



# BANNER

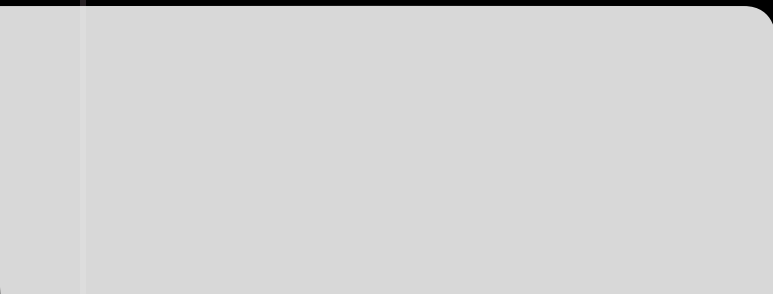
March 2010 | [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)

- <sup>20</sup> Lavish Frugality
- <sup>36</sup> Life-giving Death
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# Beauty

<sup>18</sup> Our Need for It



2010 Dordt College Concert Choir



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**Thursday, March 11**

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**Saturday, March 13**

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**Sunday, March 14**

6:00 p.m., Bellevue CRC; Bellevue, WA

**Monday, March 15**

7:30 p.m., Trinity CRC; Abbottsford, BC

**Tuesday, March 16**

7:30 p.m., Bethel CRC; Lynden, WA

**Thursday, March 18**

7:30 p.m., Cloverdale URC; Boise, ID

**Friday, March 19**

7:30 p.m., First CRC; Salt Lake City, UT

**Saturday, March 20**

7:30 p.m., Third CRC; Denver, CO

**Sunday, March 21**

7:00 p.m., Dispatch CRC; Cawker City, KS

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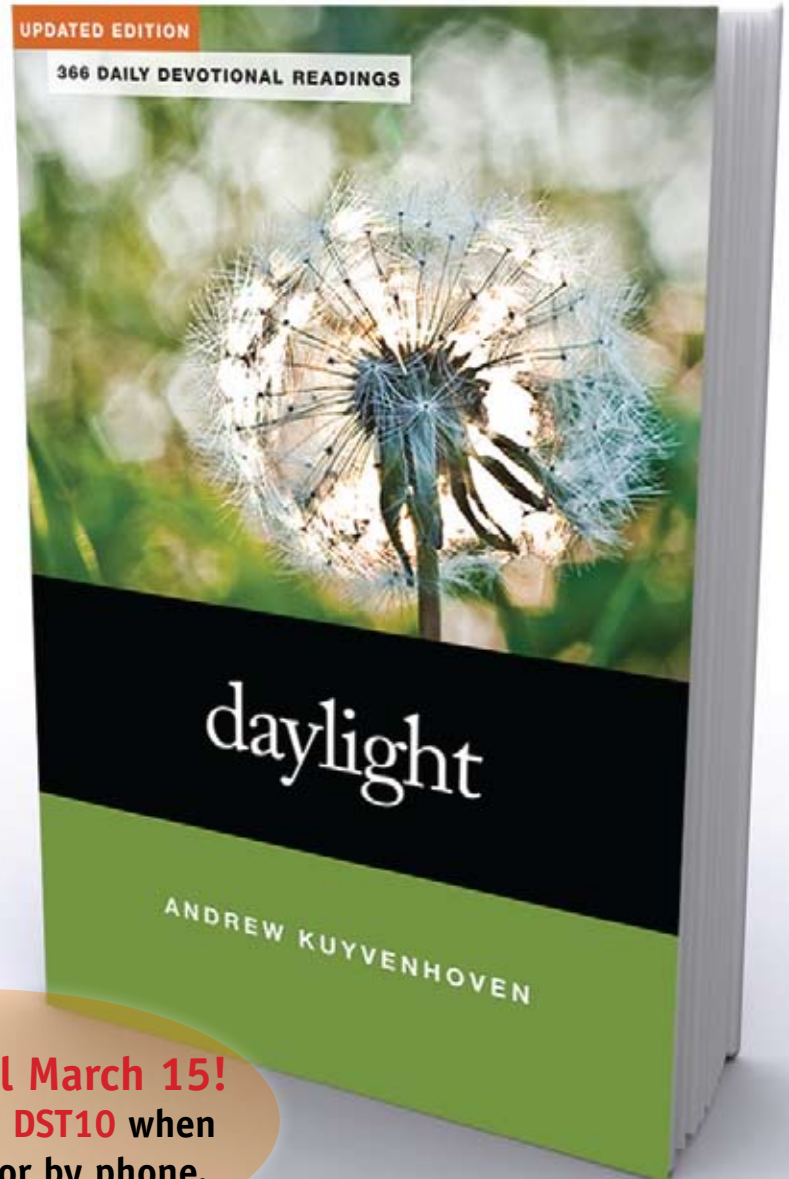
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# BANNER

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# Taking the Long View in Haiti and Elsewhere

**WHAT HAVE YOU DONE** for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee lately?

I don't mean the big donation you just sent in response to the Haiti earthquake. That was GREAT! Our church members are extremely generous in a crisis.

No, I mean the run-of-the-mill dollars that you drop in the offering plate or give through CRWRC's gift-giving catalog for the regular development work it does so well around the world.

As I write this, government and relief personnel are pouring into Port-au-Prince and promptly getting bottlenecked at the airport, trying to manage logistics in a city with a now-nonexistent infrastructure, while survivors of the Jan. 12 quake grow more desperate.

What you aren't seeing on your news is that CRWRC already has people who live there, who know the area, who know the local folks, who know the back roads around the city and between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. They are already getting food, water, medical help, and shelter to those in dire need. (For full Haiti coverage, see pp. 10-15.)

That's because CRWRC has been working in Haiti for 35 years, doing the day-to-day work of helping farmers with agricultural education, helping urban entrepreneurs set up small businesses, and more. That work contributes to the leadership skills of Haitian citizens to, in the words of CRWRC-Canada Director Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, "achieve the vision they believe God has for their communities."

CRWRC partners with many organizations, including Back to God Ministries International and Christian Reformed World Missions.

Oh, sure, it isn't "sexy" work that catches media attention. (I know—I'm as guilty as the next editor about following the "If it bleeds, it leads" maxim.) But this long-term work means that the

**Ironically, CRWRC's budget for development work in Haiti was just reduced by 13 percent.**

Christian Reformed Church already has people, networks, and expertise in place to address the disaster and to follow up afterward.

After Bill O'Reilly, Anderson Cooper, and Peter Mansbridge move on to the world's next hot spot, Haiti's recovery will require re-establishing the capacity of the Haitian people to sustain their own

economy and produce enough food to feed themselves—while trying to offset the centuries of violence, dictatorship, poverty, and dependency that have plagued their small country.

That's exactly what CRWRC was doing in Haiti before the earthquake and will keep doing afterward, there and in many other places.

CRWRC is great at disaster relief, at home and abroad. When high-profile disasters happen, the Disaster Response Team kicks into high gear, donations pour in, and *The Banner* tells readers all about it.

But it's the long-term work in so many countries that leaves us so well-placed when the crises do come. The irony is that some of that work was recently scaled back because of a drop in donations. The budget for development work in Haiti was just reduced by 13 percent (see February 2010 news, p. 13).

So for that gift you sent in for Haiti—thank you! But don't forget the long view when you plan your regular giving, so we can continue to contribute toward long-term development work around the globe.

We don't know which country might be the site of the next big disaster, but when that happens, let's already have feet on the ground, attached to hands and hearts ready to help. ■



**Gayla R. Postma** is news editor for *The Banner*.

# BANNER

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**Bob De Moor** Editor

**Henry Hess** Editor, *Church@Work*

**Dean R. Heetderks** Art Director

**Joyce Kane** Managing Editor

**Jena Vander Ploeg** Features Editor

**Gayla R. Postma** News Editor

**Kristy Quist** Tuned In Editor

**Ron DeBoer** Media Editor

**Sandy Swartzentruber** Copy Editor

**Pete Euwema** Graphic Design

**Frank Gutbrod** Graphic Design

**Shelli Lokers-Calanchi** Marketing  
Manager

## Contact Us

2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560

Address Changes and Subscriptions  
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Editorial  
616-224-0785 [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org)

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# Jesus Sees You

**I** have a friend with whom I hesitate to be seen. It's not because of potential embarrassments, but because of how painful it can be to see how people treat her.

Her circumstances have shaped a public face that often repels others because she hasn't developed the social graces that help people talk to strangers. Lunch at a restaurant means navigating a field of social landmines. She doesn't know how to order politely, she talks too gruffly, and eats her food too heartily. By the time the check arrives, the manager has strolled by to make sure that she isn't a "problem." I try my best to smooth things over with open smiles, sympathetic looks, and nonverbal messages that convey my hope that they will treat her well.

I think that's why I'm so intrigued by Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well in John 4. I can't help but see my friend in the woman approaching an exhausted Jesus, who's unable to take another step as his disciples search for lunch.

If ever there were someone who should have repelled Jesus, it was this woman—a despised member of her village, from a despised people and a despised gender. Yet Jesus' simple request for water leads her from skepticism and confusion through curiosity and wonder to faith.

When Jesus seemingly changes their conversation in midstream by asking her to fetch her husband, he's really looking beyond her public face to her heart. It's not about how many husbands she has had or why, but that her life has been unstable and insecure and that Jesus knows her deepest needs. Jesus shows her that her repeated drawing from the well of her personal history has left her spiritually thirsty.

When the disciples' return signals her time to leave, she runs to her neighbors and tells them about this amazing man at the well. Could he be the Christ? Her confession is enthusiastic, honest, tentative, and short—but it is a confession that reveals how much she has understood. And then, in an amazingly bold scene, she invites the whole town to come and meet Jesus. Because of her open-

ended invitation, they see, hear, and believe him for themselves. The story ends with an eloquent and powerful confession: "We know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

How often do I take for granted the fact that Jesus can see beyond my public face to my heart? Like the woman at the well, I need to have Someone who can be more honest with me than I often am with myself—Someone who won't be repelled by my bad manners or lack of grace and is willing to sit patiently with me as I finally come to realize what I truly need. When I sit with my friend and observe how others can't see beyond her public face to her heart, I begin to realize what a gift it is that we have a Savior who can. ■



Rev. Thea Leunk is pastor of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



*To give life to people is to reveal to them that they are loved just as they are by God.*

— JEAN VANIER

## Studying the Belhar in Iowa

**We found the content of the Belhar clearly biblical and Reformed.**



PHOTO BY MATT LAKE

**WHEN SYNOD ENCOURAGED** Christian Reformed churches to study the Belhar Confession—in view of the CRC’s potential adoption of it—we took that challenge seriously. Two adult study groups in our congregation participated in a five-session study.

Overall we found the Belhar to be thoroughly biblical and useful. What follows is a summary of what we learned:

1. During the 1980s, the CRC, along with other Reformed denominations, kept pressure on the Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church to end their support of apartheid and to bring reconciliation, justice, and unity to the church in South Africa. We supported the work of the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa and its predecessors in those endeavors. That work, and the intentional work by South African Christians to bring reconciliation and a peaceful end to apartheid in South Africa, is an important part of the history of Reformed Christianity. In view of that, it would be a shame for the CRC not to make the Belhar part of our own testimony.
2. The Belhar raises important questions for the CRC. Regarding, for example, how we treat our many ethnic groups (ethnic delegates and advisers to synod)

and immigrants (both documented and undocumented), and the establishment of “separate but equal” classes for Koreans. We believe the Belhar challenges our status quo, forcing us to ask difficult but necessary questions.

3. Certain misapplications of the Belhar Confession (in particular, the concern over whether it supports the practice of homosexuality) should not in themselves make us reject the Belhar, since any written document can be misinterpreted and misapplied.
4. We did have concern that adding another confession to our current ones could open the door to a flood of new confessions, which could in turn marginalize all of them. And we did have some technical concerns regarding certain expressions. (For example, in the section on unity, the Belhar states that the people of God “share one faith, one calling, are of one soul and one mind.” The Bible speaks consistently of the soul of an individual and never of a shared soul.) But on the whole we found the content of the Belhar clearly biblical and Reformed, framing important issues for the church today and in the future.

In the end, we concluded that the CRC should adopt or approve the Belhar Confession in some way and use it to challenge our own practices and beliefs. Most, but not all, members of our study groups felt that it should be adopted as less than a full confession with the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort. Nevertheless, we would like to see it approved in some way and made use of in the life of the CRC. ■



**Rev. Jeffrey L. Sajdak** is pastor of First Christian Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa.



### Got Religion?

Its articles such as “Got Religion?” (January 2010) that ease my own discomfort with no longer being part of a church community. Fortunately, I know a lot of people inside the CRC who would be appalled by what this person wrote. But I think the defensive nature of this article is actually embraced by a lot of church folks.

People who are not actively involved in the church are just like the people inside. They don’t think their ideas are better or more respectable. Nor do they doubt God because he has not been revealed by the Hubble telescope. Mostly, they simply don’t think that one group of people has any better idea than another about what’s really going on in this chaotic universe. . . .

I know I was looking for a community that was more inclusive—especially inclusive of people who have come to know a God through their own experiences in the world. The CRC has definitely become more diverse. But what about diversity of thought? If that isn’t recognized, the church is really going to have a hard time surviving.

—Martha Sorenson  
Gallup, N.M.



# TTERS

## Thanks

I'd like to see "Reading the Bible Well" framed! I'd settle for a poster. Many thanks to Aminah Al-Attas Bradford and Mary Hulst.

—Randy Vander Weit  
Hickory, N.C.

I'd like to thank Matt Beimers for his article "Let the Little Children Come . . ." (December 2010). It's good for us to be reminded of the wisdom of children as they see us live our lives. We think we have things figured out until children show us their childlike faith. My wife and I found ourselves with some of that same dust in the eye that Matt experienced that evening. Now *there's* some holiday "magic."

—Ed Starkenburg  
Orange City, Iowa

## Ethics of Incarceration

It seems that not a *Banner* goes by without a story or advertisement featuring a prison ministry ("Bible Lessons for Prisoners' Children," January 2010).

Though that is commendable, we should not forget to ask those deeper and disturbing questions about the ethics and morality about locking up so many people in Canada and the United States—so many young and vulnerable people of marginal background.

The U.S. is a world leader in putting people in prison, and Canada seems to want to move in that direction as well. Yet evidence has shown consistently that incarceration does not deter crime. Yes, some individuals dangerous to themselves and others need a non-punitive environment for purposes of rehabilitation, education, and healing. But we must ask serious ethical questions about spending billions of dollars on a largely symbolic activity.

I would urge churches to look seriously at alternatives to the industry of pain application and incarceration, creative alternatives inspired by Restorative Justice.

—Henry Smidstra  
Surrey, British Columbia

## Transcendental Literature

Writers, particularly Christian writers, must beware of "our capacity to deceive ourselves, and language's role in that deception" ("The Truth About Fiction," December 2010).

But I would like to argue that memoir, as a genre of literature, does not lend itself to relativism or exploitive details in order to hook a reader. The memoirist, like the fiction writer, must work with the tools of the writing craft in just as serious a way, and with just as serious a commitment to the stories that we have experienced, in order to transcend the realm of "shock" and turn them into art. I'd like to point to the work of Richard Rodriguez, Leslie Leyland Fields, Robert Clark, and many others who hold themselves to this standard. Memoir, when done right, cannot be ignored as an essential and important genre in the world of literature.

—Allison Backous  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

## War Crimes

Regarding "Aceh's Redemption" (December 2010), Gen. J.B. van Heutsz's "military genius" and Capt. H. Colijn's eradication of the independence of Aceh's population would nowadays be called genocide, and these leaders would have been tried for war crimes.

—Hans Roelofs  
Cedar City, Utah

## Empty Nest Relief

For those who don't know what to do with themselves once the kids are gone ("The Empty Nest," January 2010), become a foster parent. Thousands of children in Canada and the U.S. need homes, both long-term and short-term. If all the empty nesters in North America would take one child, not a child would have to live in a group home, hotel, or 24-hour daycare—all places that really are no different than an orphanage. Open your home to a child, and that empty-nest feeling will be replaced with a purpose.

—Anita Booy  
Regina, Saskatchewan

## Indecent Language

I was impressed by some of the good thoughts in "The Nightmare of Christmas" by James C. Schaap in the December *Banner*. But I was upset by the indecent language on p. 21: "You're so full of b.s., Dad."

To find that in a Christian publication and written by a college professor is unreal. What kind of proofreaders do you hire?

Like many others, I know there are lots of other phrases that could be used.

—LaVerne Vrieze  
Baldwin, Wis.

## Corrections

Regarding "The House that Love Built" (February 2010), Pat Lavallee and her husband lost their house to a fire *before* her husband's death. The error was made in editing.

In the same issue, "CRWRC Lays Off Staff" should have read that, overseas, "two-and-a-half positions in Asia and three positions in Africa have been eliminated, and other positions that were recently vacated will not be filled."

*The Banner* apologizes for errors.



# CRCNEWS

## Horror, Hope, and Help Haiti

**H**ope and horror were among the emotions felt by many Christian Reformed Church members as news of the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake that struck Haiti

is safe for them to return to what is left of their homes," he said.

"The images of destruction are difficult to comprehend," said Ken Little, CRWRC's senior disaster response project manager, after visiting several communities in Haiti. "The damage is severe, and people are shocked and hungry. For survivors, the need for food, clean water, shelter, and medical care is becoming extremely urgent."

As images of crumbled buildings and dead bodies in the streets crossed North American television screens, the denomination's crisis management team restricted travel of personnel to Haiti, with the exception of those approved by CRWRC's international disaster response director. That restriction has since been lifted.



Survivors await food, water, and medical aid.

Staff at the CRC's media ministry, Back to God Ministries International, prayed and clung to hope that their two employees, Sem Hypolite and Marguelita Petion, would be found. Eventually word came that they and their families were safe.



PHOTOS: PAUL JEFFREY/ACT INTERNATIONAL

Shocked Haitians walk amid the destruction in Port-au-Prince the day after the earthquake.

reached North America. People felt hope that CRC missionaries and family members would be found safe, horror at the images beaming out of Port-au-Prince, and a desperate desire to help in whatever way possible.

Death toll estimates from the earthquake ranged from 150,000 to 200,000. Nearly a third of the estimated 9 million people in this island nation were said to be without food, water, and shelter.

### The Horror

Before the earthquake, Haiti was known as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. In the days following Jan. 12, the devastation was unimaginable.

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee Haiti staff member Ad DeBlaij reported frightening scenes. "There are thousands upon thousands of people in the streets. Most of them slept outside [after the quake] because of fear of aftershocks. In front of the CRWRC offices, there are 400 people just sitting on the ground, and they'll likely be there . . . until it



Haitians line up for scarce fuel.

### The Hope

Relief was widespread when word was received that all the CRC's missionaries and their families were safe and accounted for (see box on p. 11).

"The earthquake that hit the capital city . . . was severe," CRWRC-Canada director Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo reported. "But we have confirmed that all Christian Reformed staff are safe."

Families such as Paul and Marisa Brinks clung to hope that the two children they were in the process of adopting in Haiti would be found safe (see p. 14).

It was a terrifying time, but also a time of wonderment. Howard and Sharon Van Dam, who work for CRWRC in Port-au-Prince, slept in their vehicle after the quake damaged their home. They reported that all night long they heard people who live in the ravine beside their home singing praises to God.



Haitians survey a ruined market.



This family now calls a tent home.



Makeshift tent cities have sprung up in every available space.

### Help on the Ground and on the Way

With CRWRC personnel already living in Haiti, aid efforts commenced immediately.

In the days following the quake, despite the chaos reported from Port-au-Prince as governments tried to coordinate aid delivery, DeBlaeij reported that CRWRC was busy helping teams of medical workers affiliated with an organization that collaborates with CRWRC.

"The first group of doctors, nurses, and other personnel arrived

on Saturday," he said. "They are staying at the ministry center of the Christian Reformed Church of Haiti and are working in King's Hospital to see and treat patients, many of whom still have untreated wounds and fractures from the quake."

CRWRC supplied food, water, and shelter to as many people as possible. "We want to get survivors out of the sun, out of the damage, and hydrated," said Jacqueline Koster, CRWRC's disaster program manager.

Just as quickly, donations began flooding into CRWRC in

### CRC Staff in Haiti

Ad and Cobie DeBlaeij  
 Anthony and Mary\* DeKoter  
 Lesley Millar Touissant and Diego Toussaint  
 Rev. Zachary King and Rev. Sharon Segaar-King  
 Sem Hypolite  
 Marguelita Petion  
 Jennifer LeMahieu\*

*\*off the field at the time of the earthquake*

both the U.S. and Canada. As of Feb. 3, donations had topped \$2 million in U.S. dollars, with more church offerings still to be counted.

Since CRWRC has been working in Haiti for 35 years, partnering with local churches and community organizations, it was able to move aid quickly (see p. 15).

"During a disaster like this, it is hard to see anything positive," said Little, "but one strength that we do have is local leaders and community connections who can quickly identify needs and help us distribute aid to those most in need in a timely and effective way." »

Children help unload food aid.



A displaced man comforts his daughter after losing their home.





# CRCNEWS



Children fly makeshift kites among the ruins.

### CALLS ACCEPTED

From Willowdale CRC, Toronto, to **Rev. Joel Kok** of Trinity CRC, Broomall, Pa.

From Second Christian Reformed Church in Byron Center, Mich., to Candidate **Dave Spoelma**.

» Individual church members also helped, like groups from Pella, Iowa, and Franklin, Mass., who happened to be there when the quake struck (see pp. 14-15). A congregation from Hudsonville, Mich., sent a nurse along with a \$13,000 cash offering for a small Haitian orphanage (see p. 13).

### What Happens Now?

CRWRC has focused its current emergency response efforts in Haiti on Leogane, a town of 175,000 people about 20 miles west of Port-au-Prince.

“Leogane is a community where 90 percent of the people have lost their homes,” said Jacob Kramer, CRWRC’s disaster response director. “[We] have ongoing programs in Leogane, and there is a Haitian Christian Reformed church there. The people already know us, and hopefully we can work with some local leaders as we carry out our relief response.”

The United Nations reported that Leogane was the area worst hit by the quake. Their local market was already dependent on outside food shipments, and this need increased after the disaster. “Currently, we are using cash to buy food locally,” said Kramer. What will help future food needs is that CRWRC has contacts who know the back roads in and out of areas hard to reach.

DeBlaij and Little are leading CRWRC’s response efforts in Haiti. They were joined by George and Toni Fernhout from Edmonton, Alberta (see p. 13), and Lee Mys from Fremont, Mich.

The leadership capacity and skills learned by Haitians before the earthquake didn’t crumble when the buildings did (see p. 15). Those skills will provide the foundation for moving forward once again.

—Gayla R. Postma, with files from CRWRC

Gifts marked “Haiti Earthquake 2010” can be made online at [www.crwrc.org](http://www.crwrc.org) or by phone. In Canada, call 1-800-730-3490. In the U.S., call 1-800-552-7972.

For continually updated information, see the CRC’s special *Help Haiti* webpage at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org).



Fresh water was finally available in the Belair district on Jan. 21, nine days after the earthquake.



# Answering the Call to Haiti

**G**eorge and Toni Fernhout were not surprised when they got an early-morning phone call the day after an earthquake devastated Haiti.

The call came from the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, asking them to go to Haiti to help manage the CRWRC's relief efforts.

The Fernhouts, members of Trinity CRC in Edmonton, Alberta, had spent six months in Haiti after the 2008 hurricanes, so they were familiar with the area where they

helping manage the relief effort after the 2004 tsunami.

"We had been taking courses offered by CRWRC to couples who were interested in volunteer relief work when the Asian tsunami struck. We were asked if we could retire (early) from our careers to volunteer in Sri Lanka, and we did. Our almost three-year stay there taught us the most about working in developing countries along with nationals to bring affected families unable to help themselves back to where they were before the disaster," Toni explained.

In Haiti, they are partnering with Ken Little, senior project manager from CRWRC Canada's office, and with experienced manager Lee Mys from Michigan.

"Together we assess and prepare proposals for the work we can do here in Haiti, in short-term relief, and then longer relief in regards to shelter, programs including psycho-social and children's programs, rebuilding, and/or forming community groups and repairing or rebuilding damaged or destroyed homes," Toni said.

At this writing they were busy arranging food distribution for 2,500 people camped on the grounds of a local college.

"There are signs of hope here again," Toni said in an email. "We are encouraged by the laughter of children, the gossip of women, the men playing cards together. We pray that we who are so fortunate will continue to pray and to give to those of God's people who are in such need."

—Rachel deKoning Kraay



PAUL JEFFREY/ACT INTERNATIONAL

**"There are signs of hope again," said CRWRC's Toni Fernhout. "People are selling their goods on the streets and are grateful that donations of clothes and other goods were not sent to Haiti, as this would have devastated their market."**

would be working and with the local Haitian partners and the Haitian CRC office.

They know firsthand what it takes to be international relief managers, having previously spent almost three years in Sri Lanka

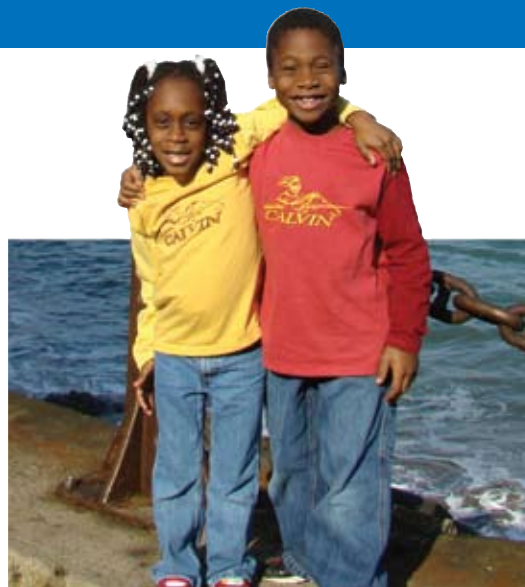
## How Did CRWRC Start in Haiti?

The Christian Reformed presence in Haiti started when Rev. Joel Nederhood, director of what was then the Back to God Hour (the CRC's media ministry, known today as Back to God Ministries International), visited leaders there in the early 1970s to investigate potential ministry opportunities.

Nederhood advised against Christian Reformed World Missions beginning a ministry in Haiti, but felt that the country's needs made it an appropriate place for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) to work.

Synod 1975, the CRC's annual leadership meeting, determined that CRWRC should develop programs because of "acute and deeply entrenched needs" and because there was good potential for a deed ministry there to complement the Word ministry of Back to God Hour.

In the years since, all three of the above Christian Reformed agencies have combined staff in Haiti into one team called Sous Espwa, Haitian Creole for "Source of Hope."



**Abby, 8, and Isaac, 9, were adopted five years ago from Haiti by Tom and Cheryl Vanderwell.**

## Michigan Church Helps Haitian Orphans

Just days after the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti, Hillcrest Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Mich., sent one of its members to the beleaguered country along with a \$13,000 offering.

Cheryl Vanderwell, an obstetrics nurse, left for Haiti to help out at God's Littlest Angels, an orphanage she and her husband, Tom, have been involved with for more than five years.

Their ties with the orphanage began when they adopted Haitian orphans Isaac and Abby, now 9 and 8 years old, into their family that already included three children. Tom now serves on the board of God's Littlest Angels.

The Hillcrest congregation has sent work teams to the orphanage in the past and is planning another trip this summer, said the Vanderwells' daughter Kristin, 20, who organizes the trips.

With Cheryl on a plane to Haiti, Tom worked from Hudsonville to coordinate relief flights of medical and baby care items, organize volunteers, and raise funds. Workers at the orphanage rushed to get documents ready for orphans who already had been approved for adoption. "My mom said they have been very busy getting children ready to travel," Kristin said.

On Jan. 21, a plane carrying 80 Haitian children arrived in Florida, many of them destined to be adopted by West Michigan families (see p. 14).

The orphanage's building, located in Petionville near Port-au-Prince, escaped damage.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

## IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. George Ebbers**

1929-2009

Rev. George Ebbers, 80, thoughtful reader of the Word, acquainted with grief, cautious in his expressions, died from heart failure on Dec. 31.

Born in Edmonton, Alberta, Ebbers graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and entered ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1955.

He served congregations in Minnesota, Ohio, and California, and also served as a missionary on the island of Guam. He retired in 1991.

After he and his wife, Julia, suffered the tragic death of their youngest son in 1983, Ebbers took a leave from the parish ministry, engaging in non-ministerial work and studying at the California Graduate School in Family and Marital Therapy.

During his retirement he served as pulpit supply for the Agape Fellowship CRC (Chinese).

Ebbers was a man of thoughtful words. Those beset by trials found him a sympathetic listener. Youth ministry was the love of his heart. He served his classis (regional group of churches) as secretary, and served on the board of Christian Reformed World Missions.

Predeceased by two sons, Ebbers is survived by his wife, Julia; three children; ten grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

—Louis M. Tamminga

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

## Massachusetts Church Members Return Safely

Jenny Reks, Todd Pihl, Lynn Duquette, and Jane Howard—all members of New England Chapel, a Christian Reformed church in Franklin, Mass.—left for Haiti Jan. 9. They thought they knew what they'd be doing there. Their goal was to work with Mission E4 to build a medical clinic and work with an orphanage in Carrefour, about four miles from downtown Port-au-Prince.

Then chaos struck.

When the earthquake hit on Jan. 12, some of their group were visiting a hospital, and others were leaving the orphanage for their secured American compound. They managed to reunite that evening, pulling mattresses outside to set up a sleeping area in the courtyard. There they spent a terrifying



The outside of the Mission E4 orphanage in Port-au-Prince before the earthquake struck

TERRY RENZLEMAN

night as massive aftershocks continued to rock the area.

None of the team were injured and all sixteen girls in the orphanage were safe, though the orphanage itself sustained major damage. The group spent the rest of the week setting up a medical clinic to tend the wounded and working at the orphanage to create sustainable living conditions in what had become a refugee camp.

The group's scheduled flight home was canceled, but Mission E4 was able to arrange return flights with Mission Aviation Fellowship. All four arrived safely in the U.S. on Jan. 16. At the time of this writing, they were recovering from the traumatic experience and were not available to speak with the media.

—Calvin Hulstein

## Michigan Family Complete With Haitian Children

When the January 12 earthquake shook Haiti, it also shook Paul and Marisa Brinks, members of Calvary Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. They and their children Alyssa, 8, and Austin, 6, were in the middle of adopting two orphans from Port-au-Prince.

"We were torn for the whole country, but devastated that the children we've bonded with might never come to us," said Marisa.

The next few days were a flurry of activity, including phone calls, television coverage on local stations, as well as an appearance on CNN. It all ended with a flight to Miami on January 21 to bring home Samar, 6, and Aidan, 3, who arrived from Haiti with 80 other children.

"We feel complete," said Paul, speaking of his family of six. Their adoption process began in June 2007. Paul explained that since the earthquake the United States government had expedited the adoptions in Haiti for those already in process by "allowing humanitarian parole where no visa or passport is needed."

Looking ahead, Paul said their hopes for Samar and Aidan are the same as for their other two children. "To know and love the Lord," he said. "We want all of them to have a servant attitude, and to give back."

—Karen Gorter

L-R: Samar, Marisa, Alyssa, Paul, Aidan, and Austin Brinks—a family complete after Samar and Aidan arrived from Haiti.



KAREN GORTER



Haitian farmers learn about improved agricultural practices as part of CRWRC's ongoing community development work.

## CRWRC: Leadership and Learning Can't Be Destroyed

The Jan. 12 earthquake devastated Haiti, but that doesn't mean that everything accomplished there by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) was destroyed.

For 35 years, CRWRC has walked alongside Haitians, helping them to transform their communities through literacy, microcredit, improved farming techniques, and protecting the environment.

The key is to equip Haitian deacons from different denominations to meet physical as well as spiritual needs in their communities. "These deacons become the base of transformation in their community," said Ad deBlaeij, a CRWRC staff member in Haiti.

For example, in the mountain community of Badyo, not far from Port-au-Prince, deacons worked with the local school to add a course for children in basic hygiene. Local leaders developed a plan to build latrines. An agriculture consultant taught soil conservation and improved farming practices by local families.

Local deacons recently encouraged 30 men and women in Badyo to form farming co-ops so they could buy vegetable seeds and fertilizer in larger quantities and at better prices.

While the physical efforts in Badyo and in many other parts of Haiti have been seriously set back by this latest devastation, the strength and leadership of local churches remains intact.

Schools, when they reopen, will include a hygiene class in the curriculum. Homes, when rebuilt, will include latrines. Farmers, when they return to their fields, will implement improved farming practices, and the members of the co-op will work together to purchase supplies, plant trees, and market their vegetables.

"Development in communities starts with transforming people," explained deBlaeij, "and that's not something that an earthquake can destroy."

—Kristen deRoo Vanderberg

## Iowa Church Group Caught in Earthquake



Lisa VanSant of Pella, Iowa, signs with a Haitian child named Ana.

Six members of Grace Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa, arrived in Haiti just in time to feel the earth move on Jan. 12. Thankfully, they were far enough away from the epicenter to escape harm.

The team was 25 miles from Port-au-Prince, ministering to students with hearing impairments through Global Vision Citadelle Ministries.

Shelly DeRuiter said that at first the quake sounded like a big tractor coming down the road. But, having experienced an earthquake before in California, she soon realized what was really happening.

"I was grabbing kids to get them out [of the building], because they wanted to run inside because they were afraid," she said.

The school did incur some cracks in the walls, but remained structurally sound. DeRuiter said the team didn't learn of the earthquake's full impact until they saw

footage on CNN. Team members then contacted folks back home to assure them they were fine.

The group was scheduled to leave Haiti on Jan. 19, but their departure was moved up to Jan. 14. They were one of the first groups allowed to leave the country.

Before they departed, some group members were able to teach lessons and do activities with the children while others repaired the building's roof.

They believe they left with unfinished business. "We are all ready to go back," DeRuiter said. "We feel that we abandoned the kids."

—Paul Delger



Senator Scott Brown attends New England Chapel, a Christian Reformed church in Franklin, Mass.

## New U.S. Senator Attends CRC

Scott Brown, 50, who attends New England Chapel, a Christian Reformed Church in Franklin, Mass., won the Massachusetts senate seat left vacant when Senator Edward Kennedy died. He and his wife, Gail Huff, have been attending New England Chapel for some time, as his schedule allows.

Brown, a Republican, campaigned across the state in his pickup truck. He is opposed to the U.S. federal stimulus bill and the health care legislation cur-

rently before Congress. However, he did support the health care reform bill passed in Massachusetts in 2006.

He supports strengthening border enforcement and opposes amnesty for illegal immigrants.

On abortion, he states on his website, "While this decision should ultimately be made by the woman in consultation with her doctor, I believe we need to reduce the number of abortions in America." Brown advocates for adoption as an alternative to abortion.

On same-sex marriage: "I believe marriage is between a man and a woman. States should be free to make their own laws in this area, so long as they reflect the people's will." Past statements on same-sex marriage have raised the ire of same-sex marriage advocates.

The Brown family also has a relationship with an order of Cistercian Roman Catholic nuns at Mount St. Mary's Abbey in Wrentham, Mass., their hometown. The family has raised millions of dollars for them.

—Calvin Hulstein

## Illinois Athlete Named All-American



JEFFREY FEBUS

Emily Ottenhoff has been named an NCAA Soccer All-American.

Emily Ottenhoff, a member of Hope Christian Reformed Church in Oak Forest, Ill., was named an NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Division III Soccer All-American.

Ottenhoff, a senior at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., was among 11 players chosen from more than 430 colleges in the division. She is the fourth female Calvin student to receive this award since women's soccer began at Calvin in 1988.

"It's an honor to be named All-American in Division III soccer," she said.

Her coach, Mark Recker, said, "I think Emily is probably one of the smartest soccer players I've had. She is able to make great tactical decisions on the field. She is one of the best players I've had at holding, dribbling, and distributing the ball."

Ottenhoff finished her soccer career with 32 goals, 13 of which were game-winners. She also had 11 assists. She played all four of her years at Calvin and was an MIAA (Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association) selection each year.

She plans to teach physical education. She says, "I think being a P.E. teacher would fit my personality really well. My high school teachers and coaches were great role models, so I'd like to do the same someday."

—Ruth Moblard DeYoung

## CRC Parsonage Burned in Nigeria

"The parsonage of our church was burned down, but no one was killed at the site. Our new pastor was supposed to move in tomorrow. Soldiers are now protecting the church. Please continue to pray for the wounded and grieving. So much pain and suffering!"

That was the gist of an email from Rev. Albert Strydhorst after violence between Christians and Muslims erupted in mid-January in Jos, Nigeria, killing scores of people.

Strydhorst works for Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) in Nigeria. The Christian Reformed Church has approximately 18 personnel, along with their families, living in Jos, making it one of the denomination's largest mission fields.

The parsonage belongs to an NKST congregation, of which many of the CRC's missionaries are a part. (NKST is the Church of Christ in the Sudan Among the Tiv, the largest of the three Reformed denominations in Nigeria.) The house was empty at the time it was burned, with the new pastor due to arrive later that week.

The church was subsequently surrounded by soldiers, who protected the property and enforced a strict dusk-to-dawn curfew.



DAVID TYOKGHIR

This parsonage in Jos, Nigeria, was burned when religious violence erupted in January.

Mike Van Der Dyke, CRC team leader in Jos, reported a heavy military presence in the city and roadblocks along the main roads.

Staff were instructed not to travel into areas of Jos affected by the crisis, to observe all curfews, and to refresh their knowledge of the security measures in place for CRC personnel in Nigeria.

CRWM and Christian Reformed World Relief Committee staff in Jos are involved in church development, evangelism, Christian education, and community development together with Nigerian church partners.

—Gayla R. Postma



# FAQs

## Church

**Q** Our pastor has been here well over a decade. For the past five years we've seen a decline in church attendance and our pastor seems unconcerned. He is also not able to deliver a sermon with any content. For the health of our congregation, shouldn't he be asked to leave?

**A** We expect a certain level of competence and performance from people who care for our cars, furnaces, and physical health. It is not unreasonable to expect the same from those who care for our spiritual health.

When they do not meet expectations, they should be encouraged to improve and given the tools and resources to do so. If there is little or no improvement, the council and the pastor, following the provisions of our Church Order, should put in place a plan with a definite timeline for the termination of the pastor's service to the congregation. The church visitors of classis and the denominational Pastor-Church Relations office may be requested to assist with this.

Sometimes the "fit" is just not right, and pastors are able to serve a different congregation much better.

—George Vander Weit

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

## Creation Care

**Q** How can I be environmentally conscious when my husband works in the forest industry? Should I make him quit his job?

**A** You do not need to be working for a conservation organization to be environmentally conscious, just like you do not need to be a missionary to bring the good news to the people around you. No matter what industry or line of work you are in, there is something you can do to take care of God's creation.

## Before we reach for our wallets or purses we should wait, watch, and pray.

God has put you in this time and place to be a blessing to this generation. If you (or your spouse) are working in a resource-based industry, use the opportunity to find out what policies and practices the industry has in place to keep the air, water, and land clean and healthy. Encourage follow-through on those commitments, or contribute to positive change where it is needed.

God's people are called to be salt to the world. Season your words and actions with a lot of prayer, grace, and humility. Then do what you can with what you've got, where God has put you, and leave the results to God. You are called to be a steward, not a savior.

—Cindy Verbeek

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

## Finance

**Q** We work hard and make an average income, but have very little to show for it. What can we do differently?

**A** To answer your question, let me tell you a story.

My wife, Beckie, and I had been down the path of using money our own way: spending with no plan, using credit cards, and living paycheck to paycheck. But after reading Larry Burkett's book *Complete Financial Guide for Young Couples*, we committed before the Lord that we would never go down that road again.

And so the first thing we did was nothing—we just waited. Then we took the little bit of savings we had and asked God to stretch it and provide us with furniture.

The furniture stores had everything on our wish list, but the cost was more than quadruple what we had in our furniture fund. So we looked in the newspaper's classified ads. One ad caught our attention because the sellers lived nearby and the asking price for their furniture was exactly what we had in savings.

We went to the sellers' house, and when we walked in we couldn't believe our eyes. They had three pieces of furniture for sale: a maroon leather overstuffed sofa, a matching loveseat, and a "sleepy hollow" reading chair—the exact items on our wish list!

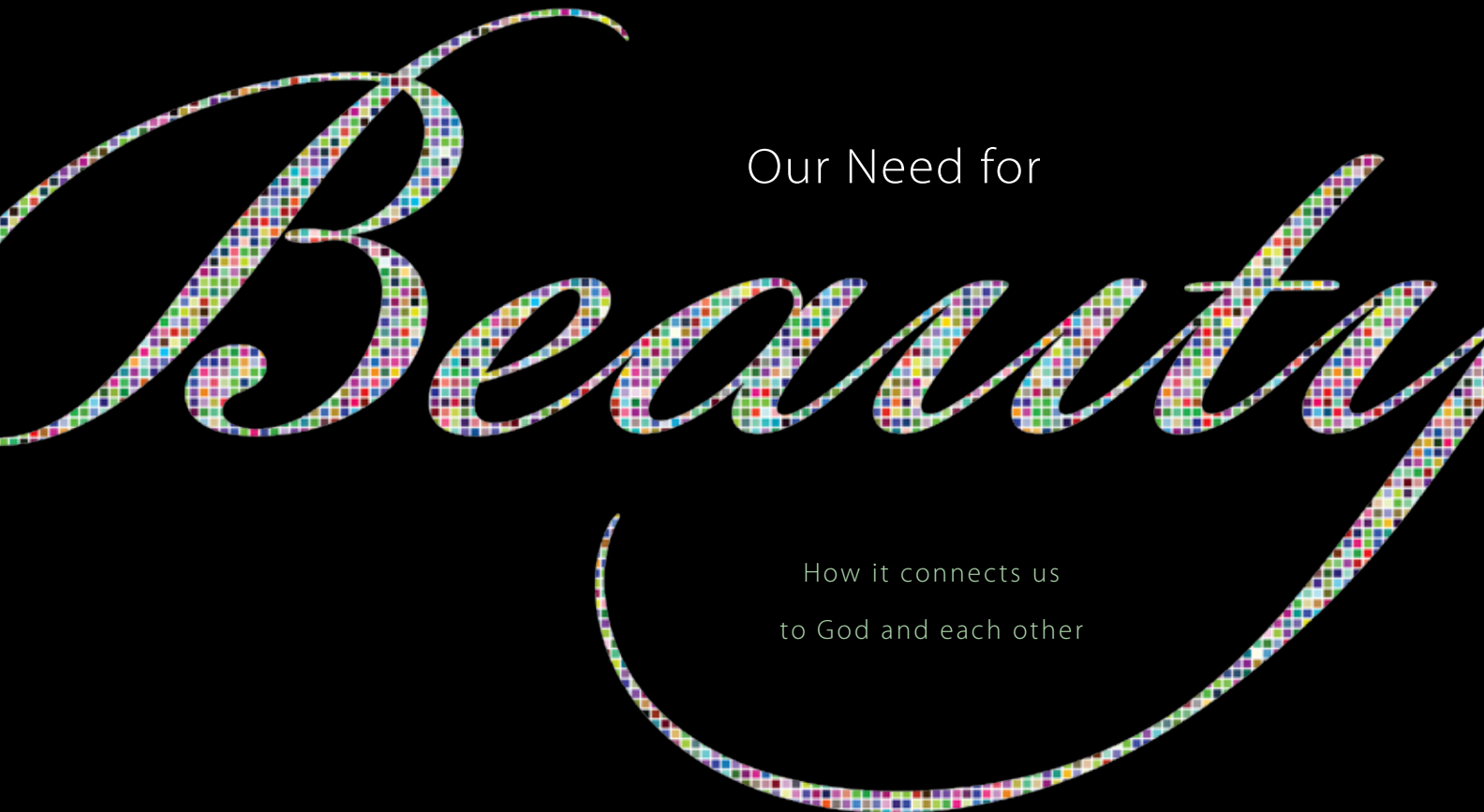
Although God doesn't always provide in such extraordinary ways, he did use that experience to reinforce a life-changing biblical principle found in Psalm 27:14: wait on the Lord.

What does that mean practically for our money? It means that before we reach for our wallets or purses we should wait, watch, and pray. Even if we see a good deal: wait, watch, and pray. Or if there seems to be more month than money: wait, watch, and pray.

—Mike Buwalda

*Mike Buwalda is a stewardship consultant for Barnabas Foundation (mike@barnabasfoundation.com). ■*

## Our Need for



How it connects us  
to God and each other

**B**EAUTY HAS INCREASINGLY become a stranger to many of us.

As urgent matters consume our time and attention, we begin regarding beauty as the *spice* of life and not so much as the *substance* of it. But when we lose beauty in our daily experience, we lose much more than a little spice. We lose the quality of relationship we are meant to have with our Creator and with each other.

Indeed, it is through the *appreciation* of beauty that we come to know God better, and it is through the *expression* of beauty that we embrace (and can better witness to) others.

### What Is It?

“You know it when you see it!” That’s often the response I get when I ask someone to define beauty. Beauty can be so many things: physical, emotional, conceptual. It can be found in a sunset or a mathematical equation. It can express symmetry and harmony or contrast and randomness. It can calm a person’s spirit as well as energize creative response. Almost anything, it seems, can be considered “beautiful.”

Interestingly, this all-inclusive potential in beauty echoes Ecclesiastes 3:11: “He has made everything beautiful in its time.”

Beauty encompasses the whole of what God is creating, both around and within each one of us. Beauty is not just something we *see*, but something we *are*.

In fact, what is beautiful in every individual (or potentially can be) is the Spirit of God. God reveals aspects of himself through individuals and each of us uniquely manifests an aspect of God to others. That brings unity to and draws effective witness from the body of Christ (John 17).

The very *diversity* we see in the world around us—but particularly throughout humankind—is something we can and should treasure. People who are different from me help to expand and complete my appreciation of the fullness of God.

### Beauty’s Effect

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” is the other common response someone will give when asked to define beauty. True, beauty is somewhat a subjective matter. My taste and your taste for what resonates with us individually are uniquely different. For example, there are many pieces in the Art Institute of Chicago that I simply do not appreciate—though many people do. I experience beauty more readily in large vistas, while others are thrilled by the detail of leaf structures.

Beyond art and nature, we experience beauty in literature, events, relationships, and even outcomes of projects. It seems, then, that we can define beauty by the effect it has on a viewer: a sense that “something worked” to stimulate the person’s mind and/or emotions with feelings of success or gratification.

The difficulty in defining beauty leads us to appreciate how an artist’s work can give life and authenticity to the longing that many of us feel but have difficulty expressing. Something we discover to be beautiful completes and complements the spirit within us. What we view as beautiful, then, can also be evidence of the nature of our character, spirit, and heart.

### A Christian Practice

So is it possible to define beauty? Technically, yes—a dictionary certainly does so. But a dictionary definition does not necessarily include all that beauty encompasses.

Beauty, as we noted above, is revealed and understood by both what it *is* and by what it *does*—not unlike God. Beauty does not have to be known (totally defined) before it can be appreciated. Beauty creates a deep resonance within each of us that lifts us to a fuller experience of the world around us and the world within us.

As a Christian, I wonder if my definition of beauty should be “that which draws me closer to God and to others.” If that definition is accurate, then beauty is something we should actively pursue; we would be wrong to ignore it.

example, I find extraordinary beauty in the relationship between faith and science. It’s a joy to share a perspective with others that expands their appreciation of the Creator when they see the extraordinary detail, harmony, and grandeur of God’s creation.

I also enjoy creating spiritually interpretive wood carvings that some find beautiful and meaningful enough to sense something of a spiritual resonance. I’m sure you bring beauty into the lives of others in different ways. In your carpentry, gardening, hospitality, service, creativity, generosity, or discoveries in nature, you can enhance appreciation for the Ultimate Carpenter, Gardener, Host, Server, Creator, Giver, and Revealer.

For Christians, especially those of us of the Reformed persuasion, this pursuit is not optional—it is the very essence of reclaiming “every square inch” of God’s creation for the sake of Christ.

This calling envelops creation itself, systems of government and justice, being a neighbor to those in need, and, most certainly, matters of repentance and salvation. Because we are God’s chosen in Christ, we *are* this beauty in the world! We are the aroma (what beautiful fragrance!). We are the light (what beautiful illumination!). We are the salt (what beautiful flavor!). We are the neighbor (what beautiful friendship!).

We need to embrace the beauty we are to the perishing, to the needy, to those without hope. Isaiah 52:7 states, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”

When we lose beauty in our daily experience,  
we lose much more than a little spice.

You may sense a certain utilitarian twist on this perspective of beauty. I do not mean to say that something beautiful cannot be appreciated for its own sake. If something beautiful does nothing more than make me feel good inside, I see nothing wrong with that—dark chocolate makes for a beautiful eating experience.

But that perspective opens the door to regarding beauty as optional or as an ancillary experience in life. We can easily discount the value of beauty when we conceive of it only as a *personal experience*.

The pursuit of beauty should be, needs to be, seen as a *relational experience*. To be touched by beauty is to be drawn into a relationship. I believe this experience of beauty is essential in coming to know and love God on a deeper level. We need to experience the beauty of the relationship between Christ and his church that we see expressed in the Song of Songs. We need to discover the intimate, meaningful relationship God wants to have with us.

Beauty is also what builds relationship with others and, we pray, brings them further into relationship with Christ. For

Beauty calls us out of our own world into a more altruistic one. It kindles our awareness or affirmation that there can be harmony, glory, beneficent inspiration, deeper truth, and a more powerful and purposeful meaning to life.

Beauty connects us with something deeper and more personal. Through it we experience a more profound sense of connection in this world, especially with God. For if we acknowledge God as the Creator, we see the beauty of God through what God creates.

Just think: God gives us the experience of his beauty *now* so that we might have a taste of what it will be like *then*. God also gives us the gift of bringing beauty back into his world now to soften it, to witness to him, to bring respite from evil, and to inspire hope. ■



Dr. Nick Kroeze is president of Kuyper College, Grand Rapids, Mich. As a hobby he creates spiritually-interpretive wood projects—one of his many connections with beauty.

# Lavish Frugality

THE SECRET TO AN ABUNDANT LIFE

**“I wish** he’d get rid of all that junk!” my mom often said of my dad when I was growing up.

Dad was both frugal and a packrat. He collected pieces of wood and all sorts of other things that he found at auctions (garage sales having not yet been invented). “These just might come in handy,” he’d say.

I remember well one of his purchases back in the 1950s. He was acting as a clerk for a local auctioneer. (They needed someone who could write, so they chose the schoolteacher—Dad.) He came home with a small wood-stave bucket, maybe one gallon in volume, filled with bent nails. I got the job of straightening all the nails and placing them in piles according to their types and sizes. I believe the bucket of nails cost a dime—though the bucket itself would likely be worth a lot more on *Antiques Roadshow* today.

Another time Dad acquired a bunch of plaster laths from a neighbor who was remodeling his home. All we boys had to do was chip the plaster off each lath, cut the broken ends square, then bundle them according to length.

Those rough cedar laths *did* come in handy. We used them as pieces of trim, stakes to hold up muskrat traps, and bars across the open end of pigeon and chicken nest boxes to keep the bedding and eggs from falling out.

# Frugality is the companion of generosity.

Packrats like Dad can be explained by history. Just about anyone who lived through the Great Depression (or post-war immigration) knows what it's like to go without. They have an understandable appreciation for possessions—in part an expression of thankfulness for God's blessings.

When you're poor, you don't have much choice but to live frugally. But in my part of Canada today—and in much of North America and Europe—we have the luxury of *choosing* a frugal lifestyle, at least to some degree.

Yet today *frugality* seems to mean “getting the biggest bang for the buck,” rather than “conspicuous thrift.” A pox on both, I say. Perhaps both are too concerned with possessions.

Frugality, after all, can become simply a means of achieving a continually consumptive way of life. By being a better bargain hunter than you, I am able to maintain a seeming economic conservatism while worshiping Mammon. (Sure, we recycle. But we use more too.)

Frugality, of course, involves the wise use of the limited resources lent to us by God. It's related to another word many of us are well-acquainted with: *stewardship*.

## Lavish Thinking

Being frugal means making judgments and clarifying values—keeping in mind our own tendency toward self-absorption and God's demands for justice.

For example, is it really wise to spend money for bent nails? Or for a new truck when the tires alone cost \$2,000? Is it wise to remodel the kitchen just to make it look better? Must I own every power tool made by Makita, or can I borrow them from my neighbors? Should I buy a \$9 pair of running shoes at Walmart, or would it be better to buy a domestically-produced but more expensive pair? Does “Buy American” (or “Buy Canadian”) show sensitive biblical wisdom, or is it a form of selfishness? Should I boycott T-shirts made in Bangladesh because I've

read about poor working conditions and wages in the factories there?

Perhaps. However, it would help us to approach this discernment another way: instead of being frugal, let us be lavish. After all, shouldn't the goal of our frugality be charity and generosity, lavished upon others with no thought of savings? As the apostle Paul wrote, “Those who are rich in this world [ought to] do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Tim. 6:18).

Think about it.

If God had been frugal with colors, we wouldn't have rainbows, or pheasants, or mandarin ducks. Our Lord's first miracle was making water into fine wine (John 2:1-11), not Mogen David diluted with 7-Up. Ultimately, God showed profligate love for prodigal children by becoming flesh and living among us.

Sometimes a frugal choice may indeed seem profligate, even foolish—like throwing money away for no gain at all.

There are only a few absolutes here: The world and everything therein belongs to God (Psalm 24:1). Second, I am responsible to God for my decisions about how I live in his world (Matt. 25).

## From British Columbia to Manhattan

If we understand frugality in view of generosity, there's plenty of room for unique responses to our individual situations.

For example, not everyone would find it possible (or desirable) to adopt the lifestyle my wife and I share in central British Columbia. We get meat directly from a farmer or by hunting; fish from nearby rivers and lakes. Our garden produces enough for several families. Our heat comes from wood that we cut, split, and stack ourselves (sometimes with help from our church's deacons). Our eggs come directly from chickens. Our cars usually rust out before they stop running; the last one—a Toyota—is “going the way of all metal” with an engine that has 365,000 kilometers (227,000 miles) on it and is still going strong.

People living in Manhattan may have quite a different set of circumstances than we do. You might use the subway and bus because it is more responsible (and cheaper) than buying a car and paying for space in a parking garage. You might support your (often immigrant) neighbors by buying produce from a small local grocery. You might help out homeless people and actually get to know them. You might pass by Starbucks in favor of a no-name cup of coffee, which you slurp while reading the paper and waiting for your fresh bread from a Jewish or Syrian bakery.

“Why live frugally?” asks one writer. “First, because it allows you to spend less than you earn, and use the difference to pay off debt, save or invest. Or all three. Second, because the less you spend, the less you need to earn. . . . You have more options with a frugal lifestyle” (“The Cheapskate Guide: 50 Habits for Frugal Living,” [www.zenhabs.net](http://www.zenhabs.net)). Frugality is the companion of generosity.

My dad's wooden bucket finally wore out and was discarded. The bent nails are long gone, but the story lives on.

Not long ago, my father and mother gave my wife and me a substantial financial gift. We promptly invested it in a hole in the ground.

It is rather a nice hole, dug by our neighbors Geoff and Rick. This hole will fill up with rainwater and snowmelt and provide a home for wildlife of all sorts: ducks and muskrats, frogs and toads. It will become a watering hole for moose, deer, bear, and other mammals. And it will bring us absolutely no profit.

A waste, some would say.

But to Betsey and me that hole (actually, it's a pretty nice hole, complete with a peninsula and a tiny island) is another way of practicing lavish stewardship. ■



**Curt Gesch**, a retired schoolteacher living in Quick, British Columbia, still exhorts regularly.

Tim Soerens, pastor of Dust



## Renewing Communities Together

“**T**he Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood” (John 1:14, *The Message*).

Imagine what it means to plant a community. Not just a church, but a whole community.

Picture a mix of church planters, pastors, campus ministers, educators, elders, and business leaders gathering regularly. Imagine them discussing how to live out their calling to be agents of God’s reconciliation in renewing and restoring their cities and metropolitan areas. See them leading their churches in nontraditional venues like theaters, coffeehouses, lofts, living rooms, patios, and pubs. Watch

them move beyond the Sunday church service to bring God’s Word to his people seven days a week.

For Christian Reformed Home Missions, this vision is becoming a reality in

North America. Groups of ministry leaders are working to bring renewal in their urban communities.

Working through regional teams in all corners of North America, Home Missions takes the role of “second chair leadership,” coming alongside churches to develop, empower, and release missional leaders and to create environments where they can gather, plan, and learn from each other.

Home Missions is vigorously engaged in partnering with local churches and leaders, as well as other denominational agencies, following God in his global mission to transform lives and communities worldwide.



Members of the Seattle duster

# Dust Brings a Neighborhood Together

On Sunday evenings in downtown Seattle's South Lake Union neighborhood, 20 people gather in a large photography studio. They talk about Jesus, and they talk about spirituality.

The next morning, the real work begins. They show up at neighborhood council meetings, tend to the community garden, and seek out other nonprofit groups for community development collaboration.

“He told me he saw me as the neighborhood pastor.”

This is Dust, a new church started last year with help from Home Missions.

“We’ve taken a marker to a map and drawn a circle around this particular community we’re in, and we are intentionally being responsible for holistic shalom here,” Pastor Tim Soerens explains.

“Within that context, we’re serving the neighborhood, sharing Jesus’ story, and developing an authentic community. Not just on Sundays; we’re actually living our lives together as a community.”

Dust is already making a big impact. “I work closely each week with the neighborhood council president, a local artist, and an events promoter,” says Soerens. “They’re not just neighbors—they’ve become great friends. Increasingly,

they’re fascinated with Dust and what our lives are like as a church body.”

A man whom Soerens met while doing a project at the local community center asked Soerens to officiate at his wedding. “He told me he saw me as the neighborhood pastor,” Soerens says.

“Since the wedding, he and his wife have joined Dust and are continuing to explore Christianity. There’s a sense of belonging before believing, and that happens quite naturally when you’re as deeply involved in the community as we are.”

Dust is also engaged in finding and training leaders to aid in the church multiplication and renewal movement in the CRC. For example, church planter Simon Cunningham is doing a residency with Dust and hopes to start a church in Seattle’s Capitol Hill neighborhood.

“Our plan is for Dust to be an incubator that brings leaders into other Seattle communities,” says Soerens.

Already, God is working through other CRC leaders to renew the greater Seattle area. For example, Soerens and eleven other pastors and church leaders meet monthly as part of a “cluster” to share ideas, pray together, and talk about ways to collaborate in renewing the Seattle community.

“I’ve worked with several different denominations, and it’s pretty unusual for leaders of both existing and new churches to get together like this and think ‘kingdomly’ on a regular basis,” Soerens says. “We’re trying to create a network of blessing that transforms the entire community.” ■



**Ben Van Houten** is a senior writer with Christian Reformed Home Missions

## Living the Gospel Through Clusters

As part of Home Missions’ new emphasis on helping to create gospel movements and develop diverse missional leaders, a growing number of ministry leaders are connecting with each other in groups known as “clusters.”

Clusters—groups of churches and church leaders located in the same region—can be environments where leaders gather to support one another in living out their gospel calling. This cluster format is in keeping with God’s intention for people to live and work together in community. It also helps leaders to be good stewards of time, gifts, and resources.

“In a world of increasing isolation and pseudo-community, we have seen the power of real community and commitment as people gather for training, encouragement, and planning in a cluster setting,” says Rev. Jul Medenblik, point leader of the Home Missions Church Planting and Development Leadership Team.

Rev. Randy Rowland, pastor of the Seattle cluster’s Sanctuary CRC and leader of the Church Planting and Development Leadership Team, says the early church developed out of clusters of leaders just like these.

“This is definitely a Bible-based model for growing the church,” Rowland observes.

Another growing influential cluster is based in Sacramento, Calif., and is led by Granite Springs CRC pastor Kevin Adams. Adams serves as New Church Development Specialist for the Home Missions West Coast Regional Team, led by regional leader Peter Holwerda.

Every month, 10 CRC pastors from existing and new congregations in this sprawling region get together to pray, support each other, and talk about ways to do asset-based community development.

“We really want to train leaders *from* the harvest for the harvest in this community,” says Adams. “It’s become a leadership engine for the whole classis, one that feeds the church planting movement as well as the local church.” This cluster is also hoping to birth a new campus ministry at the University of California-Davis.

Another cluster involving Home Missions-supported churches, pastors, campus ministers, and leaders is active in Calgary, Alberta. Still others are being formed in Toronto, in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, and in south Florida.

“It feeds the overall sense of mission,” Adams says of the cluster concept. “All of these churches and church leaders want to see the whole community transformed by the grace of God.”

### Home Missions at a Glance

With God leading the way, Christian Reformed Home Missions supports more than 200 ministries that are renewing lives and communities in the United States and Canada.

With the support of your prayers and gifts, Home Missions is able to multiply new churches and campus ministries, cultivate diverse missional leaders, and partner with churches in a shared mission.

Home Missions is thankful to Christian Reformed churches and members and appreciates your prayers and generous financial support. You can support the work of Home Missions with your church offerings on Easter Sunday, April 4.

For more information, visit [www.crhm.org](http://www.crhm.org) or call 1-800-266-2175.

## Bridging Campus and City

**A**lthough the Guelph Campus Ministry was formed to share the gospel with students at the University of Guelph in Ontario, it also has an outward focus: to renew the university's hometown.

"We're a community that seeks to bridge the campus and the community through discipleship and social justice," says Jamie VanderBerg, who has led the ministry for the past five years.

The 150 students currently associated with the Guelph Campus Ministry work in four areas: worship, hospitality, discipleship, and social justice. The ministry gathers for weekly worship as well as a monthly worship service that integrates many faith groups.

Hospitality takes the shape of weekly dinners that attract around 60 people. Discipleship happens through student-led small groups and an annual retreat.

The ministry's community development and social justice efforts, meanwhile, are designed to connect the campus with the city. For instance, through an initiative called Jubilee Village, a group of students affiliated with



Students at a weekly worship service at the University of Guelph

the campus ministry opens the doors of their downtown Guelph homes for fellowship with local residents every day.

These students also maintain a community vegetable garden for their neighbors. "Each house is a bridge between the community and the campus ministry," says VanderBerg.

Two student leadership teams from the campus ministry also connect regularly with local Guelph volunteer agencies to find volunteers to serve at a homeless center and a local "clothing closet." Back on campus, VanderBerg and his ministry are active in raising support for causes like AIDS awareness.

And, like other campus ministries supported by Home Missions, VanderBerg is working to discover potential church leaders. "I meet with nine student leaders once a week to study the Bible and pray," he says. "I mentor them, and they are walking alongside other students, too, as mentors." ■ —Ben Van Houten

## Chainsaws and Sermon Notes

**W**hat do you think of when you picture a large man from Fiji cutting down massive trees with a chainsaw? Chances are, the words "church planter" don't come to mind.

That's because you don't know Paul Lomavatu, a former logger in the British Columbia bush. Since 2001, he's been the pastor at Cariboo Community Church in the tiny British Columbia town of Williams Lake. This cross-cultural church of more than 200 is listening to God's call to transform their community of First Nations people through discipleship and leadership training.

Lomavatu's journey began in 1987 when he left his native Fiji to move to



Canada with a youth mission organization. After completing seminary he moved to Williams Lake to take a forestry job.

One day in 1998 he invited several loggers on his team to join him in prayer during a break. Eventually, the prayer group turned into a Bible study and the loggers' wives became involved. "I started out discipling a few guys, and it was becoming a real gospel community," Lomavatu says.

Introduced to the Christian Reformed Church by his wife, Lomavatu met Martin Contant, leader of the Home Missions Western Canada regional team. Shortly after, Home Missions helped Lomavatu start Cariboo Community Church.

Church planter Paul Lomavatu



## “Wine Before Breakfast” Prompts Career Shift

In 2006 Sara Gerritsma DeMoore pretty much knew what her future would look like. After graduating from the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, she planned to enter law school and prepare for a career in *pro bono* law.

But God intervened.

That year, she discovered the University of Toronto’s Christian Reformed Campus Ministry, supported by Home Missions. Specifically, she became a regular at the ministry’s Tuesday morning Wine Before Breakfast gathering, an early-morning communion celebration. “It was such a powerful experience for me,” she says.



Emerging Leader Sara Gerritsma DeMoore

She also connected with Brian Walsh, who leads the campus ministry. Walsh encouraged her to apply for a grant from the Home Missions Emerging Leader program to become a part-time leader of the ministry.

“I didn’t think I should apply at all at first, because I was going to be a lawyer!” she says. “But I prayed about it and

“It was such a powerful experience for me.”

decided to do it.” She was accepted to the program and started a 10-hour weekly position, helping Walsh with Wine Before Breakfast and assisting with a weekly graduate Christian fellowship meal.

In April 2008 when she was accepted to law school, she came to the unexpected realization that she was no longer interested in a law career. “To my surprise, I’d become more interested in ministry leadership,” she says.

Today, Gerritsma DeMoore is taking seminary classes and is actively exploring a new career in ministry, possibly in pastoral care or small group

ministry. She also works with two other emerging leaders in the University of Toronto Campus Ministry.

“I really encouraged them to take part in the Emerging Leader program,” she says. “We pray together regularly and talk about how we can all serve the community better. I would never have considered ministry if I hadn’t gone through this program.” ■

—Ben Van Houten

While Lomavatu continued to work as a logger, he set up a launch team and started worship services. “As I was gassing up my chainsaw, I was preparing sermon notes!” he laughs.

Today, Cariboo is a deeply multicultural congregation that includes First Nations people as well as Latino and Black members. Lomavatu is also increasingly focused on raising up missional leaders.

“There are eight First Nations reservations in this region, and quite a few of our members live on them,” he says. “We are training some of those members to be ministry leaders, so they can go back to the reservations and share the gospel and disciple people. That’s how we are growing this gospel community beyond the church walls.” ■

—Ben Van Houten

### Home Missions, World Missions Form New Collaboration

*“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes . . .” (Romans 1:16, TNIV)*

In your neighborhood and around the world, God is changing lives and communities with the power of the gospel. In recognition of that fact, Christian Reformed Home Missions and Christian Reformed World Missions are joining forces to “Reach your community and the world with the power of the gospel.”

From Easter Sunday, April 4, through Pentecost, May 23, Home Missions and World Missions will celebrate their collaboration in the gospel movement through a special campaign that shines a spotlight on the shared mission.

The campaign will include

- a downloadable themed devotional written by Home Missions church planters and World Missions missionaries;
- a special feature in the April issue of *The Banner*;
- a poster and a DVD that will encourage giving to either agency.

For more information, please visit the Home Missions website at [www.crhm.org](http://www.crhm.org) or the World Missions website at [www.crwmm.org](http://www.crwmm.org).



## There Is Much to Be Done

**T**he dust has settled in Port-au-Prince. The earth is quiet; the shaking has stopped; the cries of the crushed and trapped are silent. Most news reporters have gathered up their cameras and microphones and moved on. An island nation, devastated by massive tremors, has become yesterday's news. Haiti has once

again become a place of little interest in a culture focused on the latest story.

But among the ruins of a once-bustling city, people still mourn. Children orphaned by shifting slabs of concrete cry themselves to sleep in loneliness and hunger. Wives whose husbands' bodies have never been located or identified wonder and worry about the future. For the people of Haiti, the events of Jan. 12 have altered their lives forever.

Yet Haiti is not alone. Walking among the ruins are dedicated men and women who, in the name of Jesus Christ, have remained. While much of the world may have turned its attention to other matters, these Kingdom workers are touching lives with the love of God and a cup of cold water.

Among them are those who were already at work in Haiti long before the ground began to shake and buildings toppled. Before the world's attention turned toward this island of pain and poverty, the Christian Reformed Church was already working to transform lives through the community development programs of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC). Christian Reformed World Missions was proclaiming the love and grace of Jesus Christ to people hardened by poverty and desperate for hope. Back to God Ministries Inter-

national was sharing God's story and God's love through media ministry.

For the Christian Reformed Church, Haiti is not just a place devastated by an earthquake. It is a place filled with men, women, and children who need Jesus.

In the midst of the earthquake's carnage, the light shines.

The healing power of Jesus and his message—his good news—is the bedrock upon which people can and will rebuild their lives. Life will never be the same for those who lived through the events of January 2010, but through the efforts of those who proclaim a risen Lord, lives and communities will be transformed.

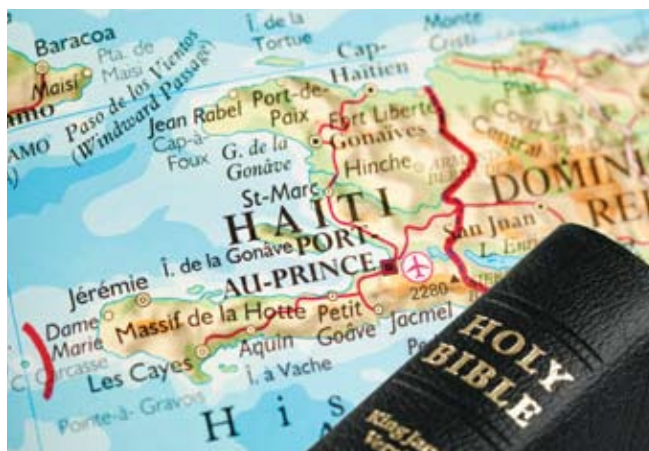
And this, dear readers, is where you and I can play a role. I am grateful for the prayers and the dollars that have poured

from Christian Reformed congregations across North America. The response has been overwhelming. God is using your prayers and resources to rebuild lives, bring hope, and deliver comfort to thousands.

Yet there is much to be done. The people of Haiti are not alone in their needs. Around the world, individuals, families, communities, even entire nations need to hear God's message of hope.

Often, amid the day-to-day pressures of my work, I forget what really matters. My tendency toward self prevents me from hearing the call of Jesus to "make disciples." Sadly, it sometimes takes events like Haiti's earthquake to get my attention—to remind me what is really important.

While we mourn the loss of life, while we reflect on these events, while we seek ways to respond, I invite you—together with all of your brothers and sisters in the Christian Reformed Church—to take this tragedy as an opportunity to renew your commitment to the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. ■



ISTOCKPHOTO

“ God is using your prayers and resources to rebuild lives, bring hope, and deliver comfort to thousands. ”



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

## Light for Rodrigo

The night was dark, but the patio was filled with light as a Christian Reformed missionary met with people in a slum in Guadalajara, Mexico, for a weekly outdoor worship service.

Two 40-watt lightbulbs produced enough light for people to gather, read the Word of God, and sing praises.

Not far from the circle of light, prayer, and song were threats of violence, people without work, people suffering from dengue fever, and a general sense of hopelessness. But inside there was joy, peace, love, and hope.

The atmosphere of warmth may have drawn Rodrigo, a tall young man who was unemployed, living with his mother, and bitter at life. Rodrigo had been seen in the community, walking along angrily, head down, shunning people.

“At first, he remained in the shadows by a broken-down gate,” says Rev. Wayne DeYoung, a CRWM missionary working in Mexico.

The service was nearly over when Pastor Melquiades, one of those conducting the service, walked over to Rodrigo and invited him to come closer for prayer. Rodrigo left the shadows and stepped into the light.

Normally prayers are low-key, but this time was different as worshipers laid hands on Rodrigo. He came alive when the hands touched him. Sounds of pain and wailing



**Pastor Melquiades plays the guitar at a worship service in a Guadalajara slum. Rodrigo's sister, niece, nephew, and mother are at the back.**

erupted from him and he fell writhing to the ground.

From the ground, Rodrigo reached out to the feet of those who were surrounding him in prayer, as if seeking something or someone solid to hold on to.

“I began to wonder if we had taken on more in this prayer than we could handle,” says DeYoung. “But the brothers and sisters just calmly gathered around him and prayed more fervently.”

Soon, Rodrigo grew quiet, even serene. He got up, dusted himself off, and acted as normal. “I wondered if the prayer had led to a change; if Rodrigo had been touched by the Spirit of God,” says DeYoung.

The next week Rodrigo was back for the outdoor worship service. And he returned to almost every service after that, looking happy. “I began to think that possibly some major change had taken place that dark night,” says DeYoung.

A few days after a recent service, DeYoung attended his first March for Jesus in downtown Guadalajara. He brought tracts to hand out at the rally.

A large crowd was on hand, both moving along in a parade and lining the street. In the midst of the parade, DeYoung spotted Rodrigo marching along. He was grinning from

ear to ear, clearly excited and pleased to be part of this joyful event.

DeYoung decided to approach Rodrigo and ask if he would be willing to hand out tracts to people lining the streets.

“Rodrigo gladly complied and off we went, handing out the tracts,” says DeYoung. “As we were we marching along, I knew that the darkness was gone and light had broken through in Rodrigo’s life.” ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

## Volunteers Multiply Ministry in China

How do you reach 1.3 billion people in China with the gospel? Through a strong media ministry and a vast network of volunteers.

Rev. Jimmy Lin, Chinese ministry leader for Back to God Ministries International, heads a staff of seven fulltime personnel who produce content for nine audio programs, six websites, one video program, and 35,000 copies of a bimonthly Chinese-English devotional.

Rev. Lin is frequently asked, “How can your ministry accomplish so many things?”

He responds, “My simple answer is that God has blessed us with outstanding staff in Chicago, Hong Kong, and China—and with more than 50 volunteers in the Chicago office who give of their time to help us reach Chinese-speaking people worldwide!”

The youngest volunteer is a first-grader who does voicing for the Chinese children’s audio program. The oldest is a retired physician who helps by mailing CDs and discipleship materials. Another team of volunteers in the Hong Kong office faithfully helps with mailings, administrative duties, and accounting.

A third large group of volunteers in mainland China—some whose names BTGMI doesn’t even know—are very important to the ministry. These volunteers receive ministry materials and distribute them to others in a country where political barriers often make mission work difficult.

BTGMI Chinese media outreach is supported through ministry shares, gifts from individuals, and many listeners and volunteers. Rev. Lin is grateful for the way God puts the pieces together to reach Chinese-speaking people.

—Nancy Vander Meer, staff writer for BTGMI

## Christians Help Muslims Rebuild after Tsunami

Jimbo is a small fishing village of about 200 inhabitants, mostly Muslim, along the Indian Ocean in southern Kenya.

In 2004, Jimbo was hit by a devastating tsunami in which many families lost their homes and livelihoods.

Pwani Christian Community Services, a partner of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), responded. Using training received from CRWRC, Pwani started work in Jimbo using a process that allowed residents to identify the needs they wanted to address.

“This process was not without challenges,” recalls CRWRC staff member Stephan Lutz. “There was no small amount of suspicion and resistance by some com-



munity members to allowing a church-based organization to work in Jimbo.”

Jimbo’s residents were willing to accept money, but did not want to build a rela-

After the 2004 tsunami, villagers in Jimbo, Kenya, worked together to rebuild the main road that leads to their community.

## Hymn Collection Blends Old with New

A committee of church music experts working to compile a new hymn collection knew that “Amazing Grace” would make the cut. “How Great Thou Art” was also a sure thing.

After all, says Bert Polman, a Calvin College music professor, both of these classic hymns are regularly sung with roof-rattling fervor in both CRC and RCA congregations.

*Hymns for Worship*, published by Faith Alive Christian Resources, includes hymn texts “from olden time to modern times,” says Polman, a member of the committee and the co-editor of the collection. “These are hymn texts that have appeared in most hymnals and are still in use today.”

Faith Alive Christian Resources is planning to release a new hymnal — *Lift Up Your Hearts: Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* — in 2013 to serve the CRC and the RCA (see [www.crcna.org/pages/hymnal.cfm](http://www.crcna.org/pages/hymnal.cfm)). This new hymnal will include many of the familiar hymns found in *Hymns for Worship*.

Polman says the process of creating a new hymnal that will include much-loved favorites as well as contemporary songs is not easy. As a result, the committee is working hard to ensure that the new hymnal will be broad in scope and full of rich music for all of the ages.

“You have to be very careful about what you put in a book that you edit. Otherwise, it becomes a very private vehicle,” Polman said. “This is a hymnal for all people of God.” ■

—Calvin College Communications

tionship or create long-term community-development plans. But Pwani CCS hung in there.

“I must confess that I had very little hope for Jimbo and had given up on any significant progress, but the Pwani CCS staff told me that things were going well,” says Lutz. “They held frequent meetings with the community members and had created an environment of safe and open discussions, trying to build trust.”

In the end, their patience paid off. Working with Pwani, the residents built a fish market and a protective seawall. They planted thousands of mangrove trees, rehabilitated a road leading to the village, and received training in beekeeping and business skills. They are now willing to work with Pwani CCS to further develop their community.

“I myself gave up hope on Jimbo,” Lutz confessed, “but I have realized that when things seem impossible for us, they are always possible for God. I can’t wait to further be surprised by what happens next in that community.” ■

—Kristen deRoo VanderBerg, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

## Growing Up in the Word

**R**ev. Marco Avila left his home in Paterson, N.J., earlier this year and drove several hundred miles. His mission: to pick up dozens of cots that had been donated to help further his vision of holding two-day weekend evangelistic retreats.

People come to hear Avila preach the Word of God at New Horizon Christian Reformed Church in Paterson and will sleep on the cots for one night so they can hear and learn more the next day.



Rev. Marco Avila

is a busy place. It offers classes in English as a Second Language and in music, and develops evangelism ministry groups to go into the largely Hispanic working-class neighborhood with the Bible message.

“We have a priority for reaching unchurched people,” says Avila. “We have plans to do a lot more things for the community.”

Avila has been able to offer these ministries because New Horizon has a new home in a former Methodist church purchased with support from Christian Reformed Home Missions and the Christian Reformed Loan Fund. The CRC’s ministry shares program helped as well.

Ministry shares is an arrangement by which large, medium, and small CRC congregations in the United States and Canada contribute a per-member assessment to help fund the work of their denomination. Ministry shares provide a steady stream of funding without the costs associated with multi-million-dollar fundraising campaigns, says John Bolt, director of finance and administration for the CRC.

New Horizon, a Home Missions church plant, met in a variety of places until the congregation was able to buy a building. Since then, mem-

bers have worked to clean, paint, and install new windows in the church. A parsonage and educational center on the property also needed to be updated.

“We are so thankful to God for the churches that contributed money to help us get financing for this church,” says Avila. “I feel blessed by being part of the CRC.”

Avila, 43, who began working with Home Missions soon after he graduated in 2000 from Calvin Theological Seminary, says that even though his church is small, with about 100 people attending every week, it has set aside part of its budget for ministry shares.

It is a way of giving back to the denomination that has given so much to him and to his church, he says. “As a small church, we are not contributing fully yet. But we plan to increase the amount we give over the next few years.”

New Horizon already means family to many of its members.

“Since I arrived to this beloved community I found a place to praise Jesus my Christ, warm feelings, friendship, and a place to grow in my faith and in my human relationships,” says Miguel T. Roca. “It is clear to me that we are not perfect but we understand that God puts all here to love and forgive. Thanks to the council and Pastor Avila who are leading us to this narrow way between happiness, sadness, troubles, joy, and compassion for all.”

Carl Gronsmann, director of the CRC Loan Fund, says he

is excited about the ministry possibilities that New Horizon can now undertake with the assistance of the Loan Fund and Home Missions. The loan from Home Missions was from a special fund (the Missions



Members of New Horizon CRC in Paterson, N.J., sing and praise God during a recent service in their new sanctuary.

Facilities Loan Fund) established to provide assistance to new church starts to help them purchase or construct their first facilities. “We have a wonderful relationship with the Loan Fund,” says Allen Likkel, ministry teams director for CRHM. “It is a great partnership.”

“The New Horizon church is an effort of many years and it had cost a lot to the denomination,” says Avila who came to the U.S. more than 20 years ago from Central America.

“My dream is that we can become a church that assists other church planters to open churches,” he says. “However it comes, we’d like to be more involved with church development.” ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



Rev. Marco Avila outside New Horizon CRC, in Paterson, N.J., with his wife, Dinorah, and their children Stephanie, Tania, Joe, and Anthony

“We invite friends and people that we know, and we go through the Bible and the gospel with them,” says Avila. “We want to help people to grow up in the Word and to bring more people to church.”

Located in a classic old brick building, New Horizon

# Comings and Growings

What are your favorite signs of spring? Robins? Crocuses?

Try these: bumblebees, butterflies, hummingbirds, oak flowers. They are all signs of spring you might not know about. And there are lots, lots more. Some are really cool.

Here's the point: Spring is rich with life. Lots of things pop up, pop in, fly by, or settle down, right under our noses. These comings and "growings" happen in precise order. In fact, they're beginning to happen now. Read a bit about them on these pages. Then go outside and watch—and enjoy a wonderful spring!



## Going Green

Watch creation go green in the spring. What happens first: Does grass green up or do trees leaf out? When do wildflowers bloom? What makes what bloom when?

Creation usually greens from the ground up: Grasses first, then woodland wildflowers, then bushes. Finally, trees unfurl their leaves.

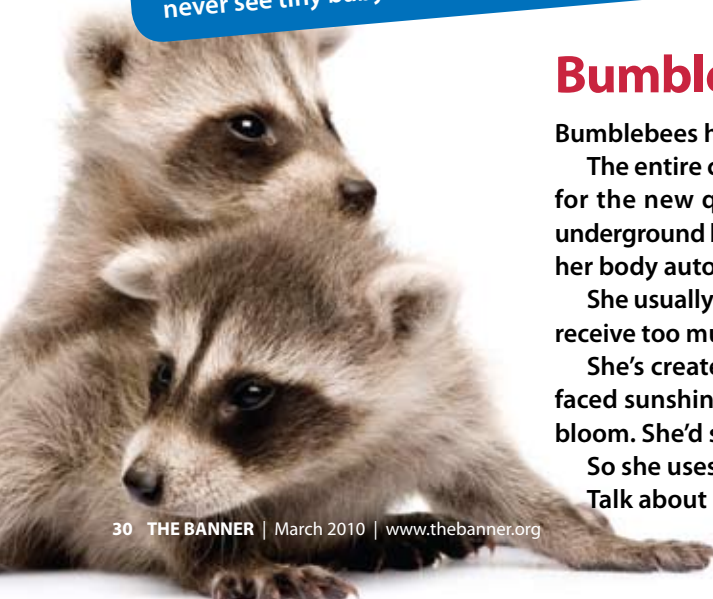
That all makes sense. To go green, *all* plants need sunlight. If trees leafed out first, they'd shade everything else. Short woodland plants wouldn't grow or bloom well. So creation generally goes green from the ground up.



## Spring Babies

If you lived in the woods, what baby animals might you see in the spring? Raccoons? Skunks? Deer? Coyotes?

Most mammals are born in the spring. You never see tiny baby animals in the fall. Why?



## Bumblebee Burrows

Bumblebees hibernate!

The entire colony dies in the first frost, except for the new queen bee. She hibernates in an underground burrow. She doesn't freeze because her body automatically makes a kind of anti-freeze when temperatures drop.

She usually finds or makes a burrow facing north, not south. South-facing burrows receive too much sun. She needs her burrow to stay cool in the spring.

She's created to wake up when her burrow warms to a certain temperature. If it faced sunshine, it might warm too early. Flowers that she feeds on might not be in bloom. She'd starve.

So she uses a burrow that will stay at the right temperature in early spring. Talk about cool!



SCOTT HOLLADAY

## Blooming Onion

There's always a plant that doesn't follow the rules. Wild onion certainly doesn't.

When wildflowers bloom in early spring sunshine, wild onion doesn't. It puts out big, fat, smelly leaves instead. These leaves gather energy from sunlight and store it in the root. The root becomes a round, smelly . . . onion!

In late spring, after trees leaf out, the onion blooms. Sometimes it's the only flower obvious in the woods. It doesn't get much sunlight; it uses stored energy. But it gets lots of attention from the bug world. There aren't many other flowers out at that time. Bugs will certainly visit and pollinate it. That's what it "wants."

What a great idea! You'd almost think wild onion figured this out. Obviously, Someone else did.

## Maps for Monarchs

Last fall monarch butterflies made a spectacular journey south. Now they're headed north.

It takes several generations of monarchs to move all the way north. Each generation moves up a little. The butterflies that appear way up north are the great-great-grandchildren of those that migrated south last fall.

It's like you following a route that people traveled 80 years ago and ending up in the right place. How in the world do monarchs know where to go when?



## Hummingbird Highways

Set up a hummingbird feeder—the little jewels are on their way north!

Lots of hummingbird "highways" run up and down North America. Each hummer has a map in its head. It follows the same highway every season.

Hummingbirds use energy so quickly they must refuel often. They can't afford to share their fuel flowers, so they fly alone.

Some hummingbird highways are long and dangerous. One goes clear across the Gulf of Mexico, 450 miles over open water. That's more than 20 hours of flight time with no fuel stops. Another runs through the Mojave Desert, where food is often scarce.

## March Movements

Keep your eyes and ears open for these signs of spring: Some **robins** from the far south have begun to head north.

Have you heard **spring peepers** yet? By mid-March many of these little frogs have thawed and begun their nightly peeping.

Some **dragonflies** migrate. Look for them especially along shorelines.

**Gray whales** have begun their 500- to 600-mile (800-900 kilometer) trip north from Mexico and up the California shoreline. Some will go as far north as British Columbia.

## Journey North

Check this website to keep track of real-time comings and growings: [www.learner.org/journenorth](http://www.learner.org/journenorth). Click on "Kids" in the left column. You can even add your own sightings and ask questions.

Although it tells lots, the website skips the most important fact. Check that out to the right.

## The Promise of Spring

"As long as the earth endures, \_\_\_\_\_ and harvest, cold and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and winter, day and night will never cease" (Genesis 8:22).

Who said that?



**Joanne DeJonge** heads north from Arizona each spring to her job as a U.S. National Park ranger in northern Michigan. She belongs to West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.

# The Journey of Grief

**T**HE JOURNEY of grief is arduous. It is exhausting, seems never-ending, and is filled with anguish and suffering. After trudging through the valley of the shadow of death with my beloved husband, I was left stranded at the bottom when death choked the final breath from his body.

At least I *thought* it was the bottom! But as grief consumed my entire existence, pouring into every nook and cranny, I found myself falling into deeper and deeper abysses.

There were rocks, maybe even boulders, that became momentary refuges. But as I tried to find my way through the deep valley, panic seized me. I was alone.

All alone! “Why, God? *Why?* I feel forsaken—so alone I cannot bear to think about it for fear of never finding a way out of this abyss. The anguish is too much to bear. Death would be welcome!”

Paralyzed by grief, I found no comfort in Scripture. Kind words from others could not penetrate the steel wall of pain.

Alone. So alone. Where do I go? How do I go? Or do I even go? I am still alive. I see, I hear, I taste, I smell, I breathe, I feel. But I am physically, emotionally, and spiritually broken.

“I need help, God! I’ve never been here before and I don’t know the way out. This valley is overwhelming, foreign, and frightening—so very, very dark.”

As months passed, a dialogue with God commenced.

“OK, God. I’m going to do the only thing I know how to do—take one step at a time.” (Oh, how I dislike that phrase! Spoken glibly, it has the power to inflict

pain on the recipient of those “encouraging” words. Only when you have been forced to live by them can you have any understanding of their true meaning.)

As I took one small, hobbling step forward, the ground felt secure beneath me. But then my eyes glanced fleetingly around me. Terror overtook me as I saw

of heaven, remembering, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” (Psalm 27:1).

“[God] will not let your foot slip” (Psalm 121:3). Take another faltering step, then another.

“This journey will take a long time, perhaps the rest of your life. The road is

The secret I needed  
uncovered  
was revealed to me.

not a smooth road ahead, but the gaping cavern and emptiness of a deeper abyss ready to receive me.

I looked up toward the heavens, screaming in anger and anguish, “Help me, God! Help!”

Because the heavens had seemed shut for so long, I expected no response.

Suddenly I felt someone holding me, anchoring me to a rock. I saw no one, heard nothing. But this touch was familiar. Could it be? Could this possibly be the hand of God? My spirit leaped with hope. “Yes, it IS him!”

For so long I had felt like I was spinning uncontrollably in outer space all alone. But now I knew that I was not alone. I had an anchor. “My soul’s been anchored in the Lord,” says the old spiritual.

The road ahead is long and arduous. One step forward, two steps back. But the secret I needed uncovered was revealed to me: “This is how you do your own journey of grief: Take one tiny step forward, remembering you are anchored. DO NOT look down or you will be overtaken by fear. Look up toward the light

not smooth. Slips and falls will occur. Tears will continue to flow. Periods of anguish will overtake you. But as you take one step of faith at a time, you will receive courage to take the next one.

“You are on a journey of learning to live with sorrow. Always remember Deuteronomy 33:27: ‘The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.’”

Isn’t that how God works? Bringing redemption and restoration into the darkest places of our lives? Hold on to the anchor! Hold on for dear life. For he is your Shepherd, and he will lead you through the valley. ■



Jackie Venegas began her journey of grief April 13, 2007, when her husband, Rev. Dante Venegas, passed away after a long battle with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. He was a longtime pastor of Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Look for a biography of him by writer Chris Meehan in 2010.



## Our Great Treasures

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](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). (And, no, you don't have to be ordained!)

**I WAS WALKING** past the youth room in a church I used to attend when I overheard the following: "Why do we have to study the Heidelberg Catechism anyway? I don't see how it relates to us today at all. Those old confessions are just that—old."

I stuck my head through the doorway to see which one of the kids was complaining. To my surprise, I saw a couple of middle-aged men. They were complaining that their children had to study the same things they were forced to study when they were young. They argued that no one is interested in the past, anyhow, so why force our children to study it?

Current cultural trends, however, indicate that many people today *are* truly interested in their past. Maybe the confessions these men viewed with disdain are actually among our greatest treasures.

Not too long ago, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ran a fantastic series called "Who Do You Think You Are?" The show followed 13 well-known Canadians who researched their family trees for tantalizing stories of intrigue. One episode (Oct. 13, 2007) followed Shaun Majumder, whom Canadians know best from his role in the comedy "This Hour Has 22 Minutes."

Shaun, an East Indian/Canadian, searched out both sides of his roots in the show. He traced his mother's lineage all the way back to John Barrett of Poole, Dorset, England, who purchased a plantation in Old Perlican, Newfoundland, in 1711.

Shaun was also able to trace his father's Indian heritage to the mid-19th century. The show ends with Shaun standing in India, on the bank of the Ganges, pouring some of his mother's ashes into the sacred river.

Through his search, Shaun was able to connect to both sides of his heritage and discover his own character flowing from rich traditions.

Mainstream evangelicalism, however, seems to be moving in a different direction. James Schaap, in his address during the CRC's Sesquicentennial Conference in 2007, noted that many denominations within North America are trying to shed their past like an old cloak. They are trying to reinvent themselves as something fresh, something new, something different.

"Yet," said Schaap, "some Protestant congregations are reinvesting in the doctrinal foundations that are the legacy of their own denominational life."

There are people, often those whom we would least expect, who are saying, "No, I really want to know what it means to be an Episcopalian. I want to know what it means to be a Lutheran. I want to study about it, and I want to learn and really invest in an identity and tradition."

People within our own denomination are saying the same thing. I know a young woman in her 20s who asked, "Why don't we learn more about the Heidelberg Catechism?" She feels as though she is missing a connection to her past. She wants to examine her religious family tree to have a better idea about who she is and where she came from. I've heard this longing expressed repeatedly by young people in our churches.

Maybe the creeds and confessions that have defined us for generations are not a detriment, but an asset. Not outdated documents, but valuable links to a past that shaped us into who we are today.

After all, our spiritual ancestors risked their lives to believe in them. Rather than being liabilities to the church, they are rich resources that can fuel our faith. ■

Rev. Chad Vandervalk is pastor of Charlottetown (PEI) Christian Reformed Church.

NEXT



Maybe the creeds and confessions that have defined us for generations are not a detriment, but an asset.



## A Film Fest of Importance

**AS MOVIE BUFFS FOCUS ON THE ACADEMY AWARDS**, discussions always turn to what makes a film “important.” Films of importance take us beyond ourselves and delve into worlds that teach us and strive to draw awareness to an issue or the plight of a people, all the while entertaining us with an engaging plotline.

A few months ago, I held a personal film fest of movies that deal with intellectual, emotional, and physical disabilities. Following is a “Top 10” list of important movies about disabilities based on a self-created formula: First, the movie has to be inspirational; second, the person with the disability has to be empowered and play a main role in his or her own resilience; and third, the movie must sustain audience interest with a strong art form.

**The Diving Bell and the Butterfly** is told from the perspective of stroke victim Jean-Dominique Bauby as he emerges

from a coma and is unable to communicate with anyone despite his ability to understand those talking to him. By blinking his one functioning eye, Bauby writes a book about his “locked-in syndrome.” (Miramax)

**My Left Foot** recounts the life of Christy Brown, an Irish boy born with cerebral palsy. Though he can only control the movement of his left foot, he grows up to become a writer and an artist. (Miramax)

**The Soloist** tells the story of a homeless man named Nathaniel Ayers, a musical prodigy who develops schizophrenia while at the Juilliard School, and the journalist who befriends him. (Dreamworks)

**A Beautiful Mind** is the life story of Nobel Prize-winning professor John Nash, a genius who lives with paranoid schizophrenia. (Universal)

**Children of a Lesser God** depicts a deaf woman who, with help from her teacher, learns to speak. (Paramount)

**Radio** reveals the wonderful friendship between a high school football coach and a mentally challenged young man. (Sony)

**Who Are the DeBolts? (And Where Did they Get 19 Kids?)** introduces Dorothy and Bob DeBolt, an American

couple who adopted 14 children, many of whom are severely disabled war orphans. (New Video Group)

**Murderball** documents quadriplegic athletes preparing for the wheelchair rugby championships at the 2004 Paralympic Games. (Velocity)

**i am sam** is the story of a father with the mental capacity of a 7-year-old who receives sole guardianship of his 6-year-old daughter after his wife leaves him. (New Line)

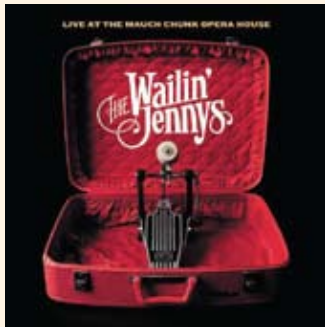
**The Other Sister** is about the romance between Carla Tate and Daniel McMahon—both with intellectual disabilities—and the challenges they face in their relationship. (Walt Disney)

If you know of other films that should be on this list, I’d love to hear from you. I can be reached by email at [rd2@queensu.ca](mailto:rd2@queensu.ca). ■

## Here’s a Top-10 list of important films about disabilities.



**Ron DeBoer** is media editor of *The Banner*, vice principal at Galt Collegiate Institute in Cambridge, Ontario, and a member of *The Journey*, a church plant in Kitchener, Ontario.



## Live at the Mauch Chunk Opera House

by **The Wailin' Jennys**  
reviewed by **Otto Selles**

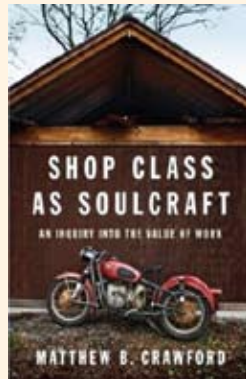
Exquisite, vibrant, or perhaps stupendous . . . it's hard to pick an adjective that adequately describes the harmonies sung by the Winnipeg-based The Wailin' Jennys. On this live album, Ruth Moody and Nicky Mehta, the group's Canadian founders, are joined by American Heather Masse to perform a mix of traditional folk and gospel songs, covers of country and pop tunes, and original work (including the signature tune "One Voice"). (Red House Records)



## Except for Six

reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

Ron Christie, who is dying of cancer, opens his home, his life, and his death to viewers in this documentary produced by Hospice of Michigan. Viewers are exposed to the issues that face any family as they experience the dying process of a loved one. As his cancer progresses, Ron is by turns lighthearted, angry, hopeful, and scared. While not presented from a religious point of view, this film would be a great opportunity for a small group or family discussion about end-of-life issues. To find out more, go to [www.hom.org/media/exceptforsix](http://www.hom.org/media/exceptforsix). (Compass Outreach Media)



## Shop Class as Soulcraft

by **Matthew B. Crawford**  
reviewed by **Otto Selles**

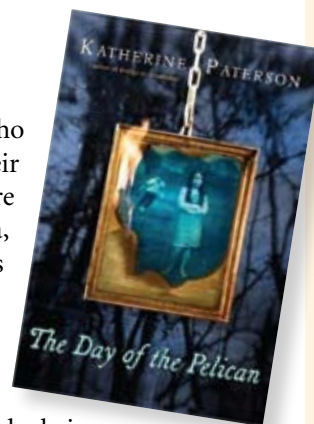
Our emphasis on training "knowledge workers" has created a generation of college graduates stuck in dead-end jobs and lacking the practical skills to fix anything. So argues Crawford, who completed a Ph.D. in philosophy but gave up white-collar jobs to work as a motorbike mechanic. Fulfillment and happiness, he feels, can be found in the intellectual challenges and obvious results manual work provides. While often too academic in style, and a bit crude, this book provides much food for thought—and action. (Penguin Press)

## The Day of the Pelican

by **Katherine Paterson**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

In 1998, 13-year-old Meli Lleshi and her family, who are Muslim Albanians living in Kosovo, flee their Serbian oppressors. They become refugees and are eventually sponsored by a church in Vermont. Baba, Meli's father, teaches his children that "hate makes no sense." As Meli witnesses atrocities in her homeland, on the run, and in America, she struggles to fight her growing hatred. Paterson's informative, sensitive novel deals in an

age-appropriate manner with the violence war inflicts on millions of children. Ages 9-12. (Clarion)



## THE LOWDOWN



### On the Run:

Runners on the go can visit [www.mapmyrun.com](http://www.mapmyrun.com) to, well, map their runs at home or out of town. Also available: map my ride, hike, tri, or mountain.



### Author, Author:

Look for new books from readers' favorites: *Solar* by Ian McEwan (Nan A. Talese), *House Rules* by Jodi Picoult (Atria), and *Her Mother's Hope* by Francine Rivers (Tyndale).

### A Little More Heart:



This month young songstress Francesca Battistelli releases a deluxe version of her hit debut album *My Paper Heart*, with six new songs.

### A Little Less Water:



March 22 is World Water Day. Observe the day by viewing the alarming documentary *FLOW* (Oscilloscope Pictures) regarding the state of our world's water supply, or you may just prefer to curb your bottled water habit.

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



# Life-giving Death

Hospice care helps people say “good” goodbyes

**I** **KNOCK ON MARY’S DOOR** with no more than a name on a chart. My hospice badge prompts her husband to let me inside. Tom apologizes for the disarray as we walk to the family room, where Mary greets me from a recliner chair.

I hear some rustling in the hall and soon meet Mary’s mother, who is entertaining 4-year-old Jimmy while his sisters are at school. Mabel and Mary resemble each other, with their curly brown hair and soft smiles. But today, Mabel could pass for the younger woman.

I sit close to Mary. She talks about her family with a certain pride as they go back to their work. But concern bordering on fear washes across Mary’s face once we are alone. “Nothing is working anymore. The doctor says I cannot tolerate more chemo. Tom has been wonderful, toting me to treatments and appointments—we’re on this road together. But he’s so tired. He’s missed so much work. It was hard to call hospice—noth-

ing against you—but it was a turning point, you know.” Tom joins us again and holds Mary’s thin hand while we talk.

Yes, I do know. After 19 years as a hospice nurse, I know what this first visit means. It is my job—my privilege—to be present with people like Mary and her family as they step away from disease-fighting to peace-seeking. Gradually, care will become more important than cure.

I enter as a stranger, carrying only a name. I have to earn their trust.

## Life’s Realities

Not all first meetings go smoothly. Fear of death or anger at a life-robbing disease sometimes gets directed at me or one of the other hospice team members.

Or sometimes people who have felt controlled by their disease or treatment regimen are hesitant about taking charge of their care. Some believe hospice will hasten death. Some worry that inviting us in constitutes failure or means they have lost the fight.

Loyal friends and family, who have prayed for healing, question God's silence. Everyone walks on new ground that feels mushy, not solid. We know, but have to learn again, that healing is more than physical—that God's work is mysterious.

Each of us faces death in his or her own way. The hypothetical becomes real: "If you had only months to live . . ."

Hospice workers notice patterns in people facing the end of life: present moments become more valuable, relationships take on new importance, resolution of unfinished business grows urgent. Psychologist Abraham Maslow put it this way in the book *The Journals of A.H. Maslow*:

Everything gets doubly precious, gets piercingly important. You get stabbed by things, by flowers and by babies and by beautiful things—just the very act of living, of walking and breathing and eating and having friends and chatting. Everything seems to look more beautiful rather than less, and one gets the much intensified sense of miracles.

This heightened awareness often prompts patients to give of themselves. "What tasks or goals would you like to accomplish before the end of your life?" asks the social worker. Hospice patients grab the precious gift of time to review their lives—renewing bonds and mending fences. People they love join to remember and record what is dear. They can free their loved ones from worry over their well-being.

Tom and Mary make plans for their children; they say things now that used to go unsaid; they cherish their togetherness. Family members, friends, and hospice volunteers find ways to grant last wishes.

Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's remarkable book *On Death and Dying* has helped many of us glimpse death openly through her keen insight into human nature. She notes:

People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.

I've witnessed many such inner lights.

One of my clients played the violin. Joni wanted to play in two concerts a distance from her home even though her breathing was compromised. I expressed concern about her safety.

"If I played the trumpet, this might not work, but I'm sure I can make it," she quipped. The violin had been her life; so she performed in those last concerts before retiring her precious instrument.

Ed, a widower, called hospice after weeks of nausea, unable to keep anything down and too tired to leave the sofa. In collaboration with the team, we tried another medicine and were delighted that he found some relief, which gave him time to accomplish his unfinished goals. He changed the spark plugs in his tractor and walked around his garden, giving his daughter detailed instructions about the care of his precious plants.

"One more thing—I want to go fishing! Not from the dock, but from my boat," Ed said. Ed's loyal volunteer drove the boat to a favorite fishing hole, carefully following instructions for Ed's safety. The two spent a glorious hour drifting and casting. Ed's wishes came true—and then he assured his family he was ready to go.

### **Closed Doors**

Sometimes a hospice worker faces an impossible situation when either the patient or family says, "I don't want my family to know . . ." or "Don't tell her. . . ." Everyone pretends they don't know what they know.

Fear closes the door to healing. A hospice worker can help folks search for the key but cannot force the door open. However, he might ask patient and family, "Can I answer your loved one's questions openly?" Permission granted, he witnesses pure relief. The key is found and the door opens, just a crack at first but then wide. Everyone becomes free to say what needs to be said. They throw away the key—the door cannot be locked again. Death ceases to be the enemy.

Hospice workers grieve when fear of death keeps their gift of care away until the final hours. The social worker cannot assist the family in making plans; the chaplain cannot help provide spiritual comfort; the nurse can offer only pain control; the health aid, minimal personal care. Time robs many precious goodbyes.

### **A Final Gift**

Norma witnessed to her Christian faith during her illness, which eventually caused her to require artificial feeding. Nausea increased as her body could no longer absorb the fluids. One pain-filled day, her nurse spent a long time with Norma and her husband, talking about their options.

Norma struggled with God's will in the situation. At the nurse's suggestion, she tried one day without the feedings and enjoyed her first painless day in months. They knew it was time to stop the feedings, as difficult as that would be. She could tolerate only sips of tea. »

## “The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and for deeds left undone.”

—Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896)

Norma’s friends came a few days later, bearing a basket containing a fancy teacup and saucer for each of them. While drinking their “blessing tea,” each friend read a card she had written to express her love and appreciation for Norma. Laughter and tears mingled in their final goodbyes.

Sometimes a dying person is comfortable facing her own end, but a family member is not. Guilt, alienation, or fear of loss can cause people to demand futile treatment despite a patient’s wishes. The situation becomes even more complicated when the patient is no longer able to participate in decisions.

“A Christian Perspective on Death and Dying,” as taught in many churches by the late sociologist Ted Rottman, urged us to speak frankly about death, not at times of crisis but as part of healthy death education. If a family has talked openly about death, arguments at the bedside are less likely when death approaches.

For example, on the occasion of a family reunion celebrating her 80th birthday, Gloria insisted that her four children and their spouses talk seriously about her death. Some wondered why Mom, hale and hearty as ever, would spoil her party with death-talk. But Gloria, widowed 10 years earlier, told everyone her wishes: “No heroics to keep me alive.”

Twelve years later, when Gloria refused invasive testing for a recurring illness, she declared that God was calling her home. She entered hospice and the family gathered to say their farewells. Her wishes were clear—no one could object. Gloria left her family in peace.

### Your Testimony

Death education often includes writing a “living will” or medical directive. If a family cannot meet to talk about death, as Gloria’s did, perhaps because of distance or estrangement, a written document could pave the way for understanding a person’s end-of-life wishes.

The living will, which designates one or more individuals to act as agent(s) for the person who is dying, could be circulated among the family with a request for a signature of agreement from each member. Once signed by all, a copy can be returned to each as a permanent record.

The living will can also become a testimony of faith. In 1 Peter, the apostle urges, “Even if you should suffer . . . always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (3:14-15). Consider one man’s reason for hope, explained in his living will:

As a Christian, I believe not only that we are the Lord’s both in living and in dying (Rom. 14:8) but also that through the power of Christ’s resurrection, death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:54). Just as biological death is certain, so is the faithfulness of God in death as in life. As one who believes that Jesus Christ has overcome the ultimate state of death for his followers (alienation from God and from each other) by his participation in the physical event of death on the cross, I wish to be responsible in dying as well as in living, being comforted by the fact that death does not annul my life, but translates it from history to eternity with God.

Hope transcends death. Comfort for the dying one, who is already at peace within his faith, can be found by the family through palliative and hospice care. This loving parting gift serves well to create an atmosphere for final goodbyes.

The bookends of a life are birth and death. We have months to prepare for a birth: decorating a room, making plans, anticipating a blessing. Perhaps we can think of the gestation of death and make preparations as well, expressing love and anticipating abundant blessings. After all, God has already prepared a glorious home for each of us. ■

### When to call hospice

If someone you love has a terminal illness, call your local hospice when

- your loved one’s treatment is not working or it is making him/her feel worse.
- your loved one can no longer take care of daily needs without help.
- your loved one is losing weight unintentionally.
- your loved one is uncomfortable or in pain most of the time.
- visits to the hospital or doctor’s office with your loved one are more frequent, and they do not help.

### Who can call hospice?

The doctor, family members, or anyone from the community can call hospice. Hospice can come to you to answer your questions and walk beside you on this journey.

—Janice Quist



**Janice Quist** ([jquist@hom.org](mailto:jquist@hom.org)) has worked for Hospice of Michigan for 20 years. She is a member of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids.



**Carol J. Rottman** ([rottcc@iserv.net](mailto:rottcc@iserv.net)) is a retired teacher and author. She has a new book due this spring, *All Nature Sings: A Spiritual Journey of Place*, and is an elder for Eastern Avenue CRC.

# Introducing True Confessions

**WELCOME TO A BRAND-NEW COLUMN.** Sorry, we're not going to dish out juicy "tell-alls" here.

Rather, we'd like to talk about the confessions that our church has adopted and that it requires our leaders to sign on to.

What are those confessions? How do they function in our congregations? Are they "true" in faithfully summarizing and interpreting Scripture? And do they keep us "true" to each other as members and leaders of a confessional church? We'll take a closer look throughout 2010.

Why examine these now? Because currently the Christian Reformed Church faces two significant issues related to the confessions. In the next few years synod (our annual leadership convention) has some major decisions to make.

The first issue involves a proposed update of the "Form of Subscription," the covenant all our officebearers must sign in which they pledge agreement with the teachings of our confessions. You'll find information on the proposed update on page 243 of *Agenda for Synod 2008* and on page 516 of *Acts for Synod 2008*, or visit [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) and click on "Synodical Resources" under "Resources."

Any serious misstep in redrafting the original form of subscription could (arguably) make it difficult to hold our church leaders accountable for how they interpret Scripture. Conversely, it could set up the confessions as a "paper pope," elevating them above Scripture itself.

The second issue regards a proposal from the denomination's Ecumenical Relations Committee to add the Belhar Confession (see [www.crcna.org/pages/belhar.cfm](http://www.crcna.org/pages/belhar.cfm)) to the six confessions we already have, raising similar questions: what are confessions and how should they function?

During the coming year we'll be asking a number of Christian Reformed authors to (re)introduce those confessions to us. We'll also ask someone to help us look at "Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony," even though it doesn't have confessional status. Finally, we'll invite someone to briefly introduce the Belhar Confession.

So why do we have confessions?

- Scripture requires our verbal response to the gospel: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).
- Early confessions quoted in Scripture itself (for example, Phil. 2:6-11) make clear that believers should literally "admit together" their faith in Christ.
- Because Scripture is so broad, we need to summarize its message. To do that accurately, we need each other (John 14:26).

## The CRC faces two significant issues related to **our confessions**.

- Confessions help us avoid heresies that return to plague us. As George Santayana warned: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."
- Confessions help us to identify clearly where our denomination stands within the wider body of Christ.
- Confessions help us to keep our leaders accountable. We'll revise confessions if necessary, but only as a team.

The importance of confessions can be overestimated. Some idolize them as if doctrinal purity is all that matters. Knowing the truth is an important component of true faith in Christ. But our experience and practice of Christian faith are also crucial: "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17).

Others underestimate the importance of confessions. But true confession is also an essential element of faith. We cannot love whom we do not know. Jesus planted his church squarely on the believing disciples' answer to this question: "Who do you say I am?" (Matt. 16:15).

Which confessions we adhere to, how they function, and how tightly we bind our leaders to them makes a huge difference for our church. Be sure to revisit this column as we offer you a bird's-eye view. And, so we don't disappoint you entirely in what "True Confessions" seems to promise, we'll toss in a few juicy bits of scandal about them just for fun. ■

### Our Confessions

We share three confessions with most other denominations: the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds. Two others show how we agree and disagree with (mostly) Roman Catholic doctrine at the time of the Reformation: the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. Our sixth confession, the Canons of Dort, shows how we interpret Scripture differently from other Protestants on the topic of election.



Rev. Bob De Moor is editor of *The Banner* and pastor of preaching and administration for West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta. See his blog at [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org).

**Advertising Information**

**Deadlines:** April 2010 issue is 3/1/10; May issue is 4/5/10. Visit [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org) for complete details.

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

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

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

**Denominational and Classical Announcements**

**AGENDA FOR SYNOD 2010**

Synod has established the following deadlines for materials to be received by the executive director of the CRCNA for the synodical agenda:

- a. Reports of standing committees and affiliated youth and educational agencies are due on February 15.
- b. Reports of agency boards are due ten days after the conclusion of the board meetings, but no later than March 1.
- c. Overtures and appeals are due no later than March 15.
- d. Names and addresses of delegates to synod on the printed Credentials for Synod, as well as the completed information sheet on each delegate, are to be submitted by stated clerks of classes as soon as possible but no later than March 15.

Materials will not be included in the printed Agenda if received after the synodically established deadlines.

Gerard L. Dykstra, Executive Director

**ANNUAL DAY OF PRAYER—Wednesday, March 10, 2010**

Synod has designated Wednesday, March 10, 2010, as the Annual Day of Prayer. All CRC congregations are requested to assemble to ask for God's blessing upon the world, our nations, for crops and industry, and for the church worldwide.

Councils are reminded that if it is judged that the observance of the Annual Day of Prayer can be more meaningfully observed in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer (U.S.) they have the right to change the date of service accordingly (Acts of Synod 1996, p. 578). The National Day of Prayer (U.S.) is May 6, 2010.

Gerard L. Dykstra, Executive Director

**Admitted into the Ministry**

**CANDIDATE MARK NEYMEIYER** sustained an examination by Classis Zeeland on January 21, 2010. With the concurrence of the Synodical Deputies from Classes Holland, Georgetown and Grandville, Mark was ordained and installed as the next pastor of the Rusk CRC on January 29, 2010.

Rev. Ronald J. Meyer, S. C.

**Announcement of Candidacy**

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

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

**Available for Call**

**AVAILABLE FOR CALL** Kelowna CRC and Classis BC South East are pleased to announce that John S. Gerrits is available for a call. John faithfully served the Kelowna church for some 10 years before requesting to be released from the congregation under Article 17 in order to take a leave of absence from ministry before accepting another call. John can be reached at 250-764-4643 or [gerritsfamily@shaw.ca](mailto:gerritsfamily@shaw.ca)

**Financial Aid**

**CLASSIS GR NORTH** is taking applications from students studying for ordained ministry in the CRC, who are members of one of the churches of its Classis, and are in need of financial assistance. Please contact Rev. Jon Huizenga at PO Box 419, Rockford, MI 49341 or at [jonhuiz@iserv.net](mailto:jonhuiz@iserv.net) by March 15.

**The Leadership Development and Support Team** of Classis Grand Rapids East exists to provide need-based aid to members of Classis churches who are full-time students in an accredited M. Div. program, and who are committed to entering the ordained Ministry of the Word in the Christian Reformed denomination. Those who wish to apply for

aid for the 2010/2011 academic year should contact Rev. Michael F. Abma by April 1, at: [mike@woodlawncrc.org](mailto:mike@woodlawncrc.org).

**Meetings of Classis**

**CLASSIS HOLLAND** will meet in regular session May 20, 2010 at Gibson CRC, Holland, MI. Agenda items are due April 9, 2010 and should be sent to: Rev. Tony Louwse, Stated Clerk. Fax: 616-494-6054; email: [louwse@macatawa.org](mailto:louwse@macatawa.org)

**Congregational Announcements**

**Retirement**

**SECOND CRC LYNDEN, WA** announces the retirement of their pastor, Rev. Mark A. Davies, after 38 years in the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. A reception and farewell program will be held at the church on Saturday, April 3. His farewell message will be on Easter Sunday, April 4, 66 years since his Easter baptism. Please join us, friends and former parishioners, in honoring Pastor Mark and Judy. For additional information please contact the church at [secondcrc@verizon.net](mailto:secondcrc@verizon.net), or call Gary Minetti, 360-656-6725.

**Birthdays**

**90th Birthday**

**HENRY "BUD" DYK** 5821 Dyk Rd. Manhattan, MT 59741 celebrated his 90th with his wife, family and friends on February 28 at Bethel CRC. Thanks be to God, we love you!

**BERTHA LYNEMA**, 766 116th Ave, Martin, MI 49070 celebrates her 90th birthday on March 2. She is cherished by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who give thanks for her example of faith and love. Great is God's faithfulness.

**CONNIE RODENHOUSE** of 2105 Raybrook SE Grand Rapids MI 49546 (#5038) will celebrate her 90th birthday March 25, 2010. Her husband (Bob) deceased, her children Mary and Chuck Terpstra, Kathy and Bob Allen, Carole and Tom VanDam, Bob Jr. Dave and Pat Rodenhouse, Debi and Joel Datema, grandchildren and great-grandchildren wish her God's continued blessing. Her zest for life and her beautiful testimony of faith is an inspiration to all who know her. We love you, Mom.



**MINA SEINEN**, 7811 Seinen Rd, Houston, BC Canada has celebrated her 90th birthday on January 29. We thank God for her steadfast faith and love she shows to those around her.



**ROBERT (BOB) SMIES** of 531 Giddings Ave, Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085 celebrated his 90th birthday on Feb. 6, 2010. His children Dave and Deb Smies, Dick and Mary Smies, Ron (deceased) and Joyce Smies, Roberta and Scott Jaschob and Sharon and Herb Lantinga together with his 20 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren wish Bob God's continued blessing. His enthusiasm for life and faith is an inspiration to us all. Thanks be to God.



## 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:** First Reformed Church of Byron Center, MI is seeking a senior pastor to lead a congregation of 200+ members. We are looking for an ordained minister who is passionate about God's Word, believes strongly in the power of prayer, is eager to reach out to surrounding areas and is able to be a faith-driven leader and visionary in our church. For inquiries and to view our church profile please contact Bob Koopman at koopmanrobert@yahoo.com or the church office 616.878.1709

**CORNERSTONE CRC,** Chilliwack, BC is looking for a full time Youth Pastor (ordained or not) with a passion for the Lord and youth ministry. We have a vibrant, unique youth program. We are located in the Fraser Valley an hour east of Vancouver. Information can be obtained from Melissa at our church office at 604-792-2517 or office@cornerstonecra

**SUMMITVIEW CRC,** on the sunny side of the Cascade Mountains in Yakima, Washington, is searching for a full-time pastor due to the approaching retirement of our pastor. Our small, loving, inter-generational congregation is looking for solid Bible based preaching to guide us on our spiritual journey and encourage us as we grow. Our church profile is available from Jerry Kobes at 509-697-5041 or gwkeng@elltel.net

**BELLEVUE CRC,** Bellevue, WA, located in the beautiful Pacific Northwest is seeking a pastor. BCR is a warm, welcoming congregation with a strong desire "to be the Heart and Hands of Jesus." We are looking to grow by living out this mission statement under the guidance of our new pastor. Please contact PastorSearch@bellevuecra.org or visit www.bellevuecra.org

**WESTVIEW CRC** located in Grand Rapids MI is seeking a full time Minister of Worship. The Minister of Worship is the primary leadership position for all ministries at Westview but most particularly for those related to worship and will work in coordination with our Minister of Congregational Life, Director of Music, Senior High Youth Directors, Middle School Youth Director, church Secretary and other staff at Westview. In addition to preaching 75% of the services, he will want to diligently promote evangelism and outreach through dynamic leadership of the 166 families / 485 professing members of Westview. For more information or to receive a Church Profile please contact the search committee (Bob Zwiers - Chair) at search@westviewcra.org or call the church office 616-453-3105 www.westviewcra.org

**RUDYARD CRC** is seeking a full time pastor. Rudyard is located in the eastern U P of Michigan. We are a traditional church, established over a 100 years ago, with a healthy outreach program, and about 65 families. For information and a church profile please contact Walter Bandstra at bandstra@lighthouse.net

**SENIOR PASTOR-PALOS HEIGHTS CRC (IL)** is seeking a spiritually gifted preacher who will lead our congregation to praise and worship heartily, develop more fully as vibrant Christians, encourage our youth, and reach out to embrace those whom God is leading to our fellowship. Having been served for a year by a Specialized Interim Pastor we are now actively searching. If you wish to explore God's call with us, contact Bill Davids, Search Team at bill.davids@clarencedavids.com. Visit our website at paloschurch.org for more info.

**SENIOR PASTOR** Aylmer CRC, Ontario, Canada is seeking a gifted preacher who will lead our congregation in worship. He will also

help us develop more fully as vibrant Christians and to reach out and embrace those whom God is leading to our fellowship. If you wish to explore this opportunity, contact Charlie Dykxhoorn, Senior Pastor Search Committee Chair at cidyxhoorn@gmail.com. Visit our website at www.aylmercra.org for more info about our ministry.

**PASTOR OF PASTORAL CARE** Do you have a passion for Pastoral care? If so, CCRC in Kitchener, Ontario is hiring a Director/Pastor of Pastoral Care to nurture, lead, direct and develop a ministry of pastoral care. Working within a team setting your first priority will be to provide leadership, encouragement and training to the pastoral elders, deacons and members of the congregation in implementing a recently developed model of pastoral care which emphasizes growing personal relationships with God, each other and the community at large. Your role will also include personal visits to provide a ministry of compassion, mercy and encouragement as well as embracing new members to our congregation. There is an opportunity to participate in Worship through pastoral prayers and in preaching about 2 services per month. Ideally our Pastor/ Director is ordained within the Christian Reformed Church (or able to be ordained) and displays a mature understanding of the Reformed Christian faith. Implementing Pastoral care will require energy, creative thinking, wisdom and patience as well as building trusting relationships across a wide age range demographic Community CRC in Kitchener is a growing urban church of about 900. You would be joining a Ministry team of a Pastor (preaching & administration), a youth Director and Office Administrator who are ably supported by several volunteer ministries. To obtain a copy of the church profile, the position mandate and further information, please contact: Graham Barraclough at pastorsearchcra@gmail.com

**MARANATHA CRC** of Woodbridge, Ontario, is seeking a full-time pastor. The candidate should be compassionate, welcoming, have strong interpersonal skills with youth, and be a solid, Bible-based preacher. Our small, loving church, just north of Toronto, is looking for leadership to develop an outreach ministry in our community, and encouragement for our spiritual journey. Send your resume and profile, or make enquiries to the search committee at maranathasearch@hotmail.com

**CAMPUS MINISTER AT GVSU,** Allendale, MI. Classis Zeeland is inviting applications for this full time position at Grand Valley State University. Email gvsucampusminister@gmail.com for a detailed position description. Deadline for submission is April 30th, 2010 or until position is filled.

**HOPE CRC PORT PERRY, ONT.** Hope CRC of Port Perry, Ontario, Canada, is actively seeking the next person that God would have lead our congregation as pastor. We are a multigenerational congregation of approximately 160 persons with active ministries and an emphasis on 'serve and serving'. Our adopted mission is "to know and to show the love of Jesus". Our vision is to be a place where people are led into a life changing personal relationship with Jesus... to enfold them into a loving fellowship of Christians, and to help equip them as partners in service to actively share the love of Jesus with others. Services are led by our P&W team(s) and involvement from all persons and all ages is encouraged. Opportunities for Youth involvement at Hope are considered very important and encouraged. If God is prompting your heart and you feel that you may be the person that God has in mind to partner with Hope in 'growing' through the next phase, we invite you to contact us. Our church profile is available upon request. You may contact Nick Stevens, chair of the ST by email at nstevens@i-zoom.net for more information / a more detailed job description. 905-985-3962

**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.covcra.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.

**SENIOR/LEAD PASTOR** Christ Community Church of Plainfield (CRC) is seeking a dynamic pastor who will lead our staff and congregation in solid biblical teaching. Our mission is: "To draw unchurched and previously churched people into a maturing relationship with Christ." We live and worship in the fast growing Chicago suburb of Plainfield, IL. We have 206 families in membership with an average of 500 people attending each week. Our worship style is contemporary with some traditional elements. We are seeking the person God has chosen to lead our congregation. For more information please visit: <http://www.aaplacetoconnect.com/pastor>

**LEAD PASTOR** Wolf Creek Community Church in Lacombe, AB is seeking a Full-time Lead Pastor. Are you gifted to preach in an engaging and authentic style? Do you have strong leadership gifts that enable you to work well with other staff and lay leaders? Do you have a love for people ranging in spiritual maturity from seeker to mature believer? Can you help us to live out our vision of reaching and enfolded others for Jesus? If the Spirit is nudging you, please call or email our Search Team Leader for more information: Gary Barnes at 403-885-5187 or barnes.gw@gmail.com

**TRINITY CRC** in Rock Valley, IA is seeking a Co-Pastor with a passion for the Lord and His ministry. We are a congregation of 497 members motivated by God's love for us and a hurting world. Seeking a pastor to encourage us to teach of God through His Word and be equipped to serve others to the praise of God. If you feel the Spirit leading you to inquire more about this position see our website [www.trinitycra.org](http://www.trinitycra.org) or contact Mr. Brad Vis at [bvis@rockvalleychristian.com](mailto:bvis@rockvalleychristian.com).

**BRIDGEWOOD CHURCH** of Savage, MN is seeking a full time pastor. We are looking to grow through outreach and community missions. Our new pastor will have a commitment to sound Biblical teaching and passionate preaching that is relevant to both established believers and 'seekers'. Bridgewood Church - People changed by the love of Christ creating a ripple effect in our community. - Check us out at [www.Bridgewood.org](http://www.Bridgewood.org)!

**OCHEYEDAN CRC (IA)** is seeking a full time pastor. Please contact Ken Haack at (712)331-4151 or [thelmaandken@hotmail.com](mailto:thelmaandken@hotmail.com)

**VICTORIA CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH** in the capital city of British Columbia on beautiful Vancouver Island is looking for a pastor who, with the members, can fulfill our vision to become more inclusive, inspire and teach from a reformed Biblical perspective to all ages, both members and the surrounding community. Our goal, with God's help, is to become a welcoming and enfolded culture. We seek to provide inspiring worship, a structure that provides opportunity for all members to use their God given gifts and to become more effective communicators, leaders, and coordinators of our ministries. If you feel God challenging you to work with us as we seek to become the kind of church God wants us to be, please contact: Joyce Masselink, Chair Search Committee, [jandjmasselink@shaw.ca](mailto:jandjmasselink@shaw.ca); or call 250-721-0066

**Associate Pastor of Youth and Worship.** Details found at [www.firstreformed.com](http://www.firstreformed.com). Applications need to be e-mailed/postmarked by March 1, 2010

**GEORGE TRIEZENBERG** of 10501 Emilie Lane Apt 2301, Orland Park, IL 60467 celebrated his 90th birthday on February 27. His family and friends thank God for his good health and the joy he brings to us all.

#### 80th Birthday

**NELLIE (IZENBAARD) & MARVIN FEDES**, 7980 Meadow View Rd, Manhattan, MT will, the Lord willing, celebrate their 80th birthdays (Mar. 26 & May 15). We thank God for you!

## Anniversaries

#### 60th Anniversary

**BEEKHUIZEN** Gib and Trudy (Venhuisen) 2920 S Yates, Denver, CO 80236 will celebrate their 60th anniversary on March 16. With love from your family.



S U S T A I N I N G  
**Congregational**  
E X C E L L E N C E

Is there a new project your church is excited about? One that will foster health?

We'd love to hear about it!

Have you considered applying for an SCE Health & Renewal Grant?

It's not hard. Why not look into it?

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by email [sce@crcna.org](mailto:sce@crcna.org)

or visit [www.crcna.org/sce](http://www.crcna.org/sce)

SCE is a program to support and strengthen CRC congregations—so they can be used by God to transform lives and communities.

**BOS**, Bernard & Wilma (Broeze), 11510 W 73rd Pl, Burr Ridge IL 60527, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Mar. 10. Congratulations and love from your children: Jim & Marge Bos, Barb & Art Hendrix, Kevin & Cindy Bos, Kim & Howard Hoff; 13 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren.

**HOOGSTEEN**: It gives us great joy to announce the 60th wedding anniversary of Wiebe and Ann Hoogsteen. Feb. 21, 1950 to Feb. 21, 2010. Great is Thy faithfulness oh God my Father! From the Hoogsteen children. Home address: Box 131, Kakabeka Falls, Ontario, P0T 1W0

**STAM**: With praise and thanksgiving to God, Bert and Rita Stam celebrate, with their family, their 60th wedding anniversary on March 23, 2010. Great is His faithfulness! Best wishes may be sent to 3634 Old Scugog Rd, Bowmanville, Ont. L1C 4J2

**VAN KUIKEN**, Lewis E. and Pearl (Stapert) of Kentwood MI will celebrate 60 yrs. of marriage on March 9. Rejoicing with them are their 4 children, 12 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren.

#### 50th Anniversary

**BROUWER**, John & Jean (Aasman) RR2 Site 27 Box 1, Rocky Mtn Hse, AB T4T 2A2 ~ will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on March 4/10. Children: Debbie & Larry St. Onge, Brenda & Robert Bootd, Cathleen & Bill Bates, Kenneth & Cheri-Lynn Brouwer, Reuben & Emily Brouwer, and 9 grandchildren. We thank God for His faithfulness!

**BRUSSEE**, Jim and Sharon (Bishop), 2804 411th St. E., Myakka City, FL 34251, married Feb. 26, 1960. Children: Jeff (Donna) and Tim (Melissa). Each couple has 1 daughter and 2 sons and live in the Bradenton, FL area. We thank our Heavenly Father for a wonderful family and abundant blessings.

## Obituaries

**BIEREMA**, (Vos), Trena, age 102, Jan. 19, 2010, Muskegon, Mi. Predeceased by husbands Henry (Ike) Vos, Charles Bierema; daughter Joan and son-in-law Claude Baker. Member of 1st CRC of Muskegon. Survived by 2 grandsons, Bradley (Darlene) Nowak-Baker, and Bruce (Kathleen) Baker; 2 great grandchildren and 2 great great grandchildren. Even in advanced age she was very involved in the Muskegon Rescue Mission and the Cornerstone Ministry where she faithfully



### DORDT COLLEGE

Dean for the Natural Sciences & Director of Scholarship & Research

Dordt College is seeking an innovative person with a strong track record of teaching and scholarship/research and a passion for Christian higher education to serve in this dual role on the Academic Leadership Team. Our selected candidate will lead the natural science division's academic departments in faculty hiring and development, enrollment growth, and program and curricular development. In addition, this person will have proven skills to support and encourage the entire Dordt faculty to develop scholarship and research as an integral part of their service to Dordt's mission and thereby strengthen our culture of scholarship across the campus.

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

Dr. Erik Hoekstra, Provost • Dordt College  
498 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE • Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697  
Fax: (712) 722-6035 • E-mail: [provost@dordt.edu](mailto:provost@dordt.edu)  
Web site: [www.dordt.edu/offices/academic\\_affairs](http://www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs)

organized and promoted socialization and Bible study fellowship for seniors. She loved to cook and bake, especially cookies which she freely gave away to support a good cause. A small feature column recognizing her cookie contributions over the years appeared in *The Banner* some years ago. Her final years were spent at DeBoer Assisted Living in Muskegon where she continued to be a ready witness for her Savior and Lord.

**BIERMA**, Henrietta (De Groot) of Sioux Center, IA was taken to her eternal home on January 15, 2010. She was preceded in death by her husband, George, and daughter-in-law, Bev Bierma. She will be dearly missed by her 8 children: Lloyd, Merle, Millie (Harv) Bos, Gretta (Bob) Siebersma, Carol (Verlyn) Schaap, Rosanne (Jack) Van Marion, George, Mari (Jarvis) DeBerg; her 30 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren and sister, Wilma Baker

**BRINKS** Mr. Robert E.; age 88; January 15, 2010; 2105 Raybrook SE, Apt. 4053, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He was preceded in death by his brothers, Gerald and William and sisters, Gertrude and Marian. He is survived by his wife: Joyce Brinks; children: Doug and Vicki Brinks of Belmont, MI, Mark and Jan Brinks of Grand Rapids and Greg and Julie Brinks of Beverly Hills, MI; grandchildren: Jesse and Megan Brinks, Jordan Brinks, David Brinks, Jonathan Brinks, Sarah Brinks, Daniel and Stephanie Brinks, Joel Brinks and Katie Brinks; brother: Charles and Joyce Brinks

**BOUMA**, Marian (Koster), age 75, graduated to the church triumphant on January 8, 2010. She will be sadly missed by her husband of 56 years, Norman, and her children, Rich & Laurie Bouma, Randy & Jan Bouma, Gayla & Gary Postma, Linda Rothenthaler, Carl Rothenthaler, 18 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. A service of celebration was held on January 11 at LaGrave Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., Revs. Wayne Kiel and Michael Hoogboom officiating.

**DELEEUW**, Jack, age 81, Jan. 2, 2010. 436 47th Ave. #18, Greeley, CO 80634. Survived by his wife Caroline (Plooster, Rosendale) Children: Debi Flaughter, Debra & Alex Komodore, Bob & Shirley Rosendale, Karen & Scott Barber, 10 grandchildren & one brother Bill & Wilma DeLeeuw. Amazing Grace.

**DEWIND**, Loren T.; age 92; Dec. 26, 2009, Palm Desert, CA. Survived by his wife Annette (Pizzo); children Sharon (Rudolf) Zuiderveld, Mary Ellen (Kevin) Peterson; 3 grandsons, Nicholas, Loren, Mark. Preceded in death by first wife June (nee Vroom).

**DYKSTRA**, Beatrice R. (Hoekstra) nee Kikkert, age 91, went to be with the Lord Jan. 3. She lived at the Holland Home in South Holland, IL. She was preceded in death by husbands, Tony T. Hoekstra and John W. Dykstra. She is survived by sons Thomas W. (Joyce) Hoekstra, Bonita (James) Hudspeth and Barbara (George) Zandstra, step-daughters Shirley De Jong and Pat Goote, 7 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren, 7 step-grandchildren and 14 step-great-grandchildren.

**EXOO**, Mrs. Bessie M.; age 89; January 17, 2010; She was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. Henry Exoo, sister, Ruth and brother, John. She is survived by her children: Henry (Mary) Exoo, Patti (Hap) Swets-Frizzell, Alan Exoo, Calvin (Diane) Exoo, Gay (Paul) Bouwmeester, and Margaret (Rick) Dokter; 13 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren; and brother, Leonard Jellema.

**GELDERLOOS**, Marie Frances, nee Decker, age 97, 1120 Prospect, Elmhurst, IL 60126. Wife of the late Jacob. Mother of Donna (Charles) Erdman. Grandmother of Chuck (Jackie) Erdman, Christy (Bob) Hooker, and Caryn Erdman. Great-grandmother of Devin and Zack Erdman and Jake, Luke, Charles and Carson Hooker. Preceded by 1 brother and 4 sisters. Memorials to Life on Wheels or Ebenezer CRC are appreciated.

**HOGAN**, Norman, 82, of Artesia, CA, went to his eternal rest on Jan 1, 2010. He is greatly missed and remembered with love by his wife of almost 60 years, Lillian Hogan, seven sons and daughters-in-law, 19 grandchildren, and 8 great grandchildren. Memorials to Christian Reformed World Missions.

**KAMERMAN**, Louise (Kamps), 85, of Churchill, MT passed away on Nov. 14, 2009. Louise is in glory now with the Lord in whom she placed her absolute trust and faith. This faith was fundamental to her life and the way she lived it. She was a blessing to other people in innumerable ways as she felt called to be of service to others and always provided a welcome to others from a love of hospitality. Her family thanks God for her example of faith and love. Great is God's faithfulness.

**POST**, Marjorie Janette (Helmholdt); age 87; January 1, 2010; She was preceded in death by her husband: John W. Post, Sr.; She is survived by her children: John W. Jr. (Jack) and Arden Post, Mary and Bob Hudson, Pat Post, Jo and Ken Blackport, Mike and Barb Post, Charlie and Elaine Post, and Betsi Post; 17 grandchildren and many great grandchildren; brother: Ted and Barb Helmholdt; sister: Carol and Bob Alspaugh; brothers-in-law: Dick Post, Gerrit and Gloria Post, Bill and Florence Post; sisters-in-law: Anne Post, Margaret and Warren Engbers, Adrianna and Ed Ophoff.

**TE VELDE**, Ralph, age 78, January 25, 2010. 1961 S. Almond Ct., Ont., CA 91762. Beloved husband for 53 years to Carol (Heins). Father to Jim & Yvonne te Velde, Ken teVelde, Lou & Cheri Kingma, Ron & Susan Brown, Bob & Heidi teVelde, Brian & Carol Nutt. 18 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren.

**VAN BEEK**, Marvin R. age 71, Denver, CO. Went to be with the Lord on Dec 26, 2009. Survived by wife of 48 years, Marlys; son Mark (Darcy), daughter Melonie (Jon), 4 grandchildren, brother Bill, sister Jean, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, many nieces and nephews. WE LOVE YOU! 2565 S Clermont St, Denver, CO 80222

**VAN'T HOF**, Mrs. Mildred "Mickie" Ruth (nee Hofman); aged 82; January 05, 2010; 2200 Raybrook SE, Unit 202, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; She was preceded in death by a baby daughter; brother and sisters: Rev. Walter Hofman, Marguerite Vermeer, Claire Hoogstrate, and Eleanor King. She is survived by her husband: Donald Van't Hof; children: David (Ellen) Van't Hof, Judy (Bill) Alphenaar, Steve (Sue) Van't Hof, Joanie (Dale) Rosema, Karen (Steve) Reid, and Jane (Jesse) Townley; brother: Rev. John and Dot Hofman, sister-in-law: Edene Hofman; brothers-in-law: Roger and Doris Van't Hof and Carl Van't Hof; grandchildren: Grace and Luke Van't Hof, Grant and Annalise Alphenaar, Justin (Ann) Ranson, Hannah Van't Hof, Lies (Phil) Kelder, Drew and Laina Rosema, Matt, Valerie, Rachel, and Kate Reid; great-grandson: Parker Ranson.

## Employment

**CAREGIVERS NEEDED** Are you interested in working for the best living assistance services company in West Michigan? Visiting Angels is looking for people who can be excellent, not average; make a connection with our clients; be perfectly dependable; practice compassion and work with integrity. Contact Heather at 616-243-7080 or heather@vangels.com or visit our website at www.vangels.com and complete an online application.

**DAIRY SALES AND DISTRIBUTION** Michigan company is offering positions in E Wisconsin and NW Iowa for part-time sales and distribution. Residual commission with existing subscribers. To learn more about us, visit [www.countrysidenviro.com](http://www.countrysidenviro.com). Please respond with inquiries or resumes to: [cesystems@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cesystems@sbcglobal.net)

**DRIVERS NEEDED:** Local greenhouse looking for Semi and Straight Truck Drivers for Spring season. Competitive wages paid. Please contact Paul Blauwkamp for more information. 616-836-1014

**LOOKING TO FILL TWO POSITIONS** 1. GM-trained service manager; 2. Experienced technician (prefer GM certified), for dealer in beautiful Conrad, MT. Excellent hunting & fishing, 65 miles from Glacier Nat'l Park! Visit [www.vanmotors.com](http://www.vanmotors.com) call 800-368-7575 or email: [tammy@vanmotors.com](mailto:tammy@vanmotors.com)

**SEASONAL TRUCK DRIVER NEEDED** to deliver flowers throughout Michigan and Northern Indiana. Contact Louie at 616-243-5492. Huizenga Bros. Inc., Grand Rapids, MI

**We are looking** for a self motivated adult to work part time in our office attached to our home. The work load would range from 2-5 days per week. Responsibilities would include payroll, data entry, answering the phones, typing proposals, and working on projects. Strong computer skills are necessary, familiarity with Quick Books, Excel, and Access are preferred. Qualified candidates must display experience, stability, a high level of accuracy and attention to detail. Please apply online at [snellerslandscaping.com](http://snellerslandscaping.com)



**Rehoboth Choir Tour**

**Tour Schedule**

**Sunday, March 21**  
9:30 a.m., The River CRC; Redlands, CA  
6:00 p.m., CrossPoint CRC; Chino, CA

**Tuesday, March 23**  
2:30 p.m., The Village at Redlands;  
Redlands, CA

**Thursday, March 25**  
7:00 p.m., 1st CRC of Bellflower;  
Bellflower, CA

**Rehoboth**  
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[www.rcsnm.org](http://www.rcsnm.org)

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What if there was a Christian ministry whose members helped each other pay off health care needs without using insurance?

What if the members of that ministry also offered up prayers to our Lord for those facing medical needs and challenges?

What if the cost of sharing in this Bible-based ministry (whose motto is Gal.6: 2 & 6) was much less than paying for insurance?

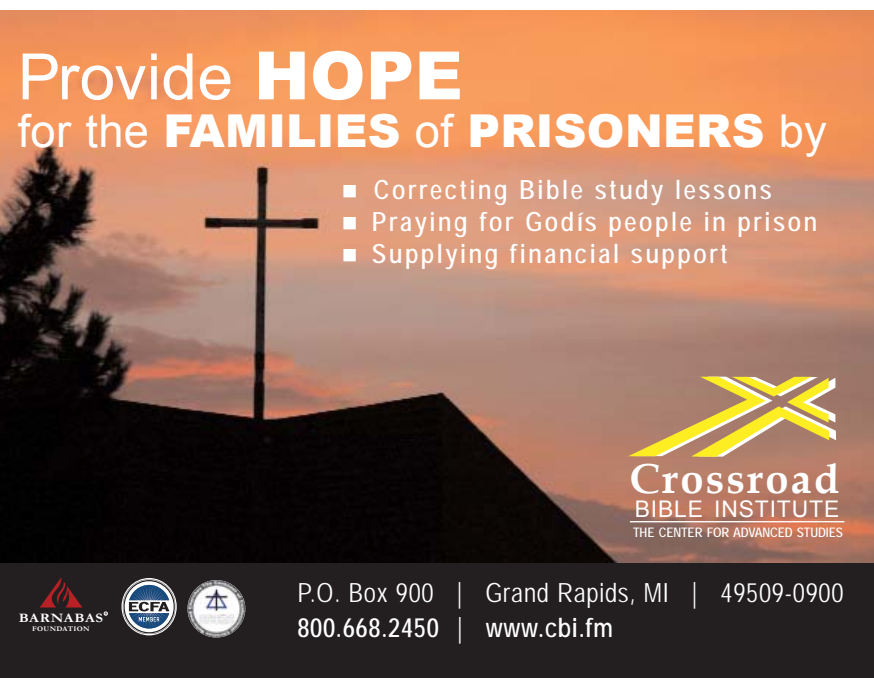
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## Volunteers

**VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED** to serve in the Lighthouse Variety Store at Mississippi Christian Family Services in Rolling Fork, MS for the months of May thru September. Air conditioned housing and store. This is such a rewarding area of service to those so much less fortunate than we. We ask for a minimum of two weeks. Call or email Cliff & Huddy Doornbos, (616)453-1984 or huddyd@gmail.com.

## Real Estate: Sales and Rental

**SAN CLEMENTE, CA.** 3bd/3ba condo. 1bd/1ba. Ocean View, 200 yd to beach. Near Disney Land, San Diego Zoo [www.vrbo.com/196251](http://www.vrbo.com/196251) (949) 413-6241 Night, Week or Month

**COLORADO VACATION HOMES** Come to Pagosa Springs, CO to enjoy large family lodges/homes for reunions and vacations. Mention the Banner ad for a 20% discount. [PagosaVacationRentals.com](http://PagosaVacationRentals.com) 970-903-4340

**KISSIMME HOME FOR RENT** New, 6 bedroom, 4 bath, fully furnished home with private pool, 3 miles from Disney. [www.floridavacahome.com](http://www.floridavacahome.com). 708-372-2586

**ANNA MARIA ISLAND, FL CONDOS** pool, beach access, linens, fully equipped. 1 and 2 bedrooms. \$650-750/wk. D. Redeker, 941-778-1915. [redekercondos.com](http://redekercondos.com)

**VACATION RENTALS DISNEY** at BONNET CREEK RESORT FL, Dec. 19-26 2BR deluxe sleeps 8. Also, oceanfront 2BR deluxe at Panama City FL Apr 3-10, 2010. 616-452-1152.

**MAUI CONDO** on the Kaanapali Beach. email: [agdendulk@cv-access.com](mailto:agdendulk@cv-access.com) [www.vrbo.com/94024](http://www.vrbo.com/94024) (209) 883-2608. Sleeps six.

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**PENTWATER COTTAGE & EFFICIENCY** On Lake, with boat dock, near village, furnished, sleeps 6-8, \$895-1300/wk. 616-299-4294

**FOR RENT**, Big Star Lake, 4 bedroom, 2 bath home, sleeps 8 for \$875/wk or up to 12 for \$1225/wk. Great beach, many weeks available. 616-669-9130 or 616-813-5972.

**WEEKLY RENTAL:** Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Walk to the beaches of Lake Michigan from this Newly remodeled Vacation Home, 7Br, 4Ba—comfortably sleeps up to 14. Very close to downtown Saugatuck & Douglas. Call 630-268-1531 or email [Groenjk@aol.com](mailto:Groenjk@aol.com) for info & reservations.

**SUMMER COTTAGES** directly on 770-acre Fremont Lake. Rent 1 or all 4. 1 hour north of Grand Rapids, MI. 2 & 3 bedrooms. \$625/\$725 in July, \$495/\$595 in early June, late August. Includes boats, bbq, 165 ft. sandy shore. Call 586-255-3593.

**LAKE MICHIGAN** - Lakefront, Whitehall area, beautiful sandy beach, 3BR/2BA, private setting. No pets please. \$1350-1450/wk. 248-344-0996 or [sji2003@comcast.net](mailto:sji2003@comcast.net)

**LAKEFRONT LOG CABIN** Priv. frontage. sandy swim area. Sleeps 6-8. 30 min N of GR. All sport lake. Kayak, fishing boat, swim raft, call for photos \$695. 616-583-0407

**GRANDVILLE, MI UPPER APT. FOR RENT** in a 2-family home. Two bedrooms, garage, pay own utilities, no smoking, no pets. Call 616-896-9468.

**COTTAGE FOR RENT** Hess Lake, Newaygo, MI. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths. Sleeps 12. \$1300/week. Call Lonnie at 616-942-0048.

**ELKHORN CABIN:** Fully equipped, 3-level Arts/Crafts log cabin vacation rental, Asheville, NC; sleeps 9. Sauna, views, screen porch. [www.elkhorncabin.com](http://www.elkhorncabin.com) 828-298-3848

**LAKE MICHIGAN COTTAGE FOR RENT** Holland MI, near Tunnel Park. Lake view, 2/3 bedrooms, pvt beach access, \$1000/wk. 616-455-2850 or [sarahdv17@yahoo.com](mailto:sarahdv17@yahoo.com)

**COTTAGE FOR RENT** Peaceful lakefront cottage on beautiful Winfield Lake - 45 min north of Grand Rapids, MI. Completely remodeled. 2 bedrooms. Sleeps 6. Deck/Rowboat. Great fishing. \$650/wk OR \$400/Mon thru Fri special. Call 616-669-2714 or email [kimk@scheperbrothers.com](mailto:kimk@scheperbrothers.com) for info or pics

**NORTHERN MI RENTAL-** On Burt Lake 4 BR 3 bath, sleeps 12 Boating, fishing, skiing, fall colors, Inland Waterway. Weeks in Aug still available. [BLCottage@comcast.net](mailto:BLCottage@comcast.net)

**RADCLIFFE VILLAGE CONDO** Near Calvin College-for sale or rent. Two bedrooms and garage. Rental includes heat and cable. Rent \$750.00 sale \$75,000 616-874-8074

**BIG STAR LAKE** Cottage for rent. 2 bedroom sleeps 8. \$800 weekly in June and \$850 weekly in July and August. Call Amy at 616-662-9659.

**HOLLAND MI** nice 1 bedroom guest house with kitchen and living area, near South Lake Macatawa. \$375wk \$80nt [www.hollandplace.com](http://www.hollandplace.com) 616-335-8766

**SUMMER RENTAL** Grand Haven cottage two blocks from waterfront and downtown. Sleeps 8. 616-846-6229

**ZEELAND CONDO** Light & Bright End unit 2 bed +den 55 + community \$49,900 Jerry Nienhuis -Keller Williams Lakeshore 616-886-0866

**COTTAGE FOR RENT** On Wolf Lake, north of Baldwin, MI. 140 ft. of private beach on 450 acre, all sports lake. 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, sleeps 6. No smoking, no pets. Includes 14 ft alum row boat. \$625/wk. 616-532-6543

**COTTAGE FOR RENT** Enjoy a week with your extended family at our cottage on all sports Winfield Lake, 45 minutes north of Grand Rapids, Six bedrooms, two kitchens, beds for 15. Swimming, boating, fishing. Call 616-875-7302 or email [pdvoet@charter.net](mailto:pdvoet@charter.net).

**GRAND HAVEN COTTAGES** -Summer Weekly Cottage Rentals in Lovely Grand Haven, MI Just two Blocks from downtown shopping and restaurants. We have 1-five bedroom cottage, and 1-three bedroom cottage. Please visit our website for pictures/pricing @[www.grandhavensummerbreeze.com](http://www.grandhavensummerbreeze.com) or [www.grandhavencottagecharm.com](http://www.grandhavencottagecharm.com) or call 616-204-8500 for more info and availability.

**LAKE MICHIGAN COTTAGE FOR RENT** Summer 2010. 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, 40 steps to beach. Just North of Holland. \$2000/wk-June, \$2200/wk July & Aug. Call 616-361-0506

**COTTAGE FOR RENT** Gun Lake, Wayland, MI. 4Bdrm, 2 bath. \$700 to \$900/wk. Call Rob at 269-792-0044 or email [rob.roamsted@gmail.com](mailto:rob.roamsted@gmail.com)

**FOR RENT:** Grandville: Executive-type home w/ 3 stall garage overlooking Porter Lake. 3122 Gable St. \$1000/mo. plus utilities. \$500 deposit. 532-0362

Lynden, WA 1 bdrm, sleeps up to 4. \$210/wk, includes utilities. Country-style. 360-220-3342.

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[www.pmi.org](http://www.pmi.org) or Telephone: (519) 821 3603 (Canada) or (828) 669-7373

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**ALPINE PLEASURE TOURS FOR 2010:** **Tour#1** May 11&12—"Purdue Chorus and the Beauty of Spring". This chorus has traveled the world and is spectacular. Day two we'll go to Holland for lunch and entertainment at Dutch Village. \$239.00 **Tour#2** Tiger game—Date not confirmed, call for info **Tour#3** June 14-19—"New York, New York" All the highlights, two plays, stay in the heart of Times Square—Est-\$1349.00 **Tour#4** Aug 24-26—"Mystery of Mysteries" This is one you won't want to miss-\$498.00 **Tour#5** Sept 22—"His Life" A look into the life of Jesus from birth to resurrection. Blue Gate Theatre in Shipshewana. Dinner also-\$99.00 **Tour#6** Oct 1&2—"Ladies Only" Shipping at IKEA & Woodfield Mall, also Mich City. Play at Drury Lane **Tour#7** Oct 12&13—"Castles & Cruises"—Beautiful fall foliage of Northern MI, dinner cruise on Lake Charlevoix, Castle Farms, overnight in downtown Charlevoix. \$259.00 **Tour#8** Dec 7-10—"Nashville Holiday Spectacular" Opryland Hotel is spectacular at Christmas, Rockettes, Louise Mandrell dinner show and much more. \$598.00 Ask about our Spring 2011 Netherlands Waterway Cruise. All prices based on double occupancy. Call or write for info. Cliff & Helengene Doornbos Alpine Pleasure Tours 3074 Richmond St NW Grand Rapids, MI 49534 Phone (616)791-4334, toll free (888)922-4334, email [huddyd@gmail.com](mailto:huddyd@gmail.com)

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# 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](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org) or send them to 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

According to a radio report, a middle school in Oregon was faced with a unique problem. A number of girls were beginning to use lipstick and would put it on in the bathroom. That was fine. But then they would press their lips to the mirror, leaving dozens of lip prints.

Finally, the principal decided something had to be done. She called all the girls to the bathroom and met them there with the custodian. She explained that all the lip prints were causing a major problem for the custodian, who had to clean the mirror every night.

To demonstrate how difficult it was to clean the mirror, she asked the custodian to clean it. He took out a long-handled squeegee, dipped it into the toilet, then cleaned the mirror.

Since then there have been no lip prints on the mirror.

—Conn Witt

I didn't know whether my young granddaughter had learned her colors yet, so I decided to test her. I would point to something and ask what color it was. She would tell me and was always correct. It was fun for me, so I continued. At last she headed for the door, saying sagely, "Grandma, I think you should try to figure out some of those for yourself."

—Marlys Brouwer

During the worship service Pastor Ron asked the children to come forward for a message. Since it was the month of March, he decided to focus on the coming of spring and the expectations that spring brings. So he asked the children what month follows March.

"April!" a little girl answered quickly.

Pastor Ron then asked, "What kind of weather do we have in April?"

Another child responded proudly, "April brings showers."

"If April brings showers," the pastor continued, "what does May bring?"

"May flowers," came the quick answer.

"And what do May flowers bring?" asked Pastor Ron.

A boy shouted with great exuberance, "Pilgrims!"

—Bill Van Dyken

Smith climbs to the top of Mount Sinai to get close enough to talk to God. Looking up, he asks, "God, what does a million years mean to you?"

"A minute," God answers.

Smith asks, "And what does a million dollars mean to you?"

"A penny," God replies.

Smith asks, "Can I have a penny?"

"In a minute."

—Carol Breems

Three boys are in the schoolyard, bragging about their fathers.

The first boy says, "My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, calls it a poem, and they give him \$50."

The second boy says, "That's nothing. My dad scribbles a few

words on a piece of paper, calls it a song, and they give him \$100."

The third boy says, "I've got you both beat. My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, calls it a sermon, and it takes eight people to collect all the money!"

—Deborah Miller

The Sunday school teacher asked her young charge, "Johnny, why do you always scratch yourself?"

"'Cause I'm the only one who knows where it itches," he answered.

—George Hoeksema

## Send Us Your Photos!

Martin Boardman of Brooks (Alberta) Christian Reformed Church sent us this two-fer combining a John Calvin bobblehead photo with a reference to a piece of CRC history. For decades, King peppermints rustled their way out of pockets and purses at the beginning of the sermon in Christian Reformed churches. A former member of Brooks CRC painted a nearby fire hydrant as a tribute to this tradition. But Martin tells us that shortly after John Calvin posed for this photo, the church's GEMS club took over sponsorship of the hydrant, painting it bright pink and adding the GEMS logo!



# Connecting... for ministry.

Across the CRC, there are people like you doing ministry. They're deacons, Sunday school teachers, musicians, office staff, webmasters, missions team members, GEMS leaders, elders, librarians, and so much more. They are in San Diego, Prince Edward Island, and everywhere in between.



Wouldn't it be great to connect? You know, compare notes. Tell stories. Learn from each other. Get help. And discover that, hey, we're not alone!

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