a Hellenistic attitude toward faith. Thus, obscure matters of doctrine moved to the forefront of theological conversation and filled many tomes by the Middle Ages.

In many ways our three confessions are products of that milieu. Contrasted with the gospels—which call us to live radically as Jesus' disciples in light of the present coming of God's kingdom—it's not a stretch to say there is a discontinuity. Can you honestly imagine Jesus wishing to spend time poring over the Canons of Dort?

How refreshing, then, to find a document that rings of Jesus throughout in its endorsement of justice, of unity amid diversity, and of living in light of the reality of God's kingdom. I say let's go for it. ■



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



## Promoting Reconciliation

The word *apartheid* in the news article "California Student Laments Israeli 'Apartheid'" (November 2010) does not represent the type of language that Hope Equals promotes.

Hope Equals is about reconciliation between people on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, not about the rhetoric of either. Hope Equals exposes students to different narratives, and our goal is to come up with a narrative of reconciliation. To that end, language that alienates is not in line with our ethos. The use of the word *apartheid* was not endorsed by Hope Equals. We stand for the equal rights of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and safety with their neighbors.

—Mariano Avila

Hope Equals Project Manager  
Christian Reformed World Missions

## Not-So-Golden Years

For the first time I found myself reading an article that comes very close to how it is when you are in your 90s. I am 93, and I have sent a copy of "The Not-So-Golden Years" (October 2010) to all of my eight children.

—Anita Dogger  
Bullhead City, Ariz.

# LETTERS

## It's OK to Sit

"30 Things You Can Do to Be Hospitable to People with Disabilities" (October 2010) was a good article that brought to light a number of issues. However, one disability was not mentioned that exists in every church. I have trouble standing, especially on a slanted floor. Every week I am encouraged to stand. I make it through two songs, and then I must sit. I have had a number of people tell me they have trouble standing for the music too. My answer is simple: "Then sit."

How should my fellow worshippers deal with this? Let me sit and don't worry about it. I was at my brother's church (Presbyterian), and they said, "Stand if you are able." I like that.

—Bruce Fowler  
Hayward, Calif.

## King's and Khadr

I take great offense at the news story "King's Linked to Guantanamo Trial" (October 2010) and its depiction of Omar Khadr.

In a video shown at his trial, Khadr can be seen smiling while sitting cross-legged on the floor, rigging explosives. Do these King's University College students honestly want such a person living in their neighborhood? And why do they want to bring Khadr back to Canada for trial if he is charged with killing an American soldier? Canadian students pay the price for crimes committed in other foreign countries; why not in this case?

I don't believe Khadr should receive special treatment. I'm all for forgiveness, but people must pay their dues to society if they break laws. The thief on the cross was forgiven by Jesus, but that didn't keep him from paying the price for his actions.

—Bert Wikkerink  
Elmira, Ontario

Why would these students want this man freed? If it were their brother, son, or father whom Khadr killed, would they feel the same way? Is the soldier less dead because he was killed by a 15-year-old? Don't these students have anything better to do with their time, like feeding the homeless or visiting the sick and elderly? Has anyone bothered to contact the family of the dead soldier?

—Edward Visser  
Oak Forest, Ill.

I was appalled by this article. . . . Why don't these young people attempt to stop abortion instead? Thousands of infants are murdered each day, and nothing is said. Instead we want to free a murderer? Omar Khadr has not suffered any injustice. The family of the soldier he killed has suffered the injustice.

—Jim Armstrong  
Utopia, Ontario

## Separation a Sin?

It was helpful for Rev. Timothy Palmer to draw our attention to the context within which the Belhar Confession was created ("Is Separation Always a Sin?" September 2010). But we are not well advised to allow this context to minimize the Belhar's prophetic reach. While apartheid doctrine forced separation of people on a racial basis, it surely profited from the argument that "it's no sin to worship separately from other ethnic groups." It's a short walk from there to an argument for separation based on preference.

I wonder if our *preferences* for church life aren't so tainted with self-centeredness that they actually make poor guides for what may be *right*. When the Belhar speaks of "sinful separation," and not just the sin of "forced separation," it's drawing on resources far deeper than its immedi-

ate context. The plea of the Belhar is for the visible unity of the church because of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ.

—Rev. Albert Strydhorst  
Christian Reformed World Missions  
Nigeria

We have to be cautious with how quickly we disregard what Rev. Palmer has to say. (Why is it that no one has commented on his statement "It is beautiful when Christians from different ethnic groups worship together"?)

If we adopt the Belhar, we as a denomination must confess our sin for promoting separation. In the meantime, we allow a classis based on ethnicity (Pacific Hanmi), yet deny other churches from transferring classes based on theological interpretation. Is that not allowing for separation, if not promoting it?

—Brian Kuyper  
Granum, Alberta

I fully agree with Rev. Palmer with respect to the Belhar. All the more so because one of its main promoters, Rev. Peter Borgdorff, has said that the document does not express itself the way we would if we were to write it ourselves! Why in the world would we want to adopt a foreign document that does not say exactly what we want it to say?

—John H. Boer  
Vancouver, British Columbia

*Editor's note: For Rev. Borgdorff's current view of the Belhar, please see "Adopt the Belhar" (November 2010).*

## Correction

Regarding "Small Groups, Big Impact in Korean Churches" (November 2010), there are at least 300 Coffee Break groups in southern California. *The Banner* apologizes for the error.

# NEWS

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## All I Want for Christmas Is . . .

**F**or Grace Christian Reformed Church in Welland, Ontario, Christmas is a time to raise money for giving, not getting.

During last year's "Gotta Get a Goat" campaign, members decided to try to raise enough money to buy 100 goats for communities in need around the world.

After a local newspaper ran a story about the campaign, Grace CRC raised more than three times the amount of the goal. The animals were purchased through the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's gift catalogue.



MARYANN FIRTH OF THE WELLAND TRIBUNE

**Rev. Ryan Braam and Karin Vermeer pose for the "Gotta Get a Goat" campaign.**

Deacon Richard Saari said that an awareness of their own abundance led the church members to bless others.

This year's campaign is "Houses for Haiti." The goal is to provide

one house for a family in Haiti. Saari said that if they can again harness the resources of both the congregation and the community, they hope to exceed that goal.

—Sophie Vandenberg



SHELLEY TRAFORD

**Amanda Tuffnail and Becky Doyle check out clothes in My Neighbour's Closet, a clothing exchange at Operation Sharing.**

## Operation Sharing Helps Parents at Christmas

**A** Christmas shop where parents can buy new or gently used toys and other items helps people with low incomes provide Christmas gifts for their children without blowing the budget. Staffing the Christmas store with volunteers keeps prices at a minimum. Children can also get help choosing and wrapping gifts for their parents.

The annual Christmas shop is just one part of Operation Sharing, a 46-church ministry network that includes Ingersoll (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church and Maranatha and Covenant CRCs of Woodstock, Ontario.

The ministry also provides specialized food cards redeemable in local stores, cooking classes, budget planning, and more. Those are some of the ways to give people in their community a hand up rather than a handout, according to John Klein-Geltink of Ingersoll CRC.

Klein-Geltink estimates that the mission reaches about 1,000 households. Some, he says, have come to faith through the mission.

"They see how they've been treated here, and they respond to that."

—Anita Brinkman

RICH DE VRIES



Megan Bradbury is delighted to wear a boa constrictor at the Amazing Grace Kids' Camp.

## Critters Visit Kids' Camp

Wearing a boa constrictor or tarantula and petting an iguana or crocodile were activities kids enjoyed when critters visited Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Oak Lawn, Ill.

It was the last activity of the Amazing Grace Kids' Camp, held every Wednesday evening over the summer for about 70 children.

Rev. Rich De Vries said, "We had opportunity to build relationships with the kids and their families in ways that often do not happen with a more traditional week-long format. Now that they know us personally, they are interested in many of the opportunities we provide for the spiritual nurture not only of their kids but of their whole family."

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung

## Paddling Pastor Funds Cadet Kayaks

Rev. John Algera and his friend David Lyle paddled a 100-mile (160 km) kayak race that took 33 hours to complete. They finished in last place, but gained a first-place spot in the hearts of Madison Avenue Christian Reformed Church's kids. Algera pastors that church, and Lyle is an elder at New Covenant CRC in North Hampton, N.H. They raised more than \$6,000 paddling the Watertribe North Carolina Challenge.

The money will be used to purchase kayaking equipment for the Madison Avenue Cadet program. Cadets is the boys' ministry offered in most Christian Reformed churches.

—Calvin Hulstein

Rev. John Algera at sunrise during the race



DAVID LYLE

## Building Wreaths and Traditions

The smell of spruce branches fills the Woodynook Christian Reformed Church in Blackfalds, Alberta, the week before the Advent season officially begins. That's when members create Advent wreaths together.

"Visuals are important in both church and family life," said Klaaske deKoning. "We wanted to get young families involved in a meaningful, focused, devotional celebration of Advent."

"We think it's a great, practical way to get kids involved in preparing for the Christmas season," explained Angela Bennik, a member of Rimbey CRC who brought her daughters Hannah and Macie along.

"My favorite part is the fellowship with other families and sharing our Advent traditions together," said Jen Doef. "My kids loved the lighting and blowing out of the candles."

—Rachel deKoning Kraay



Fiona Prins and her daughter, Reva, create an Advent wreath to use at home together.

NEIL DEKONING

## Family Writes Political Prisoners at Christmas

Every Christmas, the Vandenberg family of Norval, Ontario, sends cards of support to political prisoners around the world. They also write letters to government officials petitioning for the prisoners' release or fair treatment.

The effort is part of Amnesty International's "Write for Rights" campaign, which takes place each December.

"The worst feeling a prisoner can have is that nobody in the world even knows they exist. Getting even a single card can be an incredible source of hope," said Sophie Vandenberg, whose family belongs to Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Caledon, Ontario.

Vandenberg, who is a *Banner* correspondent, noted that prisoners often report better treatment once they start to receive mail.

—Banner staff



From left, Nicole Vandenberg, Caleb Vandenberg, and Chelsea Hiemstra write letters and sign cards in support of political prisoners.

## Michigan Church Hosts International Art Competition

**M**onroe Community Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., displayed the work of 17 artists during the second annual ArtPrize competition in that city—an event that showcased the work of 1,700 artists from around the world.

Steve Fridsma, chair of the church's ArtPrize committee, said this was Monroe Community's second year as one of the 200 venues.

The church did some fundraising by opening its doors early for a "sneak peek" at the

artwork and auctioning off donated art.

Rachel Hyde, whose art was hosted at the church, created "Impressions of Joy" in pen and ink. Although not all of the artists at Monroe were Christians, much of the art was based on the artists' Christian beliefs. "My piece is about Philipians. There's no avoiding that I'm a Christian," said Hyde, who is also a member of the church.

Ministry associate Amy Schenkel explained, "[ArtPrize] is a natural fit for us. We value art. We value



JULIA SWILDE

Steven Huyser-Honig's "Grand Rapids Gigarama" was labeled one of ArtPrize's five "Hidden Gems" by *GRnow.com*.

community. We value what Grand Rapids is about."

Worship planners also developed a four-week sermon series on the art in the church.

Other CRC artists who showed their work at ArtPrize included Wietze Adema, Danielle Dix, Ste-

ven Huyser-Honig, Robin Jensen, Kirk Lepine, Julie Quinn, Jason Reiffer, Carol Roeda, Flint Sackett, and Bill Vriesema, all from West Michigan. 📍

—Ryan Struyk

## Highlights from Classis Meetings

**T**wo or three times each year, Christian Reformed churches send representatives to meetings of their classis, a regional grouping of churches. Delegates to classis review and make decisions about their shared ministries and practice mutual accountability for their congregations' individual ministries. Here are highlights from the most recent classis meetings:

Several people were **welcomed into ministry** in the Christian Reformed Church, including seminary graduates Michael Bentley, Matthew Borst, Christopher de Winter, Anthony DeKorte, Scott Elgersma, Chris Fulkerson, Aaron Greydanus, John Kim, Nathan DeJong McCarron, Samantha DeJong McCarron, Matthew McClure, Summer Mohrlang, Kristin Palacios, Daniel Rhee, and Hernan Zapata.

**Transferred in** from other denominations were Revs. David Cheung, Kyung Hyun Cho, Maged Fayez Dakdouk, Jonathan Gerstner, SeJong Jang, Inhwan Kim, Dae Won Shinj, and Fernando Valencia.

Revs. David Sung and Daniel Rhee were **loaned** to non-CRC churches.

Revs. George Cooper, Layne Kilbreath, John Kuperus, Paul Park, Ron Smeding, and Jeff Vanderhoof were **released from their congregations**.

Joseph Chen, Wayne Knight, Steve Rhoda, and Gary Roosma were **released from CRC ministry**.

Classis Grandville and Classis Huron **declined requests to exclude women from roles at classis**. Classis Minnkota will financially support two churches each year to provide **internships for theologically conservative seminarians** (defined as those

who believe the Bible does not allow women to serve as elders or ministers).

**New ministries were started or approved** in Watertown, S. Dak.; Jenison, Mich.; University of British Columbia Okanagan; and at the Newton (Iowa) Correctional Facility. Ttokamsa Mission Church of Los Angeles joined the denomination, along with its pastors. Living Stone CRC in Rochester, Minn.; All Nations Fellowship CRC in Blacksburg, Va.; Oxnard (Calif.) Korean CRC; and Crossroads CRC of Pequot, Minn. **were closed**.

Classis Hamilton held a panel discussion on **youth ministry** and Classis Chatham approved hiring a **youth ministry consultant** subject to ratification. Classis Red Mesa **disbanded its youth committee**.

Classes Wisconsin, Minnkota, and Huron held discussions on **Safe Church** matters. Classis

Greater L.A. formed a **race relations** team. Classis Alberta North approved a classis **restorative justice committee**.

Classis British Columbia North-West requested that Synod 2011 **declare the Contemporary Testimony a confession** (official doctrine). Classis Heartland requested that synod instruct the denomination's ecumenical and interfaith relations committee, among others, **to foster a more balanced denomination-wide discussion of the Belhar Confession**.

Classis Grand Rapids East will send its overture requesting a **study to review the biblical teachings regarding homosexual practice and orientation** to Synod 2011 since it was too late for Synod 2010.

Much more classis news is available at [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org).

—Banner news correspondents



## New Mexico Churches United2Help

Small churches in Farmington, N.M., are uniting to fight big problems: drugs, gang violence, racism, and more. One of those churches is Maranatha Christian Reformed Church.

Maranatha joined other congregations to host a festival that raised money for the local crisis center and showed the community how the body of Christ could work together for the local good.

Susan LaClear is the ministry associate who pastors Maranatha. "We had an 'extreme makeover' tent where people could get their hair sprayed crazy colors and get face-painting," she said. "But then there was a 'heart makeover' section where volunteers stationed themselves to pray for people."



DONNIE EDWARDS

"This is the way it's supposed to be," LaClear said. "We can strengthen our weaknesses with somebody else's strengths, and there are things we do well that others don't." 📌

—Larry Edsall

**Members of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church joined their counterparts from several denominations to host the Four Corners Festival in Farmington, N.M.**

 Check [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) for the expanded story.

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. John Botting

1916-2010

Rev. John Botting, 94, diligent pastor, fine musician, and master gardener, passed away on July 2.

Botting entered the ministry in the Presbyterian Church of Canada, serving three churches in Quebec and Ontario before joining the Christian Reformed Church.

Botting served CRC congregations in Michigan, British Columbia, South Dakota, and Indiana. He retired in 1983.

During his earlier years in Canada he cooperated with Dr. M.J. Kik in founding *Biblical Christianity*, the forerunner of *Christianity Today*. In Vancouver he helped settle Dutch immigrants, and later he ministered to Mexican immigrants.

Throughout his ministry, Botting and his wife, Leona, did all the pastoral calling together. Botting combined pastoral faithfulness with broad theological interests.

Botting played the trumpet, enjoyed sports, and was a master gardener.

Botting was predeceased by a son-in-law and a grandchild. He is survived by his wife, Leona, six children, 13 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren. 📌

—Louis M. Tamminga

*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.*

## Disaster Response Pioneers Reunite

Fran and Wes Vryhof, now in their 80s, said they were overwhelmed back in 1972 when they set out to provide disaster relief after flooding in Rapid City, S. Dak.

That was the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's first-ever disaster relief project, led by its first director, Neil Molenaar.

The Vryhofs, members of Plymouth Heights CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich., joined about 50 other CRWRC disaster relief pioneers at a reunion in October. All of them volunteered between 1972 and 1990 and laid the foundation for the program that now sends out 2,000 volunteers every year.

In those days, guidelines were few, so relief volunteers just talked to people on the street to see what was needed. They did everything from cleaning mud-clogged houses to buying appliances from secondhand stores for clients.

The strong bonds formed on work sites continue to this day. "We made true friends while we went out," said Ed Mosher, 83, of volunteering with wife, Betty, 81. Both are members of Graafschap CRC in Holland, Mich.

Traditions such as wearing dark green shirts on work sites began with those early volunteers. To this day, the CRWRC volunteers are known as "green shirts."

Molenaar directed DRS until 1990; Bill Adams is now the director. "The pioneers paved the way. It was the Lord who built it," Adams said. 📌

—Carolyn Koster Yost

**Neil Molenaar (left), the first DRS director, greets pioneer Ed Mosher with a hug.**

CAROLYN YOST



# NEWS



ANITA BEEM

Members of North Hills CRC outline their hands to show support for the world's poor.

## 10-10-10 Focus on Poverty, Justice

Members of North Hills Christian Reformed Church in Troy, Mich., joined Christians worldwide on Sunday, Oct. 10, in a day of prayer and promise for the poor.

"10-10-10" was designated by the Micah Challenge, a global coalition of Christians, as a day to draw attention to the eight Millennium Development Goals that 189 countries agreed 10 years ago to achieve by 2015. The Christian

Reformed Church endorsed the Micah Challenge at Synod 2004. The goals include ending world hunger, reducing child mortality, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria, and more.

In addition to its worship service, the congregation held a 10-hour prayer vigil for justice for the poor. Members participated in a "Show of Hands," tracing hand prints to send to U.S. leaders as a reminder that only five years remain to meet the promised goals.

The outreach team challenged church members to pledge \$1 a day to the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's poverty-fighting efforts, and also set up two service outreach days in Detroit.

"Our busy schedules certainly don't help us get out of our self-focused lives," said Anita Beem, director of education and outreach for North Hills CRC, "so it's the church's responsibility to continually remind us of our call from God himself to make a difference."

For more on the Micah Challenge, see [http://www.crcna.org/pages/osj\\_micahchallenge.cfm](http://www.crcna.org/pages/osj_micahchallenge.cfm).



—Henry Huisjen

## Churches Celebrate 100th Birthdays

First Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, and Holland Center CRC, Lodge Pole, S. Dak., both celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in 2010.

First CRC held its first service on October 23, 1910. The service included four baptisms and the Lord's Supper.

As a part of each worship service during 2010, First CRC invited particular members to share a story while lighting a "century candle" at the front of the church. "We have been rewarded and inspired by the stories of young members, old members, and new members," said member Ron Knol.

In Lodge Pole, S.Dak., Holland Center CRC also celebrated 100 years. Five former pastors joined 150 members on the anniversary weekend in October.

For quite a few of them, Holland Center was their first church, said Jim LeFebre. "They all pretty

much indicated that they couldn't have found a better place to start," he said. "There was much prayer that everything would go well, and it did."

—Sherry Kooiker and Rachel deKoning Kraay

## Lawsuit Against Pastor, Church Dropped

A lawsuit filed late in 2008 against Rev. John Visser; Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Belleville, Ontario; Classis Quinte (a regional group of churches); Classis Eastern Canada; and the denomination has been dropped.

Bradley Thompson, who at one time had been in counseling with Visser, had filed the suit, alleging that Visser had used his position of influence, trust, and authority for his own financial gain. Thompson sued for almost \$1 million in damages.

Some issues remain unresolved for the church. Classis Quinte will appoint a five-member team, including three people from Pastor-Church Relations, to assess the situation and, according to the Classis Quinte minutes, to "bring this matter to a just and God-glorifying resolution."

—Brenda Visser



David Prins, Sheri Poelman, and their wedding guests cycled from their wedding ceremony to the reception.

## 'You'll look sweet upon the seat of a bicycle...'

It's not often that a wedding invitation says "Come with a bike and join the bride and groom in cycling from the church to the banqueting table." The invitation of Sheri Poelman and David Prins, members of First Christian Reformed Church of Vancouver, British Columbia, did just that.

They wanted to honor their commitment to cycling and using transit in the city as much as they could. About half of the guests cycled the 6.8 kilometers (4.2 miles). Arrangements were made for out-of-town guests to borrow bicycles.

The bride did have one concern. Sheri laughed, "I just had to make sure my dress didn't get caught in the gears!"

—Jenny deGroot

# FAQs

## Church

**Q I think ministers are told to agree with what the denomination tells you or else you'll lose your job. Is that correct?**

**A** Our denomination requires all officebearers to sign the Form of Subscription (*Psalter Hymnal*, 1987, p. 950) in which they indicate their belief that the “points of doctrine set forth in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort fully agree with the Word of God.” When officebearers sign, they also promise “that if in the future we come to have any difficulty with these doctrines or reach views differing from them, we will not propose, defend, preach, or teach such views, either publicly or privately until we have first disclosed them to the consistory, classis, or synod for examination.” They also agree that the consequence of refusal to submit to the judgment of these governing bodies “is suspension from office.” They will indeed lose their job.

Such subscription is not required in terms of synodical decisions. Synod allows delegates to record their negative votes, indicating that they do not agree with a particular decision. Though synod expects officebearers to abide by its decisions, it has been slow to take disciplinary action against those who oppose certain decisions, either orally or in writing. For example, in the past ministers have publicly disagreed with the denomination’s position on the lodge, and currently some ministers speak and write against the CRC’s decision on women in office.

Ministers are more likely to “lose their jobs” when their congregation, not their denomination, disagrees with what they are preach-

**Ministers are more likely to “lose their jobs” when their congregation disagrees with what they are preaching and teaching.**

ing and teaching or when their ministry performance does not meet expectations.

—George Vander Weit

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

## Christian Morality

**Q Doesn't God demand that we do the best we can at all times? If we are relaxing at the end of a long day at work, aren't we violating this principle? If it's in our power to do moral good, shouldn't we?**

**A** God recognizes that rest and relaxation are a legitimate part of our creaturely existence, even apart from the rest that takes place on the Lord’s Day. We need not feel guilt or despair when we are enjoying rest and relaxation, unless we do so to excess.

Your last question raises a broader issue. Some theologians believe that whenever we have an opportunity to perform an act that is morally praiseworthy, God places upon us a moral obligation to do so. Some people who perform saintly and heroic actions reflect this position when they say that they are simply doing their duty or obligation. But one problem with this view is that sometimes carrying out these duties is impossible.

For example, if I have one ten-dollar bill and two homeless people are asking me for money, I can only give the bill to one of them. Have I then violated a duty to perform a praise-

worthy act by not giving it to the other? This seems too harsh, and it reflects an ethic that is overly strict. A better way of approaching this issue is to say that through the grace of God we are capable of going beyond the call of duty on certain occasions, and in doing so we can bring praise to God.

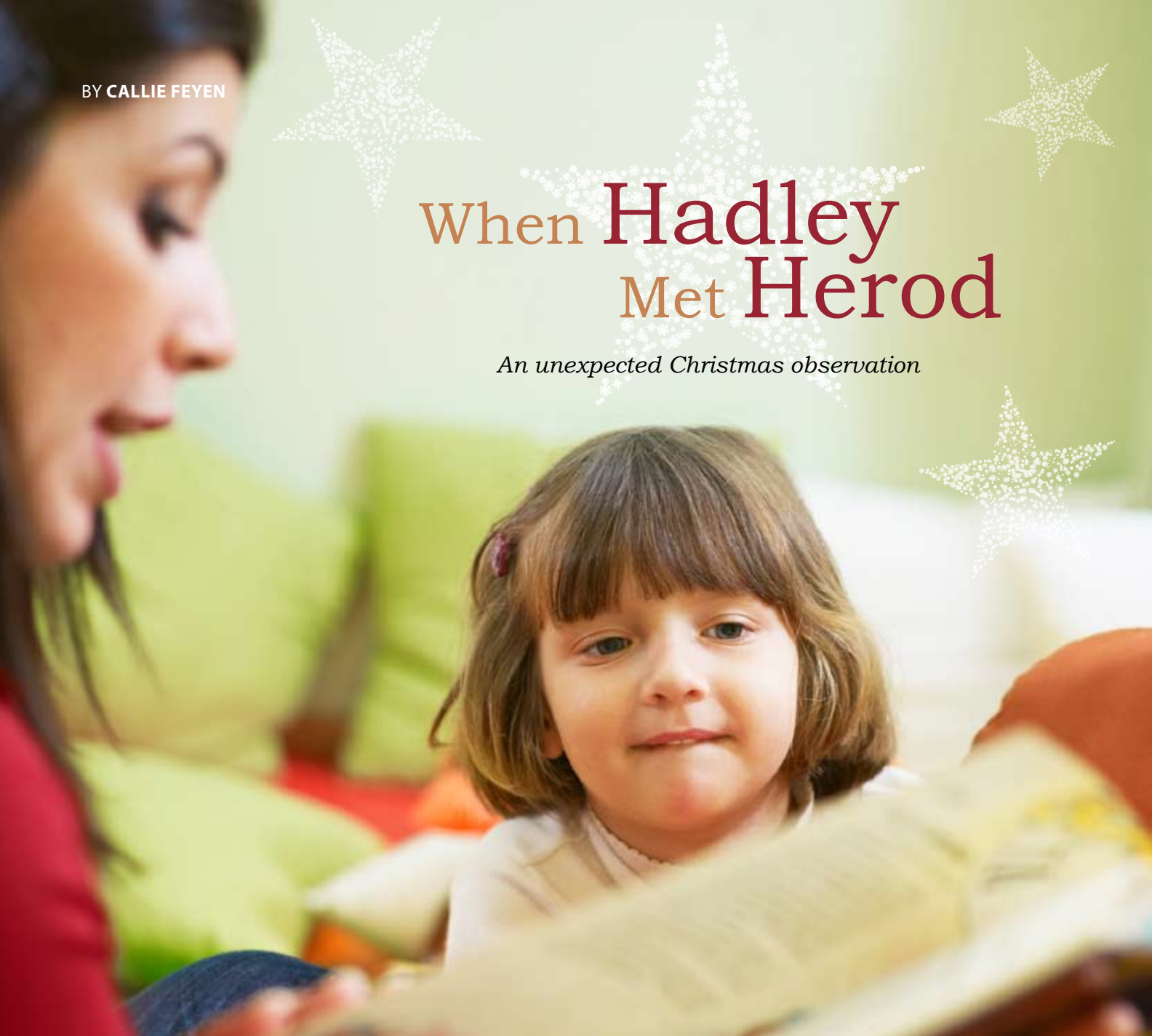
—Greg Mellema

*Dr. Gregory Mellema is a professor of philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. ■*

BY CALLIE FEYEN

# When Hadley Met Herod

*An unexpected Christmas observation*



**T**HE YEAR my oldest daughter turned 3, I decided to introduce the Christmas story to her. I gathered as many books as I could find, and during the months of November and December, we read the story of Jesus' birth together.

I was nervous about this endeavor. I wanted Hadley to know Jesus, but I didn't know if I was prepared to answer the questions she might ask: *Why do Mary and Joseph have to leave Nazareth? Why is Joseph upset that Mary is pregnant? What*

*is an angel, and how/why did he suddenly appear? (We have enough problems with sleep as it is; I'm not sure I want Hadley thinking Gabriel could make an appearance at any time.) Why did Jesus come in the first place? What is sin?*



Reading through the stories I've picked out, it seems that Jesus strikes Hadley as a really great baby, but I'm not sure she thinks he's any greater than her 1-year-old sister.

"What does Jesus do?" she asks me.

"Well, he's a baby right now, but everyone is so happy he's here," I say, wincing at my pathetic answer.

"Can he jump? Does he ride a tricycle?" Hadley wonders.

"Yes, eventually he will jump and do all the things you can do. But right now he's a baby, and we're celebrating his birth in these stories."

"Can we read the stories where Jesus jumps?"

I imagine Jesus and all the angels in heaven smacking their foreheads at my effort to teach this most important story.

## Herod, it turns out, is the person Hadley has the most questions about.

Then we get to King Herod.

Herod, it turns out, is the person Hadley has the most questions about: “Why is Herod mad?” “Why is he jealous?” “Why isn’t Herod smiling in the pictures?”

This disturbs me for two reasons. One, of all the characters in the story, Herod is the one who most captures Hadley’s interest. Two, of all the characters in the story, Herod is the one about whom I find I can answer the most questions.

“He’s angry because he doesn’t want to share,” I tell her. And, “He’s afraid that other people will take away something he thinks belongs to him.”

Frowning, Hadley studies the picture of Herod, then blows out some air.

“It is *hard* to share,” she says.

I agree.

“Sometimes I don’t want to do it,” she adds.

“I know,” I say, putting my hand on her head. I’m sad with Hadley. I’m sad because neither of us *wants* to identify with Herod, but we both know what it feels like to be angry and afraid, and we both know what it feels like to be jealous.



I think about the first few months after we brought Hadley’s younger sister, Harper, home from the hospital. Hadley was happy to see her and regarded her affectionately. But when Harper needed me and I had to stop what I was doing with Hadley to take care of Harper, things got difficult.

I remember one morning when Hadley woke up before Harper. She and I sat on the bedroom floor playing with puzzles together. I’d poured myself a cup of coffee and Hadley some juice, then put on a CD that she liked while we played. I sipped my coffee while watching her little hands flip a puzzle piece around and around to fit the spot she was working on.

Before too long, Harper woke up.

“Harper’s up, I better go get her,” I said, beginning to stand.

Hadley grabbed my leg and said, “No. Stay, Mommy.”

My heart broke. I didn’t want to disappoint her. And what’s more, I didn’t want to leave her either. I wanted to stay and

do puzzles and listen to the quiet voices of Peter, Paul, and Mary.

“It’s OK. I’ll be right back,” I said, trying to sound positive. But I’d be back with a baby—nursing her, changing her diaper, bouncing her up and down to keep her from crying. I couldn’t go back to playing puzzles. It wouldn’t be the same.

I sat down with Harper in the rocker in Hadley’s room and began to nurse. Hadley sat on the floor, cross-legged, with her head resting in her hands. And I started to cry.

Maybe jealousy comes from not understanding what’s going on. I knew that soon Harper would be following Hadley around and that the more they both grew, the more things they’d be able to do together. But Hadley didn’t understand that. Hadley didn’t understand that my husband and I had wanted to give her a sibling because we love her so much.

All Hadley knew at that moment was that her mom couldn’t play with her the way she used to or as much as she used to.

Maybe fear and frustration come from being unsure of what the future holds, or from refusing to accept the changes that are occurring even if they’re for the better.

My sweet little Harper was introducing herself to all of us, and we giggled at her wide-eyed expressions, her long legs that she liked to keep scrunched up, and her sporadic movements as she learned how to use her limbs. But that morning I mourned the loss of my time with Hadley, and I felt overwhelmed by the task of caring for an infant and a 2-year-old.



I don’t want to identify with Herod, and I don’t think Hadley does either. However, her questions give me a chance to reflect on someone I’d previously regarded as an inconvenient “blip” in this amazing story.

It had never occurred to me how easy it is to identify with Herod—and how much that makes Jesus’ birth essential.

Sitting on the couch together, my hand rubbing her back as we contemplate the difficulty of sharing, I hope I show Hadley a slice of God’s love for

her—God’s assurance that we can wrestle with our worst insecurities, bad habits, and fears and know that he still loves us. No matter what.



Hadley is now going on 4 and Harper on 2, and a lot has changed. One recent morning the three of us sat on the floor doing puzzles together. I had my coffee and the girls had their juice. Harper was taking out all the puzzle pieces and handing them to Hadley to put back in.

“Dank do,” Harper says as she hands Hadley a piece.

Hadley giggles and looks at me. “She’s not supposed to say ‘Thank you’ when she gives me a piece, Mama!”

I giggle too and shrug my shoulders. “I guess she thinks that’s what you’re supposed to say.”

The radio is on, and Landon Pigg is singing “Falling in Love at a Coffeeshop.” I lean in and watch my girls work, their eyes filled with concentration. I listen to their steady breathing. I study their hands. “I think that possibly, maybe I’m falling for you. Yes, there’s a chance that I’ve fallen quite hard over you. I’ve seen the paths that your eyes wander down. I wanna come too. . . .”

The Christmas story, like the rest of life, can be confusing. However, the one thing I am aware of as I read it over and over is that Jesus understands our fear, our jealousy, and our anger better than any of us. Jesus understands Hadley’s difficulty with sharing. Jesus understands my feelings of inadequacy about caring for two young children. Jesus understands the struggles Hadley and I had when things changed.

But Jesus has come, and he is here now. And as I watch the paths that my children’s eyes wander down, I know he will be with all of us. What’s more, I know he wants to come too. ■



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# { Confessions }



## Confessions: Why Have Them?

**T**O MANY PEOPLE a church confession seems like an extra layer of beliefs and teachings added to the multitude of beliefs and teachings found in Scripture. But, in fact, most church confessions are just the opposite.

The fundamental purpose of any good confession or creed is to summarize what is found in the Bible, not to add to it or complicate it.

Historically almost all Christian catechisms contain the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. From ancient times to our own day, this has been the universally accepted method of explaining the essential beliefs and teachings of Jesus and his apostles in a simple, organized way.

On the other hand, I've been involved with numerous Christian churches and organizations that don't have confessions or catechisms as part of their formal belief system. When I've asked them why they don't, the most common answer is that it just doesn't seem like a very spiritual thing to do. Confessions, catechisms, and the like seem so dry and intellectual and even extrabiblical.

Yet when asked what they believe, more often than not the answer depends on who is in control of that particular church's pulpit. And because the beliefs of these non-confessional churches depend on the personality in the pulpit, the direct result, I have found, is that the beliefs of these churches tend to fluctuate constantly.

To me it seems precarious, if not dangerous, to leave the teachings and interpretation of the Bible in the hands of one person—no matter how spiritual he or she may be. When a church's belief system depends on one leader's point of view, the church can easily become a personality cult rather than an extension of the faith and experience of the body of Christ.

In Matthew 28:18-20, the "Great Commission," we find a good example of a biblical text advocating an organized (confessional) approach to faith.

Here Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

I believe the Great Commission is our mission statement. It points to where the most energy of the church is to be focused and exerted: evangelism and

What we confess and believe today has been built on what has been confessed and believed over the past 2,000 years.

discipleship. Yet the final verse in this great mission statement tells us something more. Jesus makes us a promise. Jesus tells us that we are never left on our own when it comes to deciding what we believe: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

That's right; Jesus promises that he will always be with his church, throughout all of history. The church has never been on its own.

The apostle Paul writes about this in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15:

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and

someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved, even though only as one escaping through the flames.

In other words, Paul tells us, we should expect that what we confess and believe today has been built on what has been confessed and believed before us over the past 2,000 years.

Confessions lay down the precious building blocks of what the body of Jesus has believed and how it has interpreted Scripture from the early church to our day. They help us discern between the wood, hay, and straw of our faith and the costly stones. They express not only the voice of Scripture but the voice of the entire church that has existed before us in history—and, consequently, the voice of Jesus.

After all, didn't Jesus say in Matthew 18:19-20: "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them"?

To me, that statement is what a church confession is all about. »



**Rob Braun** is a salesman, a freelance writer, and a member and ministry associate of Bethel CRC, Princeton, Minn.

## Confessions: Caution and Concern

**WHAT DO** CliffsNotes, *Auto Mechanics for Dummies*, and our church confessions have in common?

They are all examples of summaries. Each takes a novel, a brake job, or the voice of the living God in the Bible and condenses it to what the authors believe to be most important.

Summaries are helpful. When an exam looms and you've run out of time to read *The Grapes of Wrath*, those notes are just what you need.

But summaries are also limited. If you read only a summary of Steinbeck's epic, you cheat yourself of the experience of being caught up in a grand narrative, of discovering insights into Depression-era life and human nature. You may pass the exam or write a paper that gets the grade you need, but you've missed out on a rich, possibly life-changing, experience.

We rightly treasure our confessions for their clarity of thought and their emphasis on the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We honor the experiences of those who forged them and the way they have shaped our faith for many generations.

As a confessional church, though, we have an uneasy relationship with new information that informs our faith. For example, our Form of Subscription for officebearers in the Christian Reformed Church outlines a detailed process for anyone who has ideas that may be at odds with the statements in our confessions. But it effectively puts our confessions on a high shelf behind glass and says, "You may believe and teach, but not touch."

While this does promote allegiance and conformity, it does not encourage active dialogue and engagement with our confessions. When there is no freedom to ask, wonder, and challenge, we may

lose confidence in our confessions and leave them on that high shelf.

I hope that the new Covenant for Officebearers, which would replace the old Form of Subscription if approved by synod, will strike a healthy balance between respect for our confessions and freedom to hear and follow our living Lord who still speaks through Scripture today.

Here are some cautions and concerns we need to consider:

### 1. The confessions are no substitute for the story.

The Bible is a story of unpredictable twists and turns: *Who would ever have thought that Abraham would pawn off his wife Sarah when they were in Egypt? Rahab was a what? Jesus commended the accoun-*

*tant who scammed his master?* These stories are not just background or supporting material for a doctrine of grace available to sinners. As narratives they twist and turn the grace of God into our hearts and convince us that God can call and use and save us too.

I know a young man who has strayed far from the faith that his parents, church, and school did their best to instill in him. He has been taught from the time he learned to talk that Jesus loves him and that Jesus died for him and rose for him. But that good news somehow never stuck with him. Lately, however, he has finally started to read the Bible for himself.

He is amazed at the stories. The messiness and the loose ends and the great, wild acts of God in those old stories

of pillars of salt, towers of Babel, and brothers who hate each other are bringing the good news home to him.

### 2. The confessions may be too "tight."

The Reformers loved to reduce and enumerate. But sometimes their lists may be a bit too condensed. The Heidelberg Catechism's summary about living under the care of our providential Father is beautiful and comforting (Lord's Day 10). We can be "patient, thankful, and confident." On the "patient when things go against us" point though, the catechism references only Job and James and recommends a passive response to the hardships of life.

Patience certainly has its place, but the catechism at this point seems to forget

## We have an uneasy relationship with new information that informs our faith.

the voice of the psalms, which teach us to cry out openly and actively to God. Could this be part of why we have lost the life-giving habit of lament?

There is value in trying to put the essence of our faith into words—we see that in Scripture itself—but it may also be that the broadness of the Bible is healthy and necessary for us.

### 3. The confessions impact how we hear the words of Scripture.

When Lord's Day 2 of the catechism teaches us about our alienation from God, it says, "I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor." Lord's Day 3 adds that we are "so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and are inclined toward all evil unless we are born again by the Spirit of God." This teaching stands



on the solid ground of Romans 3 and John 3. We are rightly cautious about any tendency to play down our sinfulness.

We must also be cautious about reading the catechism (or the apostle Paul) too quickly back into the narrative of Scripture.

Our congregation spent Advent to Ascension Day in the gospel of Luke. On the first page we met Zechariah and Elizabeth, who were “upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commandments blamelessly.” That is pretty high praise. What do we do with it?

Some commentators and preachers say, “But they were not *really* upright or blameless, because no one is.” Yet Luke tells us that Jesus comes into the world for sinners and for those who were “waiting for the consolation of Israel” (2:25).

We need to let the Bible be the Bible. If we do, we may find that God affirms his own created goodness in us more than we have come to expect.

#### 4. Confessions have a context.

I can still remember where I was sitting when my grade-eight teacher taught us that there is no such thing as pure objectivity. This does not mean that everything is up for debate and that there is no real truth to be found. Rather, it means that nothing comes to us in a vacuum and that every writer writes as a person of his or her time and context.

Christopher Hitchens, writing today against the Christian faith, and Ursinus and Olevianus as authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, each come from a particular context.

The catechism authors had a particular kind of confidence in the strength of logical argument and the power of reason that was in the air they breathed. Today we value their strengths (their appreciation for the seriousness of sin, for example), but we might not articulate the

faith in the same way now. Our context is different. In Scripture God speaks into our wired, pluralistic, hyper-frightened context today. We hear the voice of the living God as our confession writers did, but we hear God with ears tuned to qualities, tones, and even themes they may not have noticed or been able to hear in their day.

#### 5. Confessions need refreshing.

In the 500 years since the Reformation, the church has lived, learned, and suffered much. Biblical studies have swung in various directions and influenced the church in many ways. It is likely true that our confessions have helped to keep the church faithful to the gospel through times of change.

But here’s the rub. A great deal has been learned in recent years about the aims and claims of Pharaoh and the Egyptian gods, the Jewishness of Jesus, and how the gospel writers are “doing theology” rather than simply providing long introductions to the passion narratives. Today’s software tools alone help any student of the Bible to see and hear Scripture in ways that were unavailable just a few decades ago. *In any other discipline, new information is allowed to supplement and enhance what has been traditionally believed and understood.*

It is interesting to note that while our Reformed tradition places great value on the life of the mind and dares to lead scholarship in the humanities and sciences, when it comes to theology and our formulations of faith, we are less courageous.

#### Not New Concerns

It is one of the constant challenges of the church to listen to God in Scripture and to “re-form.” Jan Bonda, a Dutch Reformed pastor who died in 1997, wrote, “If the fathers of the Reformation empha-

sized one thing, it is our responsibility to search the Bible for ourselves, to see whether what has been transmitted to us by former generations does indeed harmonize with the Word of God.”

At this point Bonda references Christian martyr Guido de Bres, author of the Belgic Confession: “We must not consider human writings—no matter how holy their authors may have been—equal to the divine writings; nor may we put custom, nor the majority, nor age, nor the passage of time or persons, nor councils, decrees, or official decisions above the truth of God, for truth is above everything else. For all human beings are liars by nature and more vain than vanity itself” (Article 7, Belgic Confession).

Bonda goes on to say, “Therefore the church will always have the duty, while praying for the promise of the Spirit, to examine what has been taught by previous generations in the light of Scripture. If the church discovers that the Bible teaches something else it must have the courage to follow the Bible and abandon tradition. Respect for and gratitude to earlier generations does not free us from this task. In fact, this is precisely what they have charged us to do. Only if we do this will we deliver the faith of our parents and ancestors to the next generation as a living faith” (*The One Purpose of God*, Eerdmans, 1998).

To live well with our confessions we need the humility to keep actively listening to God in Scripture, the courage to be open with each other, the wisdom to be discerning, and the creativity that comes from grace. ■



Rev. John Luth is pastor of St. Albert Christian Reformed Church in Alberta.

## The Reason for the Season

December is upon us. Everywhere we turn, the sights, sounds, and smells of the season fill our senses. It's the time of year when shopping malls, families, and churches direct their attention toward one event: the day we call Christmas.

During my years as a pastor, I encountered this season with a strange blend of thoughts and emotions. I felt delight mingled with discomfort, excitement mixed with exhaustion, anticipation tempered by anxiety.

As I have experienced Christmas over the years, I have also come to recognize at least three distinct perspectives at play. I identify them as the *party*, *personal*, and *spiritual* perspectives.

*Party* finds its place in the glitz and glamor of the season. It is the part of Christmas that everyone has in common: the part that is evident in the crowded streets of our cities and the mobs that fill the malls in search of that perfect gift. It is the mixture of "Silent Night" and "Jingle Bells." It plays out in office parties and mistletoe. Its influence is widespread; an uptick or downturn in December retail sales can affect the entire North American economic system. It's the part of Christmas that some bemoan but most engage with enthusiasm.

This *party* perspective seems to shape much of our understanding and certainly most of our culture as we reflect on what Christmas has become. While we may wish for something deeper, the reality is that even the most devout among us are impacted by and engaged in the *party*.

The *personal* perspective during the Christmas season contrasts sharply with *party*. It might also be identified as the emotional or nostalgic side of Christmas, and is often characterized by family gatherings where food is enjoyed, gifts are exchanged, and children or grandchildren take center stage. The aroma of well-prepared food recalls memories of simpler, better times. We exchange cards and notes with old friends.

Those who are no longer with us are often foremost on our minds.

This *personal* engagement with Christmas most often forms our perceptions of what Christmas is and should be. While sometimes this perspective is overly sentimental, it's often the one that touches us most deeply.

However, there is one other perspective that deserves our attention as we reflect on the holiday. It is the element of Christmas often caught in the phrase "the reason for the season." The

*spiritual* side of Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, Savior of the world. This single historical event set the stage for and is the center of everything that Christmas has become.

As Christ-followers, we celebrate the birth of Jesus in the light of his crucifixion and resurrection. Christmas is not first of all a *party* or even *personal*—it is a time of praise and thanksgiving. In his unconditional love, God sent his one and only Son to live among us. As John articulated

so well, Jesus came to dwell among us; he pitched his tent in our neighborhood. This act of incarnation is what gives meaning to our lives today and through eternity.

The parties and celebrations certainly have their place. They add excitement and joy, and the emotions that well up in our hearts as we gather with family and friends ought to be relished. These are gifts that flow from God's greatest gift: his Son.

But it is my hope that each of you will experience anew the celebration of Jesus' birth, the joy of the world. It is my prayer that you will know the incredible gift of grace. May the wind of the Holy Spirit blow away the fog of commercialism and sentimentalism so that you may see Christmas in the bright radiance of God's love. ■



“Jesus pitched his tent in our neighborhood.”



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

## Church Goes Green for Missions

A few years ago, leaders of Ada (Mich.) CRC wanted to do a special project to teach kids about recycling and get them excited about supporting missions.

Starting with a summer vacation Bible school project, the leaders encouraged kids to collect pop cans and bottles. Since the church already had a mission partnership with Rev. Paul Mpindi, Back to God Ministry International's French ministry leader, the profits of the recycling project were given to support Mpindi's



Maria Vaandrager (left) and Sarah Faasse join Ada CRC's efforts to raise support for BTGMI's African Marketplace Ministry.

Marketplace Ministry in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Then the whole church (and some neighbors) got excited about fundraising

through recycling and put a "Paper Gator" bin in the church parking lot for paper recycling. A local recycling company pays the church for the paper collected.

In addition to the pop can and paper recycling projects, the church sponsored a health walk to raise support for the ministry in Africa. So far, the church has raised \$7,000 for Mpindi's ministry. For more information on how to get involved in missions projects, check out [BacktoGod.net/get-involved](http://BacktoGod.net/get-involved). ■

—Nancy Vander Meer,  
Back to God Ministries  
International

## From Horoscopes to Devotions

Most of Katia's colleagues at the call center where she works in Brazil were checking the daily horoscope, wondering how their day would go.

But Katia spent time reading something else: *Cada Dia*, the daily devotional put out by Back to God Ministries International's Portuguese ministry team.

"Something amazing happened," Katia recently reported to BTGMI.

She had made it a habit to leave *Cada Dia* visible on her desk each day. One day when her coworkers couldn't find the newspaper to read their horoscope, a colleague asked if she could read Katia's devotional for that day. Then others picked it up.

Katia observed: "Each person was surprised with the message that was coming to her eyes. Even a colleague who follows Candomblé (a religion of African origin) took the booklet and read it. . . . Now my coworkers compete for the *Cada Dia* to see what it says each day!"

As a result Katia requested 10 additional copies of the monthly *Cada Dia* to share with her coworkers. "I am very happy about this. I sold nothing, but I saw victory with the interest in God's Word—which is truthful and not guesswork, like a horoscope."

With support from BTGMI donors, nearly 30,000 people in Brazil receive the printed *Cada Dia* daily devotional each month. ■

—Back to God Ministries International



Katia shares BTGMI's daily devotional with her coworkers.

## January Series Features Impressive Lineup

The 24th annual *January Series* of lectures hosted by Calvin College will run Jan. 5 through Jan. 25, 2011, in the college's newly remodeled Covenant Fine Arts Center.

The lineup includes presentations from Cal Ripken Jr., a Hall of Fame baseball player; Temple Grandin, an associate professor of animal science at Colorado State University and one of *Time* magazine's "Heroes" in the 2010 list of the world's most influential people; Jessica Jackley, co-founder of Kiva, the world's first peer-to-peer microloan website; and Theary Seng, who escaped the Khmer Rouge and now works for social justice in Cambodia.

The series is also expanding its remote webcasts to 30 locations continent-wide and will also expand overseas into Lithuania. For a complete list of sites and a lineup of the award-winning speakers, visit the January Series website at [www.calvin.edu/january](http://www.calvin.edu/january). The lectures will be held from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Admission is free, and all talks are open to the public. ■

—Matt Kuchinski,  
Calvin College

## Chaplain Responds, "Yes, Lord!"

Training to be a hospital chaplain, Rev. Curt Roelofs worked in psychiatric wards and with the substance abuse team at Harper Hospital in Detroit.

He loved it, feeling he was right where he was supposed to be. He remembers the first time he heard his name paged over the intercom: he was so surprised that he answered, "Yes, Lord!"

Roelofs says he never dreamed he would end up working as a hospital chaplain serving under the auspices of the CRC's Chaplaincy and Care Ministry office.

Although he planned to be a chemical engineer, the Lord had other plans that took him to seminary, then called him

to pastor two CRC congregations, and, finally, to enter hospital chaplaincy.

He found the training rigorous and challenging. One exercise he particularly remembers was an emotionally draining death-and-dying workshop in which he was asked to imagine getting a fatal diagnosis of cancer and what that might mean.

In 1981, Roelofs took a full-time job at St. John Providence Hospital in Detroit, where he has had a full and satisfying ministry.

Over the years, he said, he has blessed and baptized babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care unit and been with families during the "sacred

time" when their loved one is weaned off a ventilator so he or she can die peacefully.

Roelofs has been asked to perform marriage ceremonies for patients and to officiate at funerals.

As he celebrates 40 years in the ministry, he says his story is "one of God's faithfulness and leading." A coworker wrote, "He has inspired many, given hope in times of anxiety, and been compassionate and loving to everyone to whom he ministered." ■

—CRC Chaplaincy and Care Ministry

## Coffee Connection in Indonesia

Indonesia natives Harold and Deibi Lopian moved to Dover, N.H., in 2002 to plant Indonesian Fellowship CRC, a Home Missions-supported church. Since that time, they've ministered to the more than 1,000 Indonesian immigrants who reside in Dover.

But this past summer their ministry expanded to another level. Deibi and others were invited by denominational leadership in Indonesia to visit the country and talk about Coffee Break, part of Home Missions' small groups ministry. Deibi, along with Pastor Brent and Diane Averill from New Covenant CRC in Hampton, N.H., traveled with Home Missions Small Group and Coffee Break coach Sam Huizenga to Central Java, Jakarta, Bali, and Sulawesi.

More than 1,500 leaders met with the group led by Deibi Lopian in North Sulawesi. Soon, Deibi will also meet with another group of 600 pastors and church planters in Bali.

As a result of the trip, translation of Coffee Break study materials into Indonesian has begun, with some materials to be made available in spring 2011.

God is at work in Dover too. More and more people of Indonesian Fellowship are attending and training as leaders in the Coffee Break ministry, in which the message of salvation is shared and lives are changed.

Extending the ministry to literal coffee breaks, Harold Lopian has made himself available to introduce people to Christ at the local Dunkin' Donuts coffee shop. One day he struck up a conversation with a customer, realized the man was an unbeliever, shared the Word of God, and a new Christian was born.

Whether in Bali or Dover, the Lord is at work through Coffee Break. Through coffee and conversations, Jesus' good news is being shared and received. ■

—Laura Posthumus, Home Missions



Yoshi Michi Momoe is studying to be an evangelist.

## A Seeker and an Evangelist in Japan

George and Ruth Young have worked in Japan with Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) for almost 30 years. During the past few years, George has developed a friendship with “Tom,” a Shinto priest, and Yoshi Michi Momoe, a young Christian.

George met Tom in a doughnut shop two years ago. Their casual conversation turned into a firm friendship.

Occasionally, Tom has accepted George’s invitation to attend Higashi Kawaguchi Church, part of the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ). Each time, Tom has warned George that he isn’t “the type to join in.”

But recently, George received a surprising phone call from Tom, who had found out that his father was born in the area where Japan’s first-known missionary lived and worked in the 1500s.

“Tom seems to have been shaken by his discovery that somewhere in his family’s roots there may very well have been a connection with Christianity, which was stamped out by the ruthless persecution that followed,” says George.

Since his discovery, Tom has attended a special evangelistic event at Higashi Kawaguchi Church. His deeper interest in Christianity is encouraging, and George hopes a more complete change in Tom’s life may be coming.

Yoshi Michi Momoe is one Japanese man who’s taken up the torch. A nurseryman and a creator of traditional Japanese gardens, Yoshi Michi recently felt called to become a “tentmaking” evangelist in the RCJ. He now commutes to the Reformed Theological Institute in Tokyo during his off-hours and travels in the opposite direction to a small evangelistic station in Fukushima, two hours north of Tokyo by bullet train.

“The [CRWM Japan team] has always tried to work closely with Japanese pastors and evangelists, sometimes employing them, sometimes working under their direction,” says George. “Missionaries are still very much needed and called for by the church here, but people like Yoshi Michi are many times more effective than people like me.” ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort,  
Christian Reformed World Missions

## Seminary Dedicates DeVos Lifelong Learning Center

Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) dedicated its new DeVos Center for Lifelong Learning in a chapel service that included faculty, staff, students, and a host of seminary friends and donors. Richard and Helen DeVos were present to receive the special thanks of the seminary community for their gift that made possible the renovation of the seminary auditorium, an expanded foyer area, the Upper Room (the former coffee shop or quiet study area—depending on which century you were a student at CTS), and the interior courtyard.

The Center for Lifelong Learning represents the heart of CTS’s continuing education program. In 2009 nearly 5,000 people attended CTS-sponsored or co-sponsored learning events. More than half of those people were attending Center for Excellence in Preaching events, a key anchor of the seminary’s continuing education efforts.

With its “smart classroom” technology, the center extends the reach of the seminary beyond the renovated spaces. Last year 38,000 people accessed the audio and video special lectures archive on CTS’s website ([www.calvinseminary.edu](http://www.calvinseminary.edu)). And the Center for Excellence in Preaching’s website based there serves more than 10,000 visitors per month with more than 25,000 pages of material.

The dedication service offered the opportunity for both President Neal Plantinga and President-elect Jul Medenblik to lead the seminary in gratitude to God for the ministry opportunities provided by this new space.

For pictures of the event and the renovated facilities, visit CTS on Facebook. ■

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



# Spreading Holiday Cheer

*"Deck the halls with boughs of holly, fa la la la la, la la la la. 'Tis the season to be \_\_\_\_\_..."*

What word would you use to fill in the blank? *Jolly? Happy? Joyful? Grate-*

*ful?* This time of year is filled with happy tunes, sparkling ornaments, and delicious hot cocoa on brisk winter nights. Oh, what fun! But sometimes we forget what this time of year is *really* about—spreading the wonderful news of Jesus

to those around us. Ask your family or friends to try at least one of the following activities with you as a way to share God's love with others. Not only will you spread holiday cheer, you will shine the light of Jesus!



## Sweet News

Bake some homemade Christmas treats. Put the treats on paper plates and cover them with colorful plastic wrap to give to your neighbors. If you enjoy writing, write a special note to go with the goodies. Be sure to let your neighbors know the true meaning of this special season—Jesus coming to the world!

## OR

Hold a Christmas bake sale at your church or school. Ask an adult to help you make fliers to tell others when the bake sale will be, and ask friends and family to help you make Christmas cookies, brownies, and other goodies to sell. Give the money you raise to an organization like Christian Reformed World Missions, which tells people around the world about the love of Jesus—and teaches others how to share it too! (See [www.crwm.org](http://www.crwm.org).)



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

## Tons of Toys

Do you have tons of toys sitting around that you no longer play with? Pick out the best ones and take them to a local donation center or thrift store. You'll be glad you did!

Toys for Tots is another great way to spread cheer to children who might not receive a gift on Christmas morning. Use some of your allowance money to buy toys for another child, or ask your teacher about starting a donation box in your classroom. An adult can help you look up Toys for Tots drop-off locations at [toysfortots.org](http://toysfortots.org). If you live in Canada, see [grandtoy.com](http://grandtoy.com).



## Singing from the Heart

Do you enjoy holiday tunes? Do you play a musical instrument? Good! Ask your family and friends about getting together to sing Christmas carols to and with people who live in a retirement home. You will lift people's spirits and make them feel special.



## Incredible Edible Nativity

Try making this scrumptious nativity scene to share with family members or neighbors. Don't forget to share the miraculous story of Jesus' birth as you give it away!

### What you need:

- a sturdy paper plate
- a plastic knife
- two whole graham crackers (unbroken)
- a can of frosting or a tube of royal icing
- a small marshmallow
- Keebler Elf cookies (or small gingerbread cookies)
- animal crackers
- one handful of crushed Shredded Wheat (optional)
- sprinkles (optional)

### What to do:

1. Break the graham crackers in half and set aside the four half-pieces. If you wish, decorate them with colored frosting and sprinkles. Wait for the frosting to dry before continuing with the next steps.
2. Using a plastic knife, spread frosting along the edges of three of the crackers, and "glue" them together to form a three-walled stable (see picture). "Glue" the stable to the center of your paper plate with more frosting.
3. Take the remaining graham cracker and place it on top of the walls of the stable to form a roof. Add more frosting if necessary.
4. Spread frosting near the entrance of the stable, and place a marshmallow in front of the stable as a manger.
5. Place two Keebler Elf cookies on either side of the manger—these cookies will be Mary and Joseph. Add more cookies if you want to include shepherds in your nativity scene.
6. Place a few animal crackers around the manger to represent the animals in the stable. Sprinkle Shredded Wheat around the nativity scene for hay.
7. Let your nativity scene dry completely, then cover in plastic wrap to give as a gift to someone. What a tasty way to share the Christmas story!

## You Can Do It!

What are your favorite foods to eat during the holidays? Corn, stuffing, mashed potatoes? Ask your friends and family to help you collect canned and boxed food for your local food pantry.

## Christmas Cards

Spread Christ's love by designing your own Christmas cards. Use construction paper, glitter, sequins, markers, and other materials to make your own beautiful creations. Inside your cards write special messages like "Jesus is our reason for the season!" or "God brings joy to the world." Give your cards to neighbors, relatives, friends, or classmates.



## Soup for the Soul

Thousands of people in North America don't have a warm place to sleep. Many missions and soup kitchens that provide warm beds and hot meals for countless families welcome the extra help of volunteers during this busy season—and all year round. Or consider making your very own soup to give to others!



## Snow Service

If you live in a snowy place, spread God's love by shoveling your neighbors' driveway and sidewalk for free. They will greatly appreciate your kind heart and hard work. Make sure to ask your parents for permission—or invite them to join you!



Christin Baker is a full time stay-at-home mom who writes part time for Faith Alive. She and her family live in Grand Rapids, Mich.

## The Awesomeness of Dr. Who



**IT MUST BE A THANKLESS JOB** to write for a sci-fi TV show. After all, these programs frequently end up with an afterlife inversely proportional to their original run (name another '60s show that has mattered for as long as "Star Trek," or was treated as shabbily by its network). "Kid stuff," the critics sneer. But sci-fi shows, by the very nature of their story materials, end up raising serious philosophical questions: What is time? What is reality? What is the value of our species?

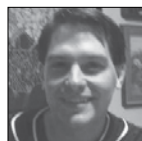
Take "Doctor Who," the British time-travel series that ran from 1963 to 1989 and again—with more consistent results—from 2005 to the present. The Doctor is an otherwise-nameless adventurer from the planet Gallifrey who, when fatally wounded, turns into another

**The Doctor seems more impressed with our capacity for loyalty and kindness than with anything else in his vast universe.**

actor—ahem, generates a new body—thus posing the mind-body-soul problem in a fairly stark form. Is the regenerated Doctor still the Doctor? His life, constantly crossing and recrossing itself, is one long logical paradox, which raises again all those fun questions about time that Augustine spends Book X of *Confessions* worrying his bulging head over. During the show's stellar fifth season, now out on DVD (can you say "stocking stuffer"?), the Doctor seems to be falling in love with a woman who knows him already—in his future.

But what I love most, besides the smarter-than-"Lost" scripts and the warmly manic performance of the current Doctor, Matt Smith, is the Doctor's never-flagging admiration for the human heart, even at the edge of space-time.

For all the show's popularity among militant atheists—Richard Dawkins did a disarmingly funny guest spot in the Season Four finale—the Doctor seems more impressed with humans' capacity for loyalty and kindness than with anything else in his vast universe. This makes the show a wonderful, humane antidote to the "Space cares nothing for your flimsy human values!" rhetoric one often finds in bad sci-fi. It's clever enough to realize that a robust appreciation for human beings leads you straight into questions science alone can't solve. (BBC Warner) ■



**Philip Christman Jr.** teaches composition at North Carolina Central University and attends St. Titus Episcopal Church in Durham, N.C.



## My Room in the Trees

by **The Innocence Mission**  
reviewed by **Allison Backous**

The Innocence Mission explores grief, longing, and hope in their new album, "My Room in the Trees." Karen Peris' soft voice glides over the songs, which recount days spent with her children, the blessing of morning light, and the "summer of a hard year." This is another lyrical masterpiece from the beloved band, whose quiet melodies hang on rich words: "Everything that has been broken you'll mend/throughout the morning of one day . . . and we'll shout, shout for joy." (Badman Recording)

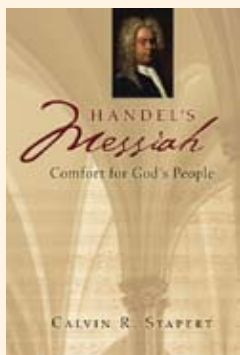
## What's in the Bible?

reviewed by **Ron DeBoer**



From VeggieTales creator Phil Visscher comes this 13-disc set of humans, cartoons, and puppets that are designed to teach kids the essentials needed to know and understand God's plan for humankind. Buck Denver (Man of News!), the Sunday School Lady and her flannel-graph, and Michael the Backseat Critic will teach kids every book of the Bible in a fun way. As with Jim Henson's successful formula of capturing both kids and parents (think "Sesame Street" and "The Muppet Show") "What's In The Bible?" will have the whole family laughing and learning. DVDs 1-4 are available now. Ages 5-9. (Jellyfish Labs)





## Handel's *Messiah*: Comfort for God's People

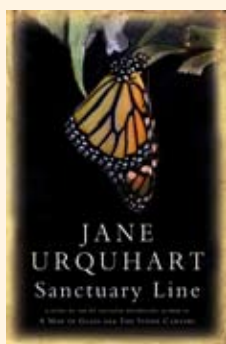
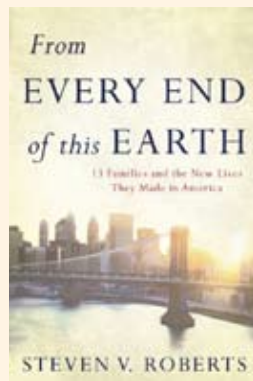
by Calvin R. Stapert  
reviewed by Randy Engle

Many books about Handel's *Messiah* focus narrowly on its music. For example, Handel borrowed from his own previous works to compose *Messiah* in record time. Other texts focus on Charles Jennens, the librettist for *Messiah*, who was equal parts theologian and poet. But in this book, Stapert explains how Handel's music and Jennens's text partner together in *Messiah* to have spiritual impact and lasting appeal. Hallelujah! (Eerdmans)

## From Every End of This Earth: 13 Families and the New Lives They Made in America

by Steven V. Roberts  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

At a time when immigration is a hot topic, Roberts celebrates the strength, character, and contributions of newcomers. He shares the stories of 13 families consisting of professionals, international entrepreneurs, survivors of war and genocide, and business owners. As he relates their painful experiences before and after coming to America, he convincingly argues that "these immigrants are like the sun and the rain to America; they replenish our soil and our spirit." (HarperCollins)



## Sanctuary Line

by Jane Urquhart  
reviewed by Jim Romahn

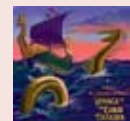
Five generations of Butlers carve fields out of southernmost Ontario forests, plant orchards, and finally sell parcels for urban development. Throughout those generations, readers witness secrets, tragedies, unrequited love, and seasons of sunshine and glory, ending in an astonishing revelation. Like the Monarch butterflies who take five generations to make the round trip of their migration, 40-year-old Liz returns to the old farmhouse. Monarchs form a constant backdrop for this polished novel by one of Canada's most talented authors. (McClelland & Stewart)

## The Hidden Boy

by Jon Berkely  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Bea is excited about going with her family on the Blue Moon Once-in-a-Lifetime Adventure Holiday. However, while traveling on an underwater bus to the fantasy land, Bea's brother is lost. The family desperately searches for Theo. When Grandmother tells Bea that she is the one with the gift to find him, Bea is both frightened and spurred on in her quest. How she succeeds and what she learns about life and love are the subjects of this creatively-plotted, fast-paced, and sometimes humorous novel for children. Ages 8-12. (Katherine Tegen Books)

## THE LOWDOWN



### Back to Narnia:

Join Lucy, Edmund, and their cousin

Eustace as they ship out for another adventure. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* sails into theaters this month. (Walden)



### Year of Prayer:

*Seeking God's Face* by Philip F. Reinders is not your average devotional

book. A year of Bible readings and directed prayer offer a structure for meditation in the tradition of the "daily office." (Faith Alive/CICW/Baker Books)



### Seasonal Music:

After Bob Dylan released a Christmas album last

year, we thought we'd seen it all. We were wrong. This year's varied Christmas entries include "Britain's Got Talent" standout Susan Boyle, Stone Temple Pilots' lead singer Scott Weiland, folk duo Indigo Girls, professional celebrity Jessica Simpson, alternative Christian band Future of Forestry, country star Carrie Underwood, '90s girl group Wilson Phillips, Christian '90s girl group Point of Grace, Christian rocker Dave Barnes, and even a new one from Bing Crosby. Take your pick.

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



## A Modest Proposal

**IN THIS COLUMN** we've reflected all year long on the confessions held by the Christian Reformed Church. This was timely because the CRC must soon decide on a new Form of Subscription—the document signed by officebearers in every congregation to indicate their agreement with the teachings of our creeds and confessions. At issue: how tightly should we bind our leaders to these creeds? Should we insist on verbatim compliance, or should we drop the “sign on” procedure entirely?

That's a tough question because two key roles of the confessions are in constant tension: (1) their foundational status as the documents that gave birth to our faith community and (2) their ongoing role as “arbiter” of our continued and shared orthodoxy.

That first function—of serving as our constitutional documents—compels us to keep them as is. The creeds and confessions act as historical way markers, clearly showing us the direction this branch of Christ's church took at a critical juncture. The latter function—serving as a test of fidelity to

age. It's this tension that I keep picking up on in conversations about the topic. Might we do two things to resolve this?

First, we could take a leaf out of the Reformed Church in America's playbook. That denomination shares our creeds and confessions but doesn't favor changing or updating them; it allows them to play only that first role of grounding the church's teachings in history without requiring strict adherence.

Second, we could elevate *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* (already long since adopted by the CRC) to a higher level by making it the document that the new form of Subscription asks CRC officebearers to sign on to. That Testimony addresses very well the concerns raised above with respect to the historical creeds. And as a *Contemporary Testimony* it's regularly revised and updated, so it will stay in step with the world in which we find ourselves as a church.

Some worry that agreeing to a dynamic testimony rather than static, historically-fixed documents will lead to doctrinal

Some worry that agreeing to a **dynamic testimony** rather than static, historically-fixed documents will lead to doctrinal chaos. I don't.

Reformed doctrine—requires an extensive revision of those historical documents and of the collection as a whole. Why? For a number of reasons:

- We no longer hold to a number of things clearly stated and taught in them—things we now consider embarrassing and unbiblical (see footnotes to Belgic Confession Article 36 and Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 80).
- While we may still uphold the teachings of the confessions, their formulation and argumentation no longer serve our purposes well today: language, modes of thought, context, and even Bible translations and interpretations have changed significantly.
- Many crucial issues demanding our confessional response aren't even mentioned in the confessions: secularism, racism, the modern welfare state, and the global economy.

The more we keep the confessions the same, the better they root us historically. But the more we change or add to them, the better they serve as doctrinal standards for this day and

chaos. I don't. The Scriptures remain our only rule for faith and life. The Holy Spirit within our churches continues to lead us to bring to expression the living faith that is rooted in our hearts. And we would still be guided by our historic confessions as we keep redrafting our Contemporary Testimony.

This two-step approach would make it unnecessary to adopt the Belhar Confession or any other—we could place appropriate language in the Testimony to chime in with such confessions, but within our own specific context.

A modest proposal—what do you think? We'd love to hear your thoughts on it. ■ **WEB Q'S**



Rev. Bob De Moor is editor of *The Banner*; a pastor for West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta; and an enthusiastic Heidelberg Catechism teacher.

**Advertising Information**

**Deadlines:** January 2011 issue is 12/6/11; February 2011 issue is 1/3/11. Visit [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org) for complete details.

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**Denominational and Classical Announcements**

**Church's 100th Anniversary**

**NORTH BLENDON CRC** Hudsonville MI will be celebrating 100 years on Nov 30 2010. Pastors Paul Hoekstra and Jack VanMarion will be preaching on Nov 28 and pastors Marvin VanDonselaar and Ron Meyer will be preaching on Dec 5. Nov 30 will be a night of celebration for community. All friends and past members are invited to attend any of the services. More information can be found on the church website [www.nbcrc.org](http://www.nbcrc.org) or by calling the church at 616-895-6434 and speaking to our pastor Aaron Vriesman.

**Available for Call**

**THE COUNCIL OF WOODLAWN CRC** would like to announce to the churches that Reverend William Zeilstra is available for call. We think Reverend Zeilstra is experienced and gifted and we commend him to the churches for their consideration.

**Candidates for the Ministry**

**QUALIFYING PERSONS** who wish to be candidates in 2011 for ordained CRC ministry should request application procedures by December 15, 2010. For further information, please email Karlene Werner at [kaw5@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:kaw5@calvinseminary.edu) or write her at Calvin Theological Seminary, 3233 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

**Eligible for Call**

We are pleased to announce that Jason E. DeVries 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

**Financial Aid**

**Classis Grand Rapids South** invites students from their Classis who are planning to pursue full-time ministry in the CRC (undergraduate or graduate level) and are in need of financial assistance for the academic year 2011-2012 to apply for a classical grant. Applications must be received prior to February 15, 2011. For information and application forms, please contact Rev. Paul Sausser by phone at 616-530-9143, or by email at [pastorpaul@discoverycrc.org](mailto:pastorpaul@discoverycrc.org).

**Meetings of Classis**

**CLASSIS GEORGETOWN** will hold its February 2011 meeting at the Fairway CRC. The church is located at 1165 – 44th Street in Jenison, MI. The meeting will begin at 7 PM. All items for the agenda must be received by January 7, 2011. Harold Postma, Clerk of Classis

**CLASSIS ZEELAND** will meet on Thursday, January 20, 2011, 4PM, at the North St. CRC of Zeeland. Agenda deadline is December 9. -Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, Stated Clerk

**Congregational Announcements**

**CHANGE IN WORSHIP TIME** Bethany CRC, Gallup, NM, now has two Sunday morning services, at 8:30 and 11:00 am.

**COMING TO FLORIDA THIS WINTER?** Visit us at our Central Florida CRC-RCA Ministry We are located in the Winter Haven/Orlando area. Services November - April. Enjoy our warm hospitality! Check us out at our website [www.lakealfredministry.org](http://www.lakealfredministry.org) Or email [jemoes@peoplepc.com](mailto:jemoes@peoplepc.com) Or call 616-784-7014 or 863-294-3453 (Florida)

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

**Birthdays**

**100th Birthday**

Jacob (Jack) Heerema, born in Orange City, Iowa and now living at 935 Oakwood Lane, Jenison, MI, 49428 looks forward to celebrating his 100th birthday on December 20. God has richly blessed him and his family. His four children, 11 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren will be with him to celebrate. His late wife, Thelma (Vredevoogd) and his infant son, James left this life before him. An open house is being held at Oak Crest of Jenison on Saturday, December 18 from 2-4:00. Family and friends are invited.

**95th Birthday**

**HELEN VAN DUYN** @Terrace Manor 1400 Thresher Dr Dell Rapids SD 57022 will be 95 on December 31. Her children Loren (Judi), Keith (Shirley), Ivan (Bonnie) and Lois (Roger) along with 13 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren thank God for her love, faith and encouragement.

**90th Birthday**

**EILEEN M. JENSEN DEVRIES** of 1215 Fay Avenue Grand Rapids MI 49504 celebrated her 90th birthday on November 5. Her husband John and her children and spouses Carol (Jerry) Buteyn, Kathy (Jerry) Vander Zwaag, and Pat (Doug) Door along with many of her 9 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren celebrated together on November 25. We thank God for her 90 years of love, faith, compassion and encouragement.

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## DORDT COLLEGE Faculty Positions

Dordt College is seeking applications for the following areas beginning August 2011:

- Computer Science
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- Economics
- Education
- Engineering
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Political Studies
- Psychology (non-clinical)

### Organic Chemistry (August 2012 or earlier)

Application reviews will begin immediately. Qualified persons committed to a Reformed, Biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Erik Hoekstra, Provost  
 Dordt College  
 498 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE  
 Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697  
 Fax: (712) 722-6035  
 E-mail: [provost@dordt.edu](mailto:provost@dordt.edu)  
 Web: [www.dordt.edu/prospective\\_employees/faculty/](http://www.dordt.edu/prospective_employees/faculty/)

*Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.*

## Church Positions Announcements

### Church Positions Available

BC Church Seeks Pastor The Bridge Community Church (CBC) located in beautiful Langley, British Columbia, has initiated a search for a full-time pastor with strengths in challenging and relevant preaching, mentoring and leadership. Our comprehensive profile will introduce you to this interesting progressive church. Please check us out at [www.bridgelangley.org/applicants](http://www.bridgelangley.org/applicants)

CAMPUS MINISTER at the University of Northern BC in Prince George, BC Canada. We welcome ordained and non-ordained applicants with advanced academic degrees to consider leading this flourishing ministry at a young university with an exciting and diverse population. For a job description and application details, please contact Dr. Ted Binnema (Chair of the Search Committee) [binnemat@unbc.ca](mailto:binnemat@unbc.ca). Applications submitted before 15 December 2010 are guaranteed consideration.

First CRC in Ripon, CA is seeking a full-time Director of Youth Ministries who will be responsible for the junior high and high school ministries of our church. Those interested in learning more or would like to receive a job description please contact the church office at [office@riponfirstcrc.org](mailto:office@riponfirstcrc.org) or 209-599-3225.

Pastor: Immanuel CRC of Cornwall, Ont., is seeking a full time Pastor who will enable & encourage spiritual growth, provide effective Bible-based messages & help us share the love of God. For more info & to obtain our Church Profile, send inquiries to Immanuel CRC, Attn: Dianne Kuipers, Sec. of the Search Committee, 2264 Pitt Street, Cornwall, ON, K6K 1A3 or [icrc@cogeco.net](mailto:icrc@cogeco.net)

Lead Pastor-Grand Rapids, MI Oakdale Park CRC is seeking candidates for the position of Lead Pastor. OPC is a progressive community of believers located in a multi-ethnic urban neighborhood in the heart of Grand Rapids Southeast side. Our congregation shares a deep desire to be a light for Christ in the Oakdale neighborhood, our city and our world. Qualified candidates will demonstrate excellence in teaching, an ability to identify and develop leaders within the congregation, and an ability to champion our vision of being a multi-cultural congregation. To view a complete job description and church profile, please visit [www.oakdaleparkchurch.org](http://www.oakdaleparkchurch.org), or email [oakdaleparkpastorsearch@oakdaleparkchurch.org](mailto:oakdaleparkpastorsearch@oakdaleparkchurch.org).

**EVADENA ROOSE** of 408 Jefferson St., Room 121, Pella, IA 50219 celebrates her 90th birthday on Dec. 3. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren thank God for her daily Christian example and her faith in Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior.

**FLORENCE NICOLAI** of 887 Oakcrest Ln, Jenison, MI 49428 will celebrate her 90th birthday on December 11 with an open house from 2 to 4PM at Oakcrest's Maplewood manor, Jenison. Her 5 children and their spouses, 12 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren give praise and thanks to God for the blessing she has been to our family.

**FRED GREIDANUS (FEITE)** born Dec. 3, 1920, residing at 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S, PT 202, Brampton, ON L6Y 5A7. This is his testimony as we celebrate: "Great was, and is, His faithfulness. Beyond expectation did He bless us, undeserved. He did show The way that we till now could go. Then there is the promise of eternal rest; And with that in sight, I am truly blessed!"

**HAROLD TERPSTRA** of 14905 Bothell Everett Hwy, #102, Mill Creek, WA 98012 celebrated his 90th birthday Nov. 22, 2010. Wives: Harriet (deceased 1992), Nancy. Children: Ken & Shirley, Judith & Allen, Glenn (deceased) & Diane. 9 grandchildren, 10 great grandchildren. Thanks be to God for His continuous blessings.

**HARRIET KUIPERS** (DeHoek Keyzer) 7320 Royal Ridge SE Caledonia, MI 49316 will celebrate her 90th birthday on December 22. Her children and grandchildren thank God for His faithfulness to her and for her Christian example to them. A celebration with family and friends will be held on December 26.

**JACOB HASPER** of 2121 Raybrook St. SE, Apt C-229, Grand Rapids, MI 49546-5793, will celebrate his 90th birthday on December 4, 2010. **His family is thankful for God's faithfulness and many blessings.**

**KEES KRABBE** 3211 Canmore Rd NW Calgary AB T2M 4J8 will celebrate his 90th birthday on Dec. 11. His wife, Ruth, children Antoinette & Hilary (Blayne & Jodi-Holden, Jordan & Kinsley) Gerald & Jenny (Joshua, Silas, Reuben). We give thanks for the blessing he is to our family & God's kingdom.

**MILDRED COOK** of 1108 N. Ash St. #6, Mtn. View, MO 65548, celebrated her 90th Birthday with family on Oct. 26, 2010. The family thanks God for her long and productive life.

**TRINA BORST** of Midland Park, NJ celebrated her 90th birthday on November 22. Praise God for health and strength through the years. A family of 5 children and 6 grandchildren along with extended family and friends celebrate God's love reflected in her life.



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## Anniversaries

### 65th Anniversary

**VAN BERKEL** Mitch and Irene (Obbink) 551 4th Ave W, Edgerton, MN 56128 Thankful for 65 years on Nov 29. 8 children, 16 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren

### 60th Anniversary

**AUWEMA** Dennis and Mary (Roelofs) 3376 Starboard Dr, Holland MI 49424, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on November 1. Their family: Jeff & Denise Stam, Doug & Bobbie Auwema, Dave & Constance Auwema, Meri Carpenter, Tim Auwema, 10 grandchildren & 11 great-grandchildren thank God for his faithfulness to them and for the blessing they have been to us all. We love you!

**BYLSMA** Pastor John and Henriette will celebrate 60 years of marriage on December 21, the Lord willing. We rejoice with you, Mom and Dad! With love from Pat, Ruth and John, John and Sheree, Phil and Jane, 9 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Soli Deo Gloria!

**BREUKER**, Andrew & Marion, 121 N Decker, Fremont, MI 49412 will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Dec 11. Children Dale & Pam, Phil & Jodi, Larry (dec) & Laurie, Mary Jane & Ron Baylor, Andy & Judy, Pam & Larry Orgeck, Jim & Sarah, Mark, 34 grandkids & 18 great grandkids are grateful for God rich blessings!

**JANSEN** Charlie & Cornelia (VanKooten), 29-68th St. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49548 celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Dec. 14. Children: Allen & Marcia Jansen, Russ & Jill Jansen, Mike & Sharon Gallup, Mark & LeAnne Jansen, Pete & Susan VanderWeide, Tim Jansen (deceased), 19 grandchildren & 6 great-grandchildren. Giving God all the glory!!



**SLOFSTRA** Lammert and Alice (nee Oving), #304, 9030-158 Street, Surrey, B. C. V4N 5G4 celebrated their 60th anniversary of marriage and ordained ministry on November 14, 2010. With thanks to God for our inspiring parents from their children: Peter and Marja Slofstra, Bert and Diane Slofstra, Grace and Bill Hoogland, John and Fran Slofstra, Jane and Jack Bosman; 17 grandchildren, their spouses, and 35 great grandchildren

**VAN WYLEN** Neil and Helen (Reminga) will celebrate 60 years of marriage on December 15, 2010. Children: Randy & Beth, Norm & Lynnea, Dan & Barb, Kelly & Joan; 12 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.



**Walters** Harold and Genevieve (Hamburg) of Hudsonville, MI, celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on November 24, 2010. Thanking God for their 60 years together are their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The family celebrated with a dinner trip to the Essenhaus in Middlebury, IN. Congratulations, Mom & Dad! We love you!

### 50th Anniversary

**COLE** Roger & Ruth (VanderMey). Open house Sat. Dec 4, 1-4 at Roosevelt Park CRC, 811 Chicago Dr, Wyo. MI. Please join us! Cathy & Mike Bosscher, Dave Cole & Luisa Rebull, Dennis Cole, 8 grandchildren

**HANSTRA** David & Joyce (Buttery) of 120 Coldbrook Dr. Lafayette, IN 47909 celebrated their 50th Anniversary on October 15. Children: Tom & Linda Hanstra (Jared, Seth, Leah, Chloe), Paul & Beth Krogmann (Kelleigh, David), Dan & Mike Hanstra.

**HAMSTER**, Homer and Tena (Veldman), 2371 N. 46th Rd. Leland, IL 60531, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on Dec. 20, 2010. Married in Middelstum, Netherlands, they are long-time members of the Wheaton (IL) CRC. Rejoicing with them and giving thanks for their Christian example are their four children, 15 grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

## Director of Safe Church Ministries

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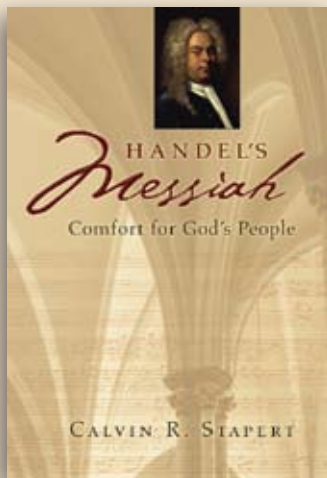
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**TUINSTRA** Larry and Phyllis, Shelbyville, MI, will be celebrating 50 years together on December 2. Children: Cheryl and Ken Brussee, Char and Jim DeMoore, Vince and Kim Tuinstra, Mitch and Michelle Tuinstra. Grandchildren: Jennifer (Scott), Ben, Kristen, Ashley (Matt), Erica (Joe), Chelsea, Casey, Nick, Evan, Jon, Zoie, Chris, Chloe, Caden, and Corey. Great-grandchildren: Tyler and Owen. We praise God for their example of a Christian marriage.

## Obituaries

**AARDSMA** Joan, nee Olson, age 73, Oak Forest, IL, 9/18/10. Beloved wife of John for 54 years. Loving mother of Walter, Richard (Ellen), John (Patty), Sharon (Dan) Lendman, and the late Robert. Cherished grandmother of nine and great grandmother of two. Fond sister of Sharon (Bill) Lettinga and Richard (Elaine) Olson. Dear aunt of many nieces and nephews.

**ANEMA**, Jay, 91, Denver, 10/14/10, Wife, Wynne (deceased), survived by children, George (deceased) & Betty, Dale & Jane Zoetewey. Bob & Barb Camp, Jim & Linda Veldkamp, 21 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, 2 brothers, 1 sister, & several in-laws. Child of God, imitator of Christ!

**AUPPERLEE**, J. George; age 91; Sept 29, 2010, 151 Graham Ave, No. Haledon, NJ 07508. He was predeceased by his brothers/sisters-in-law Cornelius (Joan) and Andrew (Alida) and great-grandson Luke Aupperlee. He is survived by his wife of 64 years Anne (De Vogel); sons J. George (Connie), James (Ruth), Thomas (Marcia) and Donald (Jeany); 14 grandchildren; 8 great-grandchildren; and brother Peter (Lois).

**BOELENS** Charlotte, age 102, died Oct. 10, 2010 at home in Three Rivers, MI. Formerly of Lansing, IL she maintained her home unassisted until her death. She was preceded in death by her husband Dr. Peter Boelens; daughter and son-in-law Sheila and The Rev. Durant Van Oyen; son-in-law Paul Vander Velde; grandson-in-law Chris Kingma and five sisters. She is survived by her son Dr. Peter Boelens (Eleanor), daughters Alice Vander Velde and Frances Redder (The Rev. Ronald Redder), 12 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews. In place of flowers, please send gifts to Cary Christian Center, PO Box 57, Cary, MS 39054.

**DECKER** Jeanette, nee Vanderveld, 88. 27W722 Hickory Ln, West Chicago, IL 60185. Wife of the late Melvin. Mother of Robert (Janice), James (Linda), Donald, and the late Melvin (Joanne) Decker. Grandmother of 20, great-grandmother of 23, and great-great-grandmother of 1. Sister of John (Cornelia), Peter (Annjean) Vanderveld, the late Margaret (the late Robert) Vander Leest, and the late James (Janet) Vanderveld. Step-sister of Bonnie (John) Van Prooyen, the late Harold (Hildred), the late Arthur (Elizabeth) and the late Amy Vander Veen.

**DERITTER**, Lena (Lee), aged 91; October 2, 2010; She was preceded in death by her husband: Elmer DeRitter Sr.; brothers and sisters-in-law: Jake and Agnes Soodsma, Bert and Harriet Soodsma, Florence Soodsma, Jim and Jay DeRitter, and George and Doris DeRitter. She is survived by: sons and daughters-in-law: Elmer Jr. and Lori DeRitter of Rockford, MI, and Peter and Diane DeRitter of Comstock Park, MI; daughter: Margaret DeRitter and Margaret's life partner, Amy Bartell, of Kalamazoo, MI; grandchildren: Glenn (Kim) DeRitter, Cyndi (DeRitter) Dykstra, Amanda and Christopher DeRitter; five great-grandchildren; brother: Herbert Soodsma; sister-in-law: Muriel DeRitter.

**DEVRIES** Donald (Don) L., 75, passed away Sept. 11, 2010, at Hospice House in Holland, MI. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Alma (Vander Lugt): children, Doug (Linda), Jane (Quentin) Reynhout, Carl (Kathryn); 11 grandchildren, one brother, two sisters, many in-laws, nieces and nephews, one aunt and many cousins. He was preceded in death by his parents Harry and Hilda DeVries.

**GRASMAYER** Pearl E. (Dykstra m. Meyer); age 77; passed away October 3, 2010; 1932 Dunlin Ct. N. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49505; Pearl is survived by her husband of 41 years, Art Grasmeyer; 13 children; 46 grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren.

**HOFSTEE** Dick, 85; 455 N. Dakota Ave; Corsica, SD 57328. Dick went to be with his Lord on 9/19/2010 survived by his wife Arlene (Van

Hofwegen) son Harvey (Sharon) 3 grandchildren 2 great-grandchildren brothers Gerrit & Everett & many nieces & nephews. Preceded in death by his parents Hans & Bertha, sister Klaasje, brothers Peter & Hans; 2 grandsons

**KOORNDYK** Mrs. June M. age 87; October 14, 2010; 2510 Lake Michigan Dr. NW, Apt. F216, Grand Rapids, MI 49504; She was preceded in death by her son, Tom; an infant sister, Donna Mae; her brother and sister-in-law, Bud and Dorothy Wolters; and her sister-in-law, Elaine Wolters. June leaves behind her husband of 65 years, Bud; children: Marsha and Greg Peters, Tom (deceased) and Pat Koorndyk, Meriel and Jack DeGraaf, Bob and Nancy Koorndyk; 13 grandchildren; 16 great grandchildren; brothers: Gordon and Ann Wolters, and Loren and Betty Wolters.

**MELLEMA** Shirley Kathryn, aged 86; October 23, 2010; She was preceded in death by her first husband, Fred Baker, second husband, Julius Mellema, son Fred Baker, Jr., and daughter-in-law, Nancy Mellema. She leaves behind her children: Patricia and Bryan Dozeman, Ronald and Sharon Baker, Robert Baker, David and Melanie Baker, Joel and Mary Mellema, Kathy and Marv Hoekstra, Gregory Mellema, and Heidi and Mark Pengra; 19 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren; brothers and sisters: Jack and Jess Swets, Mary and Norm DeGraaf, Dave and Lynne Swets, and Tom and Connie Swets.

**SNELLER**, Virginia, 81, September 24, 2010, Hudsonville, MI. She was preceded in death by her daughter Laurel Sneller. She is survived by her husband, Carl P. Sneller, her children, Kathy Davelaar, Pat and Arie Knoester, Andy and Celia Sneller, Norm and Kathy Sneller, Tom and Leigh Sneller, Mark and Ann Sneller, Ron and Cindy Sneller, Scott and Sue Sneller, Cal and Joy Sneller, and Jodi Hossink, and by a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and nephews/nieces. To God be the Glory!

**VAN VOORST** Harriet (Broek) 95, passed into glory 9/26/10 Sioux Center, IA. Preceded in death by husband John B., son-in-law Davis Tebben. Survived by children: Robert (Carol), Helma (Gerrit) Davelaar, Harlan G. (Linda), Paul (Judy), 18 grandchildren, 33 great-grandchildren, sister Margaret Feekes, brother Don Broek.

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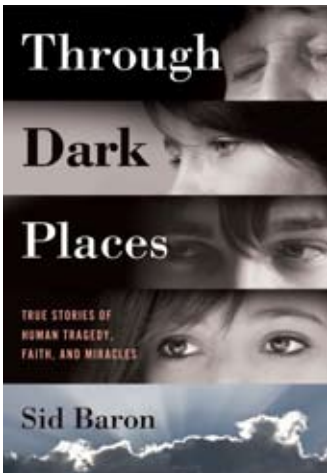
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# 2011 Winter Tour

Jan  
4

Pella, IA  
Tuesday, January 4  
7:00 p.m. Concert

Calvary Christian Reformed Church

Jan  
7

Sheboygan, WI  
Friday, January 7  
7:00 p.m. Concert

Sheboygan First Christian Reformed Church

Jan  
10

Sioux Falls, SD  
Monday, January 10  
7:00 p.m. Concert

First Christian Reformed Church

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Jan  
5

South Holland, IL  
Wednesday, January 5  
7:30 p.m. Concert

Peace Christian Reformed Church

Jan  
8

Hollandale, MN  
Saturday, January 8  
7:00 p.m. Concert

Hollandale Christian Reformed Church

Jan  
6

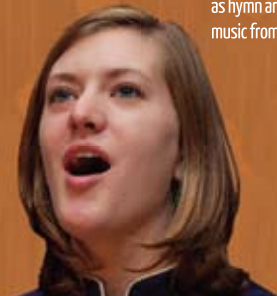
Racine, WI  
Thursday, January 6  
7:00 p.m. Concert

Racine Christian Reformed Church

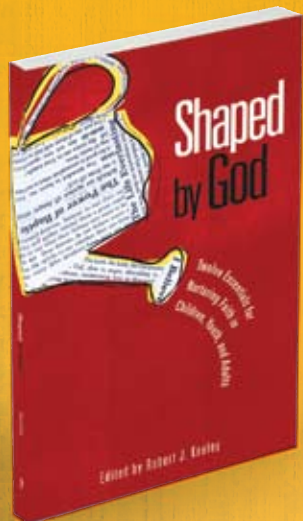
Jan  
9

Edgerton, MN  
Sunday, January 9  
7:00 p.m. Service

Edgerton First Christian Reformed Church



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# Punch Lines

Got a funny joke, story, or photo of something related to Reformed Christian life? Send it in, and you might see it here! You can email your contributions to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org) or send them to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

**W**hile picking up some groceries, a retiree noticed a woman with a girl about 3 years old. When they passed by the bakery section, the little girl asked for a chocolate doughnut. Her mother said no. When the girl started to whine and fuss, the mother quietly said, "Now, Mary, we only have half the aisles left to go through. Don't be upset. It won't be long now."

They came to the beverage aisle, and the little girl begged for root beer. When her mother turned her down, she began to cry and shout. "There, there, Mary," the mother said, "only two more aisles to go."

When they arrived at the checkout counter, the little girl clamored for gum. She burst into a tantrum when her mother told her no. Again, the mother quietly said, "Mary, we'll be through this checkout line in five minutes, and then you can go home and take a nice nap."

The retiree followed the mother and child to the parking lot, where he stopped the woman and said, "I want you to know that I'm really impressed with how patient you are with your daughter Mary."

The mother responded, "Oh, my daughter's name is Alice. I'm Mary."

—George Vander Weit

**A**n 80-year-old woman told a reporter that she had just married for the fourth time. She said her new husband was a funeral director.

"That's interesting," the reporter said. "What did your first three husbands do?"

She said the first was a banker, the second was a circus ringmaster, and the third was a preacher.

"I married one for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, and four to go!"

—Lucy Kampstra

**D**o you know why Noah never took up fishing?

He had only two worms.

—Herm Kelderman

**A** little old Christian lady comes out onto her front porch every morning and shouts, "Praise the Lord!"

And every morning the atheist next door yells back, "There is no God!"

This goes on for weeks. "Praise the Lord!" shouts the lady. "There is no God!" responds the neighbor.

As time goes by, the lady runs into financial difficulties and has trouble buying food. She goes out onto the porch and asks God for help with groceries, then concludes, "Praise the Lord!"

The next morning when she goes out onto the porch, there are the groceries she asked for. Of course, she shouts, "Praise the Lord!"

The atheist jumps out from behind a bush and says, "Ha! I bought those groceries. There is no God!"

The lady looks at him and smiles. She shouts, "Praise the Lord! Not only did you provide for me, Lord, you got the competition to pay for the groceries!"

—Connon Barclay

**T**he teenager had been in the boutique for several hours and finally chose the "perfect" prom dress. So the saleswoman was

surprised when the girl returned the next day with the outfit.

"Can I exchange this for something else?"

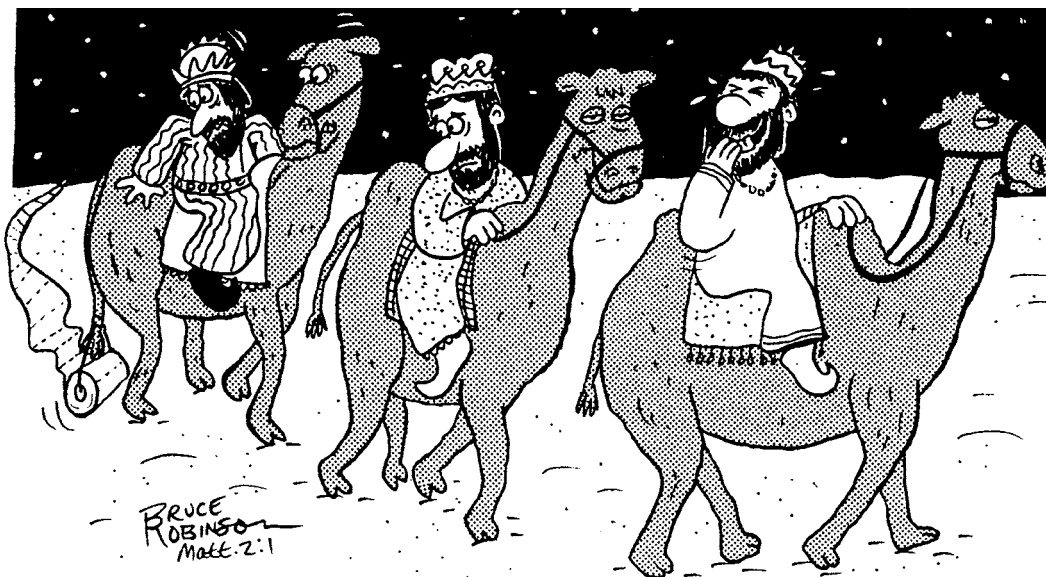
"What seems to be the problem?" asked the saleswoman.

"My parents like it."

—John Velkamp

**O**n an outing with residents from the long-term care facility where I serve as chaplain, we passed through the countryside. The residents were commenting on who had lived in the various homes. Edna pointed out a farm place that was once home to a boy whom she had dated. I looked at her and suggested that in her day she likely had to "beat the boys off with a stick!" With a twinkle in her eye, Edna smiled and replied, "Yes, I did . . . but I didn't."

—Wick Hubers



Two wise men and one wise guy.



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