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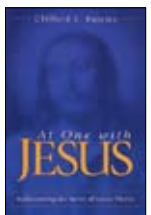
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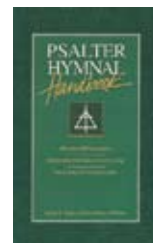
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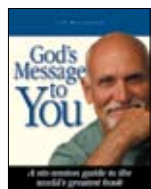
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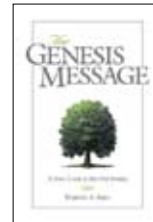
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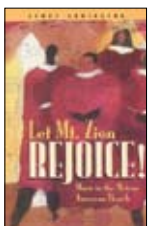
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BANNER

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Attention, Banner Readers!

Your July issue will arrive late so we can bring you news from Synod 2010.

You can sign up for synod updates on Facebook and Twitter at www.thebanner.org.

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Make Haste More Slowly

I GET MORE IMPATIENT AS I AGE.

That's disappointing, because the wisdom of years teaches us that change comes in God's good time. Who was it who observed, "If it's important enough, it will wait"? But the more my head knows it, the more my nerves rebel. When opportunity strikes, I often push too hard to "git 'er done." The cause may be noble but the collateral damage of haste too high.

That thought struck me while leafing through the *Agenda for Synod 2010*. (Synod is the annual leadership meeting of our denomination.) This year's *Agenda* is a mind-numbing 709 pages. Synod's 186 delegates will have just five-and-a-half days to respond to hundreds of recommendations covering dozens of ministries; five major study committee reports; and countless revisions to the denomination's confessional standards, Church Order, and Form of Subscription (see "Synod 2010: What to Watch For," p. 18).

Many of those recommendations came early enough so that the churches and classes (regional clusters of congregations) could reflect on and respond to them. But not all did.

For example, a previous synod mandated Faith Alive Christian Resources, the denomination's publishing agency, to work with the Reformed Church in America to produce a worship songbook serving both communions. Faith Alive intends to include in that the doctrinal standards that both denominations share: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. Trouble is, the CRC and RCA have different versions of those documents. So they struck a committee of experts from both denominations to work toward a shared version.

The committee worked at lightning speed to produce revisions that deserve our careful consideration. But here's the problem: it asks the delegates of Synod 2010, already presented with a *ginormous* agenda, to approve hundreds of revisions to the doctrinal standards that bind us all together as congregations. And the delegates are asked to do so without the benefit of careful reflection on the part of our congregations and classes. Major overload!

If all the proposed changes were superficial, this might not be a big deal. But significant changes are being proposed. For one, our current versions of Q&A 23 and 33 of the Heidelberg Catechism speak of Jesus as "God's only Son." The proposed version goes back to the more accurate translation from the catechism's original German: "God's *only begotten* Son."

However, the CRC's present version was changed because "only begotten" finds no basis in the earliest copies of the Bible. It reintroduces a speculative notion of the Trinity ("eternal generation of the Son from the Father") that many of us do *not* want to have to teach to our catechism students.

That's one of many proposed changes to the confessions that we need time to talk about together. We haven't had that opportunity.

Synod 2010 should not adopt the recommendations of this committee. Synod should appoint its own committee to evaluate the work done and garner the churches' input. Then it should propose a final draft to a subsequent synod.

Let's make haste slowly on this. I understand fully the pressures of editorial deadlines with respect to the new songbook. But my sources tell me there's enough "give" in the publishing schedule to allow for careful reflection.

This is important enough. It should wait. ■

We need time to talk about this together.



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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A Fulfilling Emptiness

NOW AND THEN my job allows me to read or tell stories to children. I stand before a small sea of wide eyes and try to gather in their free-ranging attention, not only to offer a few moments' entertainment but also to receive a little vicarious wonder for myself. This is among my favorite responsibilities as a library branch supervisor, one of the ways I get to be more creative, less administrative.

Well into my thirties I related to children as co-conspirators. I felt like one of them, belonging more to their imaginative world than to that of adults. I put off marrying and having a family for various reasons, but it was a possibility I held before me as the eventual capstone of my adulthood and epitome of my creative life. When I began to realize time could run out on that possibility, obstacles emerged; but I wasn't worried. I didn't know then that a biological twist of fate would bring my fertility to an early and abrupt end.

I'm not sure that development changed how I view children, but it has undoubtedly intensified my desire to connect with their world and influence their lives. Of course, this desire began much earlier. I became acutely aware of it as I started approaching middle age.

From college psychology I recall reading about theorist Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, the midlife identity crisis, and its existential concern with "generativity."

At a certain age, a person begins to measure and evaluate the life he or she has lived so far and to feel urgency about passing something on to the next generation. Children become a natural conduit for expressing this concern. A person with no offspring, however—or with an empty nest or a broken connection to

family—might easily experience a sense of stagnation.

Some turn to teaching, become mentors, join Big Brothers/Big Sisters, or lead Scout troops. Others become child advocates, teen outreach workers, or youth program sponsors. All kinds of possibilities exist, and it's no accident that people with a void in their lives often seek creative ways to fill it by serving others. I believe that happens by design. God has his purposes for emptiness.

Proverbs 30:15-16 describes a barren womb as a metaphorical hunger, listing it among a number of things "that are never satisfied," along with the grave, a desert, and a raging fire. Isaiah describes a eunuch's inclination to say "I am only a dry tree." And in 1 Samuel, Hannah pours out her soul to the Lord over her childless condition (1:10-15). Clearly, the Word of God is full of expressions of our Creator's awareness of and sympathy with the emptiness his children often feel—the voids, disappointments, and bereavements human life compels us to endure.

Scripture encourages Christians to pour out, as Hannah did, our bitterness or despair to "the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort" so we can be filled instead with God's love and presence through Christ. Thus we receive the comfort that allows transformation of hunger into action—and not just any action, but action that is generative, creative, and life-giving in a transcendent way.

Godly generativity occurs when we "comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Cor. 1:3-5). Because of the Bread of Life, even our hunger serves, and we are filled as we empty ourselves to fill others. ■



Jennifer Parker is a writer, teacher, and librarian who lives in Jackson, Miss.

*It is a significant part
of the Christian life
to be alert to the way
the Spirit moves
in the midst of
the ordinary fabric
of our everyday lives,
to work at ferreting out,
in the sometimes
murky interior
of the human heart,
where and how God calls us
to the fullness of being.*

—WENDY WRIGHT



A Plea for Unequal Treatment

Children have different needs and cannot be treated equally.



A RECENT BANNER ARTICLE answered a question from a person who received an advance on her inheritance to meet a current need (November 2009). The article advised, “In the interest of family harmony, treating children equally is important.”

That’s a common belief, and one that many people follow. At Christmas my wife’s mother always made sure she spent exactly the same amount of money on gifts given to her three daughters. If more was spent on one, the others would receive an envelope of money to equalize the amount.

Though such an approach seems noble, it’s not always admirable or wise.

None of us supports favoritism—the purposeful practice of including one child while excluding others. But all of us recognize that children have different needs and personalities and cannot be treated equally.

That’s crystal clear when a child with a disability is part of the family. Siblings generally do not begrudge the extra time, attention, and material resources their parents extend toward this family member. Rather, they join in that endeavor

because of their love for their brother or sister. They recognize that special needs call for special, non-equal treatment.

The same principle should be operative in every family. The call to treat children equally does not take into consideration the situation or particular needs of each child. It can even create an atmosphere of jealousy and comparison in which siblings calculate how much they receive in comparison to a brother or sister.

Jesus illustrates how poisonous that can be in the parable of workers who are treated graciously, but not equally, by their employer (Matt. 20:1-16). The sideward glance at fellow workers instead of the upward glance at their loving employer sours the attitude of those trapped in the equal-treatment box.

My parents gave a substantial amount of money so the children of one of my siblings could receive a Christian day-school education. The rest of us rejoiced in our parents’ desire and ability to assist and never even thought of asking if the amount was going to be deducted from our sibling’s share of the inheritance.

Some of our children have greater needs and fewer resources than others. To assert that they must be treated equally to promote family harmony may indicate that family members need to grow in grace—grace that makes Christians unique and the gospel evident. ■



George Vander Weit is a retired minister in the CRC.



O Canada

Just a reaction to Rev. Bob De Moor’s comments about “Language Matters” in the May editorial.

As an American who served in Canada when the national anthem was introduced, I think I can be objective about what was happening.

I write in defense of immigrants.

In the hectic and tumultuous 1950s and 1960s, when immigrants had been pouring into Canada by the tens of thousands, these folks, because of language problems, had almost no means to give input into the composition of a national anthem.

If that anthem were written today, surely the outcome would be dramatically different.

—Winston C. Boelkins
Byron Center, Mich.

Immigration

In the May article “Young and Undocumented,” “Juan” asks rhetorically, “Just because [illegal immigrants] cross the border to find a better life, we’re criminals?”

Yes, they are criminals. This interview provides a collection of paraphrased and cherry-picked Scriptures to justify the situation of undocumented immigrants, but fails to recognize the wonderful fact of how America is a nation that lives under the rule of law—a factor my legally

LETTERS

immigrated family cherishes far greater than the means for monetary gains our country may offer to its citizens.

—*Bob Reehoorn*
Colorado Springs

I found the two articles about immigration in the *May Banner* incredibly encouraging. Both the interview with the undocumented immigrant and the article on the CRC's stance supporting immigration reform ("CRC Urged to Seek Better Treatment for Undocumented Immigrants") express the love and justice of Jesus.

The new bill in Arizona concerning immigrants has weighed pretty heavily on me. I know one youth pastor in Arizona at a church that is opening its doors to any immigrants in need of a place to stay. He's prepared to face jail time if necessary, and that scares me. I keep praying more churches will stand up and be the light to immigrants that God wishes us to be. In this issue of *The Banner*, I read the beginning of an answer to that prayer.

—*Jake Crammer*
La Habre, Calif.

Climate Change

I don't resent other church members having political and economic opinions that I strongly disagree with. There should not be a "political correctness" test for our faith. But when leaders of the Christian Reformed Church presume to speak for the whole denomination—including me—on political issues, as in the Office of Social Justice's advocacy of ending the embargo on Cuba and the CRC Board of Trustees blaming climate change on human activity ("Ending the U.S. Embargo on Cuba" and "CRC Signs Climate Change Declaration," April 2010), they are aligning me with political movements I do not support. I would not do this to them; why do they do it to me?

—*Raymond Paul Opeka*
Grand Rapids, Mich.

"CRC Signs Climate Change Declaration" agreeing that "humans have something to do with it." What foolishness. According to these people, climate change will melt the ice caps, which will raise the sea levels, which will change the face of the Earth by putting large sections of land underwater. That is not what the Bible proclaims. Read Psalm 104:6-9; Jeremiah 5:22; Proverbs 8:29; and Job 38:8-11. God has set up boundaries/limits that the seas can't cross. In Revelation you don't read of the earth losing any of its land mass to the oceans.

Fact: 10,000 years ago we had an ice age that covered a lot of the earth.

Fiction: Emissions from cars and industries raised the Earth's temperature to make the ice age history.

—*Ronald Dean Rutgers*
Lynden, Wash.

A Little Soul-Searching, Please

We were dismayed by the FAQ of March 2010 from someone seeking to rid his church of their pastor.

Perhaps a better answer would have included an admonition for some sincere soul-searching.

Unfortunately, the church is sometimes even more demanding of our pastors than the world is of their CEOs. We expect the pastor to immediately respond to all our likes and dislikes, never considering that there are other members expressing entirely opposite views. Quite frankly, we find it disgraceful and a discredit to the gospel of Jesus Christ the way our congregation treats its pastors. These men and women are servants of God and should be treated as such.

If each of us treated our pastor the way we would want our loved ones treated, we would likely have fewer battle-scarred pastors.

—*Name Withheld*

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

As a pediatrician, I have the opportunity to help many children who suffer from prenatal exposure to alcohol ("An Invisible Disability," February 2010). Schools and social service agencies are ill-prepared for the severity of impairment and the numbers of children affected. A recent article states that 2 to 5 percent of 8-year-old schoolchildren have alcohol-induced brain damage. Eighty percent of U.S. children diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome are in our foster care system.

The tragedy of FAS is entirely preventable. We simply do not know how much alcohol is safe to drink during pregnancy (there is great variability in how women metabolize alcohol), yet 12 percent of American women drink after they know they are pregnant.

—*Dr. Todd Ochs*
Chicago

Thank You, News Writers

Thank you for the news articles on page 15 of the January 2010 *Banner*. What a great story about Elise Van Pelt and her generous heart to share with others ("Colorado Girl Helps Put Missionaries on Wheels").

The story about the young prisoners who, because of their faith in Jesus, gave from their own resources to help men without homes was also inspiring ("Making Restitution in Oregon"). And I saw in "Seattle Coffeehouse Reopens After Fire" a spirit of forgiveness for the arsonist that's a living out of the gospel.

Finally, the story regarding the 125th anniversary celebration of New Era CRC ("Michigan Church Celebrates 125 Years") shows God's faithfulness to this congregation throughout all those years.

My thanks to the *Banner's* news correspondents for sharing these inspiring, real-life stories with *Banner* readers.

—*Trena Lieuwen*
Cincinnati, Ohio

NEWS

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Illinois Pastor Nominated for Seminary President

Rev. Julius Medenblik, pastor of New Life Christian Reformed Church in New Lenox, Ill., has been nominated

to be the next president of Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), by that institution's board. His nomination, also endorsed by the denomination's Board of Trustees, must be approved by Synod 2010 (the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church).

Medenblik, 49, has been a pastor for 15 years, after a short career



GAYLA R. POSTMA

in civil law in Florida. He started his ministry by planting the New Life congregation, which has grown from four members to more than 700.

Asked about his vision for the seminary, he said, "I have great appreciation for the current trajectory [of the seminary] and look to continue that." At the same time, he said the seminary needs to

Rev. Julius Medenblik receives congratulations on his nomination from Board of Trustees member Roy Stallworth.

continue to develop diversity in students and faculty and seek opportunities to speak to a wider world.

Doug Kool, a representative of the seminary's presidential search

Board Proposes Three-Percent Ministry Share Increase

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church is proposing an increase of 3 percent in ministry share for the 2010-11 fiscal year, bringing it to \$316.76 per member. (Ministry share is the money collected by local churches for shared denominational ministries.)

The increase must be approved by Synod 2010 in June.

Not all trustees were happy with that increase. Rev. Dan Mouw, a pastor in Grandville, Mich., pointed out that in West Michigan, unemployment is still at 14 percent. "Churches have cut staff, cut compensation," he said. "Congregations are decreasing their budgets. I don't like the signal it sends in this area."

Loren Veldhuizen, a trustee from Orange City, Iowa, who served on the budget review committee, said that after two years of denominational cuts and layoffs "we need this increase to maintain quality and excellence."

The bulk of that increase will go toward denominational management, services, and ministries, for strategic ministry enhancement, said John Bolt, the CRC's director of finance and administration.

Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the CRC, said, "Money gets set aside so that we can decide down the road where to most effectively put that money. It gives us the ability to adjust those budgets [during the fiscal year]."

Bolt further clarified the need to have that money set aside. "A church council can move money around as needed. We can't do that here. If we say it's going to [for example] specialized ministries and then the seminary needs help, we can't do anything about it."

The salary ranges for denominational staff positions remain where they were set in July 2008. Some of the contributions to employee retirement plans will be reinstated effective July 1, 2010, after a major reduction was effected in early 2009 in the face of anticipated budget deficits.

—Gayla R. Postma

Rev. Herman Keizer receives the Distinguished Service Award from the Association of Professional Chaplains.



COURTESY OF ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL CHAPLAINS

committee, said the fact that Medenblik does not have a Ph.D. in a theology-related field was addressed by current seminary president Rev. Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

"When [Plantinga] looked at the declining enrollment and lack of development, he said it was time for an 'ecclesiastical entrepreneur,' and his endorsement was in that direction," Kool told the CRC's Board of Trustees.

Kool also noted that the seminary faculty endorsed the nomination of Medenblik unanimously.

"I hope to be able to bridge the academic environment and passion at the seminary with the local church," Medenblik said in an interview. "I have great opportunity to come in with fresh eyes, with my experience and background."

Medenblik told the Board of Trustees, "As a lawyer, I was an advocate. Now I can be an advocate for the seminary."

—Gayla R. Postma

Writers Needed

The Banner is seeking news correspondents in the Pacific Northwest United States (Washington and Oregon) and southwest Ontario to write about Christian Reformed people and activities of interest to our readers. If you live in either of those areas and you like to write, we'd like to hear from you. All expressions of interest should be addressed via email to Gayla Postma, News Editor, at gpostma@crcna.org. Please include a summary of your writing experience and some recent samples of your work.

Chaplain Receives Distinguished Service Award

Rev. Herman Keizer, former director of Chaplaincy Services for the Christian Reformed Church, was recently awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Association of Professional Chaplains for exemplifying and promoting the standards of professional chaplaincy.

Keizer was ordained in 1968 and spent 34 years as a chaplain in the Armed Services and at the State Department in the Pentagon. His career included assignments as executive director of the Armed Forces Chaplains Board, and as command chaplain for the

U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany.

Keizer received numerous decorations and awards during his time in the Armed Services, including the Purple Heart (awarded to those wounded while serving) and the Superior Honor Award, which is awarded by the U.S. State Department in recognition of sustained extraordinary performance.

Following retirement from the military, Keizer spent eight years

as director of CRC Chaplaincy Services.

"What is really special is that the nomination [for the Distinguished Service Award] and the back-up documents came from Christian Reformed chaplains," he said. "To have my peers in ministry recommend me is very special to me. I have been blessed to have served in chaplaincy all of my ministry."

—Doug Evenhouse



KEVIN VAN DER LEEK

Ruth Vanderzee was one of the participants in a recent conference for female spouses of pastors.

Sustaining Pastors' Spouses

In April, 100 women gathered in Vancouver, British Columbia, for a pastors' spouse conference aimed at female spouses. It was organized by the Christian Reformed Church's Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program.

In addition to hearing keynote speaker Rev. Mary Hulst, chaplain at Calvin College, participants worshiped and took part in workshops ranging from card-making, beading, and dancing to sharing marriage workshops and dealing with second-career pastorates.

Jane Park's husband is the CRC's Korean ministry director in Bellflower, Calif., and she is also his administrative assistant. She was pleased that eleven Korean spouses were able to meet and share their unique situations. "We find that we are in similar situations and are greatly encouraged by the way others handle the situations," she said.

Cindy Bodini, whose husband, Richard, is a pastor in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, has attended all previous conferences. "At first my main reason was to reconnect with seminary friends," she said, "but I found it to be an incredible time of encouragement and refreshment and now go with that as my primary reason."

Rev. Julia Prins Vanderveen is both a pastor and a pastor's spouse. She said her most privileged moment was introducing and honoring a member of her Vancouver congregation, Roelie Nederlof, who has been a pastor's spouse for more than 65 years. Her husband, Rev. Bas Nederlof, passed away this winter.

Vanderveen said, "Roelie urged us to 'love the people' in our congregation, to pray for them, and to acknowledge how seasons in ministry are sometimes interspersed with tears, but still are very joyful."

—Jenny deGroot

Canada Rejects Assisted Suicide

The Canadian Parliament recently strongly defeated a bill that would have legalized euthanasia and assisted suicide. The vote was 228 to 59.

Rev. Mark Stephenson, director of Disability Concerns for the Christian



Reformed Church, was more than happy about the defeat.

"I praise God for the defeat of [this bill]. It violated the basic principle that all people are made in God's image, and would have moved Canadian society toward becoming a culture of death," he said. "This bill was particularly dangerous for people living with

"This bill was particularly dangerous for people living with disabling conditions," said Rev. Mark Stephenson, director of Disability Concerns for the CRC.

disabling conditions, because some people would feel pressure to 'get out of the way' so as not to be a burden to their loved ones. A 'right to die with dignity' would become an obligation to die."

Stephenson said society should not be making it easier for people to die, but should help everyone live a full life.

"As children of God in Jesus Christ, we have a significant contribution to make to this dialogue because we affirm the intrinsic worth of every person not based on what he or she can do, but on who he or she is as an image-bearer of God," he said.

—Rachel deKoning Kraay

Rehoboth Land Sold to Benefit Schools, Churches

Large tracts of land that Navajo and Zuni Christian Reformed churches had hoped would supply much-needed income are now being sold after more than a century in Christian Reformed hands, and the churches expect some of the proceeds. The land surrounds the mission compound in Rehoboth, New Mexico.

For the past decade, a local foundation representing those churches, local Christian schools, and Christian Reformed Home Missions has tried to raise funds by developing

JOHN VANTLAND



the land and selling pieces of it. Now they've decided to sell it all.

"Money is easier to manage than land," said Dan McLaughlin, treasurer of Classis Red Mesa, the regional group to which the churches now belong. "If we trade the land for an equal value of cash, a lot of our overhead goes away."

Baptized Children at the Lord's Supper, Take Two

Synod 2006 said that baptized children are part of God's family and should be invited to partake in the Lord's Supper with the rest of the congregation.

Currently, Christian Reformed Church practice requires that baptized children first make a formal profession of faith before participating in communion.

A change of the magnitude called for by Synod 2006 requires that a subsequent synod adopt the proposal, and Synod 2007 was not of a mind to do that.

Instead, Synod 2007 appointed a Faith Formation Committee to study a number of issues over five years, including participation of baptized children at the Lord's Supper and the role of public profession of faith.

This committee was instructed to communicate extensively with Christian Reformed congregations and report on its progress to each subsequent synod.

This year, the Faith Formation committee isn't bringing a formal recommendation to open up the Lord's Supper to baptized children, but it is asking Synod 2010 to approve what it calls a "guiding principle,"

from which will flow formal recommendations for Synods 2011 and 2012.

That guiding principle states, "All baptized members are welcome to the Lord's Supper for age- and ability-appropriate obedience to biblical commands about participation, under the supervision of the elders."

The proposed guiding principle also includes the following: "Requiring a formal public profession of faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper is one pastoral approach to consider, but is not required by Scripture or the confessions."

The committee says in its report that this principle honors the covenant status of all baptized members and is faithful to the instruction in 1 Corinthians 11 and to Q&A 81 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The report states that "much of the committee's work in the coming year will be formed by the response of Synod 2010" to that guiding principle.

Should synod approve the guiding principle, the Faith Formation committee will then come to Synod 2011 with formal recommendations that would adopt the change envisioned by Synod 2006.

—Gayla R. Postma



A rainbow graces the Christian Reformed mission compound in Rehoboth, New Mexico.

The Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation in Grand Rapids, Mich., is forming a business entity that will buy the land for \$3.1 million.

Officials at the DeVos Foundation told *The Banner* their interest in buying the land is to help out the churches and, in particular, the schools. They've not said what plans, if any, they have for the land.

The churches and schools will split the proceeds, with the churches' share being 60 percent, McLaughlin said. The churches' access to the money will be limited. The deal calls for it to be placed in a trust managed by the Illinois-based Barnabas Foundation, and paid out over three years.

McLaughlin said he hopes interest from the proceeds will eventually provide more yearly funds than churches got from the land before the sale. Individual congregations could make specific funding requests through clinics.

McLaughlin pointed to new training for local church leaders as an example of a promising program that needs ongoing financial support. "There are a lot of needs out here," he said.

—Jack Klumpenhouwer

Wisconsin Teen Inspires Support for Haiti



Convicted by the searing images of devastation caused by the recent earthquake in Haiti, high school senior Karl Bratt, a member of Racine (Wisc.) Christian Reformed Church, felt that he and other students should take action to help.

Bratt went online, found a low-cost supplier, and designed black bracelets imprinted with the Haitian motto "L'union fait la force" and its English translation "Strength in Unity."



Karl Bratt designed and sold bracelets with the Haitian motto, "L'union fait la force" and its English translation "Strength in Unity."

Through local media and Facebook, Bratt enlisted other students to sell the bracelets. Students as far away as Pittsburgh participated. Together they sold 3,300 bracelets, raising more than \$6,000 for the American Red Cross. Bratt said he partnered with a secular organization so that non-Christian students wouldn't be deterred from taking part.

"There is no better feeling than knowing that you are lending a hand to people in such dire circumstances," Bratt said.

—Doug Evenhouse

Michigan Church Mixes Faith and Art

Saugatuck (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church transformed itself into an art gallery recently, hosting an art show with a creation theme for public high school students.

Saugatuck is known as the "Art Coast of Michigan." It boasts many galleries, resident artists, and an art school.

"We wanted people otherwise not connected to a church to dig into the Bible and explore their faith," said art judge Terri Schippa.

Rev. David Van Der Wiele said, "We wanted to stimulate the thinking of our local high school seniors and get them to interact with the text of the Bible. It seemed like a promising way to get them

into God's Word and ponder the meaning of creation."

About 50 people viewed 32 paintings, drawings, and other creative forms at a Sunday afternoon dessert reception.



Art show organizers (l-r) Lori Lubbers, Terri Shippa, and Rev. David Van Der Wiele, with the winning entry of Saugatuck CRC's art show.

The \$500 first prize went to Leighann Pendergrass for her entry, "In God's Hands" depicting planets spinning off into space.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Bastiaan Nederlof
1917-2010

Rev. Bastiaan Nederlof, 92, scholar and writer, denominational leader, and pastor at heart, passed away suddenly but peacefully.

Nederlof was born on Nov. 5, 1917, in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, where he graduated from the seminary of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Apeldoorn, and served two congregations before emigrating to Canada.

He served Christian Reformed congregations in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and California.

Nederlof was an erudite but unaffected pastor. His colleagues remember him as an encourager and an advisor. His congregations remember him foremost for his outstanding preaching, love for people, and genuine spirituality.

He was a frequent delegate to synod and served Synod 1977 as its president. Nederlof contributed to such significant synodical statements as the Contemporary Testimony "Our World Belongs to God."

Nederlof is survived by his wife, Roely; four children and their spouses; nine grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

For more on the life and ministry of Rev. Nederlof, please visit www.thebanner.org.

NEWS

Ontario Women Make Mats for Haiti

I feel like this is a calling. God has put us on the earth to do this work for others," said Tena Alblas, a member of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Brockville, Ontario.

Alblas helps coordinate a group that makes mats for Haitians out of the plastic bags that are used to package milk in Ontario.

Every week more than 15 women meet to make plastic bag "yarn." They then take the yarn home to crochet or knit large

sleeping mats for children and adults.

They have been doing this work for several years, and Coba Bangma said Christian schools and individuals around the community are getting involved.

Since the earthquake in Haiti, media coverage has been strong. Alblas said, "All in all, it's a bit overwhelming! All the phone calls I get—I don't know who's who anymore!"

Some women also make fabric quilts. Donations have even been

coming from northern New York, where women struck up a conversation in a fabric store. A Montreal (Quebec) company donates rolls of flannel.

When a large package of recycled milk bags comes in the mail to the church, the women laugh. It is just one more example of how the mission is growing. Alblas says, "The blessing comes from helping others."

—Brenda Visser



BRENDA VISSER

Jo Oosterhof rolls a ball of plastic bag "yarn" that will be used to make sleeping mats for the people of Haiti.



BEN NANNINGA

Michigan Woman Survives Chile Earthquake

Overwhelmed by God's providence—that's how Carissa Elenbaas feels in the wake of the Chile earthquake, which she and two visiting friends survived in February.

Elenbaas, a member of Dearborn (Mich.) Christian Fellowship, a Christian Reformed church near Detroit, has been teaching English to business professionals in Santiago, Chile, since last July.

When the earthquake struck on Feb. 27, she and college friends Amanda Rose and Ben Nanninga were visiting the city of Dichato near the earthquake's epicenter. Dichato was heavily damaged, and the cabin the friends were staying in was swept away, along with their possessions, in the subsequent tsunami.

After several harrowing days, with the help of many Chilean people, the three were able to make their way back to Santiago, and Rose and Nanninga returned to the U.S.

"God's hand was really evident," Elenbaas said. "We had so many close calls. It was the middle of the night when the earthquake hit. If we had stayed in our cabin we probably would have drowned. But God placed us with Chilean friends who knew what to do."

Back at work in Santiago, Elenbaas maintains a deep affection for Chile and its people, and has no plans to cut short her stay there.

—Henry Huisjen

Carissa Elenbaas (right) with friend Amanda Rose in Dichato, Chile, shortly before the Feb. 27 earthquake.

Illinois Churches Team with Local Restaurant to Serve Easter Dinners

While watching the 9 o'clock news last December, something he says he rarely does, Rev. Jon Hoekema saw a story about a local restaurant owner giving away Christmas dinners to people in the area who had fallen on hard times.

Hoekema's interest was sparked because the restaurant is located in Downers Grove, Ill., the town where his church, Horizon Community Christian Reformed Church, is located.

In the news story, the restaurant owner remarked that he would like to offer a similar dinner service at Easter but needed help from the community.

Hoekema contacted Rev. Tim Hoekstra, pastor of Suburban Life CRC in neighboring Darien, Ill., and the two of them offered help to the restaurant owner.

Members of both churches contacted local agencies that provide assistance for people in need, and extended dinner invitations. A few days after Easter, church volunteers served Easter dinners for about 200 people who are struggling in a tough economy.

Hoekema was pleased to have the opportunity to show the love of God and share information about the church's ministries. "Praise God that he works even through the 9 o'clock news," he said.

—Doug Evenhouse



Diners enjoy free Easter dinner served by CRC volunteers.

Michigan College Students Serve and Learn on Spring Break

For 10 students from Campus Chapel, the Christian Reformed campus ministry at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, spring break was a time to learn and grow in the Dominican Republic.

Working alongside ministry partners of Christian Reformed World Missions, the undergraduate and graduate students served in areas reflecting their academic interests.

"Most teams that come here are mainly focused on serving through a building project," said Steve Brauning, the CRC missionary who hosted the group. "This was designed to be primarily a learning, growing experience."

Accompanying the students were Ashley and Geoff Van Dragt, ministry interns at Campus Chapel.

Campus Chapel encourages students toward ministry in their professional careers, Ashley said, and the trip to the Dominican Republic offered an opportunity for the students to see how their academic fields play out in developing countries.

"Half the group was interested in medical professions and shadowed and volunteered at a local clinic, and the other half was interested in engineering," she said. "One student gave her first injection, and an architecture student drew up the plans for a new building at the ministry center in which we stayed. The engineers did the surveying."

As a result of their experience, Brauning said, several students have expressed confirmation of a call into mission service.



University of Michigan graduate student Natalie Wiersma meets children from the Dominican Republic during the Campus Chapel spring break trip.

MARK TEATER

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. J. Carl Derksen

1918-2009

Rev. Carl Derksen, 91, classical languages specialist, electronics and computer expert, accomplished exegete, social justice champion, and immigrant pastor, died of a respiratory illness in Kitchener, Ontario.

Derksen was born in Arnhem, the Netherlands, and graduated from the Free University of Amsterdam. He served three churches in Holland before emigrating to Canada in 1957, where he served two churches in Ontario. He retired in 1983.

Derksen was gifted in languages, theology, and electronics. It was said of him that he never preached a sermon twice. He was a conscientious pastor and generous in his support of those who are disadvantaged.

Already in his youth, he was intrigued with sound equipment and electronics, building his own computer in the 1970s to record his sermons and teaching materials.

Derksen was delegated a number of times to the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. He also served on the Board of Trustees of Calvin College and Seminary.

Derksen was preceded in death by his wife, Cornelia, in 2004. He is survived by two children and a daughter-in-law.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Chinese Pastor at Home in Iowa

The story of how Rev. Wen-Yau Hsieh wound up pastoring a church in Iowa by way of Queens, N.Y., is an unexpected one.

Raised in the Holiness Church in Taiwan, Hsieh, 57, came to the U.S. in 1980. He began attending a Reformed Church in America congregation in Queens, where he served as an elder for 16 years. He left a long career as a corporate lawyer to study for the ministry in Deerfield, Ill.

Friends who belong to the Chinese Church of Iowa City, Iowa, encouraged him to consider leading the congregation.

"When my wife and I felt God's leading to come to the church, we found out it was a Christian Reformed church," Hsieh said. That information surprised Hsieh because most Mandarin-speaking Chinese churches in the States are independent, he said. "Since the CRC is very close to our RCA heri-

tage, we feel at home serving here," he said.

The family moved to Iowa in August 2009.

Rev. Ed Laarman, a Christian Reformed campus minister in Iowa City, says Hsieh's life experience is valuable for the church. "He is an excellent fit for those involved in the professions and involved in the university," Laarman said. "He has a great passion for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, and a love for people."

"My hope for the future of the church is that it will root itself firmly in God's Word," Hsieh said. "This is a church of many young Christians. They need God's Word to grow mature in their faith."

—Paul Delger

The Hsieh Family: Jonathan, Wen-Yau, Emily, and Connie



NEWS

The Bus Boutique Gets Rolling

Two churches in California are putting wheels under the thrift store idea.

Monika Grasley, a member of Gateway Community Christian Reformed Church in Merced, used a converted bus donated by a local radio station to create a secondhand store on wheels in order to bring goods and good news to those who are unable to come to it. "We don't want to just give a hand-out, but build relationships," said Grasley.

Working through Lifeline Community Development Corporation, volunteers from Grasley's church and from Church of the Cross CRC in Delhi made this project a reality.



HEIDI WICKER

The bus travels to five or six communities, where it is staffed by local volunteers. Those struggling to put food on the table can find clothing for themselves and their children by purchasing items at low cost, trading in gently used clothing, or volunteering to mend or sort items.

"It brings dignity to people if they can do something in return,"

Suzanne and James, volunteers and artists, helped get the Bus Boutique rolling.

said Grasley. "Everyone, no matter how rich, has a need, and everyone, no matter how poor, has a gift. That is why we build and celebrate community."

—Heidi Wicker

Florida Professor Turns Sabbatical into Mission Trips



Jim Bode of Bradenton, Fla., (right) works on computers with Ken Poll of Holland, Mich., at a Christian school in the Dominican Republic.

Jim Bode, professor of network services technology at State College of Florida, turned a recent sabbatical into three mission trips to share his computer skills in Nicaragua, Peru, and the Dominican Republic.

"What was really cool was that the trips were all so different," said Bode of the three trips that took place in November, March, and April.

In Nicaragua, he taught computer skills to 155 missionaries from many denominations and worked on computers at Nicaragua Christian Academy, a school started by Christian Reformed missionaries.

In the Dominican Republic, Bode and his brother-in-law, Ken Poll, assembled and repaired computer systems at 21 Christian schools.

And in Peru he and brother Jon Bode worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators to create an Internet connection in the jungle. The connection is already helping missionaries as they translate the Bible into local languages.

Bode's congregation, Bradenton (Fla.) Christian Reformed Church, paid his airfare and some lodging costs.

Bode hopes to encourage anyone who might have skills that are not traditionally associated with the mission field to pursue missions anyhow.

"A lot of people underestimate what they're capable of doing," said Bode. "God's opportunities will be more than plentiful for someone who's available."

—Roxanne Van Farowe

New Brunswick Teens Join Parents for Service Trip

Several pairs of parents and teens from Fredericton (New Brunswick) Christian Reformed Church recently traveled together to New Orleans to continue the work of rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina. The group helped renovate a former bowling alley into a community center.

Lizanne vanderLee was "very happy to be [in New Orleans] with such a great group." Her dad, Willem, shared her feeling. "It's nice to be here with a group of people of all ages," he said.

"I am very happy with the way we are treated," said Jessica Boonstopple. "[The leaders] gave each of us the opportunity to try out different jobs . . . they trusted me with the responsibility needed to do a job right."

Some of the adults had been on a previous trip to the city and were glad to see improvements. Jessica's mother, Tammi, said, "It is good to see the [progress] that can happen in a few years."

NeI VanWoudenberg agreed. "A lot of things are restored compared with two years ago," she said. "It was emotional to come back and see everything again."

—Brenda Visser

Muslim, Christian Roommates find Common Ground at Calvin College

Anika Farhan, a Muslim from Bangladesh; and Katelyn Fuller, a Christian from California; opened their email last summer to discover that they'd been assigned to each other as roommates at Calvin College. Despite their different backgrounds, the two have become friends. Calvin College is owned and operated by the Christian Reformed Church.

Farhan was looking for a smaller college with strong academics, and learned about Calvin while visiting her sister in Grand Rapids, Mich. Although she was aware that Calvin was a Christian college, she applied anyway and was accepted.



ANIKA FARHAN

Roommates Katelyn Fuller, a Christian from California (left); and Anika Farhan, a Muslim from Bangladesh (right); have forged a friendship at Calvin College.

"I always knew I would get a Christian roommate; the religion didn't matter to me," Farhan said. "I wanted an American roommate."

Fuller learned that Farhan was a Muslim when the two connected on Facebook.

"I looked through her info and saw she was a Muslim, and then I messaged her," Fuller said. "We talked pretty much the whole summer. We talked about our faith. We got along instantly."

Fuller wasn't greatly bothered by the religious difference. "It wasn't a huge deal, but it was something to

think and pray about," she said.

For Farhan, the difference of being a Muslim at a Christian college started off as a challenge.

"At the beginning, it was very difficult," Farhan said. "I cried. At one point I thought, 'Should I transfer? What should I do?' It was just a mess, all the workshops, the discussions, going to chapel, constantly praying, the singing, and being the odd one out. I want to learn about the religion, but not participate."

With her roommate's help, Farhan stuck through it.

"Katelyn's support and all my friends' support was like a miracle to me," she said.

Farhan also credits her family, particularly her father. "I'm really close with my dad. He always tries to say, 'Keep your faith strong.' I always have the religious discussions with my dad, why I should follow what we follow. Whenever we talk about it, that makes sense."

Despite their religious differences, both girls credit the experience with helping them develop in their faiths.

"I'm really happy that I chose Calvin and have Katelyn as my roommate," Farhan said. "Coming to Calvin has made my faith stronger."

"It definitely has had a large impact on my faith," Fuller said. "It's made me delve deeper into God's Word and really take Christianity as my own. I would do it a million times over again. It's definitely been a blessing in disguise."

—Christian Bell

Love Quilts

A group that started in order to teach quilting has evolved into a ministry of comfort in Oak Forest, Ill.

Since 2006, women from Hope Christian Reformed Church have made 10 special love-filled quilts.

Their first quilt was made for a little girl who had been in and out of hospitals often in her short life. When the women delivered the quilt in the girl's favorite colors of pink and purple, they left with tears in their eyes. Mary Van Loh said, "Through the recipients' appreciation, we also get wrapped in love."

The quilts are planned specifically for each recipient. For



Julane Bellin and Sharon Aardema display one of their quilts.

example, an avid golfer battling cancer received a golf-themed quilt. A young butterfly-loving woman struggling with lupus

received a butterfly-themed quilt. A personalized label with a Bible verse or poem is sewn onto each completed quilt.

Recipients have included elderly people, those who can't leave their homes, and people dealing with chronic and terminal illnesses. The quilt is usually a surprise, and when it is delivered the quilters pray with the recipient. Two quilts were displayed at funerals, and one was sent posthumously to a daughter.

"We have the time and we love these people. We make the quilts for people who need a hug," explained Lynne Findlay.

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung

NEWS

SYNOD 2010: What to Watch For

Faced with an agenda of more than 700 pages, the 186 delegates to Synod 2010, along with advisers and staff, will have a long, busy week when they meet this month. Synod is the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church.

It is never easy to predict a synod's actions—or which topics will prompt vigorous debate. Likely hot topics this year include climate change, immigration reform, allowing baptized children at the Lord's Supper, and how we as a denomination live together with differing views on women's ordination.

A study committee on migration is bringing a large report to this synod (see *Banner*, May 2010, p. 41). And in the past year, the CRC's Board of Trustees endorsed a declaration on immi-

gration reform (November 2009, p. 16).

The board also signed a document on climate change (April 2010, p. 15), which some church members didn't like. That has prompted an overture (proposal) asking synod for guidelines regarding what denominational leaders can sign on the CRC's behalf.

Two congregations in West Michigan do not feel comfortable belonging to classes (regional groups of churches) that allow women to be delegates to their meetings. So those two congregations are asking synod to allow them to transfer to a distant classis that shares their view that women should not be ordained to ecclesiastical office (May 2010, p. 40). Such a move could be seen to strain the spirit of the agreement in the denomination that we will live in unity despite our

differences, and delegates may struggle with whether to allow the transfers.

There is no formal recommendation before Synod 2010 to open the Lord's Supper to baptized members without a public profession of faith. But synod's Faith Formation committee that's been studying the issue is asking for approval in principle of moving in that direction (see p. 12).

While some of these discussions may be difficult, one item that promises to be a highlight is

synod's interview with Rev. Julius Medenblik, the nominee for president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

Synod 2010 will meet June 12-19 at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Ill. *The Banner* will provide updates throughout synod on Facebook and Twitter. Please visit www.thebanner.org to sign up. The July *Banner* will contain extended synod coverage.

—Gayla R. Postma

A Year for Revisions

Already noted for its heavy workload, this year's meeting could also become known as the synod of revisions.

Synod 2010 will look at proposed revisions to

- guidelines for handling abuse allegations against church leaders (see *The Banner*, May 2010, p. 40)
- the Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church (the rules that govern denominational life)
- the three confessions of the CRC: Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort
- the Ecumenical Charter of the CRC
- the CRC's Form of Subscription (the document officebearers sign to signify agreement with the above-mentioned confessions).

The proposed changes to the Church Order are to bring it up to date and make wording consistent after years of piecemeal changes. Some overtures (requests) to Synod 2010 ask that specific articles be looked at more closely. There is a request to reject some proposed changes, and another to broaden the revision committee's mandate and give the Church Order an overhaul.

The proposed revisions to the confessions are in preparation for a hymnal being published jointly by the CRC and the Reformed Church in America. The two denominations use slightly different versions of the confessions, and the proposed changes would harmonize them.

The Ecumenical Relations Committee is seeking revisions to its charter, even though its new charter was adopted in 2006. There is also a proposed addition to its mandate: adding interfaith dialogue to its task of conversing with other Christian churches.

The Form of Subscription is still being worked on by the second synodical committee to attempt to update it. Synod 2010 won't be voting on it, but it will get a chance to discuss the document, now called "A Covenant for Officebearers." —Gayla R. Postma

Helping Churches Deal with Mental Illness in Ontario

More than 200 people attended a conference in Cobourg, Ontario, to learn more about being a supportive Christian community for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

The conference was organized by Faith & Hope Ministries, a ministry of Classis Quinte (a regional group of churches).

Winnie Visser, a member of Fellowship CRC in Brighton, Ontario, and resource consultant for Faith & Hope Ministries, said the response to the conference was very positive. She thought it was hopeful that "people don't feel so alone in their journey."

According to Rev. Mark Stephenson, Director of Disability Concerns for the CRC, there is an increasing awareness of mental health concerns in the church. Visser is also encouraged. "We are finally allowing ourselves to talk about [mental illness]," she said. She hopes that similar conferences can begin bridging the gap between churches and other mental health resources.

This year's Disability Concerns emphasis week in October will focus on mental health, if approved by Synod 2010 (the church's annual leadership meeting).

—Brenda Visser

FAQs

This month we're pleased to introduce two new contributors to this column: Tim Postuma and Bonnie Speyers.

Electrons

Q My church has too many meetings! Can technology help?

A There are too many options to list them all, so I'll just mention two of my favorites. First, the telephone conference call. It's old-school technology, for sure, but it allows your group to meet at any time with no travel. Instead of meeting in the evening, maybe a lunchtime phone conversation would work. Conference calls are very easy to set up—in fact, your phone plan may already offer three-way conferencing (perfect for little subcommittees). Larger groups can sign up for services that cost only pennies per minute per person. Get a plan for your whole church so others can use it too.

A lot happens between meetings, though, so a second tool to consider is Google Groups. It brings order to the inbox chaos of group e-mail discussions, and it allows you to store documents in a secure, members-only website. With so many church committees changing membership every year, it's great to have that online repository of all past minutes, conversations, schedules, and more. Google Groups even allows you to collaborate on documents so, for example, people can add their own names to a schedule or do some virtual brainstorming.

Whichever tools you choose, keep in mind that they are just tools. How and when to use them requires good judgment, and they always work best when your group has had enough face-to-face time to build relationships, trust, and a little team spirit.

—Tim Postuma

Instead of meeting in the evening, maybe a lunchtime phone conversation would work.

Tim Postuma is web and e-communication manager for the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Calling

Q Because of the downturn in the economy, jobs are much harder to find. Now that I am graduating I'm afraid I won't find a job. How can I best prepare myself for the job search?

A Congratulations on your graduation! I'm sure that it took a great deal of perseverance to not only finish school, but to finish well. The perseverance and determination you developed over the past four years will serve you in your job search, because that's essentially what finding a job is all about—perseverance, determination, and, let me add, faith. Faith that the Lord has not carried you this far only to drop you.

In addition to these qualities, you'll need to prepare the job-search essentials: an effective résumé, a 30-second self-introductory "speech," a basic professional wardrobe, and a plan of action for the coming months.

Since most positions are filled through referrals, I suggest starting your search by drawing up a networking list consisting of friends and acquaintances who might be willing to help you. And don't forget social media sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook, which are useful tools.

I'd also encourage you to be flexible. The position you find upon graduating does not need to be the one you'll hold for 30 years. And sometimes jobs that initially don't seem to offer much can open the door to more desirable positions.

A number of years ago I moved to a new city where, despite my best efforts, I was unable to find a teaching position. After a great deal of effort I finally landed a job with a software company. But within three months, the com-

pany's demise was obvious to all, so I wound up where I started—looking for another job. This time, however, I could list employment within the software industry on my résumé, which was one of the things that caught my subsequent employer's eye when he hired me as a corporate trainer to teach computer languages.

So as you step forward in faith, remember that God sees the end from the beginning and will guide your steps.

—Bonnie Speyers

Bonnie Speyers is a career counselor at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Scripture

Q What does Scripture say about cremation?

A Historically, Christians followed the Jewish practice of burial. The New Testament mentions burial a number of times and refers to the dead as those who are "asleep," a reference that would be inappropriate if the body were incinerated. Some oppose cremation because in the Old Testament burning bodies was a punishment for serious offenders (cf. Lev. 20:14, 21:9) and perhaps even an attempt to deprive the spirit of the deceased "of the rest that was widely believed to result from decent burial" (cf. Today's New International Version Study Bible note on Amos 2:1). Others oppose cremation because the enemies of Christianity sometimes burned people to ridicule the belief that God is able to raise the dead.

It's a mistake to link such texts to the respectful practice of cremation or to assert that cremation makes it impossible for God to raise the dead. There are no legitimate biblical or theological grounds to prohibit cremation.

—George Vander Weit

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

(Note: For more on the topic of cremation, see Al Hoksbergen's article in the April 2010 *Banner*.) ■

Shaping a Youth-Friendly Church

TAKING CUES
FROM NATURAL
TEEN TRAITS

IF YOU WORK WITH YOUNG people in the church, it's almost guaranteed that someone will ask you for help or advice in reaching their "wandering" child.

For many good reasons, we're deeply concerned for our children. Will they have faith? Will they stick with the church? Will they stay connected to the denomination they've grown up in? These concerns are especially prominent in a Reformed church rooted in covenant theology—one that makes and lives out serious baptismal promises.

In a society that offers so much competition to our faith, it's no wonder these questions persist. The matter of passing on faith is complex—too complex to treat exhaustively here. But we *can* reflect on what makes an average teenager tick and how those traits might shape the church's ministry. Here are

five traits that make teens who they are, and suggestions for how the church might respond.

1. Teens Are Relational

All people are relational, but friendships are especially important to teens. Success and failure and the perception of happiness are determined by how relationships fare. Most teens report that peer relationships are the most important relationships to them. Social bonding through shared culture is also at a premium. Young people shape their identity by such things as the music they listen to, the sports they enjoy, and the celebrities they adulate; sharing these likes with friends is crucial.

The church responds: The great news about teens being highly relational is that forming godly relationships of integrity is the best way to nurture faith.

The church, therefore, can and must seize opportunities to build relationships

of integrity between *all* members. Prayer partnering and programs such as Forget-Me-Not luncheons that pair seniors with students allow opportunities for a congregation's members to form genuine relationships across generations.

And since relationships with peers remain highly important to young people, it's essential that we provide them with communities of faith in youth group settings packed with fun and fellowship. Additionally, church youth groups should look for opportunities to participate in larger-scale events, such as SERVE projects and conventions, where youths can meet others their age who are discovering and growing in Christ.

2. Teens Value Their Parents

Though teens value peer relationships, research shows that the greatest influence on their character remains their parents and/or family of origin. Parents or guardians influence their attitudes, voting

patterns, and religious beliefs more strongly than anything or anyone else. Interestingly, the number-one predictor of people's presence in a church pew when they are 30 is whether or not their parents were active in church.

The church responds: We need to view parents as indispensable partners in the religious formation of youths. As we develop programs for young people, are we paying enough attention to the faith nurture of their parents? Do we provide opportunities for parents to share their

4. Teens Are Searching

Christian teenagers are moving in their spiritual journeys from the childlike faith "borrowed" from their parents to personally owned faith. This stage of life has been labeled "searching faith" because it is a seeking process. Teens in searching-faith mode may experiment with other religious perspectives and may waver in their level of commitment to traditional values held by the church. Some church members, especially those who did not grow up in an environment that encour-

5. Teens Value Change

Young people are on the hunt for meaning and significance and will therefore have different preferences from those of preceding generations in order to define themselves.

The church responds: Since every believer is given gifts to serve the body of Christ, the church should seek to nurture young people's gifts in its life and ministry. When looking for volunteers for committees or events, churches should give significant responsibility to their younger members. We should not be afraid to allow young people some scope in shaping worship styles that work for them (music, video clips, dramas, humor) as we seek to be truly intergenerational. On the other hand, it's profoundly important that young people learn that it's not always "all about them." Teens must act selflessly at times and respect the worship preferences of other generations. It's good for churches to question whether their worship incorporates this range of preferences.

We need to minister to both the child and the adult in teens.

faith and model it to their children? The church can help through ministry opportunities that bring families together—for example, youth vs. parent soccer—as well as walking alongside and supporting parents of teens.

3. Teens Live in Transition

Teens live in a transition zone between the carefree days of childhood and the responsibilities of adulthood. Some seem to slide into adult roles with ease; others do it kicking and screaming. Some can't wait to grow up; others experience anger when adult responsibilities are laid on them. Torn between two worlds, teens can, understandably, behave like children one minute and adults the next.

The church responds: We need to minister to both the child and the adult in teens—allowing youths to respond seriously to the world around them, but also making room for them to have fun and just be kids. Making room for play buys a leader credibility when the agenda comes around to serious talk. Most youth groups do this well, but what about pastors, elders, and catechism teachers who connect with teens? Warm-up games, church picnics, and related activities hold incredible value for ministry. Churches should not neglect the fact that being a Christian has joy at its center.

aged searching faith, can find this process disturbing and inadvertently (or purposefully) pass judgment on young people, turning them away from church.

The church responds: A pastor and/or youth leader can be instrumental in helping parents and other adults be aware of and less anxious about this searching stage of faith. Folks in the church need reminders that although at times young people may need to be given direction, more often the task of the church is simply to be available and (relatively) non-anxious as young people wrestle to own their faith.

It's particularly crucial for the church not to ignore or suppress the seeking process but to provide a road-tested, dependable faith perspective that is taught and practiced yet open to debate and questioning. One activity that we've found endlessly beneficial is the game "Take a Stand." A provocative statement is posed to the group (for instance, "It doesn't matter what the lyrics say in songs I like, as long as the beat is good"). The game challenges young people to "take a stand" on the statement and move to one of four labeled areas of the room: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. A spokesperson from each area is asked to articulate the stand they have taken, and the debate ensues.

A Parting Word

In all of this we need to remember that we are in the hands of a loving God who is actively, by his Spirit, drawing people to himself. As parents watch their children search out their own faith and even wander, guilt can hold sway. While it's undoubtedly appropriate for all of us to do some careful self-examination to see whether we've contributed to pushing a young person away from church, when our children reach maturity they must be given space to make decisions for themselves. More often than not, our best course of action is to pray for our young people.

Ultimately, our children's faith is in God's hands. Our job is to learn to trust the movement of the Holy Spirit. ■



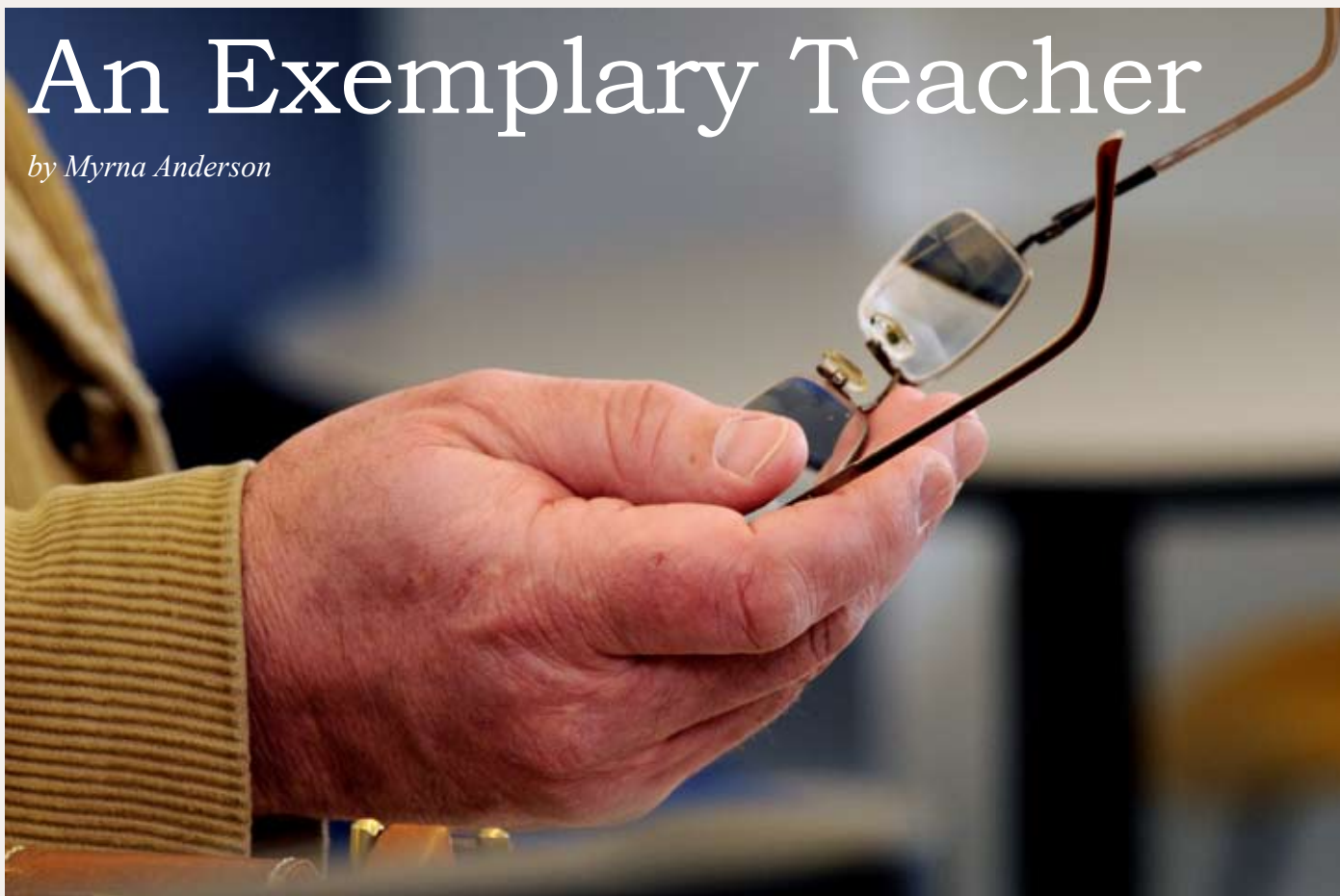
Rev. Pieter Pereboom is a pastor of First CRC, London, Ontario.



Anita Plat Kuiken is First CRC's director of youth ministry.

An Exemplary Teacher

by Myrna Anderson



Calvin English professor William Vande Kopple vividly recalls one specific moment from his 20 years of teaching an interim class in English grammar. It's the time two young women leaped from their seats and stormed out of the classroom, yelling that they "couldn't take it anymore" and sweeping all the books off the desk at the front.

"There were 15 or 20 grammar books on his desk—just about gave me a heart murmur," Vande Kopple remembers, "and he was up there, laughing."

"He" refers to Calvin English professor James Vanden Bosch, Vande Kopple's partner in teaching grammar, who had orchestrated the classroom revolt.

"[Vanden Bosch] has a different approach to people wanting to leave class early," Vande Kopple explained. "He tells them, 'Just so you do it dramatically...?' He is so much fun to have around."

Vanden Bosch, the founder of the grammar interim, is the winner of this year's Calvin Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching.

"He can probably teach a wider variety of classes than anyone in our department,"

He frolics in language with a cat-like grace.

says Vande Kopple. "He teaches with sprightliness, with a sense of wonder, with curiosity, and even with joy."

English professor Gary Schmidt wrote, "I think that every rational person on the globe must acknowledge this: That a teacher who can make a course in grammar one of the most sought-after courses in a department . . . has done something remarkable. Jim has done this."

Vanden Bosch himself, however, claims to be non-

plussed by the honor. "When [Calvin President] Gaylen [Byker] called me and told me, I said, 'Now Gaylen, you're not playing a cruel joke on an aging English professor, are you?'" he recalls, laughing.

Vanden Bosch grew up in Zeeland, Mich., playing softball and football in the yard next door and reading his way through the family bookcase. "I had a very happy childhood," he said. "I had no idea we were a poor blue-collar

family. Everything was just gorgeous to me.”

Both of his parents had eighth-grade educations, and both were dedicated to the idea that their children would graduate from college—preferably Calvin College. “It was an enormous advantage to me to have parents who were happy and optimistic and encouraging, but also parents who instilled that work ethic: when you took on a job, you knew that you were going to do your best,” he said.

At the age of 4, Vanden Bosch went off to kindergarten at Zeeland Christian School, “and already I was aggrieved,” he said, “because I knew my reading skills were good

He started in 1966 and added new names to his list of good teachers: George Marsden, Nick Wolterstorff, Richard Mouw, Clifton Orlebeke, Stanley Wiersma, Ken Kuiper, George Harper, and Harmon Hook.

He also met his wife, Maria (Hiskes), when he joined the Radio Choir. “I said, ‘Who’s that soprano over there?’” he remembers.

Vanden Bosch attended Calvin during the Vietnam era. “It was an interesting place to be in the late ’60s,” he said. “There were marches, demonstrations, teach-ins, pranks. . . In our individuality we all wore the same jeans and long hair and loved the same music and opposed the same war.”

department, that Vanden Bosch got a call from Calvin about replacing retiring English professor Richard Tiemersma.

During the interview, Tiemersma, the department’s acknowledged guardian of English grammar, asked this question: “Mr. Vanden Bosch, we here have found that the retained object is the *pons asinorum* [“bridge of fools”] of students in freshmen composition.

Please define and describe the retained object for us with some examples.”

Vanden Bosch answered: “The retained object is the spouse of someone who gives everything to the college, with nothing left over for the family.”

“They just howled,” he recalls, adding, “I wonder if that answer should have taken care of everything.” He got the job and Tiemersma’s office as well.

In the 27 years since then, he’s taught on both the language and literature sides of the English curriculum. He has taught in Russia, China, and Hungary and represented Calvin at conferences in Italy, Spain, Russia, Hungary, and England.

“He frolics in language with a cat-like grace,” said English professor Elizabeth Vander Lei, “and students are entranced by that delight.” (Vanden Bosch has a history of asking students to describe him as

possessing “cat-like grace” in their course evaluations.)

“He sees things through a lens of linguistics, which I didn’t even know I liked or



thought was possible until I had classes with him,” said ’99 graduate Meghan (Moreau) VanBeek. She remembers another of Vanden Bosch’s trademarks: “I remember him—and he still does it to this day—trying to crush my hand when he shakes it.”

Colleagues and students alike bear witness to the handshake. “It’s bone-crushing,” said Vande Kopple, who says the habit is symptomatic of Vanden Bosch’s competitiveness—a competitiveness that extends to the racquetball court. (“I played him once,” said ’98 alum Andrew Zwart. “He was merciless. . . . Has anyone mentioned his crushing handshake yet?”)

The competitiveness extends to the classroom. “He competes with me to see who can pass out papers faster,” said Vande Kopple. It’s also evident on the football field, where for decades, as a member of the Faculty Fumblers team, he has taken on the challengers, »



Vanden Bosch “can probably teach a wider variety of classes than anyone in our department,” says Calvin English professor William Vande Kopple.

enough that I could have started when I was 3.”

He considers his teachers, both at Zeeland and at Holland Christian School, among the great blessings of his childhood. There he learned Latin in sixth grade and in high school and began his mastery of English grammar.

Calvin was Vanden Bosch’s destination after high school.

From Calvin he went to graduate school in literature, first at Ohio University and then at the University of Chicago Divinity School. He left the program in 1977, short of earning a Ph.D., to teach English at Northwestern College in Iowa, moving to Dordt College in 1978.

It was while at Dordt, serving as chair of the English



» Les Jacques de *Chimes*, the staff of Calvin's student newspaper. "He's been playing since before I came to Calvin," said computer science professor Joel Adams, "and he's the one who—how shall I say it politely?—challenges the stu-

Magnanimous in victory: Jim Vanden Bosch hugs *Chimes* captain Nana Yaa Dodi in the La Jacques de *Chimes* vs. Faculty Fumblers 40th-anniversary football game in 2005.

Calvin College at a Glance

Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Mich., is a comprehensive liberal arts school in the Reformed tradition of historic Christianity. Through our learning, we seek to be agents of renewal in the academy, church, and society. We pledge fidelity to Jesus Christ, offering our hearts and lives to do God's work in God's world.

Founded in 1876, Calvin is an educational institution of the Christian Reformed Church and one of the largest Christian colleges in North America, with more than 4,000 students and 100-plus academic programs.

- 4,092 students in 2009-2010
 - 2,181 from Michigan
 - 1,528 from other states
 - 156 from Canada
 - 227 from other countries
- Tuition of \$24,645 for 2010-2011
 - 92% of students receive financial aid
 - average need-based award is \$16,000
 - 60% of students receive academic scholarships
- 100+ majors and minors, ranging from Asian studies, biochemistry, business, and engineering to recreation, sports management, writing, and youth ministry leadership

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WORK CALVIN COLLEGE

dents to show their stuff on the field."

Colleagues and students give other details: Vanden Bosch regularly volunteers for extra duty, including reading the names of graduates at commencement. He has a large collection of dictionaries, and he reads them. He never refers to his students, either inside or outside class, by their first names.

Nevertheless, Vanden Bosch is known as a friend and coun-

B. and Margaret K. Tinholt Endowment Fund.

"I've told my colleagues for years that I'm in this for the glory and the big bucks, and now it's all come true," he said.

"He has this twinkle in his eye that suggests he holds the secrets to the universe," said Zwart. "And I'm not sure, but I suspect he holds many of them."

Vanden Bosch knows one secret in particular, said 2000



Vanden Bosch; chemistry professor Larry Louters, English professor Dean Ward, and Calvin history professor James Bratt.

selor by students and colleagues. "He watches out for people and remembers what's going on in their lives, asks about troubles, asks about how he can help," Vander Lei said.

"I try to do my part," Vanden Bosch said, emphasizing that Calvin has been a great place for him as a teacher and a scholar. "Showing up is important." In February he showed up at the Prince Conference Center to collect his award, which comes with a medallion and a financial stipend, funded by the George

alum Kelli Klaasen Scholten: "If there is one characteristic that defines him best, it is his ability to spread joy to the people around him. It's hard to be unhappy in the presence of someone who always seems to be having such a good time." ■



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

Trio of Professors Honored

At the annual Faculty Awards Dinner held earlier this year at the Prince Conference Center, the Calvin College community recognized more than one outstanding member of the faculty. Along with the Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching, which went to English professor Jim Vanden Bosch, the college also handed out a trio of new



Frans van Liere

awards that recognize particular facets of teaching excellence.

History professor **Frans van Liere** received the Innovative Teaching Award for incorporating practices such as papermaking into his classes on medieval studies.

Political science professor **Amy Patterson** was awarded the Advising and Mentoring Award, in part because of her role as adviser to Calvin's

Model United Nations program.

And chemistry professor **Roger DeKock** was honored with the Student-Faculty Research Award for the role he has played in shaping generations of future chemists.

"It's gratifying to be able to thank this number of faculty publicly and to highlight what they've done with their students," said Calvin provost Claudia Beversluis, who presented the awards.

"And it's gratifying to see what each one brings to teaching. If we have 320 faculty [members] per year, and you give one award for something that looks like a lifetime achievement award, then there are so many practices that don't get highlighted."

This year Calvin's professional status committee created five new awards: the three that were awarded Feb. 11, the Community-Based Teaching Award, and the Teamwork/Collaborative Change Award. They also brought under the aegis of the provost's office the From Every Nation Award for Excellence in Teaching, originally created by the Calvin office of multicultural affairs.

Asian studies professor Larry Herzberg recently won that award for his work in promoting Asian studies at Calvin. The teaching awards will be granted in differing



Roger DeKock

combinations from year to year.

The recipients of this year's awards were quick to share the honor with their students. "I guess that I see myself as being the biggest beneficiary in my interactions with students," said Patterson, who recently was also awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study HIV support groups in Zambia.

"All of these unique opportunities challenge me. Students ask hard questions, and they have forced me to dig deeper into my subject matter and my faith. I interact with students because I see it as part of teaching and because it makes my life richer."

And DeKock, whom Beversluis described as a pioneer in student-faculty research, was humbled by the award.

"I never expected to receive an award for anything that I had done at Calvin College," he said. "I am sure the same thing is true of other colleagues who have received awards. In other words, I don't think any of us are doing what we are doing with even the thought of an award in our heads. We are doing this work because it is what we love to do." ■

—Myrna Anderson



Amy Patterson

Bringing Children to Jesus

Have you ever noticed that at certain times in our lives, or in the lives of those we love, the things we say take on special significance? These special times might include births, baptisms, weddings, or farewells. It isn't that other conversations are unimportant; some moments are just especially unique and powerful.

I suspect that each of us has experienced those transition moments—moments when we realize that new chapters in our lives are about to unfold. At those times, someone's words can indelibly imprint themselves on our hearts and minds.

One such moment in the life of the disciples (and in the life of the church) took place when Jesus gathered them on a mountain in Galilee and said, "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" (Matt. 28:18-20).

These words, spoken in preparation for Jesus' Ascension, would ring in the ears of the church for centuries. Even today, the church understands this mission—this Great Commission. Jesus could have made any statement, shared any thoughts, given any command, but he chose to instruct his followers to go, make disciples, baptize, and teach.

Over the past 2,000 years the church has been in the business of making disciples. It is at the heart and core of what we do. We send missionaries around the world. We plant churches in our neighborhoods. We reach out in mercy to the poor and hurting. We produce educational materials. We establish Christ-



centered institutions of learning, from preschools through colleges and universities. We do it all because Jesus has called us to be disciple makers.

Disciple making takes many shapes, but at its core it is about introducing people to Jesus—letting them know that following Jesus can make all the difference in their lives and in the world.

I suspect that sometimes we get so wrapped up in the *how* of disciple making that we forget the *what*. We forget that, as we go about our daily lives, everything we do and say impacts our witness in the world. Disciple making is as much about what we *do* as what we *say*. When it comes to introducing someone to Jesus Christ, actions often speak louder than words.

Perhaps we see this best in children. Children have an uncanny ability to see through the façades of life. They very

quickly pick up what really matters. They watch us, often emulating what they see. That's why it is so incredibly important to disciple children. The things that are implanted in them when they are young shape and mold them throughout their lives.

This is at the heart of the issues Synod 2010 will examine when it discusses faith formation. There is no question that we must disciple children. The question is, How can we most effectively do so? How do you and I as parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends, and fellow Christ-followers shape and mold young hearts and minds?

What shape will Christian education take in the next generation? What can churches do to lead and guide children and adults into becoming fully devoted followers of Christ? What can parents do to assure that the next generation of disciples becomes *disciple makers*?

These are not easy questions, but they are questions that we, as the church, must answer if we are to fully engage in this disciple making endeavor. If disciple making is at the heart of Jesus' commission, then it is certainly at the heart of what we, his disciples, are called to do. ■

“ At its core, disciple making is about introducing people to Jesus. ”



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

The Network Takes Off

The conversation has begun and connections are being made since the launch of The Network, a new website where Christian Reformed Church members can connect with each other about the nuts and bolts of ministry.

“Over the first eight weeks, we had about 15,000 visits and 85,000 page views,” says Tim Postuma, web manager for the CRC. “That will continue to increase as search engines pick up the site. So far, visitors have added over 600 comments and discussion topics.”

The Network is a practical tool people can use to learn about ministry topics in which they have an interest, as well as to discuss various issues related to ministry. The site currently covers 49 ministry roles and topics.

“We’ve created these networks for every role and ministry we could think of,” said Postuma, “and if we forgot some, we’ll add more. We know there are people across the CRC doing similar ministries. We wanted a way for them to connect and compare notes with each other.”

“We have found that The Network resonates with people,” says its director, Michael Bruinooge. “They’re also interacting with us and giving us good feedback about what to add or change.”

That input has already resulted in new features, including the option for users to see who else in their church is using The Network and to

receive email alerts when new content is posted. Another popular feature allows people to log in using their existing accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Google, or other services.

“I feel very pleased at what The Network exemplifies and how it has been built,” says Bruinooge. “I definitely see this as an open system that will grow and adapt.”

The website is part of a broader effort to connect members and churches in new ways.

“The Network operates on the premise that the best help often comes from peers and neighbors,” Bruinooge says. “We’ll also be working behind the scenes to help connect us all better for ministry—churches, classes, agencies—in various regions around the U.S. and Canada.”

Each ministry area includes an open discussion forum where people can ask questions, share stories, and give input to each other. Eleven networks are designated as “Guided Networks,” led by volunteer experts, who also offer articles, resources, and blogs.

“The Network represents a new way of being a denomination together,” says Bruinooge. “Our hope is that this is something people will use, helping them feel less isolated.”

Visit www.crcna.org/network to browse The Network or watch a five-minute video introduction.

—CRC Communications

On The Network

Here’s a small sample of what was posted to The Network in the first two months. We’ll be updating this list with new postings in Church at Work in upcoming *Banner* issues.



Church Membership Software

—by Duane in the Church Administration network
Should Christians Use Credit Cards?

—by Mike in the Stewardship network

Including People with Autism in Church Life

—by Mark in the Disability Concerns network

Pastoral Care for Those ‘Living Together’

—by Neil in the Elders network

Prayer Walking

—by Pete in the Prayer Ministry network

Music-Dominated Worship

—by John in the Worship network

How to Start a Church Website

—by Dave in the Church and Web network

Low and Irregular Attendance

—by Nick in the Sunday School network

Children at the Lord’s Supper

—by Clay in the Church Order network

Why I Don’t Tweet

—by Jim in the Pastors network

Spiritual Abuse

—by Beth in the Safe Church network

Global Mission 101

—by Steve in the Global Missions network

Parents Involved in Youth Ministry

—by Marcel in the Youth Ministry network

Missional Church

—by Ryan in the Church Planting network

Profession of Faith Materials for Grades 6-8

—by Hebron CRC in the Sunday School network

The Heidelberg Catechism Is on the Cutting Edge of Youth Ministry!

—by Marcel in the Youth Ministry network

Taking Care of the Pastor

—by Neil in the Elders network

Wedding Guidelines

—by Rob in the Pastors network

Men’s Bible Study Material

—by Renae in the Small Groups network

See the latest posts and add your own at www.crcna.org/Network.

From Dream to Reality in Brazil

Hugs and laughter, music and memories, profound gratitude and deep joy filled the room when more than 300 people gathered in late March to dedicate a new International Ministry Center in Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil.

Staff from Back to God Ministries International and its partners in Latin America recalled God's faithfulness over the course of 40 years of media ministry and looked forward to new opportunities made possible by the new facilities.

"Our partnership in mission today jumps language barriers and links continents," BTGMI

director Bob Heerspink said. "Our partnership testifies to the unity of Christ's church and witnesses to the one mission we all share as we bring the gospel to the people of Brazil, Latin America, and the world."

The project started three years ago when LPC (*Luz Para o Caminho*, Light for the Way), BTGMI's Portuguese ministry, outgrew its facilities. Visionary leaders had purchased a vacant lot in 1997, with a dream that someday God would make possible a state-of-the-art ministry center that could serve all of Latin America.

Thanks to the generous response of ministry partners in North America and Brazil, the dream became reality. The new ministry center will serve not only Latin America, but has the potential for media production in several languages to reach people around the world.

Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, sent a letter of congratulations to the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB), a ministry partner in this mission. Dykstra noted the appointment of Rev. Hernandes Lopes as the new Portuguese ministry leader and said, "It is our prayer that God will use him and the staff of LPC to continue the good work in Brazil."

LPC reaches millions of people in Latin America through its Portuguese media ministry. Much of BTGMI's Spanish outreach is also produced and distributed from the ministry center in Brazil.

—Nancy Vander Meer, *Back to God Ministries International*

Lopes Installed as Portuguese Ministry Leader



Rev. Hernandes Lopes brings a wealth of theological and media experience to his new role.

Rev. Hernandes Lopes has been installed as the new Portuguese ministry leader for Back to God Ministries International.

Lopes, a pastor in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB), brings a wealth of ministry and media experience to the collaborative ministry of IPB and BTGMI in Campinas, São Paulo.

He has served as the host of BTGMI's Portuguese TV program *Verdade e Vida* (*Truth and Life*) since 2006. He is a popular conference speaker in Brazil and has authored more than 75 books, including commentaries on many of the books of the Bible.

BTGMI director Bob Heerspink noted, "With his heart for missions and a wealth of theological and media experience, Rev. Lopes is an ideal choice to give leadership to our Portuguese media outreach. We are grateful to God for leading him to Back to God Ministries International."

—Nancy Vander Meer

Growing and Thriving in Aurora

Nearly 20 years ago, Pastor Shawn Sikkema was leading a new Colorado church plant that was struggling to grow beyond 100 people. These days that church, Eastern Hills Community Church, packs 2,300 people into three services every weekend and overflows with a wide range of evangelism and youth programs, small groups, and support groups.

How does a new church last so long, grow so much, and become such a presence in its community?

"It really is a God thing," Sikkema says. "God has clearly had his hand in our ministry, and we've been able to keep growing and reach a lot of people for him."

Formed in the Denver suburb of Aurora, Colo., in 1989 with help from Christian Reformed Home Missions, Eastern Hills wasn't always a thriving megachurch. Like many young church planters, Sikkema struggled to attract new members and was unsure how long this new worship community would last.

"I'd planted a church in British Columbia in 1985 that didn't work out, so I was well-acquainted with the challenge of getting a new church off the ground," says Sikkema.

There have been many challenges along the way, Sikkema says. "We were originally very liturgical in worship style, for example, but over time we had to become more contemporary and evangelistic." He also learned to become more focused on ministering to the youths in Aurora.

This year Sikkema will become the leader of a new ministry cluster in the Denver area. This group of churches and church leaders will work together to find diverse missional leaders and plant new churches in the region.

"I was really shaped by Home Missions, in terms of its leadership training and dedication to God's mission," he says. "Hopefully, God can work through this cluster to bring the gospel to this entire community."

—Ben Van Houten, *Christian Reformed Home Missions*

Seminary Starts Toastmasters Club

As seminarians prepare for ministry, developing self-confidence and communication skills is important. The new Toastmasters club sponsored by the Center for Excellence in Preaching (CEP) at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) is helping students gain both.

The Ted Spoelstra Toastmasters Club, named for a generous donor who provides funds for communication resources for seminarians, started in the fall of 2009 and celebrated its charter organization in March.

The group meets twice each month over lunch at the Seoul Garden restaurant near campus. There they listen to and



Ron Musich, District Governor for Toastmasters International, presents seminarian Amos Oei with the new club's charter.

encourage one another in public speaking.

CTS students are enthusiastic about the new venture. Club secretary Reita Yazawa says, "We are practicing to become better public speakers in a supportive, encouraging atmosphere [and are] attracting members from Calvin Seminary, Calvin College, the CRC headquarters, and the local community."

CTS student Amos Oei serves as president of the club. CTS preaching professor John Rottman and Calvin College communications professor Randy Bytwerk are also charter members. Sponsored by the CEP's Spoelstra Communications Fund, the club is open to anyone interested in improving his or her communication skills.

Toastmasters International was founded in 1924 to help

adults learn communication skills. The key is learning through participation, said District Governor Ron Musich in his address to the newly formed club at its charter celebration. Lisa Sochacki, volunteer coordinator for ServiceLink at the CRC denominational office in Grand Rapids, gave an impressive speech about God's work in her life, titled "Write Your Plans in Pencil and Let God Have the Eraser."

For more information about the CTS Toastmasters Club, see <http://calvincollege.freetoasthost.org/index.html>.

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

Walking Alongside Cambodian Leaders

"I am like Job," says Pastor Vin. A former philosophy teacher in Cambodia's capital city of Phnom Penh, Vin lost his family and everything he had under the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s.

Like thousands of others, he was forced from his home and sent to the countryside, condemned to harsh labor on communal farms. But now he testifies how the Lord has given him back a family, a home, and so much more.

"A few years ago Pastor Vin became a Christian," says Gil Suh, who works for Christian Reformed World Missions in Cambodia. "Though he does not have formal theological

training, he is now serving a rural church as a pastor."

Suh met Pastor Vin through a Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) seminar, a course designed for church leaders who have never received seminary training.

The TLT program highlights the different parts of effective, biblical leadership through courses such as "Stewardship" and "Caring for God's People." At the end of each course, participants make action plans for their ministries and report back on their progress at another session held six months later.

This kind of leadership development is greatly needed in Cambodia, which was rav-

aged by the Khmer Rouge. By some estimates, the Khmer Rouge killed nearly one-fifth of the people in their country. Leaders and potential leaders, with years of knowledge and experience, were lost forever. Today the average Cambodian is just 22 years old. The Christian church, while growing, is also very young.

Gil and Joyce Suh walk alongside Cambodian churches and leaders, helping them mature into strong, healthy communities. As part of his work, Suh follows up with leaders like Pastor Vin to encourage and stretch them in their roles. Joyce works primarily with the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia's

Women's Commission, creating training materials and other resources.

"The more I get to see the faith of people at a grassroots level and hear people's stories and testimonies, the more I am simply in awe," Joyce says. "Although there may be a lack of training and biblical foundation, there is a very deep and real faith. There is maturity that grows out of persecution, through exile from family and through living their faith in spite of hardships every day."

—Sarah Van Stempvoort, Christian Reformed World Missions

Cool Wings and Crazy Knees

Did you know that bats live near you?

This time of year, you can find bats almost anywhere in North America. Bats are a part of summer—just like ants, bees, worms, snakes, and all those other little critters.

Bats have some strange personal habits. They sleep hanging upside down. They fly—wearing fur—in hot weather. And they collect bugs into “bug baskets.” To support those

strange habits, bats have some pretty amazing body parts. God gave them just the right stuff for their role in Creation.

Bats are a part of your life, just like those other critters. That should make you very happy (see “Yummy Bugs!”). And you can be a part of bats’ lives too. Read on to find out how.

Crazy Knees

Some people say that bats’ knees are on backward. They’re not. They just seem backward from the way our knees bend.

Our knees bend forward. Try this: stand up, then walk, then crouch down. Watch your knees while you do this. See how they bend forward?

Now imagine that your knees bent the other way, like a bat’s. Would you be able to walk?

Probably not.

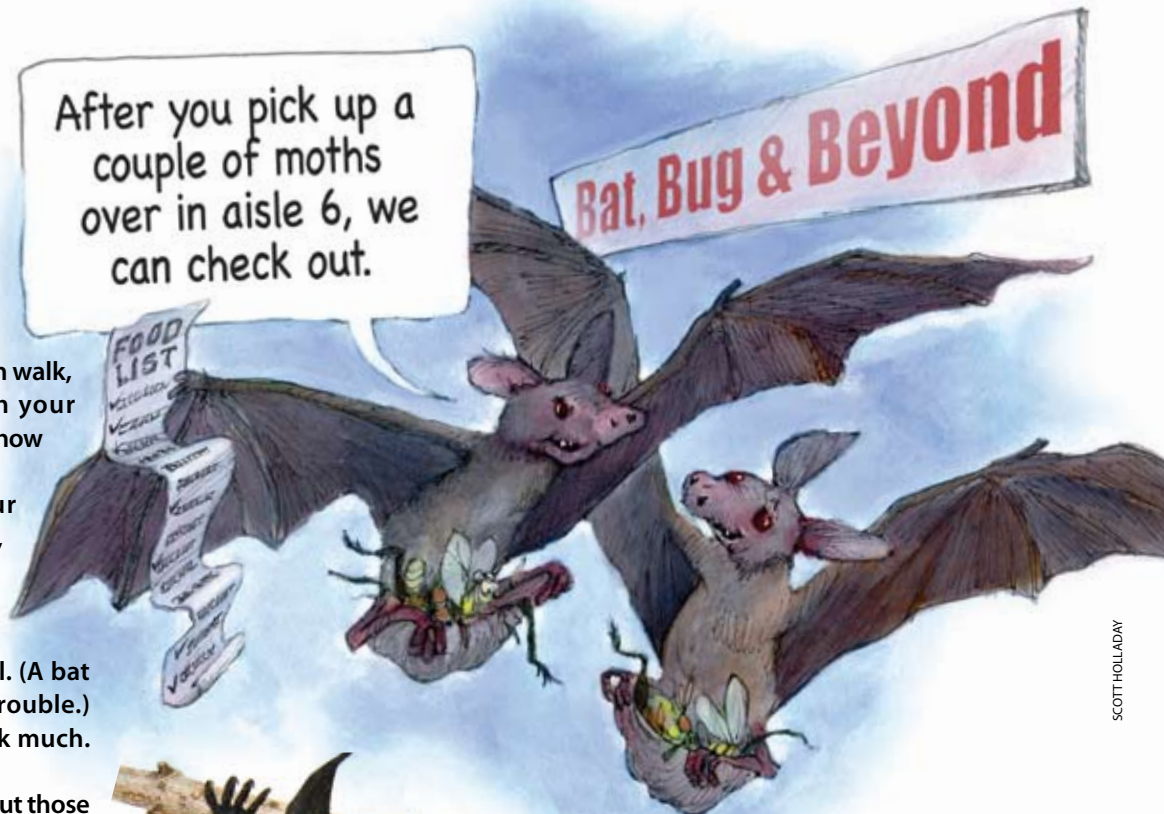
Bats can’t walk very well. (A bat on the ground is a bat in trouble.) But bats don’t need to walk much. They’re created to fly.

Here’s the great thing about those crazy knees: they give bats “bug baskets.”

Most bats have a flap of skin stretched between their back ankles. When their knees bend, their feet come forward. The skin flap forms a little basket in front of the bat. That’s a great place to store bugs. It’s like a shopping basket. The bat catches a bug, puts it in the basket, and takes it home to eat later.

After you pick up a couple of moths over in aisle 6, we can check out.

Bat, Bug & Beyond



Hanging Out

Bats spend most of their time hanging out . . . upside down . . . by their back toes! They even sleep that way. And they don’t fall. That’s because they have special toe-lock equipment. The weight of the body hanging upside down pulls their toe claws shut. So they hang on by their toenails, locked in place.

Bats also have special “blood gates.” When bats hang upside down, certain blood vessels close. That prevents too much blood from flowing to their heads.

Cool Wings

Imagine yourself in a fur coat on a hot summer night. Now imagine yourself flying with that coat on. Wouldn't you get HOT?

Bats are covered with fur, and they fly in hot weather. But they don't overheat. God gave them natural air-conditioners in their wings.

Hundreds of tiny blood vessels crisscross each wing. Lots of blood flows through those wings. When a bat flies, the wind fans its wings and cools the blood in them. That cool blood flows back to the rest of the bat, cooling the whole bat.

Here's a bat bonus: The bat can use blood gates for cold weather. It can close blood vessels to keep blood out of the air-cooled wings. The blood inside the bat stays warm, so the whole bat stays warm. That's cool!



Anybody Home?

Would you like to watch bats swoop around your yard or neighborhood, scooping up insects? Then invite them by putting up a bat house. You can find out where to buy bat houses or how to build them by visiting this website: <http://www.batconservation.org>.

A Grate Idea

Some bats hibernate (sleep) during the winter, often in caves. They live on fat they've stored from food they ate during the fall.

If a hibernating bat is disturbed, it wakes up and moves around. That activity can use up 10 to 30 days' worth of stored fat. Then the bat will need to eat earlier than usual in the spring. But what if the bugs aren't out yet? The bat might starve.

Some people love to explore caves. Sometimes they disturb hibernating bats by mistake. That used to be a big problem. Too many bats were disturbed, came out early in the spring, and starved to death.

So people put grates in front of bat caves. Now they close the grates when the bats hibernate. This keeps people out, but the bats can still squeeze through the holes in the grates.

The bats fly out in the spring. Then someone opens the grates. People can explore the caves at the right times, and the bats can hibernate undisturbed. Isn't that grate?!

Yummy Bugs!

Most bats eat bugs. They like beetles, moths, flies, and especially mosquitoes. A little brown bat can catch and eat at least 10 to 15 mosquitoes per minute. That's about 600 mosquitoes an hour!

Some bats eat fruit and flowers. Trees that grow bananas, dates, avocados, mangos, guavas, and cashews depend on bats to pollinate their flowers and/or spread their seeds.

Imagine a world without bats. We'd have a lot more bugs and a lot less fruit! Aren't you glad God made bats?



Joanne De Jonge is a park ranger in northern Michigan. Every summer she introduces kids to bats living in their favorite hangout there.

Human reason still has its value. We can use it to better understand what is grasped by faith (the study of theology) and even to test the plausibility of claims of faith (the study of apologetics). But the moment we try to use human reason as the *foundation* for our beliefs, things start to wobble.

Faith and Fog

I wonder how many of our difficulties with faith stem from misunderstanding what faith really is. We often approach faith as if it were a verb—something we have to do, like pedaling an exercise bike on a generator to keep the lights on. When faced with a crisis, we may cringe and brace ourselves as we muster up as much God-optimism as we can in order to make sure that God's promises still hold true.

This attitude is really a form of fear: we worry that if we were to grow tired of pedaling, the lights of heaven would dim. But if we can keep “*faith-ing*” hard enough, God will provide what we need—working all things for our good or forgiving our sins or guiding us when we face decisions.

It's strange that we picture faith that way, because Hebrews 11 doesn't describe faith as an effort, but rather as a kind of vision: “Now faith is being . . . certain of what we do not see.” Faith is an ability to see something that's already there, whether we've spotted it or not.

I live in northern California, and I love to spend time near the San Francisco Bay. One of the things I love most is watching the dramatic fog roll silently in.

The city of San Francisco, or Angel Island, or Alcatraz, can suddenly vanish. Drivers may begin crossing the Golden Gate Bridge with no visible proof that the other half of the bridge even exists. I recall being on a sailboat once and suddenly making the eerie discovery that all my familiar landmarks had disappeared in the fog.

People who live in the Bay area have learned to adapt to the fog. There's no widespread panic when a bridge disappears or a mountain vanishes overnight. We've learned that if we are patient for a few hours, we'll get our bridge back and our mountains and islands will return. That's just how fog works.

The principle is this: fog doesn't change our landmarks; it changes the *visibility* of those landmarks.

I find the same principle at work in faith. Some days we can clearly see God's hand in our lives. We feel God's love and bask in God's care.

Other days aren't like that at all. A fog of doubt or a haze of shame creeps in, and suddenly all those spiritual realities seem to have vanished.

That's where the Hebrews 11 kind of faith comes in. Faith is our awareness of the fact that all those things are still there, even when we can't see them.

It takes faith to drive across a bridge when you can't see the other side. It takes the same kind of faith to continue loving a difficult spouse or child or to continue following a call to a particular ministry or to continue to resist chronic temptation.

In a broader sense, our faith doesn't necessarily change our fundamental realities; it only exposes them. Our faith doesn't cause God to be faithful; it simply helps us discover that God has been faithful all along.

Living by Faith

So what does it mean for us to live by faith?

When navigating by faith in the fog of life, there are three actions that can help us find our way:

1. *We need to accept our need for faith.* To live by faith we need, first of all, to come to terms with our faith-phobia. We need to somehow make peace with the fact that our faith can be plausible without having to be proven. To live by faith we need to learn to resist the panic that can creep in when the visibility of spiritual realities dims.
2. *We need to do whatever we can to clear the air.* Here's one thing I've discovered about fog: it's easier to see familiar things in it than unfamiliar things. When fog settles on the freeway near my home I can still spot my usual exit even if I can't yet read the signs. But if I were traveling in another town I could get lost quickly. The same is true with our faith. It becomes much easier to hold on to God's promises in times

of stress if I can recall plenty of times when God has previously shown himself to be reliable.

3. *We need to keep looking.* When confronted with fog, we really have only two choices: to *squint* our eyes or to *shut* them. Most drivers, when encountering fog, will squint, craning their necks to spot familiar silhouettes through the gloom. But imagine how disastrous it would be if a driver simply gave up, taking his hands off the wheel as he entered a fog bank, thinking, “It's too foggy to see—what's the use?” (A freeway is a bad place to become directionally agnostic.) We face a similar choice when encountering spiritual fog. Will we strain to see how God may be working in these circumstances, or will we simply conclude that God has failed us?

In short, it's not about us. We don't make God's providence happen. We didn't invent the promises of Scripture, and we can't enforce them.

I still have mixed feelings about faith. Given the choice, I would prefer to live by sight. But I'm discovering that the fog that appears in my life really doesn't change anything. While I can't make it go away, I'm also not in charge of keeping bridges and landmarks in place when my vision is obscured.

Fog isn't so bad if I know what's real. Thanks to Scripture, I do.

And so I have faith. ■



Ron Vanderwell is lead pastor for *The Gathering*, a church plant in Sacramento, Calif. He also co-leads the re-start church plant of another congregation in nearby Napa, Calif. He is married and has three sons, two dogs, and one classic VW Beetle.

Some days we can clearly see God's hand in our lives. Other days aren't like that at all.

at. Read. Relax. Repeat. Read. Relax.

Good Reads for Real Girls



WHAT'S A GIRL TO DO when she's finished with Nancy Drew but too innocent for the glamour and drama of the Gossip Girls? Recently, a few female authors have emerged with books that feature girls who face real-life problems. These girls are not always polite or well-behaved. They are never beauty queens. They are down-to-earth characters, written to support young people who are living through their own coming-of-age stories.

Shannon Hale writes for children ages 9-12. Hale gained the national spotlight in 2003 when her novel *The Princess Academy* (Bloomsbury) won a Newberry Honor, but it is her Bayern series that hooks most of her readers. She creates mythical worlds for her characters, and even though most of her main characters are girls, every novel has enough magic, intrigue, deception, and war to keep both male and female readers interested. Hale's female characters are clever, resourceful, independent, and brave.

Jacqueline Woodson writes for kids in middle school and for young adults.

What's a girl to do when she's finished with Nancy Drew?

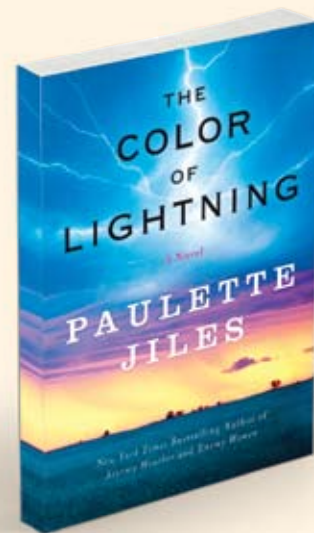
Attempting to give a voice to the voiceless, Woodson writes about characters who feel out of place in society. Readers will root for them as they struggle against mainstream norms and expectations. Woodson often portrays African American girls who live in urban environments—characters who were missing from the pages of the books that she read as a child.

Laurie Halse Anderson writes for teenagers. Beware: somewhere between the juvenile section and the young adult section in the library, female characters become sexual beings, and Anderson does not skirt around the issue. Her novels are often darker and center on issues that face girls today, such as rape, anorexia, and loneliness. Anderson offers no trace of the fairy-tale world, but her characters are strong and funny and capable of grace.

Hale, Woodson, and Anderson attempt to restore balance to the ratio of strong girls to boys who are featured in juvenile literature. They do so with a skill and humor that lends dignity to their characters and their readers. ■



Kathryn Hoffman is a freelance writer, an avid reader of young adult books, and a member of Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

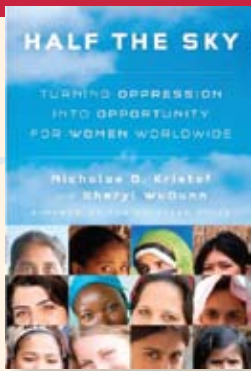


The Color of Lightning

by Paulette Jiles
reviewed by Jim Romahn

North America's native people were often described in the past as "noble savages." This novel, based on a true story, portrays 19th-century Native Americans as both noble and savage. Some of the story is told via Samuel Hammond, a peace-loving man who was sent by the Quakers of Pennsylvania to serve as an "Indian agent." The other voice is Britt Johnson, a black man who risks his life to free his wife and children after they're captured by Native Americans. (HarperCollins)

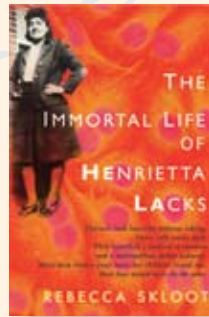




Half the Sky

by **Nicholas D. Kristof** and **Sheryl WuDunn**
reviewed by **Meg Jenista**

If you are looking for a “nice” read, keep moving. If you are ready to be infuriated, to experience moral conviction and social empowerment, the vivid stories, haunting statistics, and photographed smiles in this Pulitzer Prize-winner are intended for you. Rightly called a “manifesto,” this book is intended to channel the social pressure of Western indignation, “turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide.” Perfect for book clubs and church groups. You won’t be finished with this book until you’ve gotten involved. (Knopf)



The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

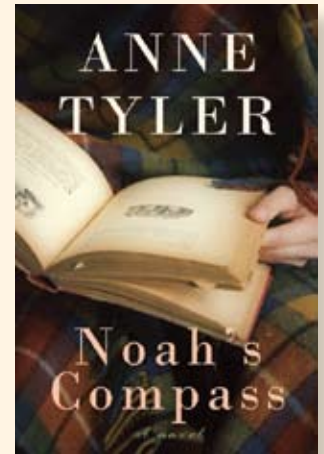
by **Rebecca Skloot**
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

Henrietta Lacks was an African American woman whose cancerous cells, taken without her knowledge, were the first to grow in culture, becoming “immortal.” Known as HeLa cells, they gave scientists a building block for countless breakthroughs. This saga, set against racism and crippling poverty, tells one family’s tale of the human consequences of scientific discovery. It’s a meditation on medical ethics, the notion of informed consent, and the issue of who owns human cells. You won’t be able to put it down. (Crown)

World Gone Beautiful

by **Linda Buturian**
reviewed by **Phil Christman Jr.**

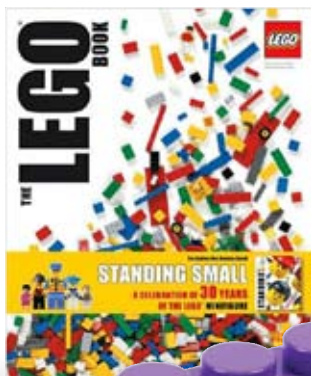
Fidelity—to friends, lovers, place, God—is almost as hard to write well about as it is to do. The Midwest has more than its share of the few writers who can pull the trick off, from Kathleen Norris to Larry Woiwode to Debbie Blue, and Linda Buturian (Blue’s neighbor) slots easily into that list with this instantly engaging, cumulatively powerful memoir. Whether she’s writing about the “Cold War” of a marriage or the cold winters of rural Minnesota, her work is as quietly revelatory as a prairie sunset. (Cathedral Hill Press)



Noah’s Compass

by **Anne Tyler**
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

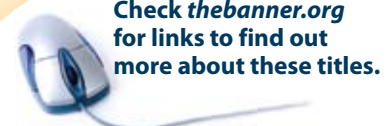
Sixty-year-old Liam Pennywell is less concerned about losing his teaching position than he is about losing the memory of the night he was attacked by an intruder. He strategizes about ways to retrieve that memory and enlists the help of a person who can do his remembering for him. Gradually, Liam’s spirit is healed as he retrieves memories, though not the one he had hoped for. Tyler’s insightful exploration of a broken man recovering his compass through restored relationships is humorous, compassionate, and poignant. The book contains some profanity. (Knopf)



The LEGO Book

by **Daniel Lipkowitz**
reviewed by **Otto Selles**

Did you know that the company name LEGO™ comes from “LEg GOdt”—the Danish for “Play Well”? That the LEGO block was patented in 1958? This marvelously illustrated book pieces together the history of LEGO and displays the various LEGO product lines. Parents will recognize past LEGO sets, while today’s fans will drool over special collector sets. A second volume, *Standing Small*, gives a humorous portrayal of the LEGO mini-figure over the past thirty years. Packaged in a box set, this will thrill the LEGO fan of any age in your family. (Dorling Kindersley)



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



Emily's Ghost

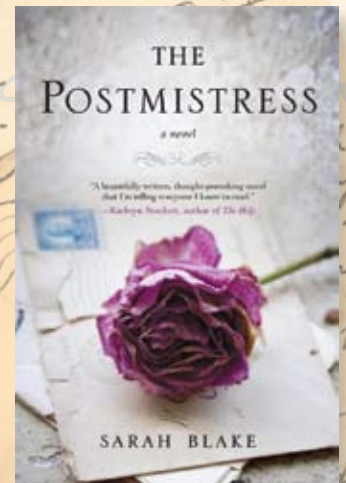
by **Denise Giardina**
 reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

For all who love *Wuthering Heights*, and for those who are bewildered by it, Denise Giardina offers a novel based on Emily Brontë's life. The author brings to life Brontë's family relationships, the cultural restraints she endured, and her connection to the young clergyman working with her father. Curate William Weightman serves the destitute mill workers in town and resists the societal status quo. Emily's independence and intelligence attract his interest. Moving, but not sentimental, this novel explores love, faith, and hope. (Norton)

The Postmistress

by **Sarah Blake**
 reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

In 1940, Frankie Bard, reporting from the Blitz in London, strives to make her fellow Americans see the harsh reality of the war and take action. Her radio dispatches change the lives of Iris James and Emma Fitch in Franklin, Mass. As Frankie records the stories of refugees fleeing the Nazis, tragedies also evolve in Franklin, eventually weaving the women's lives together. This novel, which contains profanity and sexually explicit scenes, masterfully deals with the question "How do you bear (in both senses of the word) the news?" (Putnam)



Once Was Lost

by **Sara Zarr**
 reviewed by **Sally Bulthuis**



As her once-stable family life unravels and the search for a kidnapped local girl goes on, 15-year-old Samara Taylor finds her faith in God shaken to the core. Zarr sensitively portrays a Christian family in crisis: Samara's mom is in rehab and her dad, the pastor, is more focused on his congregation than on his troubled family. Interwoven themes of loss, doubt, hope, and restoration give teen and adult readers much to ponder and discuss. (Little, Brown)



Over at the Castle

by **Boni Ashburn**
 reviewed by **Sandy Swartzentruber**

In this delightful picture book, a mother dragon and her little dragon sit on a hill near a castle, waiting for something, but the little dragon's getting restless! Meanwhile, life in and around the castle goes on—until the big moment arrives. This counting book's gentle, rhythmic text makes it a perfect choice for bedtime reading. Imaginatively illustrated in subtle warm colors by Kelly Murphy, it's great for any little boy or girl who loves dragons, castles, and rhymes. Ages 4-8. (Abrams)

Crazy Love

by **Francis Chan**
 reviewed by **Paul Delger**

Francis Chan's *Crazy Love* may make the reader uncomfortable. Chan invites Christians to leave their comfort zones and radically show their love for God. Chan contends that many Christians appear like unbelievers ("Something is wrong when our lives make sense to unbelievers"). He encourages people to downsize their lifestyle, give to the poor, and live life now in view of eternity. *Crazy Love* causes readers to examine the impact of their Christian life in the light of God's saving grace. (David C. Cook)



Identity Theft?

In your 20s or 30s? We want to hear what's on your mind as it relates to living out your faith in today's world. Please send manuscripts (600 words) to editorial@thebanner.org. (And, no, you don't have to be ordained!)

Identity theft is something that most of us associate with credit cards and the Internet. We call it "identity theft" because a person's most valuable and private information is stolen or exploited in a destructive way. No one likes the idea of having his or her security breached.

But "identity theft" can also refer to a more social or spiritual phenomenon. I recently had a conversation with my wife about the thing Generations X, Y, and Z fear even more than financial insecurity: losing their ability to define themselves.

Raised by televisions, always on the phone, my fellow 20-to-30-somethings and I often define ourselves by the products we buy, the groups we join, and, most important, by the statement "You can be whatever you want to be." As individuals, we've absorbed that advertisement as gospel and made self-expression the highest human virtue.

However, when confronted by the church's message of corporate identity and self-sacrifice, many of us have been scared away and have never looked back. Why would I want to let someone else define who I am?

The way this perceived identity theft has played itself out in the church is also connected with our conversations about denomination. Reformed Christians have struggled with the tension between tradition and transformation for centuries, and frequently the proposed resolutions come back to identity. Who are we as the Christian Reformed Church in North America? Where have we come from, and where do we want to go?

The identity crisis every new generation faces doesn't seem to go away. Yet this same crisis provides an opportunity for a new way of thinking about our identity.

This new way of thinking starts with recognizing that our identity is in Christ.

Because of the way Jesus offers people a new identity, the church will always be at odds with cultures that fear conformity. As long as confusing equality with sameness obscures the gospel message of "new creation," there will be those who feel that their identities will be stolen instead of transformed.

Our problem, then, is how to speak to a generation of people who fear that joining the church will force them to lose themselves.

Maybe the problem of youths leaving our pews is *not* that we're asking the wrong questions or that we haven't found the right "formula." Maybe the problem is that we spend more time trying to project an image of what we think a certain generation might want instead of finding joy in who we are.

Too often we identify ourselves by what we don't like, who we don't want to be, and where we don't want to go. At other times we compromise too much just to appeal to current trends. Jesus says in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Even though Jesus compels us to lose our lives to gain them, he is not a thief. He is the source of true identity. Jesus' representative body, the church, proclaims: "Come, all you who thirst for real security and to be known and understood. Christ is our joy. Taste and see that he is good!"

So where do we go from here? I have a few suggestions: Don't hesitate to talk to others about how we can better communicate this timeless truth. Don't be afraid to say there is a solution, but that it involves a new way of thinking about identity and a very old message about life in Christ.

And, finally, if we proclaim this gospel this way, don't be surprised if we begin to see a church filled with new seekers and returning prodigals. ■

Mark Hofman is married to his seminary sweetheart, Stephanie, and is the happy father of Asher. He's currently in the Th.M. program at Calvin Theological Seminary.

NEXT



When confronted by the church's message of corporate identity and self-sacrifice, many of us have been scared off.

Silence as a Weapon

CONVENTIONAL wisdom suggests that “silence is golden”—a saying that no doubt originated with harried parents.

While silence can be beautiful, it can also be ugly. It can wreak more havoc than words can ever match. Silence can cut sharper than a knife and pierce the heart more keenly than an arrow.

A number of years ago I became aware of the terrible power of silence during the painful divorce of a friend. The following is taken from an article I wrote at the time, in which my friend expressed his pain:

“During the long year in which my marriage lunged toward disintegration, nothing was more difficult for me to endure than my wife’s intense silence. We lived together in the same house, but we never talked. If I initiated a conversation she would answer in monosyllables, and she initiated nothing. She didn’t argue, complain, or become angry. She did her work around the house and cared for our children, but she would not talk to me. It would have been easier for me if she had cursed me for my inadequacies and denounced me with bitter hatred. Anything she had to say, no matter how venomous and virulent, would have been less oppressive than that hateful silence she hurled at me” (*The Banner*, March 21, 1988).

Wielding Silence

In the succeeding years I’ve seen the weapon of silence used to wound people on many occasions. As a minister I have often seen the destructive power of silence within the church community. I’m convinced that silence is the weapon of choice for churchgoing folks.

There would be heavy sanctions against a church member who assaulted a fellow believer with a switchblade, but who has ever come under church discipline for wounding another person with the “silent treatment”?

My first adult experience in being on the receiving end of hurtful silence came during my early years as a pastor. When the church council made a decision to change hymnals, one of the senior and respected members of the congregation was outspoken in his anger. The next thing I knew, he was icing me out with silence.

I tried everything I could to create a warmer climate, but to no avail. At every church service I sought him out, greeted him cordially, and tried to shake his hand. Although he did reluctantly take my outstretched hand, I would have received a friendlier shake from a polar bear. Until the day I left that congregation to serve another church, this angry man never surrendered his hurtful silence.

I would like to claim that I have never myself wielded the weapon of silence. The truth is that I live among people who abuse the power of silence, and I am just the same.

Jesus and Silence

More than anyone else, Jesus has taught me when silence may and may not be used.

Prior to his 24 hours before the cross, Jesus never gave anyone the “silent treatment,” not even his enemies. To be sure, he had plenty of cause. Throughout his ministry people constantly taunted him, baited him, tested him. On many occasions Jesus could have turned a cold shoulder and walked away.

But he didn’t.

When the Pharisees gleefully sought to trap him by posing a tax dilemma, Jesus didn’t turn mum—he answered them



(Matt. 22:15-22). When the Sadducees lured him into a verbal minefield with a question about marriage and the resurrection, Jesus calmly responded to their inquiry (22:23ff). Though he did occasionally speak to his enemies with veiled meaning, Jesus never inflicted silence on them. That is, not until just before he died.

One of the most striking features of our Lord’s passion was the silence of his suffering. All four gospel writers note his remarkable silence.

Matthew informs us that when Jesus “was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer” (27:12). Mark points out that the high priest bluntly



asked Jesus why he would not respond to his accusers, “but Jesus remained silent and gave no answer” (14:61). Luke records that when Jesus later appeared before Herod, Herod “plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer” (23:9). Silence! Powerful and pointed silence.

Why? Why was Jesus so silent? His silence was prophesied by Isaiah centuries earlier, but Isaiah does not explain its purpose.

The Simple Truth

The simple truth is that the silence of Jesus was the final result of a love that

was again and again rejected. It was the silence of judgment.

Jesus’ silence was directed at the Pharisees and teachers of the law who had hardened their hearts against him. It was a silence that said, “You have spurned my saving grace so often that there is nothing more I can say.”

As the late Peter Eldersveld wrote many years ago:

There comes a time in God’s dealings with sinners when he has nothing more to say, when something more powerful than words will be necessary if they are

just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over” (Matt. 18:15). Communication with the hope of reconciliation must be the goal for believers who feel wronged by another.

Likewise, if another person treats us with a stony silence, it is our duty to attempt communication in the hope of reconciliation. We must not acquiesce easily to another person’s attempt to hurt us with silence! The inspired word from the apostle Paul is, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18).

Silence can wreak more havoc than words can ever match.

to be converted. And that is usually his last witness to them. If the utter silence of God does not impress them, then there is nothing left for him to do but to forsake them forever (*Nothing But the Gospel*, 1966).

Silence in the Hands of the Christian

In the hands of anyone less than the Son of God, the weapon of silence is extremely dangerous. When we take aim and shoot a cold stream of silence at another person, we are pronouncing our judgment on that individual. We are saying that that human being is so despicable and unreachable that we do not consider him or her worthy of any attempt at communication. We pour out our utter contempt by our silence.

Rarely are we justified in making such a judgment.

Jesus did not say, “If a brother or sister sins against you, hit them with the weapon of silence until they shape up.” Rather, Jesus said, “Go and point out the fault,

Unfortunately, in this fallen world there will always be someone who hits us with silence, and, despite our best efforts, we will not be able to warm the relationship. Eventually, we may realize that further attempts to communicate are fruitless. In such situations perhaps we are justified in responding to stubborn, persistence silence with a silence of our own.

We must make certain, however, that our silence never rises out of hatred or contempt, but out of a Christ-like love that has again and again been rebuffed. ■



Rev. John Van Regenmorter is director of Christian Life and director of Stepping Stones for Bethany Christian Services, Grand Rapids, Mich.

The Athanasian Creed

IF YOU'VE EVER RECITED THE ATHANASIAN CREED in a worship service, please send me an email to tell me about it!

In truth, I've never heard this creed used in church, and it's not difficult to see why. Even a quick glance shows you that in addition to being *much* longer than either the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed, this creed is also sufficiently repetitive as to get tedious. (You can find it with all the CRC's confessions in the back of our *Psalter Hymnal*.)

But wait: this incredibly long creed has a brief introduction and an even briefer conclusion. The opening states that the faith professed here needs to be kept "whole and unbroken"—and if anyone fails to do so, that person will "perish eternally." Then at the very end we read, "This is the catholic [universal] faith: one cannot be saved without believing it firmly and faithfully." That's a real zinger!

If it seems a bit on the severe side, that's doubtless a reflection of the fact that the Athanasian Creed centers on the two biggest teachings the early church had to tackle: the nature of God and the nature of Jesus Christ.

No matter which religion you're talking about, it's clear that knowing your God is about as important as it gets. If atheists are correct and there is no God, then religion is just what atheists claim it to be: deluded silliness. Then again, if there *is* one true God, not only is religion warranted, there is also no more important pursuit than determining who God is.

But putting it that way sounds a little dry, so let's warm things up and remind ourselves that, for Christians, it's not just a matter of right knowledge but of love. We are to love the Lord our God with everything we've got. And when you love someone, you want to know everything about your beloved.

Believe it or not, that's the aim of the Athanasian Creed: to help us know our beloved God better.

Specifically, this creed wants us to understand the sublime mystery of the Trinity. Our God is just *one* God, but he exists as a community of three persons. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have absolutely everything in common—each is uncreated, immeasurable, eternal, almighty, even as each person of the Trinity is properly seen as the true God and Lord of the universe.

But for all they have in common, they can be distinguished too.

The Son, not the Father or the Spirit, was the one who became human inside the womb of Mary. The Spirit, not the Father or

There is no more
important pursuit
than determining
who God is.

the Son, was the one poured out in power at Pentecost. This is the God we love.

The other main concern of this creed is to help us understand the Savior we love. Here, too, we have to wrap our minds around a mystery: Jesus is just one person, but he is both divine and human. As divine, the person who was born of Mary in Bethlehem existed from all eternity. But his human nature did have a starting point when the virgin Mary became pregnant by the power of God.

Yet Jesus is not a hybrid, he's not a mixture, and he's not two different persons. He is one person who is both divine and human. Both. That's the Savior we love.

Someone once said that the gospel message is like a body of water. In one sense it's shallow enough for a baby to splash around in without danger of drowning. In another sense it's a vast ocean into whose never-ending depths a person could dive forever. Our Christian faith, in other words, is both as simple as saying, "Jesus is Lord!" and as mysteriously complex as a statement like the Athanasian Creed. It's both. Just like God: both one and three. Just like Jesus: both one and two.

These may not be simple ideas. But they are glorious ones because they come from the One who loved us while we were yet sinners and whom we now get to love back forever and ever. ■



Rev. Scott Hoezee (seh6@calvinseminary.edu) is director of Calvin Theological Seminary's Center for Excellence in Preaching in Grand Rapids, Mich. He is author of *Speaking as One*, a study of the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds (available at www.faithaliveresources.org).

Advertising Information

Deadlines: July issue is 5/31/10; August issue is 7/5/10. Visit www.thebanner.org for complete details.

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

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

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Denominational and Classical Announcements

General

The council of Grace Community CRC, Oak Lawn, Illinois, hereby calls all duly elected delegates to Synod 2010 to meet in the Martin & Janet Ozinga Chapel at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois, on Saturday, June 12, at 9:00 a.m.

All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday afternoon, June 13, 2010, at 3:00 p.m. at Grace Community CRC, 10415 S. Kedvale Ave., Oak Lawn, Illinois. Rev. Michael J. Kooy will deliver the message.

All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 6, and on Sunday, June 13.

Council of Grace Community CRC, Oak Lawn, Illinois

Admitted into the Ministry

At its January 21, 2010 Classis Toronto examined and approved Rob Datema for ordination as a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church. Rob was ordained on March 7, 2010 as Associate Pastor of Willowdale CRC in Toronto to serve as Executive Director of The Lighthouse Inner City Mission there.

Available for Call

EMDEN CRC heartily recommends our pastor, Rev. Jeff Vanderhooff, for call to the churches of the denomination. The church council is taking this action due solely to our congregation's financial situation which no longer allows us to support a full-time pastor. If you have any questions please call the chair of council, Duane Mulder, at 320-329-3203.

Congregational Announcements

General

FULLER AVENUE CRC 85th Anniversary Celebration: All friends of Fuller Avenue Church are invited to a service of praise and thanksgiving to God for 85 years of ministry on Sunday, July 18, at 9:45 AM. A memory book is being created, and we'd love to hear from you! Send your greetings or stories before July 9 to info@fullercrc.org or 1239 Fuller Avenue SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

NEW LIFE CRC in Guelph, Ontario, is pleased to announce that on January 31st Tom and Lesli VanMilligan were installed as their new "pastor couple". Pastors Tom and Lesli will share equally this full-time position to spiritually mentor the church leadership, help connect the congregation with its community, and lead the pastoral care and preaching teams of the church. We give thanks to God for sending them to us, and we pray that both pastors and congregation might flourish in ministry together.

SUBSTITUTE ORGANIST/PIANIST Greater Grand Rapids Area. 25-Years Experience as Church Musician. 616.974.9077

THANK YOU! The Bethel Council, on behalf of the congregation, wishes to thank **Neil Feddes**, as she retires after more than 50 years of service, faithfully playing the organ and piano during our worship services.

VACATIONING IN THE LUDINGTON area this summer? Come worship with us Saturday nights at 5:30. It's casual. It's contemporary. Lakeside Chapel, 301 N. Washington, Ludington, MI 49431. Phone (231) 843-9515.

Church's 50th Anniversary

PALO ALTO CA All friends of the Palo Alto Christian Reformed Church are invited to a weekend of praise and remembrance celebrating 50 years of service in Palo Alto. Festivities are planned for Sept. 4 and 5, 2010. For details please call Kim Fiske at 650 493-1152, email info@pacrc.org, or search for the church's full name on Facebook.

Retirement

SEYMOUR CRC in Grand Rapids, MI announces the retirement of its pastor, Carl Kammeraad, after 38 years of service in the ministry. Rev. Kammeraad and his wife Jeanie faithfully served churches in Toledo, OH, Paterson, NJ, and Grand Rapids, MI. Rev. Kammeraad also retired as a Chaplain from the U. S. Air Force Reserve after 25 years of service in 2006. A day of celebration for his years of service will be held on Sunday, June 13 at Seymour CRC, beginning at 9:30 am.

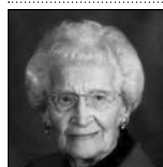
Announcements

CELEBRATION OPEN HOUSE: Celebrating 55 years of Christian Education! You are invited to join the Calvin Christian Elementary School Community in celebrating God's faithfulness in providing Christian Education for the past 55 years at 601-36th St. SW, Wyoming, MI. Wednesday, June 2, 2010, 6:30-8:30 pm, at the school. A brief program will be held at 7:00 pm.

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION Family and friends of Rob and Esther (Timmer) Koops are invited to an open house on Sunday, June 20 to celebrate their service as linguists in Africa. Rob and Esther were employed by the CRC and the United Bible Society for 43 years, first in Nigeria and then in The Gambia. Their first project was translating the New Testament into Kuteb. Dr. Koops then served as a consultant for translation teams working on Igala, Jukun, Nupe, Hausa, Kuranko, Krio, Balanta, and other languages in W. Africa. Esther made major contributions to the translation of Mandinka. The open house in their honor will be from 1 to 4 p.m. at Maranatha CRC in Holland.

Birthdays

100th Birthday



Mrs. Henrietta Bierling (VanZyl) of 2121 Raybrook St. SE, Room 252, Raybrook Manor, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546 will celebrate her 100th birthday on June 23, 2010. Her children, Henry and MaryLou Bierling, Frank and Joyce Bierling, Harriet and Al

Rusticus, Tom Jr and Betty Bierling, Dorothy and Ron Rands, her 16 grandchildren and 45 great grandchildren thank God for her health, love to all family members and for the blessing she has been in our life and all those around us.

99th birthday

AGNES TIMMERMAN, of 3820 North Big Springs Dr. Grandville, Mi. 49418, celebrates her 99th birthday on June 29, 2010. Her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and many friends all wish her God's continued blessings, and thank her for her wonderful example of Christian love and faith.

95th Birthday

AGNES (STROO) VANDERMOLEN, 5711 Falmouth Rd, McBain, MI 49757, formerly of Jenison, will celebrate her 95th birthday DV June 25. Mom, your extensive family rejoices with you. We give thanks to God for your life and testimony.

90th Birthday

NICHOLAS H. BLYSTRA, 95 Old Mill Dr #16, Holland, MI 49423, will celebrate his 90th birthday, June 12. His family is thankful for God's faithfulness and many blessings.

GRACE A. BOERSMA (Togtman) of 35 Old Mill Lane, Burr Ridge, IL 60527 on June 3. Widow of Ted Boersma. Children: David (Priscilla), Carol (Jim) Evenhouse, Jani Kwantes, Ted (Cheryl), Rev. Robert (Jan), Ken (Lisa), Debra (John) Thatcher, and Marge (Fred) Haywood. Her children, 28 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren give thanks to God for her love and guidance. She was predeceased by son-in-law Rick Kwantes and granddaughter Gracie Thatcher.

CORNELIA GREVENSTUK of 1450 E Fulton, #214, GR, MI. 49503 celebrates her 90th birthday on June 25. Children: Pete and Marjean, Rich and Phyllis, Gordon, Bob and Nancy, and Tom and Nancy, along with their children and grandchildren give thanks to God for her and the many years He has blessed her with. There will be an open house, in her honor, on June 26, from 2-4pm, at the East Martin CRC.



JERRY JONKER 72 W. 33rd St., Holland, MI 49423 will celebrate his 90th birthday on June 13. An Open House will be held at Bethany CRC, 11 E. 32nd St., Holland, MI from 2-4 pm on June 12. Loving congratulations from his wife Delia, children: Jim and Jan Jonker, Bob and Nancy Jonker, 10 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. His life and faith are an inspiration for us all.



DENA KOOY (Withare), 1511 Cst., Lynden, WA 98462, celebrates her 90th birthday on June 12. She is cherished by her husband, John, and 6 children, 13 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren. We wish God's continued blessing on her; her beautiful testimony of faith is an inspiration to all of us.

VIOLET OOSTEMA 4614 W. 88th St., Hometown, IL 60456 celebrated her 90th birthday on May 12. Her family and friends wish her God's continued blessing. We thank God for you.

MARJORIE PROSE, 2105 Raybrook SE, #4027, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 will celebrate her 90th birthday on June 10. We are thankful for God's many blessings, esp. her good health. Love from her children & grandsons.

ANNETODD, 104 Whitehead, La Porte, IN 46350, will celebrate her 90th birthday on July 1. Congratulations & love from her children: George & Carolyn Bosman, Bob & Mary Todd, Marcia Wolff, Tim & Sue Herwaldt, Glenn & Kathy Todd, 18 grandchildren, 14 great grand children.

JANET (VANDEKIEFT) VEEN 3053 Rich Ct. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508, will celebrate her 90th birthday on June 18. She is deeply loved by all her children: Sharon and Glen Hartger, Bill Vande Kieft, Joyce and Peter Joppe, Linda and Wayne Luznicki, and her stepchildren: Judy and Fritz Miller, Barb and John Kieft, and Rick and Sally Veen, and many grandchildren and several great-grandchildren. God is so GOOD! We all love you, Mom!

Anniversaries

65th Anniversary

KUNTZ, Frank & Evelyn (Kuyers) 500 Parkside Dr., Apt. 269, Zeeland, MI 49464, celebrated 65 years on May 12, 2010. Children: Jay & Jan Kuntz, Mary & Tom De Korte, Ron & Diana Martinie, 6 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren. Congratulations with love from your family.

60th Anniversary

BULTHUIS, Donald and Elaine (Van Loo), 855 Harvest Dr Holland, MI 49423 will celebrate their 60th anniversary on June 16. Congratulations and love from your family: Mark and Sally (Adrienne and Gavin Hollemans,

Katherine); Jane (deceased); Mary and Steve Eelkema (Tyler, Amy); Paul and Kris (April and Jeff Dickey, Travis); Jon and Julie (Sara, Alina); Steve and Krystal (Bethany, Kaylyn). Great-grandchild: Hayley Dickey.

DEBOER Robert and Edythe, 423 Eagle Blvd., Kingsland, GA, 31548 celebrate their 61st anniversary on June 17, 2010. Children: Bob (Barbara) Greg (Marla); 6 grandchildren 1 great grandson.

DEKOCK, Jason & Arlene (Karsten), June 28. 145 Columbia Ave., Holland, MI 49424. Congratulations and love from Doug & Sam (Andrea, Allison), Brian & Jan (Emily, Chris & Jonah, Elizabeth, Jonathon).

GRAVES, Rev. Raymond & Johanna (Keuning), 420 Chippewa Dr., Holland, MI 49424 will celebrate their 60th anniversary on June 7. Praise God for his blessings. Congratulations & love from your family!

SOPER, Hal and Fran (Rop), May 6. 2772 Pfeiffer Woods Dr. SE, #4203, Grand Rapids, 49512. The event was celebrated with a family week-end retreat at Pretty Lake near Kalamazoo, MI. Congratulations and love from all of us, mom & dad! Linda (Bob), Barb (Dave), Gail (Doug), Sarah, Hal, Paul (Sue), 20 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

SYTSMa, Leonard and Hermina, June 7, 2010 – Congratulations on your 60th anniversary! We love you and are so thankful for your love and example to all of us. God is good all of the time. Children: Mary and

Stuart Greydanus; Daniel and Mary Sytisma; Tom and Judy Sytisma; Nancy and Joseph Maggio; Leslie Sytisma. Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren: Seth Greydanus (1977 – 1978); Jeanine and Brandon Gasper (Logan and Owen); Leah and Jason Mraz (Kylie and Peyton); Jonathan Sytisma; Erin and Andrew Willink (Cassidy); Micah Sytisma; Janna Sytisma (fiancée' Scott Piersma); Joel Sytisma; Andrew Maggio and Thomas Maggio.

ZEILSTRA Donald & Verna (Jabaay) June 30; 3903 Pemberton DR. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508. Rejoicing with them are their children; Joe & Carol Hamilton, Don & Janna Zeilstra, Steven & Amy Zeilstra, 6 grandchildren, 1 great-grandchild.

50th Anniversary

BERKOMPAS, Ed & Julie (Stegink) celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 10. God has richly blessed their years together with 8 children: Bruce (Jane) Berkompas, Linda (Doug) Kellar, Wayne (Amy-deceased) Berkompas, Brian (Lisa) Berkompas, Evelyn Berkompas (deceased), Kathy (Jeff) Borowski, Carla (Greg) Nagel, Dale (Diane) Berkompas and 14 grandchildren. Celebrate with them at Ruyard CRC on June 12 from 1-4 PM.

BOONSTRA, Harry & Thelma (Pastoor) Grand Rapids, MI, will celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 17. Congratulations and love, Mom & Dad, Opa & Oma.

Church Positions Available

NEW CHURCH SEEKS PASTOR: Living Water Community Church is a new and vibrant congregation in Orange City, IA, eager to share the Living Water with all who thirst. We are searching for a full-time pastor with a vision for outreach and a passion for teaching God's Word. To view our church profile, visit the Christian Reformed website. For inquiries please e-mail or call Scott Groeneweg at 712-548-8131 skgroen@yahoo.com or Al Schuiteman at 712-441-6352 cfs@longlines.com.

SENIOR PASTOR Northern NJ: America's Best Kept Secret? Are you adventurous enough to consider a new location for your life and ministry? Contrary to popular stereotypes, Northern NJ is a beautiful area conveniently proximate to nature, New York City and everything in between. A mid-size congregation situated on a 10 acre suburban campus, Covenant CRC is seeking an intelligent and energetic Senior Pastor with strong preaching skills, leadership ability, and passion for engaging the lives of those within our walls and in our community. The Lord has blessed our church with robust youth ministry programs and an active congregation diverse in age and talents but united in the goal of becoming more like Christ. If he puts us on your heart, we would love to hear from you. Please visit our website www.covcrc.org and contact Mark Reitsma at mreitsma@optonline.net or 666 Godwin Ave., Suite 210 Midland Park, NJ 07432. A copy of our Church Profile is filed with the Office of Pastor/Church Relations.

SCOTTSDALE AZ MINISTRY Will you join us in God's mission to our community? We are committed to providing the life giving water of Jesus Christ to the people of South Scottsdale. God is leading us to search for a mission minded person or family to live rent free and engage our neighbors with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Interested? Contact us at Palm Lane CRC 480.947.3211 or palmLANECC@gmail.com

WORSHIP DIRECTOR Inglewood Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta is looking for a part-time Worship Director. Visit the Worship Director Job Description Link at www.inglewoodcrrc.org for more information.

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES First Christian Reformed Church of Taber, Alberta is seeking a full time Director of Youth Ministries. The successful applicant will oversee and be involved in the various youth programs, will strive to establish personal relationships with young people and young adults, will organize SERVE trips/projects. He/she will preferably have a university degree, or its equivalent from an accredited Bible college. We seek someone who has a strong personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. A love for and rapport with youth is also essential. A more detailed job description is available upon request. Please forward resumes/questions to karenjanehamilton@gmail.com, Fax 403.223.1573, or 4904 56th Ave, Taber AB T1G 1H4.

TRINITY CRC, located in the western suburbs of historic Philadelphia, is seeking a senior pastor for its small but energetic and diverse congregation. Trinity is known for its high level of unity and commitment to Christ and for its appreciation of strong preaching and blended worship. If you sense the exciting potential of ministry to this effective, intergenerational church, contact the search committee chair, Dwight Jaggard (dljaggard@gmail.com/610-353-4104) or send a resume to 829 Malin Road, Newtown Square, PA 19073.

WORSHIP ARTS DIRECTOR Missional church (600+ attendance) reaching the unchurched is looking for a gifted musician and worship leader. Must have a growing relationship with God, the ability to build and develop a team, and good stage presence. Excellence on keyboards and/or guitar and experience with a praise band is essential. Crossroads Church, 1538 Janice Drive Schererville, IN 46375 – 219-322-6400 www.aboutccc.com – jbuss@aboutccc.com

EMO CRC with 275 members and regular attendees is now actively recruiting a full-time pastor. Reflecting on our congregational needs, we seek a pastor who is energetic and charismatic, effective at preaching the Word of God, and comfortable with pastoral care. Our goals are to engage our youth while still relating to all members, develop our adult education and to create a vision that includes outreach. Emo, Ontario is a rural town on the Rainy River, 30 minutes from a U. S. border and near several large lakes. We praise God for our previous pastors and councils and pray that our journey in faithfulness that began in 1953 will remain fruitful. Please contact Ed Heerema at emosearch@bellnet.ca for more information.

TERRA CEIA CRC located in beautiful eastern North Carolina is seeking a full time pastor. We are a small, but active, congregation looking for a pastor who will lead and nurture us. For more information contact Arie DeHoog at 252-964-2230.

WORSHIP DIRECTOR: Heritage Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, MI is seeking a part-time worship director to develop and lead the worship ministry. The applicant must be committed to a blended worship experience, proficient on the piano and able to take the lead in worship planning. The position is for up to 20 hours per week. For more information on this position and to submit a resume and cover letter please contact the church office at churchoffice@heritagecrrc.org or (269) 372-3830.

PASTOR NEEDED Faith Community Church (CRC) of Colton, SD is seeking a full time pastor. For more information or church profile contact search committee. Rod VanDerVliet-Chair at 605-446-3803 or rflviet@Siouxvalley.net

SECOND CRC OF LYNDEN WA is searching for a full time pastor who can connect with and encourage younger families in the congregation

and community. Contact Paul DallaSanta at psdallasanta@juno.com. www.secondlyndencrc.com

YOUTH DIRECTOR: Lake City Christian Reformed Church in Lake City, Michigan is seeking a person who has a passion for working with youth to be our full-time Director of Youth Ministries. We are an outreach minded congregation of 400 members desiring to continue and strengthen an active and vibrant community youth ministry. Approximately 75 youth from our church and community are involved in various aspects of our youth ministry. For further information, contact Jeremy Winkle at (231) 876-2491 ext. 133, or at jwinkle@vandrie.com or go to our website at www.lakecitycrrc.org. Resumes with references (including a letter expressing your interest) may be emailed to jwinkle@vandrie.com or to office@lakecitycrrc.org or sent to Lake City CRC, P. O. Box 659, Lake City, MI 49651.

OUTREACH AND DISCIPLESHIP At Faith CRC, in Burlington, Ontario, we believe that God is calling us to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ into a changing culture. We desire to follow God's leading and are willing to move in new directions to serve those around us. We seek a Pastor of Outreach and Discipleship that can lead, organize and inspire us to implement this vision. If you sense God calling you to a missionally-focused ministry like this, please contact Richard Wiersma at faithsearchteam@gmail.com for a detailed position description. Deadline for Submissions is June 3, 2010. www.faithcrrc.ca

SEEKING A PART TIME CANDIDATE (10-12 hrs weekly) to minister to the Senior High youth at South Olive Christian Reformed Church. Candidate must have a vibrant passion for Christ and spiritual lives of the youth. South Olive is located 7 miles north of Holland, Michigan. All applicants can receive an application at southolivecrrc.org and submit to southoliveyouth@gmail.com or call the Church office at 616-875-8645. Receiving applications until June 14, 2010.

DIRECTOR/PASTOR OF OUTREACH and Congregational Life: Providence CRC of Cutlerville, MI is seeking a strong leader and skilled communicator with a passion for Outreach and Congregational Life. This gifted man of God will work under the supervision of the Pastor of Worship and Leadership as a vital part of our ministry leadership team. Providence is committed to equipping our members to grow in Christ and to share His life with those who have not met Him. Therefore, the ideal candidate will have strengths in leading the outreach ministry to our community, equipping our members, building positive relationships, caring and teaching. Masters degree preferred, ordination not required. To view our church profile, visit the CRC website. Submit inquiries to search committee chair Ron Stuursma at: rnstuursma1@att.net or call (616) 608-3978 (h) or (616) 560-9045 (c).

DYKSTRA, Robert & Marilyn (Witteveen) 1250 Janice St. Holland, MI 49423 will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on June 24. Children: Dan & Diana Breuker, Kevin & Cindi, Keith & Tonya, Kurt & Michele, Karl & Tracy, Mark & Dawn Lundell, 13 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren. To God be the glory!

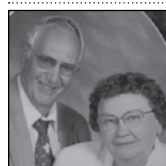
KUIK, Jerome & Phyllis (Kostelyk), Whitinsville, MA celebrating 50 years on June 24. Children: Kim & Doug Piquard, Tom & Valerie, Sherry and Garo Ohanian, Nikki & Nathan Rinsema. 9 grandchildren. God is faithful.

MEDEMA Wayne and Faith (Derksen). W12383 Cty Rd AW, Waupun, Wisconsin, celebrated their 50th anniversary on May 27. Children: Gail and Dan Ringwell, Cindy and Don VanDenTop, Renee and Jim Eckberg, 9 grandchildren. We give thanks to God for his faithfulness.

SANDSTRA, Mike M. and Wilma H. (van't Land), 57 Ogilvie Close, Red Deer, AB Canada T4P-3X7 with thanks to God celebrate 50 years of marriage on July 8. Congratulations and love from Ron & Anita, Phil & Gayle, Rob & Anita, Richard & Wilma, Ted & Brigitte and families.

SMIT, Wolter & Nelly (Bevaart), #90-4714 Muir Rd. Courtenay BC, V9N 8Z6. June 24, 1960. Children: Wolter Leo (dec), Kathy (Bob) Smith, Jacqueline, Monique, Shan (Carmen), 8 grandchildren, 2 great grandchildren (1 dec). Great is Thy faithfulness!

VANDEN EINDE, Harlan & Sandra of 1830 92nd Ave., Zeeland, MI. 49464 will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on June 7. Children: Mike & Jill Young, Tom & Sheila De Groot, 7 grandchildren. Great is thy faithfulness.



VAN DYKEN Peter & Annetta (Vander Zee) of Bozeman Montana will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary with an open house at the Belgrade United Reformed Church on Sunday, June 13 from 2-4 pm. The couple were married June 15, 1960 at the Bozeman Christian Reformed Church.

Their children are Kenneth Van Dyken of Eugene, OR and Mike & Elise Van Dyken of Honolulu, HI.

VAN MANEN, Jack & Johanna (Kooy) 2266 Tecumseh S. E. Grand Rapids, MI 49506 celebrate 50 years of marriage on June 24. Children: Jeffrey & Deanna Van Manen, Jon & Julie Kuyers, Joel & Joy Rusticus, Chris & Jill Larsen. 11 grandchildren.

40th Anniversary

Dekker, Jim and Rose. To Mom & Dad, Grandpa & Grandma who, because they knew God chose them first, chose lives of service to each other and God's world; chose work (and play!) that led them across time

zones, continents, and hemispheres; chose each other 40 years ago, and continue to do so every day. Congratulations, we love you, and we thank God with you for four decades of marriage; your kids & grandkids.

30th Anniversary

DEBRUYN, Johannes (Han) & Joanne (Prins) 2506 Clam Bed Ct. Matthews, NC 28105, married July 5, 1980. Children: Jason, Jonathan, Neil. Parents: Everdina deBruyn & the late Gerard deBruyn, Ray & Gertrude Prins. Blessed Anniversary—we love you!

Obituaries

DE VRIES, Rev. W. Thomas, age 79; April 7, 2010; 2230 Raybrook SE, Apt. #203, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He is survived by his wife, Evelyn; children: Tom and Liliana De Vries, Ruth Ann and Bob Vander Roest, Karen and Gerry Walcott, Dave and Kim, Mark and Vilma, Tim and Kathy, Steve and Erica De Vries; 12 grandchildren; 9 great grandchildren; brother and sister in law: Ron and Grace De Vries; sister-in-law: Nancy De Young.

GROEN, Gerald, age 72 of Raymond, MN, went to be with the Lord on Mar. 17, 2010. Survived by his wife of 51 years, Marjorie (Visser); children James (Nancy), Bradley (Juanita), Jolene (Michael) Bonnema, Michael A. (Luanne), Sheila (Robert) Ruter; and 14 grandchildren. He was preceded in death by an infant son, Michael D. Groen. His life of faithful service to Jesus Christ and love for the Lord was an example to many.

HULST, Margaret, age 97; April 9, 2010 of Holland, MI. She was preceded in death by her husband Marvin in 2000. She is survived by daughter Virginia and Wayne Alofs. 2 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren.

STEVENS, Thelma J. (Kamstra), of Irvine, CA, Retired Registered Nurse. She enlisted in the US Cadet Nurse Corp in 1943, graduating from Iowa Lutheran Hospital. Born 7/29/1925 at Sheldon, Iowa, passed away 4/6/2010. Survived by husband, Harold; stepson, Patrick; son, Paul; one brother, William of Sheldon, Iowa; two grandchildren, Chad and Kelsey.

DEBRUYN, Adeline; 91; April 15, 2010; Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by her brothers: Cornelius and Walter; and sisters: Frances Tinklenberg and Marian Petersen. She is survived by sisters: Nancy Bloem, Bette Bosma (John); brother: Otto (Marilyn); 24 nieces and nephews; 65 grandnieces and grandnephews; and several great grandnieces and great grandnephews.

BROUWER, John W. age 82, April 16, 2010, Pella, IA. Survived by his wife of 61 yrs. Bertha (Ver Meer); Children: Jerry (Nancy) Brouwer, Becky (Gary) Vos, 7 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren. Ps. 73:26.

SYNOD 2010

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CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

DEGROOT, Joyce E., 97, went to her Lord on March 29, 2010. She was married to our dad, William DeGroot, 57 yrs. Later she married Ernest DeGroot. Her son, Thomas, preceded her in death. She is survived by: Jack (Shirley) DeGroot, Dave (Joan) DeGroot, Ruth (Al) Bonnema, Becky (Dave) Meekhof and Phil (Dianne) DeGroot. She really enjoyed her 18 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren and 3 great-great grandchildren. And they rose up and called her blessed.

BETTEN, Anthony James "Tony" Betten, aged 82, February 25, 2010; 1366 Old Oak Hill Dr, Ada, MI 49301. Tony is preceded by his parents, Rev. Joseph and Marie Betten, and siblings Henry, Marge and Jean. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Char (Weesies) Betten and children Dennis (Lori), Glenn (Shar), Jerry (Elizabeth), Valerie, and Karla (Robb), 12 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild.

ZOMER, Egbert, age 88, of Corsica, SD; April 25, 2010. Survived by his wife, Beulah; 4 children; 10 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren.

VANDER MALE, Arie (Bud), age 89, passed peacefully into eternal glory on April 14, 2010, in Grand Rapids. He was preceded in death by his two sons, Jack Edwin and Joel Irwin, and sister, Josephine Hoeksema. Survived by Jayne (Feenstra), his wife of 64 years, and daughter Anne Marie and Stephen Tuuk, daughters-in-law Mimi McMillan and Kathelene Williams, sister Frances Worst, brother Cornelius and Betty, 8 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

VOSS, Howard Glenn, 74, of Tempe, Arizona, went to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on March 29, 2010. He is preceded by his wife Helen Ann Voss (Jansen), his parents James R. Voss and Jennie Voss (Kuit), and his brothers Dale and Leon. He is survived by three sons Keith (Katie), Curtis (Pam), and Steven (Wendy); his grandchildren, Michelle Voss-Roberts (Brian), Scott Voss (Kristin), Jennifer Casey (Sean), Jami Voss, Will Fredrick, Alex Fredrick, Grant Voss (Krista), Rachel Ellerie (David), Sarah Voss, Taylor Voss, Bailey Voss; his great grandchildren Abigail Helen Voss and Anya Devi Voss-Roberts. He is

also survived by a sister-in-law Dorothy Voss (Leon) and brother-in-law John Jansen (Lori). Our Dad's special verses which gives us all comfort are Romans 8:38-39.

MASSELINK, William (Bill) age 75 went to be with our Lord on April 18/10. He is survived by Marilyn, his wife of 50 years, his sons William J. and Paul (Kristen), and 6 grandkids. 1425 Woodlawn Common, Grand Haven, MI 49417

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"Faith is
being certain
of what we
do **not** see."

Faith Amid the Fog



FAITH can sometimes seem like the dirty little secret behind Christianity. It's necessary, but given the choice we'd really prefer an alternative.

It's not that we're opposed to faith. On the contrary, we often refer to our religion as "the Christian faith." Our trouble lies in having to actually *use* our faith. It's like that little "donut" spare tire found in the trunk of many smaller cars. When you're really stuck it's nice to be able to dig it out so you can keep on moving down the road. But as soon as possible you want to replace it with something that feels a little more substantial.

Trusting Faith?

Clearly the Bible takes faith seriously. Hebrews 11 puts it simply: "Now faith is being . . . certain of what we do not see." In Romans 1:16-17 the apostle Paul claims an unblushing confidence in the gospel as our only hope for righteousness, "a righteousness that is by faith from first to last."

From the Bible's perspective, faith is clearly what counts.

Yet its claims about faith can sound silly in our post-Enlightenment world that trusts in human reasoning. After all, having faith seems an awful lot like being gullible or naive, and who wants to be viewed that way?

At the heart of this struggle lies the conviction that we humans ought to be able to "get" whatever is going on in the spiritual realm. If there really is a God, we ought to be able to not only detect God, but also to agree together on just who God is. And if there really are moral absolutes, they ought to make absolute sense to us, and so on.

But we overlook the fact that our human capacities are limited when it comes to the spiritual realm. Trying to determine spiritual realities with human reason is like trying to listen to FM stereo on an old AM radio. Even the sharpest human logic can't determine just what lies beyond our experience.

Punch Lines

Got a photo of something funny related to Reformed history, culture, or tradition? Send it to *The Banner* and you might see it in print! You can email photos to editorial@thebanner.org or send them to 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

The pastor in Phil the barber's village had a fiery sermon on witnessing: "We *all* have to be soul-winners!"

Phil tried sharing the gospel with his first customer the next morning, but failed miserably. The next day he tried again but could not get his words out. He hoped the following day would go better. When a big, strapping man came in for a shave, Phil seated him, got his leather strap out and sharpened his knife, but then could not

remember the Bible verses the pastor had suggested. So he looked down at his customer and cried out, "Are you ready to die?"

The customer left in a hurry.
—Walter Vanderbeek

A tourist was admiring the necklace worn by an indigent local.

"What is it made of?" she asked.
"Alligator's teeth," the man replied.

"I suppose," she said patronizingly, "that they mean as much to you as pearls do to us."

"Oh no," he objected. "Anybody can open an oyster."
—John Veltkamp

Ioverheard my 10-year-old son reviewing the armor of God with my 7-year-old son: "There's the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, the guillotine of mercy..."

—Dan Wolters

My 5-year-old son, Zachary, and I were talking together, and he reminded me of a time from the past summer when he had a lot of fun with his uncles. So I said to him, "Just think, every year you keep getting bigger and stronger, and you'll be able to keep up more and more."

"Yeah," he responded enthusiastically, "and they'll just keep getting older and weaker, so I'll be able to beat them then!"

—Christine Mantel

My 7-year-old grandson, Trevor, lamented the fact that he had to go downstairs to practice the piano and commented that he didn't want to be alone down there. His 4-year-old sister, Sidney, said, "Don't worry, Trevor, God will be with you."

Later that same day, when Sidney was about to go downstairs, she asked her mother, "Will you go with me? I don't want to be alone with God."

—C.R. Lindemulder

Send Us Your Photos!

Dr. Paul A. Vander Laan models his lab coat, which is embellished with a Calvinist Cadet Corps badge. His parents, Burt and Kathy Vander Laan, gave him the coat a few years ago when he graduated from med school. Paul graduated from the Cadet Corps at Faith CRC in Tinley Park, Ill., some time ago, but you can tell from his smile that he still has great Cadet memories!



"This pool's no fun—all they let you do is swim."



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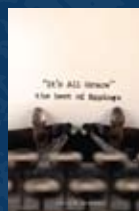


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Sixty at Sixty: A Boomer Reflects on the Psalms

Popular author James C. Schaap presents 60 comforting devotions based on the psalms.



It's All Grace

A thought-provoking collection spanning 40 years of Jacob D. Eppinga's beloved "Cabbages and Kings" column in *The Banner*.