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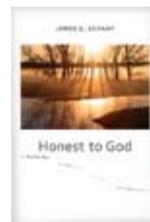
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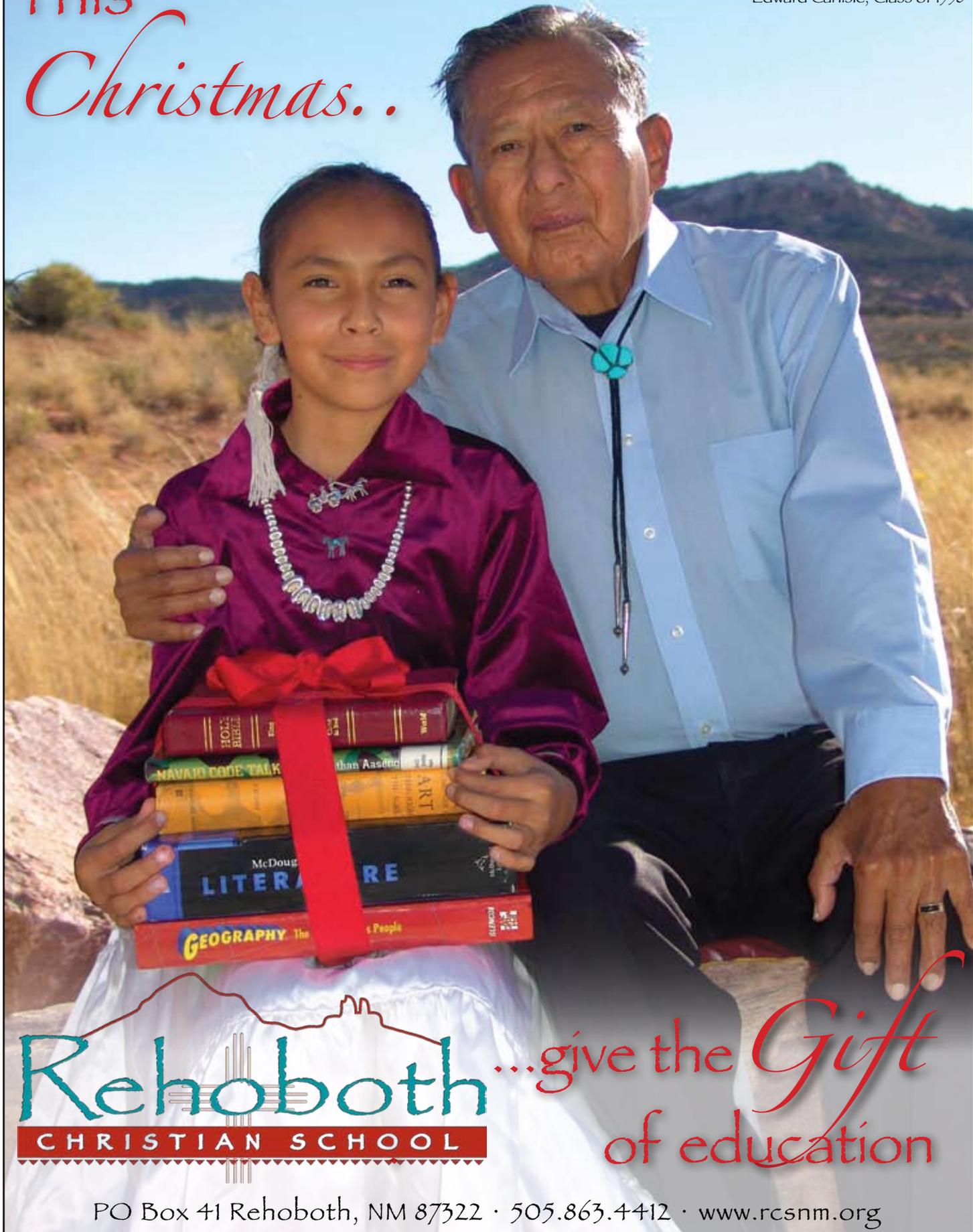


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# Royalists

**CHURCHILL ONCE QUOTED SOMEONE** who observed that democracy is the worst form of government . . . except for any other.

A glance at Numbers 14 gives us a case in point.

The Israelites were slogging through the desert heat, and word on the sand dunes was that they would be better off if all that exodus unpleasantness had been a mirage. The Israelites would still have homes instead of squatting in ratty tents. They would be well watered and fed. So why not patch things up with their enslavers and return to the fleshpots of Egypt?

So they decided on their own grassroots candidate (v. 4) and had a *parlez-vous* with the acting prime minister:

“Moses, howyadoin?”

## Dictatorships don't cut it. Even democracies can't.

“Not so hot . . . um, I can't believe I just *said* that! Oi, you could fry an egg on my forehead. And then there's your constant kvetching: no water, everybody's got B.O., impossible to get all the sand out of the manna . . .”

“Funny thing you should mention kvetching, Moses. We just chose this dynamite tour leader to help us make a 180 back to Egypt. Better we're slaves there than put up with all this yammering here, right, Moses?”

“No.”

“No?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“No.”

“Moses, we *voted*.”

“Heaven wouldn't like it.”

“Moses, we have a clear majority here. We're informing you that the people have spoken. This train's headed back to Goryland.”

“I forbid it.”

“What? A schlemiel like you should overrule all of *us*? Who gives *you* the right?”

“Heaven.”

“That's just one more vote alongside of yours. That's two against all of us. What are we, chopped liver?”

Scripture records how this experiment in democracy ends. Despite their kvetching the Israelites do obey Moses and head for the Promised Land.

Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria—this past year demonstrated so graphically that dictatorships don't cut it. They are too weak to maintain their coercive grip on power because cruel intimidation cannot capture people's hearts. Sooner or later dictators get swallowed up in the torrent of blood they themselves release.

Greece, Italy, Spain, North America—this past year demonstrated so graphically that even democracies can't cut it either. They are too weak to rescue their economies, let alone to enact true justice or peace. The will of the people is too divided, too fickle, too easily

deflected. And the quest for the common good always gets derailed by self-interest.

So where to turn? To a true monarchy. To a King who rules not by majority assent but by the divine right of (eternal) inheritance. To a King who loves God so much he willingly sheds all his innate glory to become a slave to the Father's goodwill (Philip. 2:6-11). To a King who loves us so dearly he served us all the way to hell and back.

This Christmas, regardless of our political slant, let's celebrate together that holy inauguration in Bethlehem of the ancient regime. Let's join shepherds in witnessing to the Wonder. Let's join the magi in offering gifts fit for King Jesus: gold, labor, love, and lives.

And let's resolve to be noble ambassadors of that eternal kingdom throughout the New Year.

So, does Jesus have *your* vote? ■



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# World Sorrow

**I****N THE NOVEL** *The Secret Life of Bees*, May Boatwright's sisters, June and August, must conceal any upsetting piece of news from her because she is unable to emotionally distance herself from it.

Whenever May hears a sad story on television or the radio, she writes it down on a little slip of paper and stuffs it between the stones of her "wailing wall," which runs along their property. May is not the main character, but she is the one to whom I relate most.

Sometimes I feel like I need a wailing wall.

This past May I was sitting on my bed in York, England, where I spent the spring semester. I was reading an article about the devastating tornado in Joplin, Missouri. As I read story after story of injury, destruction, and death, I was overwhelmed. Tears flowed down my cheeks.

How unbelievable that I could be sitting in a comfortable chair in a nice warm

apartment in a beautiful country, while at the same time hundreds of people were suffering.

My family calls this "world sorrow," and every so often I am overcome by it. The band Mumford and Sons captures my feelings perfectly in their song "Roll Away Your Stone." They sing: "Darkness is a harsh word, don't you think? / Yet it dominates the things I see."

I struggle to distance myself emotionally from the suffering in the world: human sex trafficking, famine, war, malaria, earthquakes. These issues are too vast, systemic, and complex for me to fix.

Yet I often think about my role as a Christian. I know that Christ will come again to make all things new and that he is the only one who can fix perfectly the devastating realities of the world. Some people use that as an excuse to do nothing. But if our physical world and our short lives have true weight and worth, wouldn't it be important that we do *something*?

Often I feel impassioned, yet I lack the courage to act on my convictions. I am not feeding villages in Africa; I am not becoming a missionary in Asia. I'm a middle-class college student working toward being a teacher. What's so courageous about that?

Whenever I find myself sliding down this spiral of uselessness, I think about what my grandmother used to say: "Brighten your own little corner."

For some reason that idea sticks with me, and I imagine one of those cell phone commercials showing a map of the United States or Canada with lights indicating nationwide coverage. The tiny dots come together to illuminate the whole screen.

My bouts of world sorrow are relentless and inevitable, but despite the darkness, I envision thousands of small acts of love illuminating the world. ■



**Sarah VanderMolen** is a student at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. She attends Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids.

YOU MUST BE MEN AND WOMEN  
OF CEASELESS HOPE, BECAUSE  
ONLY TOMORROW CAN TODAY'S  
HUMAN AND CHRISTIAN PROMISE  
BE REALIZED. . . . EVERY HUMAN  
ACT, EVERY CHRISTIAN ACT,  
IS AN ACT OF HOPE.

— WALTER J. BURGHARDT

# Evolution and the Young Adult Exodus

**PHOTO** The evolution issue is a microcosm of why the denomination is hemorrhaging college-educated young adults.

PHOTO BY KEVIN DOOLEY

**“THE PERCEPTION IS** that the denomination believes in evolution . . . no we don’t” —CRC pastor quoted in the July 2011 *Banner* (p. 37).

There has been lengthy discussion in the Christian Reformed Church about retaining and attracting young people to the denomination—in essence, us.

We are both 27 years old, CRC born and raised, and educated at Calvin College. When we moved five years ago, we joined a Presbyterian church (PCUSA) because there were no Christian Reformed churches in our new city. Now we wonder if there is a place for us in the denomination if we return to a CRC area.

You see, we are evolutionary biologists. When a Calvin religion professor recently left the college over the well-publicized evolution flap, many *Banner* readers no doubt viewed it as confirmation that an anti-evolution view is the official position of the church.

When we did our own research into the *Acts of Synod*, particularly those of 1991 and 2010, we were pleasantly surprised to find that, officially, the church is not anti-evolution at all. If that is the case, then why does the perception that the CRC rejects evolution persist?

The evolution issue is a microcosm of why the denomination is hemorrhaging college-educated young adults, even Calvin graduates.

While many CRC congregations remain fixated on issues like homosexuality, evolution, and the role of women, young people have moved beyond those debates. This leads some parishioners to ask, “What is wrong with what the Calvin faculty is teaching?” However, that is not the right question to ask.

Calvin has assembled some of the best and brightest minds the denomination has to offer. If CRC-raised Calvin graduates are turning their backs on the denomination, the real question congregations should ask is, “What is wrong with us?”

We find that the problem is not that we disagree with “official” CRC positions, but that too few of the CRC’s own members know what those positions are.

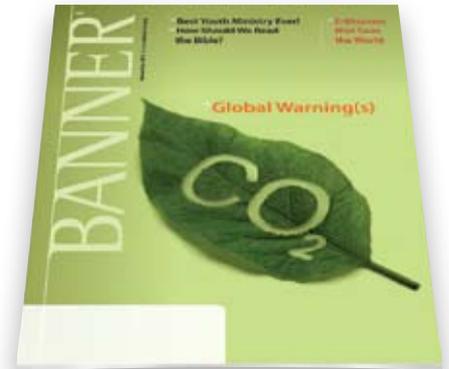
During recent controversies, congregants have listened to loud voices propelling the fundamentalist evangelical movement, while the wisdom of their own synod and scholars is drowned out.

When we read *The Banner*, we still find many reasons to love the CRC: caring people, compassionate missions, and a rich theological tradition. However, the body of Christ has many parts. If evolutionary biologists are a foot, why does the body say to the foot, “I do not need you?”

The denomination needs to regain the trust of open-minded young people and scientists alike—to make us feel like a needed part of the body without fear of amputation, like the one that just happened at Calvin. ■



**Steve Roels** has a master’s degree in ecology and evolutionary biology. **Sarah Bodbyl Roels** will receive her Ph.D. in ecology and evolutionary biology in 2012. They are members of First Presbyterian Church in Lawrence, Kansas.



## Science Behind Climate Change

After reading “Global Warning(s)” by Brian Martin (November 2011), I was left shaking my head in dismay. First, he begins by subtly chastising those with differing views as having “dismissive comments.” He further uses questionable correlations that CO<sub>2</sub> is the cause of “serious changes in global temperature.”

While chiding people to take a long-term view of climate, he then uses a short-term example of a glacier receding over 50 years, thus contradicting his own argument. . . .

Rather than a thought-provoking article, this turned out to be more of an elitist view being passed off as facts. This is the least scientific presentation of this subject I have ever read. But it is not a surprise since the *Banner* editorial staff already concluded that “we must act on the assumption that climate change is real.” Wow.

—Robert J. Ribbens  
Muskegon, Mich.

Your article “Global Warning(s)” and editorial “Why Play Favorites?” (November 2011) were lopsided and unscientific—more of a political statement than a faith issue. Reading my church publication should enhance my faith, not try to

# LETTERS

persuade me of the virtues of liberal politics.

Cancel my subscription immediately.  
—William Krzymowski  
Gallup, New Mexico

There is probably no way to publish an article on a controversial subject without stirring up a lot of debate. However, your reasons for not publishing pro and con views in the same issue have a downside too. . . .

I do want to point out that a *consensus* among believers is not proof of the validity of their belief. The reason for this from a scientific standpoint is clear: consensus *follows* the establishment of *fact*; it does not verify it. Whenever physical evidence is lacking or incomplete on a matter in the physical world, the subject under discussion is not considered as *fact* but as a *theory*. Had you written about the subject of global climate change 40 years ago and come down on the side of the consensus viewpoint, you would have supported the conclusion that the world was headed for another ice age.

—John A. Clark  
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Because the “scientific community” considers the view against “human-caused” global climate change to be a minority opinion, *The Banner* will not publish it (“Why Play Favorites?”). On the other hand, in the same issue it publishes an article (“How Should We Read the Bible?”) and letters that support those who question the reality of Adam and Eve, even though that remains a minority opinion in the membership of the CRC. If “majority rules” is the standard for publication, *The Banner* should be more consistent. The best standard, of course, is not science or majorities but,

rather, the reliable words of Scripture from beginning to end.

—Michael DuMez  
Oostburg, Wis.

## How Should We Read the Bible?

Regarding Clarence Vos’ article “How Should We Read the Bible?” (November 2011), what a timely gift to the Christian Reformed Church!

This is the Reformed tradition at its best: reading both God’s Word and God’s world without fear. Now I remember why I first came to love the CRC.

—Robert A. Arbogast  
Columbus, Ohio

Vos says that during discussions of the CRC’s Committee on Infallibility, Rev. Louis Praamsma, my father, noted that Abraham Kuyper maintained that “the historiography of the Bible was not that of a camera but more like that of an artist’s brush.”

Vos says that quote was an eye-opener for him, a suggestion that there is more to reality than the camera can capture. . . .

I would like to point out that my father held to a literal view of the Bible and would have been appalled to have his name linked to any suggestion to the contrary. Not only did he believe it important to accept the Genesis creation account as literal truth, he also actively promoted this viewpoint.

—Christine Farenhorst  
Arthur, Ontario

Obviously this is a troubling article and needs much more explanation for certain questions that come up.

One of the key principles in hermeneutics is that the message of the Bible is historical—that it describes what happened to real people who lived in real

places. Are we now saying that principle is no longer true?

It sounds to me in 1 Corinthians 15:22 and 15:45 that Paul believed that Adam was literally the first person and that we all descended from Adam and Eve. Were Paul’s words not inspired?

And what happens to original sin if we now believe that Adam was not the first person God created and that through him we all have imputed original sin? . . .

We better have good, solid biblical answers so we can defend our faith.

—Harry VanMunster  
Holland, Mich.

## Trick or Treat?

The article “Trick or Treat?” (October 2011) left me with a heavy heart. To be advised that I can casually follow pagan customs with indifference, just as many unbelievers are indifferent to the gospel at Christmas, is appalling. Did the author consider, for example, the martyrdom of Perpetua (A.D. 203), who could have saved her life by following a simple act of sacrifice to a pagan god? She was told that she could perform the act without meaning it. Would the author have given Perpetua such counsel before her death? As a Christian, I fail to see how or why I would participate in a feast that celebrates fear and death when Jesus Christ has come to bring us life and life to the full.

—Phyllis Schouten  
Burnaby, British Columbia

# NEWS

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Classes Grand Rapids East, Grand  
Rapids North  
616-558-8166

**Kate Padilla**  
Classes Iakota, Heartland, Northcentral Iowa  
616-834-1476

**Ryan Struyk**  
Classes Grand Rapids South,  
Thornapple Valley  
616-550-6723

**Amy Toornstra**  
Classes Columbia, Pacific Northwest  
503-399-9165

**Roxanne Van Farowe**  
Classes Illiana, Southeast U.S.  
919-477-2084

**Brenda Visser**  
Classes Eastern Canada, Quinte  
613-924-1792

**Heidi Wicker**  
Classes California South, Central California,  
Greater L.A.,  
209-599-3799

**Carolyn Koster Yost**  
Classes Georgetown, Grandville  
616-516-9175

**Louis Tamminga**  
In Memoriam articles  
616-949-4539

If your region is not listed here, please contact the news editor.

## Keith and Kristyn Getty Perform in Illinois Church

**M**ore than 500 people attended a concert and night of worship Oct. 20 with modern hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty at Faith Christian Reformed Church, Elmhurst, Ill.

Keith Getty, a Northern Ireland composer, co-wrote "In Christ Alone" along with veteran British songwriter and worship leader Stuart Townend. Many other songs are co-written with his wife, who



Kristyn Getty leads the congregation in singing during an evening of worship at Faith CRC.

also provides lead vocals during their concerts.

"The Gettys' music has theological and biblical depth, his-

torical and liturgical integrity, and it's just amazingly beautiful and singable," said Rev. Greg Schuringa. "Their music is also for the whole church, all the generations, which we really value and appreciate and believe is the biblical ideal for corporate worship."

In an interview before the concert, Keith Getty talked about the role of hymns in people's lives. "When my grandfather was dying, he was able to quote old hymns and passages of Scripture," he said. "What is our generation going to do when they get older? Ninety percent of their songs have a nine-month shelf life."

The Gettys are not unfamiliar with the CRC. A number of their songs are slated for inclusion in the new hymnal, *Lift Up Your Hearts*, being published by Faith Alive Christian Resources for the CRC and the Reformed Church in America. And they have participated twice in the Symposium on Worship at Calvin College.

The Gettys performed well-known favorites but also introduced two Christmas songs into the mix in honor of their newly released album *Joy - An Irish Christmas*. 

—Melissa Holtrop



Keith Getty

## Medenblik Inaugurated as President of Calvin Seminary

**R**ev. Jul Medenblik was inaugurated Oct. 15 as the seventh president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

Medenblik practiced law before entering the ministry in 1995. He spent 16 years leading New Life Christian Reformed Church in New Lenox, Ill., before taking up leadership of the CRC's seminary.

"It is Jesus Christ who we are to follow," Medenblik said in his address. "We are marked by his love, and we are to share that love with others. . . . May our attention turn to Jesus, and may we serve others as he has served us." 

—Gayla R. Postma



Rev. Jul Medenblik: "We are marked by [Christ's] love." 



## Singing into a Starry Vancouver Night

The Christmas candlelight service last year at First Christian Reformed Church of Vancouver, British Columbia, ended on the church's city street as singing filled the night sky.

The service was collaboratively planned with an exodus idea as the theme, said Laura Smit, the church's choir director.

The choir led the worship along with a lively bluegrass band. As the service drew to an end choir members took their lit candles and passed the flame, lighting the candles given to each worshiper.

The choir followed the musicians, who led them all, troubadour style, down the wide front stairway and onto the street as they sang the parting song "Soon and Very Soon."

Gathered into a large circle, worshipers held their candles high as the singing ended with "This Little Light of Mine."

"The neighbors did indeed come out of their houses, and some started dancing along with the music and cheered at the end," said Kurt Monroe, worship planner and musician. "It was a wonderful, unexpected moment."

First CRC plans a similar event for this December.

—Jenny deGroot

## Washington Church Connects with Cupcakes

He's known as "Dan, Dan, the Cupcake Man." Dan is Dan Houston, youth pastor of First Christian Reformed Church in Lynden, Wash, and he delivers cupcakes to the young people of the church on their birthdays. Church members bake or purchase the cupcakes.

He said the purpose for this ministry is to show students that people of First CRC care about them. "It's fun, and everyone wants someone to recognize them on their special day," Houston said.

—Amy Toornstra



Taylor Finnson, a student at Lynden Christian High School, surrounded by friends Anna, Taylor, Eric, and Marshall, receives her birthday cupcakes.

## Ontario Family Receives National Farming Award

Father and son John and Neil Zevenbergen and their wives, Jenny and Debby, were recently honored with a national Master Breeder award for dairy farmers at a ceremony in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The Zevenbergens' farm is located in Owen Sound, Ontario, where they are members of First Christian Reformed Church.

The national award is given by the Holstein Association of Canada.



(L-R) John and Jenny Zevenbergen, Neil and Debby Zevenbergen

Their standing is based on the animals' productivity (yield, quality of milk) and conformation (appearance, health of the animal).

"In what we do, in breeding cattle, this is . . . very prestigious," said Neil Zevenbergen. "It's recognition that you're doing things right."

—Anita Brinkman

## New Jersey Church Reaches Hundreds with Live Nativity

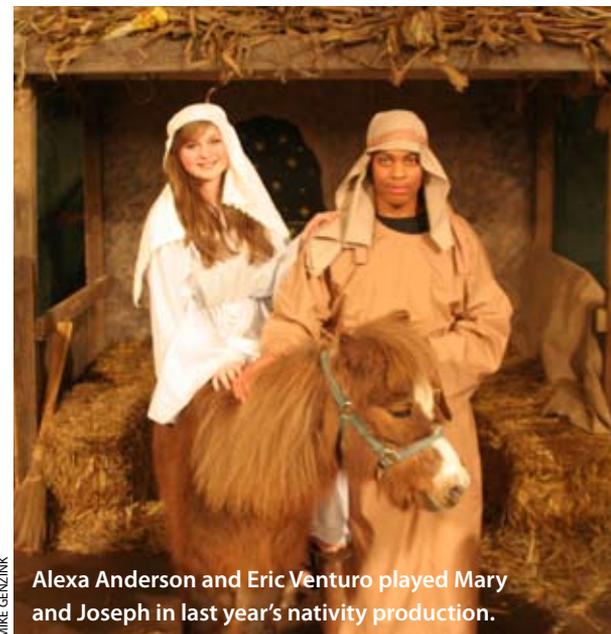
Since 2002, Covenant Christian Reformed Church in North Haledon, N.J., has produced two live nativity services each December, drawing about 600 people each year.

The services include a fictional story, the portrayal of the events of Luke 2, and solos and carols. More than 80 people from the church and its youth programs participate as cast or crew along with a pony, sheep, goats, and chickens from a nearby farm.

Wayne Vriesema designs and helps build the sets. He was instrumental in persuading the church to take on this challenging project back in 2002.

"It's a good way to reach out to the community and invite people who wouldn't otherwise go to church," he said.

—Calvin Hulstein



Alexa Anderson and Eric Venturo played Mary and Joseph in last year's nativity production.



LARRY EDSALL

More than 300 people attend Maranatha CRC's Sunday worship services in the winter.

## Snowbirds of a Feather Worship Together

**T**he largest Christian Reformed congregation in Arizona owns no building, has no full-time staff, and doesn't send delegates to synod.

Yet each Sunday morning, from early December through mid-April, as many as 330 people attend worship services at Maranatha CRC in Mesa, which will celebrate its 30th anniversary this winter.

Technically, Maranatha is a community ministry of Palm

Lane CRC in Scottsdale. In 1981, Palm Lane assigned home missionary Stan Sieberma to lead worship services for wintertime visitors staying in the various mobile home parks located in eastern Mesa, which is at least a half-hour drive from Palm Lane. Sieberma served the Maranatha congregation for 25 years.

Since 2006, Rev. Gary Hutt, who two years earlier retired from New Hope CRC in Spokane, Wash., has been Maranatha's minister. The congrega-

tion, comprising primarily Christian Reformed and Reformed Church of America members from the upper Midwestern and Northwestern states, started electing its own elders in 1990.

Attendance at Maranatha starts each December at around 75 people, swells to more than 300 in February, and then dwindles back to 75 as the snowbirds start to fly home for the summer.

—Larry Edsall

## Hurricane Devastates New Jersey Church

**W**hen Hurricane Irene made landfall on the coast of New Jersey at the end of August, members of Northside Community Christian Reformed Church in Paterson knew there could be water damage, but they were not prepared for the amount of water that flooded the city. Its building filled with 13 feet of water, flooding the entire basement and 3 feet of the main level of the church.

Sewers backed up and mixed with river water, which meant that everything the water touched was contaminated and had to be thrown out. The church lost all its tables and chairs, Bibles, room dividers, kitchen appliances, boilers, and computers.

Outreach programs have been delayed while the church rebuilds. Of immediate concern is the loss of the church's two boilers, with cold weather settling in.

"We thank God for the donations that have come in, but much more is needed. We ask that you please keep our church in your prayers, as this is a trying time for us," said Rev. Sheila Holmes, pastor of Northside Community. "We have a small congregation, and although we are all pitching in, this is a hard situation to recover from. We know that God is able, and with him by our side we will make it through this disaster a stronger church."

—Tonya Brown

Everything from two levels of Northside Community CRC had to be thrown out following Hurricane Irene.



## Spanish Ministry Leader in California Deported

**T**he complexity of immigration issues struck home for Church of the Cross Christian Reformed Church in Delhi, Calif., when volunteer Maria Isabel Rodas Moreira walked out of her house and into the arms of Homeland Security a year ago.

She was deported to Honduras without a chance to say goodbye to her children.

Moreira was an active volunteer in the church's Spanish-language ministry. She arrived in the United States at age 19. "In the United States Isabel became a Christian, turned her life around, married, had children, and began serving her church and community," said Rev. Zeke Nelson, the church's pastor.

Moreira tried to straighten out her immigration documentation but twice was defrauded by lawyers who took her money and disappeared. One lawyer also failed to tell Moreira of an upcoming court date, which resulted in the deportation order.

Her absence is keenly felt by the entire congregation. Moreira was instrumental in a women's group and a monthly Spanish worship service. Nelson and many others have written letters, petitioned government agencies, supported Moreira in Honduras, and prayed. Moreira's current lawyer is filing a motion to reopen her case, and it is hoped she might be able to return to the U.S. while the case is processed.

—Heidi Wicker



Maria Moreira and her family remain separated after her deportation.

## CRC Task Force on Structure Seeks Input

The task force studying the Christian Reformed Church's administrative structure and culture is seeking input from across the denomination.

To do that, it has put up a web page on The Network, asking for input in four areas:

- Comments and suggestions regarding the current denominational governance structure
- Comments and suggestions about the current culture within the structure
- Comments and suggestions about the leadership within the structure
- Additional comments or suggestions for the task force.

The deadline for posting comments at [network.crcna.org/structure-culture](http://network.crcna.org/structure-culture) or emailing the Task Force Reviewing Structure and Culture is Nov. 30.

—Gayla R. Postma

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

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. William Versteeg

1955-2011

Rev. William Versteeg, age 55, a humble and scholarly pastor of unyielding faith and abounding love, died from bile duct cancer Jan. 28, 2011, ending his 25 years of ministry all too soon.

Versteeg earned a degree in electronic engineering but subsequently trained at Calvin Theological Seminary for the ministry.

Versteeg served congregations in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. He also completed graduate studies at Trinity Western University and was awarded a Doctor of Ministry degree posthumously.

Those who had the privilege of being Versteeg's parishioners remember him for his patience, humor, and scholarship.

He traveled for missions to Mexico, Haiti, and Liberia, where, as an adviser to Lifewater, his technical skills proved extremely helpful in well drilling.

Throughout his life he was deeply devoted to his family. He was also a fine guitar player and loved snorkeling and long-distance hiking.

Versteeg is survived by his wife, Judy, four children and their spouses, and one grandson.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Further information on recently deceased ministers is available each year in the Christian Reformed Church's annual Yearbook.



CAROLYN KOSTER YOST

Culver's restaurant employee Jon Elders, 18, left, and owner Mavis Byers, center, serve ice cream to Georgetown Township trustee Rev. Richard VanderKlok at an Alive Ministries open house.

## Alive Ministries Makes Business Its Business

Alive Ministries is making business its business.

The new Christian Reformed church plant is located in the commercial district of Jenison, Mich., and is part of the Grandville/Jenison Chamber of Commerce in order to align with business operators.

Alive's pastor, Rev. Terry Scholten, said, "We can collaborate to discern needs in the community and [learn] how businesses and nonprofits can meet those needs."

Alive and the Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a forum for businesses, schools, churches, and non-profit agencies to discuss community needs, resources, and volunteers.

—Carolyn Koster Yost

## Michigan Congregation Helps Tenor Phenom Study at Calvin College

Tantelinaiina Fitahiana (Fitah) Rasendrasahina, of Madagascar, is studying vocal performance at Calvin College with the help of Woodlawn Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Joel Navarro, a professor of music at Calvin, said, "Once in a hundred years a voice like this comes to Calvin."

Rasendrasahina hopes to compete, perform, teach, and conduct, returning home periodically.

"Many young people [in Madagascar] are making music, but lack the resources and aca-

demics," he said. He would like developing their God-given gifts." —Noah J.K. Kruis



Rasendrasahina in performance

# NEWS

## Iowa Pastor Hosts Spanish-language Radio Program



SCOTT FRANCE

**Rev. Gianni Gracia: "Mostly I hear people talking about the show at the store or along the street."**

**R**ev. Gianni Gracia hosts a weekly radio program called "Parabolas para Hoy" ("Parables for Today"), which reaches about 5,000 listeners in Sioux County, Iowa.

Gracia is pastor of Amistad Cristiana, a Spanish-speaking Christian Reformed church in Sioux Center, Iowa.

Gracia tells stories of everyday life that promote the values of the community. He calls it "relational evangelism."

The program is well-received. "I receive some e-mails, but mostly I hear people talking about the show at the store or along the street," he said.

Gracia has noticed a direct link between his program and the growth of Amistad Cristiana.

"Many people come to the church via the program," he noted. "We've got three or four families right now [who came because of it]"

—Kate Padilla



## Michigan Church Hosts End-of-Life Seminar

**O**ne year ago Christine Tooker, a 52-year-old single mother of three, was diagnosed with a rare terminal cancer. When she saw an announcement in her church's bulletin for a seminar titled "Meaningful Preparation for End of Life," she

**Attendees at the end-of-life seminar listen intently.**

signed up right away and brought along her sister.

"I was very interested in any information to make this planning easier for me," said Tooker.

Tooker attends Covenant Life Christian Reformed Church in Grand Haven, Mich.

The Oct. 13 seminar included presenters from a funeral home, hospice, and an attorney from Barnabas Foundation. Topics ranged from wills, trusts, power of attorneys, and history of the hospice movement to the process of dying, patient advocates, and funeral costs and planning.

"Our goal is to help people have their affairs in order by having some discussions with the family ahead of time," said Duane Smith, pastoral care assistant for the church. "When you are under stress is not the time to make these decisions."

—Daina Kraai

## Evangelical Fellowship Defends Religious Speech in Canada

**T**he Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) has intervener status in a case before the Supreme Court of Canada regarding religious speech. The Christian Reformed Church in Canada is a member of EFC.

The Whatcott Religious Speech case began when William Whatcott distributed flyers in two Saskatchewan cities that were vehement in tone and language against homosexuality.

Complaints were filed with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, which said the flyers contravene the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code and promote hatred.

The hearing at the Supreme Court is the result of multiple appeals.

"While we don't necessarily condone the language Mr. Whatcott used, we do firmly believe that every Canadian should be and feel at liberty to share their beliefs and participate in the democratic process from a faith-inspired perspective," said Don Hutchinson, vice president and legal counsel for EFC. "To shut out the expression and beliefs of one perspective is to dictate who can and who cannot participate in peaceful public policy dialogue."

Rev. Bruce Adema, director of Canadian Ministries for the CRC, agreed with Hutchinson. "We are really glad the EFC is speaking for us and others in the evangelical community in this case, but this is not based on our own deep analysis of the relevant issues. We have to be careful to protect that right even if we don't agree with what was said."

—Rachel deKoning Kraay

## Harvest for Hunger a Win that Counts

**W**hen farmers near Monkton, Ontario, brought together 120 combines to harvest 160 acres of soybeans, they fell shy of the harvesting speed record by 35 seconds. But they scored a win that mattered most: raising \$1 million to combat hunger.

The Harvest for Hunger was organized by five Christian Reformed farmers to raise awareness and funds for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

They harvested the 160 acres of soybeans in 11 min-



**Farmers drove 120 combines to harvest 160 acres in just under 12 minutes.**

utes and 43 seconds. Almost 4,000 spectators and 300 volunteers turned out for the mammoth event.

Aided by strong community support—including donations of time, land, seed, fertilizer, and the auction sale of the soybeans—they raised \$250,000, which will be matched 4:1 by the Canadian International Development Agency.

John Katerberg, from Palmerston CRC, participated

in the harvest. "The spectacle of this event isn't something you'll see again in my lifetime," he said.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee is one of 15 member agencies of CFGB and will receive a portion of the funds for its East Africa drought response.

—Anita Brinkman



**Signing the youth ministry certificate agreement, from left: Syd Hielema, Jeffrey Kruithoff, and Marcel deRegt. Witnessing the signing are Rachel Jenecek, Richard Wikkerink, Mark Knetsch, Rick Roeda, Grace-Emma Van Til, and Dina Zomer.**

## Redeemer University Partners with Youth Unlimited

**R**edeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, is now offering a certificate program specifically for church youth workers. The program will allow those already involved in youth ministry an opportunity to develop professional skills through research and hands-on work.

Designed to be completed over three summers, the program is offered in partnership with Youth Unlimited.

Marcel deRegt, leadership development director of Youth Unlimited, said he "saw a need to raise the bar so that youth ministry is not perceived as a stepping-stone to some other form of ministry, but as one's call to ministry." He is pleased that there is now a youth-worker training program from a Reformed perspective.

—Brenda Visser

## Highlights from Fall Classis Meetings

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

Several people were **welcomed into ministry** in the Christian Reformed Church, including seminary graduates Jason De Vries, Adam Eisenga, Rodolfo Galindo, Philip Landers, Raidel Leon Martinez, John Moelker, Adam Nordyke, Martin Sisneroz, Matthew VandenHeuvel, Bernhard VanderVlis, Ashley Van Dragt, Geoff Van Dragt, Mark Van Dyke, Terrence Visser, and Brian Willats.

**Transferred in from other denominations** were Rev. Phil Covert, Rev. YoungYoul Ki, Rev. SeongHwan Kim, Rev. Yun Jin Kim, Rev. Jung Suh, and Rev. SeongChuil Youn.

Rev. Doug Hunderman was **readmitted** to ministry. Rev. Phil Apol was **loaned** to another denomination.

Revs. Bob Kim, Daryl Meijer, Karen Norris, Philip Rose, and Gerry Van Dam were **released from their congregations**.

Simon Kim, Woo Chun Lee, Byung Nam Moon, Lucas Rodenhouse, Naji Umran, Timothy Van Zalen, Michael Veenema, and Gene Vis were **released from CRC ministry**.

**New ministries** were started or approved in Wyckoff, N.J., Los Angeles, and Manhattan (New York City). Bridge Community CRC in Frankfort, Ill., was **closed**.

Three classes held discussions on **restorative justice**. Two classes discussed **ministry with aboriginal people**.

Two classes held discussions on the **Belhar Confession**, and two classes sent overtures (requests) that the Belhar be adopted as a testimony, not as a fourth confession. Classis Alberta South/Saskatchewan overtured Synod 2012 to **not adopt the Belhar**.

Classis Eastern Canada sent an overture to Synod 2012, requesting that it actively tackle the use of **pornography** in our churches.

—Banner news correspondents

ANITA JOLDERSMA



## Ontario Church Teaches Homemaking for Moms

**H**ome with a Heart, a 12-week course offered twice yearly by Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario, helps moms learn tips on budgeting, laundry, parenting, cooking, running a home business, and more.

"I never had a mother, so I never had a role model to teach me these things," said Liz, a participant. "We are all from different cultures and backgrounds, but we are learning that we are not so different from each other."

Anita Joldersma teaches the class. "We don't want the women to feel like outreach targets," she said. "We want to help them develop a community and to provide them with the resources they need."

Missy, a single mom from Hamilton, said, "This feels like family. This experience has been like me meeting God." 

**Missy, Liz, and Zeyni learn knitting skills from Ann Zandberg at a course for moms offered by Immanuel CRC.**

—Monica de Regt

## Renewing a Church Renews Denver Pastor



**W**hat happens when a church declining in numbers calls a minister with declining health? In the case of Hillcrest Christian Reformed Church in Denver, it means hope and renewal.

Rev. Tom Draayer began at Hillcrest in 2010, serving in a reduced capacity because of limitations from Parkinson's disease.

Draayer knew he was coming to a church in decline, with services drawing about 25 attendees. "I went there knowing that the

**"Bridge Builders" from Hillcrest CRC and the Chinese congregation that meets in Hillcrest's building.**

possibility of closing the ministry was a very viable option," he said.

Draayer quickly sensed a change in the congregation, in part due to the growing relationship with a Chinese ministry that meets in its building. "There seemed to be some kind of renewed hope. [The congregation] kept coming back to the question 'Does the Lord have a purpose for us that's different than what we've served in the past? Is he opening up a new door?'"

With a Sustaining Congregational Excellence denominational grant, the church started exploring how a traditional CRC congregation and a Chinese church could most effectively minister together. They titled the project "Bridge Builders." The Chinese congregation is now considering joining the CRC.

Attendance at Hillcrest has risen to between 40 to 50 people on a Sunday.

And Draayer is experiencing some renewal of his own. "I'm having the time of my life!" he said.

—Sarah Boonstra

## CRC Man First Protestant Chaplain at Catholic University

**M**ichael Moore is the first-ever Protestant chaplain at Loyola University Chicago, a campus with an undergraduate population of just under 10,000.

"There is no Catholic-Protestant tension," Moore said. "They acknowledge that the ministry is significant and needed."

Moore leads a Wednesday-night worship and Bible study, along with worship on Sunday nights, among his other responsibilities as a campus chaplain.

"I think it's important that students are worshipping on campus because if they're not, church becomes something that you outsource—you leave campus to worship and come back to do school work," Moore said.

Moore's position was initially funded by a Christian Reformed Home Missions grant. He is now funded by Classes Northern Illinois and Chicago South (regional groups of churches), Home Missions, and Loyola. 



**Michael Moore (back row, second from right) poses with several students who took part in Chicago Winter Immersion, during which students live in different parts of Chicago, visit local churches, and work on service projects.**

—Melissa Holtrop

## Why I Believe in Santa Claus

NEXT



My faith in Jesus seems just as bizarre as anything having to do with the Santa story.

**HI. MY NAME IS SAM.** I'm 33 years old . . . and I believe in Santa Claus.

My brother and I discovered at a young age that my parents were the ones who “squeezed their way down our chimney” after we found a plethora of gifts hidden in the back of our 1971 blue Dodge van parked in the garage. It seemed as though “Santa” had arrived three weeks early and forgotten to lock the van doors.

As I said, I'm 33 years old, and for the first time in my life I'm starting to believe in Santa. Well, let me put it this way: I'm open to the possibility that Santa could exist. What is becoming increasingly important to me is not whether he actually exists, but the openness, imagination, willingness, and playful curiosity needed to believe in Santa.

I'm starting to think that a similar openness, imagination, and willingness help me to believe in Jesus.

“But Jesus really lives!” you might protest. “And Santa is just made up—at least the version most of us know.” That's true. But when I think about it, my faith in Jesus seems just as bizarre as anything having to do with the Santa story.

Think about it: flying reindeer, a glowing red nose, a magic workshop, elves, a bottomless bag of toys, and a visit to every home on one night is just as weird as a crowd of 5,000 fed with barely anything, walking on water, money in the mouths of fish, voices from heaven, angel visitations, a virgin birth, a transfiguration, rising from the dead, magically appearing behind closed doors, and mind reading.

Having believed in Jesus for as long as I can remember, it's easy for me to forget what Christianity may look like from the outside. Imagine if you heard the stories of Jesus for the very first time—what would you think?

In a culture that's no longer steeped in the stories of the Bible, it's good for us to remember that when we invite people to believe in Jesus, we are essentially inviting them to believe in an enchanted universe in

stark contrast to the materialistic worldview that says “What you see is all there is.”

Christians postulate that the material is not the whole story. Instead, we assert that reality is infused with mystery, glory, spirit, paradox, truth, and invisible forces. Faith is about helping people cultivate the openness to believe in realities not seen.

One of my seminary professors talked about cultivating certain “capacities.” As we mature, these capacities need to grow and expand. One of the key capacities we can nurture and deepen is our capacity to imagine. In a culture that wants to do our imagining for us—asking us to passively absorb an overabundance of images—we need to be intentional about cultivating a healthy, vibrant imagination.

A healthy, vibrant adult imagination has a childlike capacity to hold the possibility that maybe—just maybe—Santa does exist.

Children seem to have no problem imagining that dragons, fairies, monsters, and unicorns exist. Sometimes it can even be difficult for them when someone “older and wiser” comes along and dismantles their belief in an enchanted universe.

This dismantling sometimes begins when an adult tells a young child for the first time that Santa does not exist. Yes, I admit, some of that needs to happen; we need to move beyond naïve, immature faith. But as we grow in Christ, we also need an expanded capacity to remember, imagine, and believe.

So if a child asks you this Christmas whether Santa exists, with a twinkle in your eyes try responding something like this: “I don't know . . . but he could . . . he very well could.”

Hi, my name is Sam. I'm 33 years old . . . and I believe in Jesus. ■

**Sam Gutierrez** is ministry director to students at the University of British Columbia—Okanagan. He attends the Well Church, a Christian Reformed church plant in Kelowna.

## In the Record

I knew someone once who was very much interested in tracing his lineage back as far as he could. But when he got to the 15th century, he found an ancestor lurking in the family tree who embarrassed him. He stopped his search right there and closed the file. You never know what or whom you might find when you dig deeply enough into the record.

Advent is a time of preparation. And one good way of preparing again for the coming of Christ is to look into his family tree. The Gospel of Matthew provides us with one that goes all the way back to Abraham.

It's amazing what we find when we look closely. If you start reading the genealogy of Jesus aloud and hope to be inspired, you will probably be disappointed. You may find quite soon that reading it is not only not interesting but quite trying. Biblical Hebrew is certainly not our first tongue, and some of those names are humdingers! *Amminadab, Jehoshaphat, Jeconiah, Zerubbabel*—not exactly the stuff inspiration is made of.

So stop hearing it and just look at it, lying there on the page. You can quite readily see that the first 17 verses are laid out in three distinct paragraphs. And if you count the names without trying to pronounce them, you'll find 14 in each paragraph. That's a design meant to help you and me remember.

The first paragraph covers a time of greatness, of growth, of hope and vision. The second a time of demise, of fall and shame, of disaster and the effects of human sin. And the third paragraph takes us from slavery to liberation, from imprisonment to release, from darkness to light, all the way to Jesus.

It's the story of creation, fall, and redemption. It's Jesus' story. It's our story.

No doubt there were more than 14 generations in each of those eras. But they are summarized into precisely 14 because 14 is the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in the name *David*, the one to whom God made the solemn promise to



keep his descendant on the throne forever. Fourteen is a numerical way of whispering “faithfulness” at each turn in the story, reminding us that what God says, God does.

There is a feature in this genealogy that would not have appeared in any other genealogy of the day. And it appears five times in this one: the names of women. Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary.

These are not just any women; they are women with sad chapters in their stories. Not only is gender no longer a qualification or disqualification, behavior is not a qualification either. This is God's way of saying boldly and emphatically that *no one* is excluded on the basis of who she is or what he has

done. This family tree drips with grace, and the same grace falls on you and me too.

Most of the names in this “record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ” are completely unknown. There is even a message in that. *We* may not know them. *We* may have lost track of them. But they are known to God, loved by him, and kept for him. God's mercy is everywhere in this family tree.

Take the time to look at this tree during Advent this year. It's not just a genealogy. It's not even just Jesus' genealogy. It's yours and mine! And it speaks of God's faithfulness and reliability. It speaks of God's grace. It speaks of God's mercy. It speaks of God's Son and our Savior.

We call it a family tree. But the opening words of Matthew point to another tree not mentioned until near the end of this gospel. This tree looms, for Jesus at least, from the opening few words in the story. The one whose “tree” we see in chapter 1 is heading already to the other tree in chapter 27. And that's ultimately why the “tree” in chapter 1 is yours and mine—because the tree in chapter 27 was his.

It's amazing what you can find when you look in the record. ■

“This family tree drips with grace.”



Rev. Joel Boot is interim executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

## Humanizing Church Order and Family Devotions

Faith Alive Christian Resources, the publishing arm of the Christian Reformed Church and publishing partner of the Reformed Church in America, has released two new resources: a highly readable, accessible book on Church Order and a game-in-a-box to make family devotions more enjoyable.



In the *Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary*, Henry De Moor breathes life into a complex subject, talking about each of the 86 articles in the CRC's Church Order and including examples of frequently asked questions.

Here's a sample: "Give me a straight answer that's brief and clear: May a consistory ever ask a member to resign, especially in cases where he or she is simply not responsive to its admonitions and further pastoral actions are judged to be fruitless?"

The former Calvin Theological Seminary professor responds clearly: "No."

De Moor explains how and why the CRC works and addresses the offices of the church, the assemblies of the church, the task and activities of the church, and the admonition and discipline of the church.

*God's Big Story* cards are designed for families. This game-in-a-box is also a component of Faith Alive's recently released *Dwell* Sunday school curriculum.

Your family devotions could look like this: David picks a card. Dad

reads the Scripture passage on the card—the story of God creating night and day (Gen. 1:1-5). Then Abby rolls the color-coded dice and lands on "purple." David reads the "purple" activity on the card: "How many seven-word sentences can you put together to retell this story?" (For example: "There was only God and nothing else.")

God's Big Story activities are geared for kids ages 5 through fifth grade, but can be adapted for all ages. The story cards can also be used by homeschoolers, Christian day schools, and in other intergenerational settings.

For more information or to order, visit [FaithAliveResources.org](http://FaithAliveResources.org) or call 1-800-333-8300. ■

—Sandy Swartzentruber,  
*Faith Alive Christian Resources*



## Reclaiming Hungary for Christ

When Frank and Aria Sawyer arrived in Hungary 20 years ago to teach at Sárospatak Reformed Theological Academy, church growth had halted during the country's 40 years under Communist rule.

The academy had closed, pastors and church members were aging, and home Bible studies and outreach programs were forbidden. Whole generations had grown up knowing little about Christ.

Christian Reformed World Missions sent the Sawyers to Sárospatak to help train new church leaders and teachers.

Over time, the academy began adding programs. Many young people became pastors. Churches resumed outreach ministries. Seminary students became involved in youth camps and music ministries.

The academy offers courses in four over-all areas: cultural programs, church music, diaconal work, and outreach to the Roma people of Hungary.

The school's Christian Events Organization track, for instance, teaches students how to host evangelistic-based events in Hungarian villages where historical and cultural programs, music and folk dance groups, and other activities are held to attract tourists and draw the community together.

Since a new law requires people coordinating civic events to have a diploma in "events organizing," village pastors and their spouses trained in this area help lead these events.

"The last 20 years have brought endless opportunities for Christian outreach in society, which was forbidden before—television, radio, youth camps, and so forth," Frank Sawyer says.

Having lived through oppression, he said, people show "a curious but often worthy blend of old values and new approaches, solid memories and great hopes." ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort, *Christian Reformed World Missions*

## Mapping Trees at Calvin

Calvin College biology and geography students completed a tree inventory this fall and launched an online map with details on the size, species, location, and age of more than 3,500 trees on the west side of the campus in Grand Rapids, Mich.

“As we start thinking about a more sustainable campus and trying to become carbon neutral, it seemed to make sense that we needed to document the trees on campus,” said Dave Warners, a Calvin College biology professor who began the project in 2010 with help from geography professor Jason VanHorn.

The inventory shows the number of trees (3,516), number of species (112), number of landscaped compared to natural trees (1,138/2,378), and each



A Calvin College student takes part in the tree survey.

type of tree. Norway Spruce is the most common (305).

Students roamed the campus with meter sticks, notebooks, and GPS devices, documenting attributes of every tree at least 5 inches in diameter.

VanHorn's students developed a data dictionary on the college's hand-held GPS receivers. Warners' students then entered the data for all of Calvin's trees on that part of campus.

Under Warners' direction, junior geography major Owen Selles incorporated the data into an online map. Trees can be searched by species, diameter, height, health, and a number of other categories.

“We're called to be stewards, and the first step of being serious stewards is knowing what it is you're stewarding,” said Selles. “That's what makes this map worthwhile.” ■

—Lynn Rosendale,  
Calvin College

## I'm a Christian—Now What?

After Christmas break, Josh (not his real name) knocked on the office door of Mike Wagenman, campus pastor at the University of Western Ontario. Wagenman asked what brought Josh to his office.

Josh said he'd had a “lightning bolt” experience that made Jesus Christ someone he could no longer ignore. Because he didn't know any Christians, he wanted direction on what to do next.

Wagenman soon met with Josh weekly to read Scripture, pray, and answer his questions. He explained the next steps for Josh's spiritual growth and connected him with a local church and other Christian students.

Nine months later, Josh says he can see how faith relates to his life, even academics.

Wagenman, a campus minister for seven years, recently helped establish the Kuyper Centre for Emerging Scholars. Rooted in Reformation theology, it replaces the youth ministry model of campus ministry Wagenman used previously.

The center ([kuypercentre.ca](http://kuypercentre.ca)) offers informal activities to full-year courses of study to help students integrate Christian faith in their studies.

Through it, Wagenman wants students to see campus ministry as the church engaged in mission, as the church serving the university, and their years as students as integral to Christian discipleship.

Wagenman and the Western Ontario campus ministry also host events such as a midweek student fellowship, a faculty/grad student book club, early morning devotional gatherings, a growing international student group, and a vocational discernment conversation group, as well as visits to other campuses.

Other Christian Reformed Church Home Missions campus ministers offer similar, innovative campus programs.

Wagenman said he wants students to follow Christ with heart, soul, and mind on campus and as they become leaders in the church and the wider culture. ■

—Laura Posthumus, Christian Reformed Home Missions



Pastor Mike Wagenman

## CTS Creates Legacy Society

In conjunction with Rev. Jul Medenblik's inauguration as the seventh president of Calvin Theological Seminary, the seminary is launching its first President's Legacy Society.

The society will be an honorary group of faithful people dedicated to bearing “fruit that will last” for future generations by including CTS in their wills or estate plans.

The society comes from the idea that each president of CTS has worked to ensure that churches have trained pastors and leaders to preach and teach God's Word.

“By the grace of God, I look forward to building on the foundation others have laid in strengthening [the seminary's] ability to produce great preachers and great leaders who serve the church, which serves God's mission in this world,” says Medenblik.

To learn more about the President's Legacy Society, call 616.957.6039, or email [bknoor@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:bknoor@calvinseminary.edu). ■

—Carolyn De Neut, Calvin Theological Seminary

## Families on Fire

If you wrestle occasionally with the messiness of living as a family, you might want to check out the new “Family Fire” Facebook page and website launched by ReFrame Media, the English outreach of Back to God Ministries International.

“Our goal is to encourage families to see the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, stoking the Spirit’s flame at home,” says Steven and Deb Koster, co-leaders of Family Fire.

“Family Fire points people to ways of enriching their family lives, growing spiritually, to help them see God at work in their family,” says Steven.

Deb adds, “Families . . . are a picture of God’s forgiveness. You never come to a place in your marriage where you stop growing. We are fellow strugglers. We just share what we are learning.”

“Facebook is a popular and natural place for conversation



and mutual encouragement,” Steven explains. “People share a question or prayer request, and others chime in with suggestions, resources, or promises to pray.”

They also point visitors to the website, which includes resources on many family topics: encouragement, devotionals, articles, and book reviews.

Since Family Fire began, the ministry’s Facebook page and website have attracted hundreds of fans and visitors from at least 18 countries, including Kenya, the Philippines, and Saudi Arabia.

One parent shared her worry about text messages she had seen on her son’s phone. Several people stepped in with helpful information and responses. ■

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

## Intergenerational Ministry Starts

Attending a Sustaining Congregational Excellence (SCE) learning event started ministry leaders from Overisel Christian Reformed Church, near Zeeland, Mich., dreaming about how to foster health in their congregation.

The result is an intergenerational ministry project being funded by an SCE health and renewal grant.

Overisel was looking for a creative way to get folks from

different generations to connect on a deeper level.

In August individuals from all age groups headed to Chicago for a few days of service to kick off the intergenerational ministry. They worked hard, and relationships blossomed. Rev. Steve Mulder reported, “We’re having an absolutely outstanding service trip! Young and old are working together, there is harmony, and we’re learning more about each other.”

## CRC Couple in Egypt at Crucial Time

Anne Zaki and her husband, Naji Umran, have begun an innovative approach to ministry in the culturally rich, politically dynamic country of Egypt.

Zaki and her husband came to the United States in 2002 to attend Calvin Theological Seminary. Anne had graduated from Calvin College. After graduation from CTS, they served Christian Reformed churches in Grand Rapids, Mich., and in British Columbia.

Anne and Naji have returned to Egypt at a crucial moment.

“There is an urgency to us going back, especially after the overthrow of the Mubarak government,” said Zaki. Protesters asking for more freedom earlier this year forced Hosni Mubarak, Egypt’s president, to end his 30-year rule. “Elections will be coming up and, for the first time in a long time, Christians could have a voice in the government.”

Zaki will teach at a seminary and work with the Christian community, while Naji Umran, who is Canadian, begins a ministry creating dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

“We will be speaking about Reformed culture, which teaches us to be very active agents for change in the world. That is a beneficial learning to take with us,” Zaki says.

Peter VanderMeulen, director of the CRC’s Office of Social Justice, says he is encouraged by the type of work Zaki and Umran will be doing in the heart of a country that experiences all the tensions and opportunities that exist for building relationships between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East.

“Anne is a wonderful, brilliant, and energetic person of faith,” VanderMeulen says. “We are very fortunate that she and her husband will be working right there on the ground.” ■

—Chris Meehan, *CRC Communications*



Working, playing, and dreaming together: intergenerational members of Overisel CRC

Back in Overisel, the church formed more than 20 intergenerational groups to nurture relationships. The groups meet for supper and join in an activity and Bible study.

Since 2007, SCE has awarded 140 health and renewal grants to smaller congregations. Each congregation custom-designed a project for its particular setting. ■

—Lis VanHarten, *Sustaining Congregational Excellence*

BY MEG JENISTA



# The Ways We Tell The Story

**O**N AN EVENING IN EARLY SEPTEMBER, I called my 6-year-old niece Sophia and asked her to tell me a story. Specifically, I asked her to tell me the story of Baby Jesus.

After a moment's pause to gather her thoughts—which, given that school had just started, leaves were still green and attached to trees, and she probably hadn't thought much about this particular story for the past nine months, is only fair—she began:

“Mary is the mom. Joseph is the dad. Jesus was the baby and he loves us. And there is an angel on the top [of her nativity set] that sings, ‘We love you, LORD Jesus, and ask you to stay close by us forever and love us, we pray. Bless all the dear children in your tender care and bring them to heaven to live with you there.’”

Already at age 6, Sophia knows the story of Baby Jesus, or at least the main characters. Already at 6, Sophia can tell this story as her own. She knows that Jesus loves her. (Her mother assures me that, at the height of the Christmas season, she knows that Jesus is God too.) She knows that Jesus wants to bless the children and that being close to Jesus is a good and special thing.

In a child's retelling, the absences and insertions may be more noticeable, but if we're honest, each of us approaches this story as we do every other story: in a way that includes and excludes according to our abilities, preferences, and intentions.

The gospel writers are no different in this regard. Mark, in writing the earliest account of events, is anxious to get to the heart of the matter and skips over the birth narratives altogether. John, who wrote significantly later, was more interested in providing perspective and interpretation than factual narrative. It is mostly, then, to Matthew and Luke that we turn for our understanding of Jesus' birth story.

Most church pageants rely on narrative slices from each gospel to make up the whole Christmas pie. The effect is familiar, comprehensive, and certainly not wrong. But something gets lost in this translation.

We don't often hear Matthew tell the story as his own. We don't often honor Luke by letting him tell the story in his unique way. I wonder what we would hear with fresh clarity if we allowed Luke the whole pageant spotlight for a moment and then afforded Matthew the same opportunity?

## Spotlight on Luke

Dr. Luke begins his account with his credentials, having “carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account.”

First, the angel appears to Zechariah, and Elizabeth conceives a child. Then the same angel (who is named in both accounts) announces to Mary that she is to bear the Christ-child. Mary and Elizabeth come together to share their pregnancy stories. Mary sings and John the Baptist is born. Zechariah sings and Jesus is born.

It is because of Luke that we know Jesus was born in the days of Caesar Augustus, that Joseph and Mary traveled to the little town of Bethlehem to be counted in the census, and that the baby was tucked away in a manger. According to Luke, shepherds watched their flocks by night and angels were heard on high.

Finally, in Luke's account, the baby is presented at the temple to fulfill the visions of faithful Simeon and Anna and so that Joseph and Mary do everything required by the Law of the Lord before retiring to Nazareth, where Jesus “grew and became strong,” being “filled with wisdom and the grace of God.” Careful and orderly indeed, Dr. Luke!

Why this voice? Beyond the desire to make a careful and orderly report, Luke also has a particular story to tell. Luke »

always writes with an eye toward the outer edges of the crowd. He writes for Gentile hearers, those people who wouldn't have been allowed anywhere near the temple.

Luke cares deeply and passionately about the marginalized, the excluded, the “less-thans” of society—the people who wonder whether this magnificent and grand story could really be for them. For their sake, Luke makes several specific interpretive choices:

- Angels feature prominently in Luke's account. These messengers of heaven demonstrate the coming nearness of God-with-us.
- The experience of women is emphasized in Luke's account. For all we know from Matthew, Mary might have sneezed violently and out popped Baby Jesus, perfectly pink and swaddled in purple robes in anticipation of the Magi's visit. Luke the doctor knew that a woman's labor requires mention in order to emphasize again the nearness, the flesh-and-blood reality of God-with-us.
- Luke draws in the shepherds' story—ordinary, unspectacular people encountering the extraordinary hosts of heaven. Ordinary, unsuspecting people encountering the newborn Savior, Messiah, and Lord. Ordinary, unsuspecting people who continue encountering the world with a new story.
- Luke wrote after the church, The Way of the Christ-followers, had formally split from Judaism. His inclusion of the temple tableau reminds us that there was and always must be a continuity between the forward-looking faithfulness of Anna and Simeon and faithfulness in the shadow of the manger, the cross, and the empty tomb.

Luke 19:10 is widely credited as Luke's thesis statement: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Here, as throughout Luke's storytelling, the inclusion of the outsider and the outcast draws marginalized people toward the center of the gospel.

The story of the Son of Man born of a woman's labor pains, heralded by angels, and praised by ordinary shepherds is told by Luke. The spotlight shines on the awesome presence, immanence, and “with-us” nature of God in Jesus Christ.

Luke withholds his final argument for Jesus' baptism account. After the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, “You are my Son,” Luke includes a genealogy that traces Jesus' Sonship: “the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.”

Luke wants to make sure we know that this Baby Jesus is one of us. This Baby Jesus is for us. This Baby Jesus is God with us.

### Spotlight on Matthew

Matthew begins where Luke trails off—with the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Included within we find Matthew's thesis statement,

that this is the story of “Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Hold him to it—every detail included or excluded from this point on speaks to verifying this claim.

The genealogical claims follow Joseph's family back to King David and Father Abraham. Immediately following, the birth narrative of Jesus begins, primarily focused on Joseph's decision-making in the shadow of Mary's improbable pregnancy.

An unnamed angel appears and tells Joseph what he ought to do. He links Joseph's experience with Old Testament prophecy of the future Messiah's virgin birth. Next thing we know, the “kings of Orient” are bearing gifts and traveling far. They enter Herod's kingdom and ask his permission to search for “the one who has been born king of the Jews.”

Having seen and worshiped Jesus, the Magi return home, Joseph and Mary flee in exile, and King Herod lets the blood of the innocents flow in Bethlehem's streets.

Why this voice? Matthew has a claim to defend—that this child is, in fact, the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. This is Matthew's particular story to tell. While Luke looks toward the outskirts of the crowd, Matthew is concerned that those closest to the story not miss it.

Matthew writes for a Jewish audience, a well-trained and educated one. An audience whose expectation of this Messiah has been built up generation upon generation and who needs irrefutable, incontrovertible proof that this story, this man, this salvation is what they had been waiting for their whole lives.

So for this audience Matthew chooses to include the following:

- Rather than trace his lineage all the way to Adam, Matthew is content to let Jesus' heritage rest with David and Abraham. Powerful King David and covenant father Abraham are the necessary predecessors of this child who is the long-expected Messiah, the one who reigns as King and fulfills God's covenant promises to God's people.
- The prominence of the Magi in Matthew's telling is intentional—highlighting again the royal power and authority imbued in this small child. Indeed, the Kings of the East owe a state visit to this newborn “king of the Jews.” The gold, frankincense, and myrrh they bring highlight the honor and reverence such a king requires.

*“Mary is the mom. Joseph is the dad. Jesus was the baby and he loves us.”*

## What would we hear with fresh clarity if we allowed Luke the whole pageant spotlight for a moment, then afforded Matthew the same opportunity?

- And then there is Herod. We don't hear about Herod much. His part in this story is disturbing. Far better the cherubic Jesus of mangers than this cruel tyrant on the throne. But Herod knows and acts on a truth many of us are inclined to gloss over in this season of merry-making and goodwill to all mortals: this baby has come to subvert the powers of our world.

Here, as throughout Matthew's story-telling, the subversive power of the kingdom of God begs our allegiance. While Luke wants us to embrace the comfort of a God who goes to the greatest lengths to be God-with-us, Matthew acknowledges that this baby, while just as sweet and cuddly as any human infant, is also majestic, mighty, and powerful, demanding of all people a loyalty and faithfulness that leaves no portion of our lives untouched.

We miss that emphasis sometimes, preferring to deck it out with holly, demanding cheer at this most wonderful time of the year. We miss something that even wicked King Herod knew. Anglican priest Joy Carroll Wallis writes: "The birth of this child is a threat to [Herod's] kingdom, a threat to that kind of domination and rule. Jesus challenges the very power structures of this evil age."

Matthew wants to make sure we know that this King Jesus changes everything. This King Jesus changes us. This King Jesus changes the world in order that his kingdom might come and ["his] will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Indeed, his "is the glory and the kingdom and the power forever. Amen" (Matt. 6:10, 13).

### Spotlight on You

Matthew has the spotlight for his story. Luke has the spotlight for his story. Even Mark and John have their take on the centrality of Jesus' birth. It used to be the case that scholars worried themselves over the distinctions between these stories, trying to harmonize details and smooth out the wrinkles developed by apparent disagreements. But we are entering a period of scholarship that is more willing to let each account stand as its own perspective, and I happen to think that's a good thing.

I recently watched the film *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962 and 2004). In this story an ill-tempered, ostracized soldier

named Raymond Shaw comes home a war hero. Each soldier in his unit can tell the story of how Shaw, under enormous and intense pressure, saved his life. But slowly their stories begin to disintegrate, and it isn't their discontinuity that makes them uncomfortable. Rather, it is that each soldier tells the exact same story, down to vocabulary and inflection.

As anyone who's ever witnessed a traffic accident and reported his or her version of events knows: vantage point, perspective, life experience, and intention always influence the story we tell. It isn't malice. It isn't falsehood. It is simply the way human minds and experiences work.

So too, Matthew and Luke share their stories each according to his own vantage point, perspective, life experience, and intention. Each assumes that the historical events of Jesus' life are relevant to the kinds of people we are meant to be today. And that the historical events of Jesus' birth teach us something of what we ought to believe about God.

At Christmas, we have the chance to tell Jesus' story again, not just in sermons or pageants but to neighbors and at company holiday parties. So I am left wondering, *How do I tell Jesus' story?*

Trusting that these long-ago events are still relevant in my neighborhood, with my family and friends, what pieces of Jesus' birth story help me to further understand what God is attempting to birth in my life this Christmas and in the year to come? Do I need the comfort of God-with-us to hold me through trials and deep pain? Do I need the kingdom of God to challenge my own easy assimilation to the values of the kingdoms of greed, materialism, or convenience?

How is Jesus yet to be born in my life, and how can I find words to share THIS story in my own voice? ■



Rev. Meg Jenista is minister of community life and witness for Third Christian Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Mich.

# The Secret Christmas Candy

Did you know that you can use a simple piece of candy to tell people about the love of God?

It's true! This treat can carry a secret message to kids and adults everywhere about the real meaning of Christmas. Can you guess what it is?

Here's a hint: it's red and white and tastes like peppermint.

You're right—it's a candy cane! Find out how you can use this sweet treat to tell others about God's love to us in Jesus this holiday season!

## Did You Know?

We don't know exactly when candy canes were invented or who came up with the idea for them. We *do* know that in 1670, a large church in Germany called the Cologne Cathedral held special Christmas services to honor Jesus' birth. During those special services, children were given white sugar sticks to enjoy.

One day the choir director of the cathedral asked if the people who made the sugar sticks could bend them in the shape of a shepherd's staff to celebrate the Christmas season. These candies became so popular that they were given to children every year during holiday services throughout Europe. People even hung them on their Christmas trees for decoration.

Known today as candy canes, these sweet sticks became popular in North America around the 1800s. At that time, most candy canes were still plain white. But by the 1900s, people started adding small red stripes to the candy canes. No one knows exactly who started making candy canes with stripes, but some people say a candy maker added the stripes to send a secret message to others about Jesus. Let's decode that message!

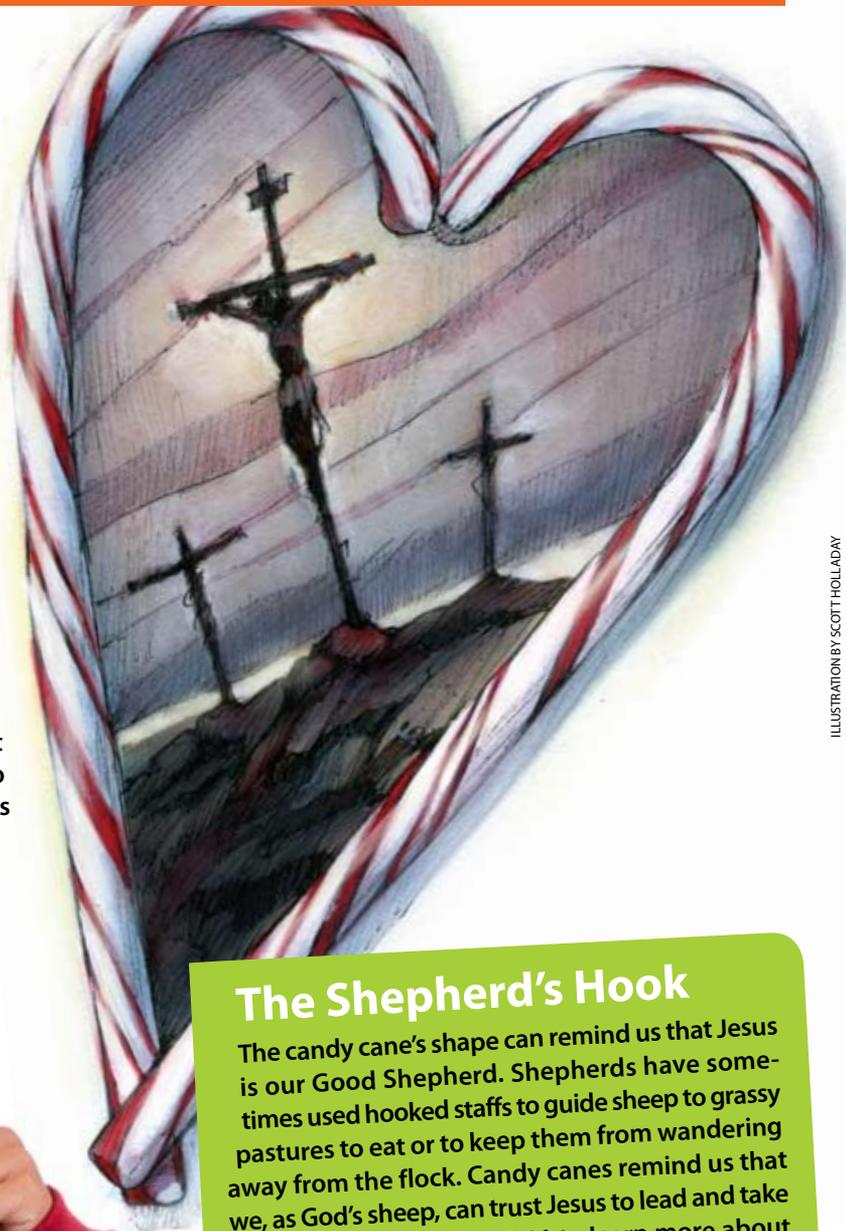


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

## The Shepherd's Hook

The candy cane's shape can remind us that Jesus is our Good Shepherd. Shepherds have sometimes used hooked staffs to guide sheep to grassy pastures to eat or to keep them from wandering away from the flock. Candy canes remind us that we, as God's sheep, can trust Jesus to lead and take care of us. (Read John 10:11 to learn more about how Jesus is your Shepherd!)

If you turn a candy cane upside down, it looks like the letter *J*—another reminder of Jesus!



## Candy Cane Gift Bags



Try making special gift bags to give away to friends and neighbors to spread the news about candy canes and Jesus.

### What you'll need:

- White or brown paper bags
- Construction paper
- Markers
- Glitter, stickers, etc.
- Glue
- Christmas wrapping paper (optional)
- Candy canes
- Other Christmas candies or treats

### What to do:

1. Decorate your paper bag with markers and construction paper, or cut out holiday pictures from Christmas wrapping paper to glue to your bag.
2. Fill the bag with candy canes, Christmas cookies, and other holiday goodies.
3. Make a Christmas card and write down the hidden messages about Jesus in candy canes. Put the card in the bag and staple or tape the bag shut.
4. Give the bag to a friend, neighbor, classmate, or anyone you want to tell about Jesus and wish that person a very Merry CHRISTmas!

## Sweet but Hard

Candy canes are made by heating sugar, water, corn syrup, cream of tartar, and peppermint flavoring at temperatures as high as 265 degrees Fahrenheit (130 Celsius). Once the candy cools a little, it gets pulled, twisted, and bent to form the shape of a shepherd's staff. The candy then cools completely and becomes very hard. The next time you bite into a candy cane, think about how God's love for you is even more rock-solid!

## Design Your Own Candy

If you were a candy maker, how would you design your candy cane to remind people about God's love to us in Jesus? Use markers or colored pencils to create your own secret messages. Then share your design with family members or friends and ask them to guess what your secret messages are!

## Red and White Stripes

Most traditional candy canes have three small red stripes and one large red stripe. The three small stripes can symbolize the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The large red stripe has been said to represent God's love. Together, all the red stripes can symbolize the blood Jesus shed when he died on the cross for the sins of the world. Many Christians use the white portion of the candy cane to represent Jesus' holiness and purity. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we can now be cleansed and forgiven of our sins. What great news!



**Christin Baker** is a full-time stay-at-home mom who also writes for Faith Alive. She is a member of Resurrection Fellowship Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

# BEYOND THE CNN EFFECT



*Making  
generosity  
a lifestyle*

**A**S I WRITE THIS ARTICLE, a famine is raging in East Africa that will affect the lives of more than 13 million people across three countries. Families are walking for days to seek help—arriving at temporary camps exhausted, severely dehydrated, and often having left behind loved ones who succumbed on the road.

Working for an organization that has been on the ground, watching this unfold over the past number of months, we are frustrated by how long it takes for the world to recognize and respond to such an emergency. Lives are at stake, but the funding comes too slowly and often too late.

In our business we speak of the “CNN effect”: unless CNN is reporting on a

crisis, the world doesn’t seem to care. As soon as CNN packs up and leaves, the world also moves on to the next thing.

There exists a small window of opportunity when organizations maximize their funding efforts to carry through the remainder of a crisis. Although we have known of the emerging East Africa crisis for more than six months, it is only now that the “CNN effect” is kicking in. There’s something wrong with this picture!

How is it that we live in a world that requires images reminiscent of the Ethiopian famine of the 1980s before we are willing to respond? Do we really need to see the starving kids before we believe there is a problem?

Approximately 25,000 children die needlessly each day of preventable causes.

Millions more suffer the inhumanity of grinding poverty. Wars, natural disasters, and global forces bind the poor in an abusive vicious cycle of hopelessness and despair. There is no shortage of need.

Couple that with the fact that we are the most connected society ever. We are deluged with mailings asking for help, and when something happens in the world we all know it in seconds. There is no shortage of information. Have we become callous? Uncaring? Tired of responding? What truly motivates us to act?

As Christians we should be outraged by this situation. This is not what God has in mind. He calls us to protect the vulnerable, to feed the hungry, to set the prisoner free, to proclaim his kingdom. We shouldn’t need a “CNN effect” to motivate us; our

motivation should come from the depths of our calling to witness to God's love and compassion in our world. It should be a natural, willing, and joyful response to how God has blessed us.

### The Hole in Our Gospel

In his book *The Hole in Our Gospel*, Richard Stearns argues that Christians have become far too tame and relaxed in our faith. We need a revolution that will shake us up and bring the whole gospel to life.

Would the world take notice, he asks, if “two billion Christians embrace this gospel—the whole gospel—each doing a part by placing his or her piece into the puzzle and completing God's stunning vision of a reclaimed and redeemed world—the Kingdom of God among us?”

Someone else once said, “Sometimes I think I would like to ask why God allows poverty, suffering, and injustice to exist in our world when he could do something about it, but I don't because I'm too afraid God would ask me the same question.” The truth is that we are asked that question daily by the ongoing presence of poverty and injustice in our world. We can and we must do something about it. But what—and how?

Dave Toyce makes the distinction between charity and generosity in his book *The Power of Generosity*. Charity is more calculated. Though it is a compassionate response, it is often based on duty and/or justice. It originates from a position of plenty. All the virtues are important, Toyce says, but generosity is “the lubricant that smooths our daily living in a way that affects every other moral virtue.”

Generosity is not a single act but a way of life; it is “the attitude that puts heart in our obligation to care for others.”

From an early age the Church taught me to care for the poor, to fight for jus-

tice, and to give regularly. It taught me to be a good steward of what God has blessed me with. It taught me to be charitable.

We in the Christian Reformed Church are known for being extremely charitable—just count the dollars raised by our small denomination when an earthquake hits somewhere in the world. But is our charity lubricated with the power of generosity? Has that power become an integral part of our fabric and being?

### We Can Relate

Poverty at its root is relational. It has a face and a name. It happens to real people who are fellow imagebearers of God. In World Vision's experience, the most successful means of engaging people is relational: child sponsorship. The power of sponsorship is that it allows for a personal relationship to exist that can lead to transformation on both sides. People respond more positively when they can relate to a real person and know that through that relationship lives change.

The CRC has long been a faithful supporter of international missions and development. But think of whose pictures we have hanging in our churches: our missionaries? Not the poor.

We relate more to our mission workers than to the very people we hope to serve. What if we turned this model around and helped build relationships between our churches and the poor instead? Would a more personalized and direct approach unleash our power of generosity?

One of the conclusions of a recent study on giving was that it must be cultivated within family and community (Arthur Brooks, *Who Really Cares: The Surprising Truth about Compassionate Conservatism*).

## Unless CNN is reporting on a crisis, the world doesn't seem to care.

At World Vision we talk about “life cycle giving,” which is presenting products and opportunities to families at different stages of their life cycles. When a family has young children, simple products that build relationships and understanding are important. As children grow and develop hopes and aspirations for a bright future, it's important to provide them opportunities for advocacy and justice. As parents become empty nesters and have more disposable time and income, we offer meaningful lifetime opportunities. And, finally, we talk to the elderly about legacy giving.

Cultivating a generous spirit is best done within the family, and it must be appropriate to the life cycle of the family.

We do practice life cycle giving in the CRC, to a certain extent. But there is opportunity for more focus and variety. Churches that practice this successfully engage whole families with unique challenges and opportunities designed for their respective stages in life. A more holistic approach of harnessing time, talent, and treasure (known as the “3 Ts”) allows individual members to be more satisfied and challenged by their engagement.

In the end, our response as Christians to world crises must be a whole-life response. We should be passionate about justice, fairness, and holistic development in everything we say and do. Our response to poverty shouldn't be driven by emotional appeals or by the CNN effect, but by our calling to claim this world for God. ■



**Dirk Booy** serves as Partnership Leader-Global Field Operations for World Vision International. He has worked in Christian

humanitarian development for more than 30 years, including 13 with CRWRC. He is presently based in London, England, and remains a member of Rehoboth CRC in Toronto, Ontario.

### How to Unleash Your Church's Generosity

- Ensure direct contact between your church and the needy.
- Teach generosity, not just charity.
- Engage whole families in different ways depending on their stages of life.
- Focus on the “3 Ts” of time, talent, and treasure.
- Build accountability and reporting into the relationship.

## Memorable Music



**HIS SHRUNKEN FRAME AND AGE-DIMINISHED VOICE** were almost lost at the front of our large church auditorium. He had been a medical intern at a small hospital in Arnhem when Hitler's war machine rolled through the Netherlands and set up a puppet Nazi government. Radios were destroyed to prevent BBC "propaganda" from demoralizing folks who needed nothing other than Nazi "truth."

But among the clutter of equipment in one surgical suite, someone had managed to hide a shortwave radio. At 5 p.m. each Sunday afternoon the doctors and nurses gathered secretly and tuned in softly to the worship service of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields in London. My friend could not remember a single sermon heard in those covert assemblies, but one thing he never forgot. At the close of each broadcast swelled the choral power of Henry Lyte's magnificent song "Abide with Me."

"In the distance we could hear the guns," the old doctor whispered, "and the cupboards of medical supplies rattled with falling bombs. We huddled together, standing close to the single speaker, weeping as we were transported for a few moments into the congregation in London, and with it to the very throne of God."

## What are you listening to?

"This," he said, as we turned our own hymnbooks to the song, "is how we survived those dark and awful hours." And so we sang with him:

Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide!

The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!

When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,

O, Thou who changest not, abide with me!

I think of the old doctor often when my students walk into class with buds in their ears linked to phones and MP3 players. "What are you listening to?" I ask them, and they tell me of the latest hits and greatest groups and hottest tunes and newest metal. I love music and share their passions, often playing videos of recent songs for classroom discussions.

In the noisy archives of all the wonderful melodies I've loved and shared with pounding intensity or heart-throbbing intimacy, I wonder, sometimes. What music actually changes my life? What music helps me enter another realm in order to remember what this one is truly all about? What are you listening to? ■



Wayne Brouwer teaches at Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

## Leaving Van Gogh

by Carol Wallace  
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



In 1890, when Dr. Gachet is asked by Theo Van Gogh to be his brother Vincent's personal physician,

he enthusiastically accepts the challenge because of his dual interests in mental illness and art. Vincent, whose artistic genius was tormented by an unconfirmed mental illness eventually ending with suicide, became Dr. Gachet's friend. Wallace's historical novel, based on primary documents about Van Gogh's life, explores the connection between artistic genius and madness, shows the 19th century's response to mental illness, and realistically portrays moral choices that have life-changing consequences. (Spiegel & Grau)

## GodPod

reviewed by Randall Engle



I once met William Willimon on the streets of Cambridge and eagerly told him that I listened to his podcast when I exercised on the treadmill. He said, "But you ought to be listening to GodPod. It's what I listen to when I'm on the treadmill." I took his advice and have been hooked ever since. Polite but acerbic British theologians discuss burning issues of God, theology, the Christian life, and more "over an endless supply of coffee and biscuits." (<http://sptc.htb.org.uk/god-pod>)

## Sharing the Road: A Journey Through Parkinson's Disease

by **Case Boot**  
reviewed by **Jenny deGroot**

*Sharing the Road* is a thin volume weighted with wisdom. Parkinson's disease became author Case Boot's daily companion just as he was retiring as a Dordt College professor. His life

story is gently woven into the harsh realization that the disease is there to stay. Especially poignant are Boot's words of advice to family and friends. This book is an invitation to share the road as we live in community, supporting each other in all our trials and illnesses. Appendixes suggest daily exercises for the body and the voice. (Dordt College Press)



## This Time Around

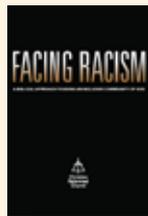
by **Heather Williams**  
reviewed by **Paul Delger**



Heather Williams offers a rich, contemporary sound on her debut full-length album *This Time Around*. The songs reflect a life marked by tragedy, including Williams being given up by her mother at age 11 and losing an infant son as an adult. The songs also offer God's hope. "Hallelujah" (a top-10 radio play) is a powerful selection that asks God to come into painful situations. "God Is Still God" encourages listeners to remember God's control over challenges. (Fair Trade)

## Facing Racism

reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

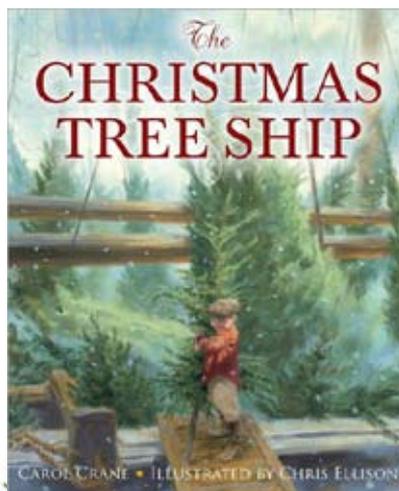


*Facing Racism* is a series of six 30-minute video segments that equip congregations and small groups to understand, discuss, and break down the racism that exists in our communities. The sessions offer ways to challenge both personal and institutional racism, using the stories and personal experiences of a variety of people, dramatic readings of scripture, the perspective on diversity that the CRC developed in a 1996 synodical study, and pertinent portions of our denominational history. A printable study guide is embedded in the first of the two-disc set. (Produced by the CRC's Office of Race Relations, available from Faith Alive at [faithaliveresources.org](http://faithaliveresources.org))

## The Christmas Tree Ship

by **Carol Crane**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

The Christmas Tree Ship and its captain, Herman Schuenemann, faithfully brought Christmas trees from Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Chicago's children and their families. In November of 1912, the ship went down in a storm. Who would deliver the Christmas trees now? The next year, another schooner arrives, laden with trees and piloted by the Captain's wife and daughters, who had decided that the Christmas Tree Ship tradition should live on. Chris Ellison's tender illustrations embellish this fictional story based on fact. (Sleeping Bear Press)



## THE LOWDOWN

**Our reviewers share their favorite Christmas albums**

- Christmas*  
by Bruce Cockburn  
(True North)
- Christmas Is Jesus*  
by Bryan Duncan (Word)
- Christmas with Julie Andrews*  
by Julie Andrews (Legacy)
- Christmastime*  
by Michael W. Smith  
(Reunion)
- December Stillness*  
by The Dale Warland Singers  
(American Choral)
- Gloria*  
by Various Artists  
(Rockettown)
- Go Tell It on the Mountain*  
by The Blind Boys of Alabama (Real World)
- Messiah*  
by The Sixteen (Coro)
- O Yule Full of Gladness*  
by The St. Olaf Choir  
(St. Olaf Records)
- The Sky Can Still Remember*  
by Sherri Youngward  
(BEC Recordings)
- Snow Angels*  
by Over the Rhine  
(Great Speckled Dog)
- Songs for Christmas*  
by Sufjan Stevens  
(Asthmatic Kitty)
- A Very Rosie Christmas*  
by Rosie Thomas (CSP)
- Welcome Inn*  
by Phil Keaggy  
(Strobic Records)
- Wintersong*  
by Sarah McLachlan  
(Elektra)

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



# FAQs

## Calling

**Q I have been looking for a job and sending out resumes for nine months with no results. I am very discouraged and don't really know what to do anymore.**

**A** Surviving the trough between jobs is a major challenge on multiple levels: psychologically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. So rather than continuing what you are doing, I would suggest that you take a break for a few days to catch your breath. You'll need strength to continue what in actuality is a walk by faith—believing that God does have work for you to do and that he will open a door when none is apparent.

Upon returning to the job search, I would recommend altering your approach. What you have been doing can be described as pre-recession job searching—responding to job openings in a reactive way. You can continue to apply in this fashion, but I would recommend adding proactive measures such as the following: keep your skills current by attending topic-related lectures or training events (often free at local colleges and universities), get out of the house and volunteer, set up an account on LinkedIn and maximize it, start your own blog or respond to questions posted by other bloggers, do some informational interviewing, send out thank-you or other types of personal notes to people you've met along the way.

And finally, expand your life focus beyond simply finding a job, as important as that is, to interacting with and encouraging others. As a result, you will be buoyed up in the process.

—Bonnie Speyers

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

**You'll need strength to continue what in actuality is a walk by faith.**

## Church

**Q Can a person who is a Mason or Shriner or lodge member join the CRC? Also, should Christians vote for a political candidate who is a Mason, or should we waste our votes by casting ballots for a smaller party that has no hope of winning a seat?**

**A** Lodge members may not join the CRC because we have declared that “any member of the lodge, by virtue of the oath he has taken, has at least tacitly identified himself with the false religion of the lodge” (*Acts of Synod 1977*, p. 104).

Our denomination made that decision even though both the majority and minority of the synodical advisory committee expressed disappointment with the work of the study committee. Undoubtedly, we will address this issue again, especially as we seek a closer relationship with the Reformed Church in America, which permits each congregation to make its own decision on this matter based on the faith commitment of the person seeking membership.

When voting, we should not “waste” our vote. We should select the candidates we believe will govern best in all the areas for which they will be responsible. Whether that person is a Mason, a Muslim, or a homosexual—or where the candidate stands on a single issue—should not be the deciding factor.

—George Vander Weit

*George Vander Weit is a retired pastor in the CRC.*

## Outreach

**Q How can I best negotiate changes in my faith? I have been reading and growing, but I'm a bit frightened. How can I be sure I'm in touch with the Spirit of God while I'm also shifting into a new way of living and believing?**

**A** Great questions and important ones. Change is never easy, particularly regarding the things we hold most dear, such as our concepts about God and faith. That said, a sign of true faith is that we are growing, shifting, and learning in our walk with God. If our faith hasn't changed at all in 10 years, perhaps stagnation or complacency has taken root.

As theologians dating back to ancient times have noted, the closer you get to God, the more you realize how far you have to go. In light of that, one sign of a maturing faith is humility in your beliefs—admitting you may not have all the answers.

We are *all* learning and growing. That may seem a subtle thing, but it is important. Being able to hold your faith at a distance, to look at it, turn it over in your hands, and see it with new eyes is an important thing to do from time to time. It allows what is true and whole to remain, while allowing externals to drop away. It also creates some space within you to calmly encounter people who think differently without feeling personally assaulted when they voice a different perspective. How we hold our faith is an important and often overlooked part of faith.

We must also remember that we do not walk new and unknown roads alone. Jesus noted that the Spirit would teach us “all things” and be our constant guide and companion on our journey. Additionally, our faith communities should be spaces where we are allowed to learn, grow, and explore, while also being helped to discern what is of God and what is not.

—Bryan Berghof

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

# Facebook Discipleship



**SO YOUR CHILD** just got a learner's permit. Do you just hand her the car keys and say, "Good luck"? Not likely. You will

make sure she gets proper instruction, and you'll spend hours in the passenger's seat, helping her navigate the streets and highways of your town. There will be some close calls, some heated words, possibly even a fender-bender along the way, but in the end you hope to develop a responsible driver.

There's a new step in the stairway to adulthood. At age 13 a young person becomes eligible for a Facebook account. That is, if he or she hasn't come up with a fake birthday before that time. And Facebook certainly isn't the only social media game in town. What's a parent to do?

We know that Christian parenting means helping a child make responsible choices that reflect the life of someone who follows Christ. "Train up your child in the way that he should go" applies even in the virtual world.

We hear of young people coming to tragic ends after being bullied on Facebook by classmates. We also hear dire, and important, warnings about predators on Facebook. (Seriously, if you haven't checked your child's privacy settings by now, stop reading this and go straight to the computer.) But there are other implications for parents.

Yes, we need to teach kids safety on the Internet. And as parents of young teens, we can be proactive about that. For example, we can insist on having the password to our child's Facebook account, as well as on being one of our child's Facebook friends. Doing so keeps children aware of a parent's supervision and allows parents the option of monitoring when necessary.

It might be even more important, though, to teach children how to be Christians online.



**We need to teach our kids safety. . . . It might be even more important, though, to teach them to be Christians online.**

One big way parents can encourage Christ-like behavior online is by promoting inclusivity. This does not mean accepting any friend request that comes your child's way. It means making sure that the people he or she *has* friended feel included.

There are specific ways to avoid excluding people. Posting status updates about who you spent the day with or who was at the party you just attended only points out to the uninvited that they are, in fact, the uninvited. Posting photos of a recent group outing to the mall lets everyone else know they were not in on the event (sometimes that may even be the intention).

On the other hand, if a child knows someone is having a hard time fitting in with the crowd, Facebook is a great opportunity to make that person feel included by commenting on his or her status updates and photos or by sending an encouraging message.

And then there's the Facebook profile. Facebook and other sites allow users to list preferred activities, movies, books, music, and more. This provides a prime opportunity to talk to children about humility and honesty. If they list a bunch of things they know are popular but aren't really their thing, they're putting up a false front. This can continue with status updates that don't reflect their real lives.

Facebook and the like allow people to portray themselves as other than they are, perhaps even post a disingenuous description of who they wish they were. While that can be tempting, it's not true to the person God created us to be. It will not attract people who like us for who we are. And in the long run, most people can see through a false front anyway.

Like every aspect of life, the virtual world offers opportunities for Christian witness as well as pitfalls for making poor decisions. Don't let your child head out into the great unknown without a map, compass, and good directions. ■



**Kristy Quist** is editor of *The Banner's Tuned In* section and a member of Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Another Confession?

**SINCE THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH'S INCEPTION** in 1857, we have identified ourselves as a denomination in the Reformed tradition by what we call our Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. At our next annual leadership meeting, Synod 2012, we will consider Synod 2009's proposal to adopt the Belhar Confession as a fourth confession. Many congregations and classes (regional groups of churches) have already spent much time discussing the proposal.

The Belhar is not a lengthy document, only two pages (see [crcna.org/belhar](http://crcna.org/belhar)). It comes to us from the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa, which adopted it as a fourth confession. Our sister denomination, the Reformed Church in America, granted it confessional status at its 2011 leadership meeting.

The Belhar presents three prominent biblical themes: unity, reconciliation, and justice.

Based on discussions so far in churches and classes, we may anticipate that the discussion at Synod 2012 will center on whether to adopt the Belhar as a confession, whether to accept it as a document similar to our Contemporary Testimony, or whether to receive it as information about a development that has taken place in South Africa but is not relevant in North America.

I'd like to summarize some of the concerns expressed about adopting the Belhar as a confession, as well as some of the thoughts in favor of adopting it.

### Concerns

First the concerns. You may have heard questions about the wisdom of accepting the Belhar as another confession when a declining number of our members are aware of the content of the confessions we already have. So why, people are asking, would we add a fourth confession when the three we already have seem to play a minimal role in our denomination?

The Fall 2010 issue of Calvin Theological Seminary's *Forum* publication included five articles about the Belhar Confession. Two seminary professors commended the document for its strengths but expressed serious reservations about adopting it as a confession in the CRC. Professor John Bolt has reservations about the Belhar as a confession because it fails to highlight the biblical insistence on repentance, forgiveness, and faith as germane to reconciliation. Professor John Cooper believes the Belhar is subject to misinterpretation on such an important biblical issue

**The Belhar** provides what some claim is the missing link in our current confessions.

as universalism. In his opinion, the Belhar is too ambiguous on the matter to be granted confessional status. In the June 2011 issue of *The Banner*, Cooper also stated other reservations about the wisdom of adopting the Belhar as a confession.

The perceived ambiguity of the document has been expressed in other contexts. The concern is that the Belhar is open to misinterpretation on more levels than universalism. Granted that unity is given significant biblical emphasis in Scripture, is the Belhar clear on what unity means for our relationship with brothers and sisters in other Christian traditions? Some insist that a confession be clear on such a major point.

Some ask if the Belhar might undercut the hard work we have already done to arrive at a clear and understandable biblical position about homosexuality. They would prefer that a confessional statement not be open to misunderstanding.

Finally, the matter of justice also seems ambiguous. We agree that justice is a major subject in the Bible. However, it seems to some that a confessional document ought to do more than simply note that Christians are to be just in all they do.

### Support

Along with concerns, we can also expect to hear opinions expressed in favor of adopting the Belhar as a confession.

Synod will surely be reminded that the Belhar does not intend to add another doctrinal statement to those we already have. Rather, it is a call to action, a call arising from Scripture as well as from our doctrinal understanding of God's Word. A call to biblical action should be a significant part of our confessional position.

The Belhar thus provides what some claim is the missing link in our current confessions. By its call to action, it responds

powerfully to the criticism that the church has lost credibility because of its emphasis on biblical doctrine to the neglect of Scripture's emphasis that faith without deeds is dead. The Reformed Church in South Africa is a case in point. It held to the doctrines set forth in the Three Forms of Unity, while at the same time living in harmony with the evils of apartheid. The authors of the Belhar are convinced that had this document been in place, apartheid would not have been accepted as compatible with Scripture.

The Fall 2010 issue of Calvin Seminary's *Forum* also included three articles by seminary professors who favor adopting the Belhar as one of our confessions. Professor Mariano Avila urges the church to walk in the shoes of those who authored the Belhar. They know from experience what it means to be relegated to inferior positions in the name of the Lord.

Avila refers to the Belhar as a "cry from the heart" of a people who suffered great indignity at the hands of Christians. He also points out that the issues of South Africa have just as much relevance in North America. Indeed, we continue to hear cries throughout the world from people who suffer from racism, alienation, and injustice.

Professor Lyle Bierma's article in the *Forum* notes the Belhar meets all the requirements we expect from a Reformed confession: it is a document we can confess together, it provides valuable biblical truths to be used in our preaching and teaching ministries, it can be a measure of orthodoxy, and it declares what we understand it means to be active in the faith as Reformed Christians.

Professor Ronald Feenstra points out that the Belhar "provides a clear witness to those both inside and outside the church, articulating the gospel message and its implications for authentic Christian faith and life."

While it may be true that many Christian Reformed Church members know little about the confessions we already have and that we seem to have lost credibility as a church in the Reformed tradition, Synod 2012 will no doubt be urged to realize that the Belhar can restore the authenticity we seem to have lost because it moves the church from looking primarily inward (to its doctrinal position) to outward, toward the kind of action sorely needed today.

The Reformed Church in America's adoption of the Belhar Confession in 2011 will also factor into the discussion at Synod

2012. While the RCA's action does not compel us to follow suit, synod will likely take it into serious consideration since our two denominations are developing a stronger relationship.

While some express concerns that the Belhar will undermine certain Reformed theological positions—for example, on homosexuality—we should note that the document insists on a fair and just biblical base for whatever position we take. Since our position on homosexuality is rooted in Scripture, that should not pose a problem. The Belhar simply states that we believers in the Calvinistic tradition are firmly committed to the biblical principles of unity, reconciliation, and justice.

Delegates to Synod 2012 will need our prayerful support as they wrestle with whether to grant the Belhar confessional status. Cogent arguments question the wisdom of Synod 2009's proposal to do so, but equally moving arguments support it. I look forward to the discussion. Whatever decision synod reaches, I pray it will enhance the ministry of the CRC. ■ **WEB Q'S**



**Rev. Alvin Hoksbergen** is a retired minister in the Christian Reformed Church. He lives in Spring Lake, Mich.

**Advertising Information**

**Deadlines:** January 2012 issue is 12/5/2011; February 2012 issue is 1/2/2012. 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.

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**Denominational and Classical Announcements**

**General**

**CHANGE IN TIME OF WORSHIP** The morning service of the Pine Grove Community Chr. Ref. Church of Pinellas Park FL, has been changed to 9:15 AM.

**Calls Accepted**

**CONRAD CRC** in Conrad, MT is pleased to announce that Rev. Timothy Toeset of Cascade CRC, Marysville, WA has accepted our call.

**Candidates for the Ministry**

**QUALIFYING PERSONS** who wish to be candidates in 2012 for ordained CRC ministry should request application procedures by December 15, 2011. For further information, please email Karlene Werner at [kaw5@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:kaw5@calvinseminary.edu) or write her at Calvin Theological Seminary, 3233 Burton Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

**Meetings of Classis**

**CLASSIS ZEELAND** will meet on Thursday, January 19, 2012 at North Blendon CRC at 4:00 pm. Agenda deadline is December 8.

**Congregational Announcements**

**Church's 50th Anniversary**

**OTTEWELL CRC** in Edmonton, AB, will DV celebrate 50 years of God's grace and faithfulness February 18-20, 2012. We hereby invite

friends and past members to attend. For more information visit: [www.ottewell@telusplanet.net](http://www.ottewell@telusplanet.net)

**Announcements**

**LK. ALFRED MINISTRY-CRC/RCA winter ministry** - join us in worship! Every Sunday, 10:30 am, 5:50 pm thru April 22. Located on rt. 17/92 in Lk. Alfred, FL., close to Winter Haven & Route 27. Phone 863-422-2187, 863-422-6442. cf, [www.lakealfredministry.org](http://www.lakealfredministry.org).

**PSALTER HYMNAL (1976)** A reformed church in Maine is looking for the 1976 edition of the Psalter Hymnals containing the church order. Please contact us at [crchurch@gmail.com](mailto:crchurch@gmail.com)

**Birthdays**

**100th Birthday**



**MINNIE (KEUNING) MULDER** of 455 N. Dakota Avenue, Corsica, SD 57328, will celebrate her 100th birthday on December 28. Her family thanks God for her Christian example and faithful prayer life. Her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great grandchildren, relatives, and friends rejoice and celebrate her many years of life, To God Be the Glory!

**HERMAN SEGAAR** of 500 N Franklin St. Glenwood, MN 56334 will celebrate his 100th birthday on Dec 6. Herman and Johanna his wife, will celebrate 73 years of marriage on Dec 15. To God be the glory.



**NELLA VANDE KOPPLE** will celebrate her 100th birthday on December 20. An Open House is planned for Sunday, December 18, 1-4 pm, at Seymour CRC, 840 Alger SE. Friends and relatives are invited.

**95th Birthday**



**GRACE (STOB) OZINGA** 95 years young on Dec 8. Residing at 6157 Princeton Lane, Palos Heights, IL 60463. Children: Dick & Wilma (Pixie) Molenhouse, Marty & Sally Ozinga, Ron & Sharon Ozinga, Bill & Janice Hoffman and Paul & Marcia Hite. 12 grandchildren & spouses (1 deceased) and 24 great-grandchildren. We all love you! Amazing Grace!

**90th Birthday**

**JENNIE BURMANIA** will celebrate her 90th birthday on Dec 6. Everyone is invited to an Open House in her honor on Saturday, Dec 3 from 2-4 PM at 1st Hudsonville CRC.

**CATHERINE (HOFMAN) FOLKERT** 725 Baldwin Dr #3048, Jenison, MI 49428 will celebrate her 90th birthday. Her children invite friends and relatives to join them in honoring her with cake and celebration on Dec 3, 2-4pm at Ridgewood CRC, Jenison. We thank God for her.

**RAYMOND SEVEN**, 2121 Raybrook SE, Room 229C, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546, will celebrate his 90th birthday on December 5. Dad, your family thanks God for you and the wonderful influence you are in our lives. God bless you on your birthday and for many days afterward!

**ELEANOR (ROSEMA) SEVENSMA**, 2121 Raybrook #320N, GR, MI 49546 celebrates her 90th birthday Dec. 22. We thank God for her many years. Love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**80th Birthday**



**MARGERY BAKKER** 3165 E. University Dr., Orangewood Shadows #430, Mesa, AZ 85213 on Dec. 3. Her husband, Rev. Paul, 5 children and their spouses, 14 grandchildren (Shane in heaven), and 17 great-grandchildren praise God for her and the blessing she has been to us.

**50th birthday**

**THOMAS RICHARD STRONKS** son of Dick and Wilma of Burlington, ON, will celebrate his 50th birthday on January 5. On that day, long ago, upon arriving home, Mom quickly realized that little Thomas was way more of a Rick and the name stuck. Thanks for the memories, big brother!

**Anniversaries**

**65th Anniversary**

**ELDERS** Alfred and Lucille, of Grandville will celebrate 65 years of marriage on December 12. They will celebrate their anniversary with family (6 children, 17 grandchildren, 8 great grand children), and friends on December 11 after the AM church service at Hope CRC in Grandville.

**Director of Back to God Ministries International**



The Christian Reformed Church in North America is seeking a **Director of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI)**. BTGMI fulfills a vital role in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world using various media that effectively communicate Christ in the "language of the heart" of the viewers and listeners.

The Director will give leadership in the strategic planning process and execution of policies that support the mission of BTGMI and the Christian Reformed Church. They will be able to articulate the vision and mission for developing worldwide partnerships.

The successful candidate will have demonstrated skills in casting vision, thinking strategically, have experience working in a leadership capacity, working in a global context and be an ordained minister of the Word in the CRC. Visit the web site at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) for a complete job description and additional information about BTGMI. To apply send cover letter and resume to [btgmisearch@crcna.org](mailto:btgmisearch@crcna.org) by **February 15, 2012**. The process will remain open until a nominee to fill the position is identified.

## 60th Anniversary

**BRANDS** Robert & Irma of Morrison, IL will celebrate their 60th anniversary on December 27. Children David&Marcia, Diane&Steve, 2 grandchildren & 4 great grandboys. Love to both

**DOKTER** G. Bernard and Lydia, 11245 N. 111th Ave., Sun City, AZ 85351 on Dec. 20. With our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren we thank God for his blessings.

**FRANJE** Marion and Vera celebrated 60 years of marriage Oct. 25. They and their family give thanks to God for His continuing blessings and faithfulness.

**HULST** Dr. John B. and Louise M.(Jacoby) 1114 1/2 Houston, Pella, IA 50219, will celebrate 60 years of marriage on December 21, 2011. Siblings, children and grandchildren give thanks for their wisdom, strength, faithfulness and love.

## 50th Anniversary

**ATMSA** George & Clasiene (van der Laan) of 2217 Tarn Place, Duncan, B. C. V9L 5E7, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on October 28. Congratulations from Alida & Harold van Boven, John & Sheri Atsma, Brenda & Carl Dragt, Stephen & Patti Atsma and 13 grandchildren. Your love & faithfulness to God & each other is a blessing to all of us.

**ATTEMA** Alfred & Anna(Mulder) Bellflower, Calif. Will celebrate 50 years of marriage on Nov. 17. Children: Arnold(deceased) (Jason & Alex); Cheryl & Gary Van Den Berg(Rodney & Annaliese); Rodney & Melanie (Rodney deceased) (Amanda)

**VANDER MOLEN** Jack and Rita (Marcene Van Dyken) will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on January 2, 2012. With gratitude to God for His providential care and our children, Brenda and Mark Mowers, Lorene and Rich Leentjes, Jackie and Gordan Vander Veen, Branden and Jamie Hape Vander Molen and our 14 grandchildren.

## Obituaries

**BRATT** Dr. Harvey J. MD; October 29, 2011; 2725 Mulford Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He was preceded in death by his first wife Fran Verhage Bratt in 1992. He is survived by his wife of 16 years, Phyllis VanVugt Bratt; his children and grandchildren: Dave and Ruth Bratt (Tom, Joe, Jenny and A. J. Heyboer, Sarah), Jane and David Daining (Justin and Nana Daining, Cara and Gareth Wood), Mary and Arturo Ragagni (Giovanni), John and Ellen Bratt (Eric, Emily, Laura); Phyllis' children: Eric and Wendy Van Vugt (Erin and Craig Haan, Heather and

Austin Ramirez, Tim), Mary and Tim Moran, Dean and Jann Van Vugt (Jill and James Harrison, Abby and Peter McIlquham, Megan), William and Lynn Van Vugt; four great-grandchildren; sister: Dorothy Dyk; sisters-in-law: Edith Bratt, Kaye and Bob Johnson, Anna Collins, Marlene and Paul DeVries.

**COOPER** Janice Marie, 80 years, child of God, went home on October 9, 2011. Survived by her beloved husband, Rev. Sidney Cooper, whom she partnered with in love and life for 60 years. Devoted mother of Kathy (Louis) Drapac, Sara (Ted) Stelpstra, Beth (Ken) Mulder, Ross (Sandy) Cooper, Todd (Ingrid) Cooper and Andy (Cheryl) Cooper. Cherished by 16 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

## Church Positions Announcements

**PASTOR: KINGSTON**, Ontario's Westside Fellowship CRC is a small church with a big heart in an historic university city of 117,000 on the shores of Lake Ontario. We are seeking a pastor who relates well to all ages, and will help us grow as a church through using his or her gifts of empowering leadership, engaging preaching, and effective worship planning. The new pastor will help renew our educational ministry and will support our efforts to reach out to our community. For further information, or to submit a pastoral profile please email admin@wfcrc.ca

**PASTORAL SEARCH:** Meadowlands Fellowship CRC located in Ancaster, ON is prayerfully searching for a full-time pastor to shepherd the congregation. We seek a pastor who is committed to sound biblical preaching, has a heart for youth ministry and mentoring, and is passionate about fostering a caring and welcoming ministry for the congregation and the community. We encourage those who are interested to consult the church profile (see [www.meadowlandsfellowship.com](http://www.meadowlandsfellowship.com)) and to contact Meadowlands Fellowship Pastoral Search Committee, [mfcrc.search@gmail.com](mailto:mfcrc.search@gmail.com), or Vince van Dijk, 905-387-0250.

**HAVEN CRC** in Zeeland, MI is seeking a full time Pastor. Please direct all inquires and communications to: Rick Huizenga, Search Team, 541 Alice St. Zeeland, MI 49464 or email to [richh@egltech.net](mailto:richh@egltech.net) or phone at 616-886-1355.

**WORSHIP DIRECTOR** Milwood CRC, Kalamazoo, MI, is seeking a part-time worship director. A job description can be requested from Patti Landstra, [plandstra@gmail.com](mailto:plandstra@gmail.com).



## DORDT COLLEGE Faculty Positions

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Dordt College  
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Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697  
Fax: (712) 722-6035  
E-mail: [provost@dordt.edu](mailto:provost@dordt.edu)  
Web: [www.dordt.edu/prospective\\_employees/faculty/](http://www.dordt.edu/prospective_employees/faculty/)

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

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**DEBOER** Ruth (VanAlthuis) age 80 of Kalamazoo MI, entered her heavenly home on Sept. 19, 2011. She is survived by her loving husband of 58 years Rev. Floyd R. DeBoer and her sons Bob & Char, Ron & Irene, Dan & Jan, John and Chris, 12 grandchildren and 4 great grandsons. She will always be remembered for her love for God, family and others.

**HAAN** Florence (Vander Ley) age 100 of Hudsonville, MI went to be with our Lord on October 15, 2011. She was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. Enno Haan and together they served many Christian Reformed Churches. They started their ministry in Goshen, IN and ended in N. Blendon, MI. She will be lovingly remembered by her children, Judy (Chris) Beezhold, Ruth (John) Terborg, 6 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren

**HEEREMA**, Jacob (Jack) 100, passed away October 25 to be with our Lord. Preceding him in death was his wife Thelma and infant son James. Those who will carry on his legacy are Gretchen (George) Zuiderveen, Norm (Sandra) Heerema, Allen (Gert) Heerema, Susan Heerema, 11 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

**ELDON JUDSON MERENESS** (Jud) age 79 of Grand Rapids, MI died on June 22, 2011. He was preceded in death by one infant son and leaves his wife Cele, two daughters, June Guetter, and Shelley Marinus, two grandchildren and their spouses, and one great grandson. Soli Deo Gloria!

**MEYERS** Marilyn (Van Hook), age 80, of Mahwah, NJ on September 4, 2011. Predeceased by her husband, Gerard, in 2010. Survived by children Sally (Steve), Virginia (James), David (Brenda), and Pamela (Steve); 12 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren.

**SCHAAP** Edgar, 79, of Murrieta, CA, went to be with the Lord Oct 28, 2011. He is survived by his wife MaryAnn (Gardner), children Steve (Christine) Schaap, Karen (Mark) Bosman, David (Virginia) Schaap, John (Deborah) Gardner, JoAnn (Mark) Ensminger, brother Arnold Schaap, sister Arlene Maifeld, and 20 grandchildren. He was preceded in death by Rose (Palmer), his wife of 38 years.

**VAN DYKE** Janet E. aged 88 on October 15, 2011; of 1919 Boston S. E., B210, Grand Rapids, MI 49506; Cherished wife of Gerrit for 66 years. Loving mother to Muriel Van Dyke, Barb (Don) Attebury, Phil Van Dyke, and Ellen (Steve) De Koster. Dear sister of Margaret Van Kley. Faithful grandmother to 8 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

**ZOETEWEY** Christian "Chris", 94 of Denver, Colorado celebrated his heavenly birthday on September 28, 2011. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Motts in 2010. He will be sorely missed by his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren: Dave and Anne Paige Cady (Josh, Joanne, and Jonah, Lea, Darin, and Grady Gunnett, Jonathan), Jon C. and Cathy (Chris, Kerri and Zach Van Eps, Danny, Johnny), Ken and Christie Pals (Robin and Heide), Dave and Jill Bielema (Ben and Lindsay Gandy, Kara, Kristin), sister, Mae, and numerous nieces and nephews. His children and grandchildren are eternally thankful for his legacy of hard work, prayer, and commitment to his (and their) faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

## Employment

**CAMPUS CHAPLAIN** Ottawa Christian Reformed Campus Chaplaincy seeks to hire a full time campus chaplain to establish a new campus ministry on the bilingual campus of the University of Ottawa. The successful candidate is committed to the Reformed faith, self motivated, relates well with young adults and is able to be an incarnational presence in both the academic and wider communities Please contact Larry Vandergrift at [lvdgrift@uottawa.ca](mailto:lvdgrift@uottawa.ca) for a job description and further information. Deadline: December 31, 2011

**CONTRA COSTA CHRISTIAN** School (CCCS), in the Bay Area of California, seeks candidates for Head of School beginning July 2012. The Head is the CEO/educational leader, reporting to the Board for the academic program and all operations. CCCS, a Pre-K-12 school founded in 1978, is recognized for high quality academic instruction and spiritual nurture of its 270 students. In Walnut Creek, half an hour east of San Francisco, CCCS is accredited and members of CSI and ACSI. The next Head will be spiritually mature, have a deep understanding of



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**SCOTTSDALE CONDO - FOR RENT** 2bd, 2 bath - Mc dowell mt views, pool, hottub, gym, 1150 sq ft; Dec-Jan-Mar-May @ \$750 wk - 2500 a Month- Details 512-591-7088 or 269-341-9752

**FOR RENT:** Scottsdale, AZ, 2 BD, 2 BA, condo in Old Town district. Walk to shopping, dining. Awesome hiking and golf. 209-923-1451, [gamallett@hughes.net](mailto:gamallett@hughes.net)

**CHERRY VALLEY S CALIF HOME** For sale Friendly +55 gated cmt. 3 BR, 2 BA, kitchen/family, living/dining. 2 stall attached garage w/ golf cart incl. Overlooking 9th fairway & pond. Golf, clubhouse, pool, tennis & hot tub. Btwn Redlands & Palm Springs. Agent Lynn 909-936-3544

**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

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**FOR RENT IN FLORIDA:** Condo near Clearwater, 2 BR, 2 BA, greatroom, new appliances, very clean, quiet, near shopping, beaches, golf courses. Avail. Dec 2011 - Apr 2012. Weekly/monthly rates, reasonable. Contact [ljvandermeer@yahoo.com](mailto:ljvandermeer@yahoo.com) or 708-946-0265.

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**CONDO FOR RENT** Orlando, FL. Grand Beach Resort, 3 BR, sleeps 10. March 29-April 5, 2012: \$1200.00. 2 available. Call Al Teerman 616-291-4435

**DELRAY BEACH, FL** Condo for rent, 2BR, 2BA. 1st floor end unit w/ florida room, pool, near beaches and downtown Delray. Available Jan-Apr 2012. Call 215-855-9139 or email [charlenejoy73@gmail.com](mailto:charlenejoy73@gmail.com)

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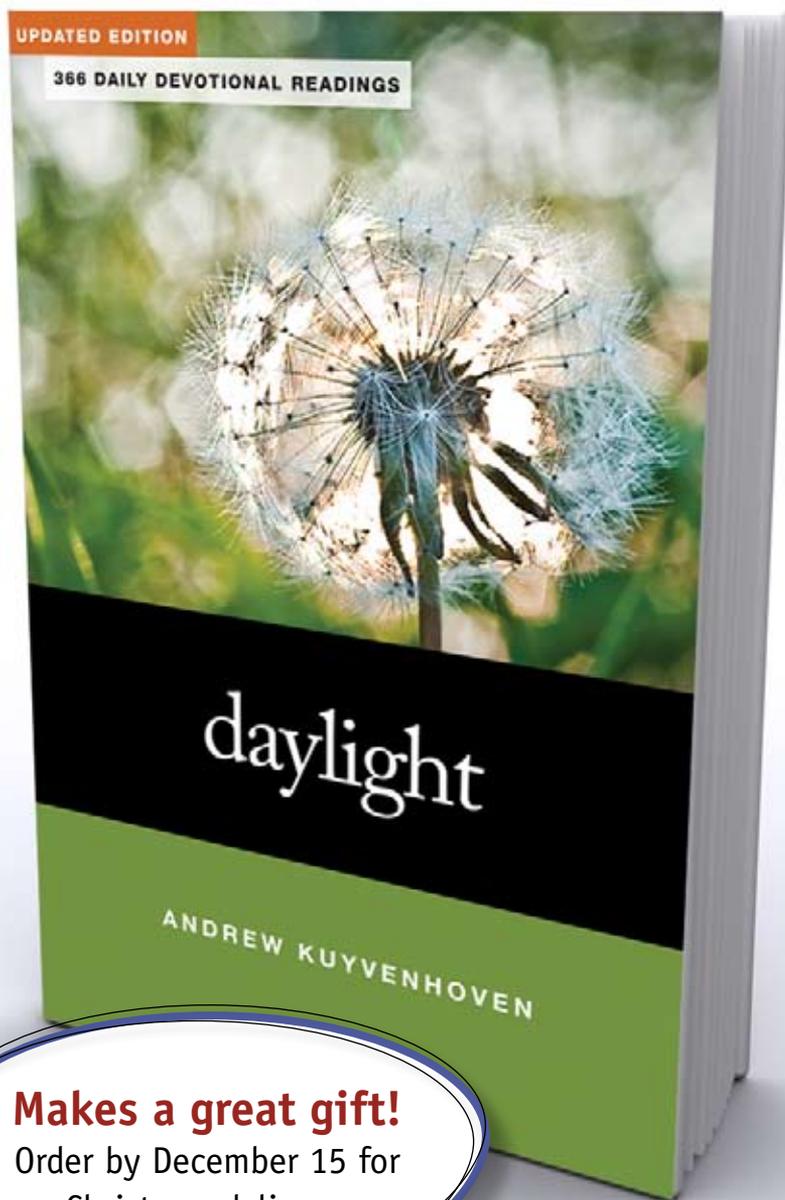
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## Punch Lines

What has made *you* smile lately? Got a joke or funny incident you'd care to share with your wider church family? Please send it to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or email it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org). Thanks!

**A** master thief planned an attack on the Louvre Museum in Paris. He executed the plan without a flaw and made off with several paintings. However, the thief was captured by police several blocks away from the museum when his van ran out of gas. The police detective asked how he could undertake such a "perfect" crime and then get caught by forgetting to fuel his vehicle. The thief replied, "Monsieur, that is why I stole the paintings. I had no Monet to buy Degas to make the Van Gogh."

I know this is bad, but I hope you print it. What have you got Toulouse?

—Dave Hollander

**S**unday school teacher: "Does anyone know who lived in the Garden of Eden?"

Little voice from the back: "It was the Adams family."

—Dick Bylsma

**W**hen my now-56-year-old son was 6, he came home from Sunday school and asked, "Jesus was a carpenter—did he change that job to be God?"

—Anita Dogger

**T**he best indication of consumer confidence in the stock market is unopened 401K statements. It's almost an act of courage to open the envelope when it comes. Thus, I was more than a bit surprised when I talked to my financial adviser a few days ago. I lamented the shape of my investments and asked if he was worried.

"I sleep like a baby," he replied.

"Really?!" I responded in amazement. "Even with the market in the shape it's in?"

"Yep," he said. "I sleep for a couple hours, wake up and bawl my eyes out. Then I sleep for a couple more hours, wake up and bawl my eyes out. Then I sleep for a couple more hours, wake up and bawl my eyes out."

—George Vander Weit

**O**nce upon a time in their marriage, my dad did something really stupid. My mom chewed him out for it. He apologized. They made up.

However, from time to time my mom mentions what he did. "Honey," my dad finally said one day, "why do you keep bringing that up? I thought your policy was 'forgive and forget.'"

"It is," she said. "I just don't want you to forget that I've forgiven and forgotten."

—Clarence Wildeboer

**M**any years ago Halloween tricksters were often quite destructive. Each year our church's bulletin board was covered with wax, which was difficult to remove. My father finally solved the problem each year by displaying the

text from Genesis 16:13: "Thou God seest me."

No more wax!

—Helen Meulink

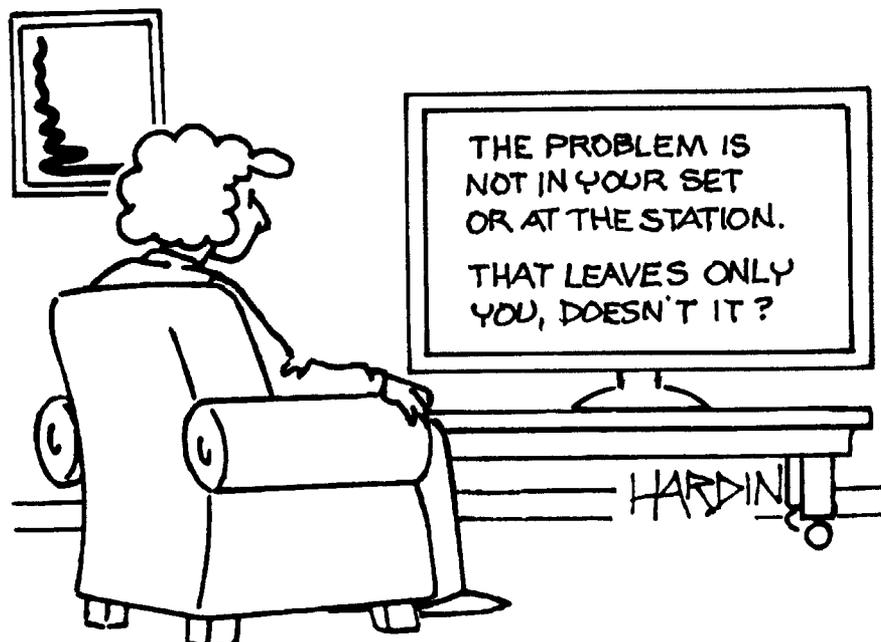
**A**fter a difficult surgery, our visiting pastor asked my wife, "How are you dealing with the pain?" To which she replied, "I've been married to him for 53 years, and I think I have him under control!"

—Ade Vander Starre

**M**y son's Cub Scout troop was talking about "What Makes America Special?" and the discussion turned to freedom of religion. The leader asked, "Why do you all go to different churches? Because your parents tell you to come with them. And who tells your parents where to go to church?"

One of the boys answered, "Their parents!"

—Matthew A. Posthuma



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