

BANNER

May 2011 | www.thebanner.org

³² Our Fundamental Identity

³⁶ The Hardest Death of All

²² Scholarships,
Strings,
and Stars

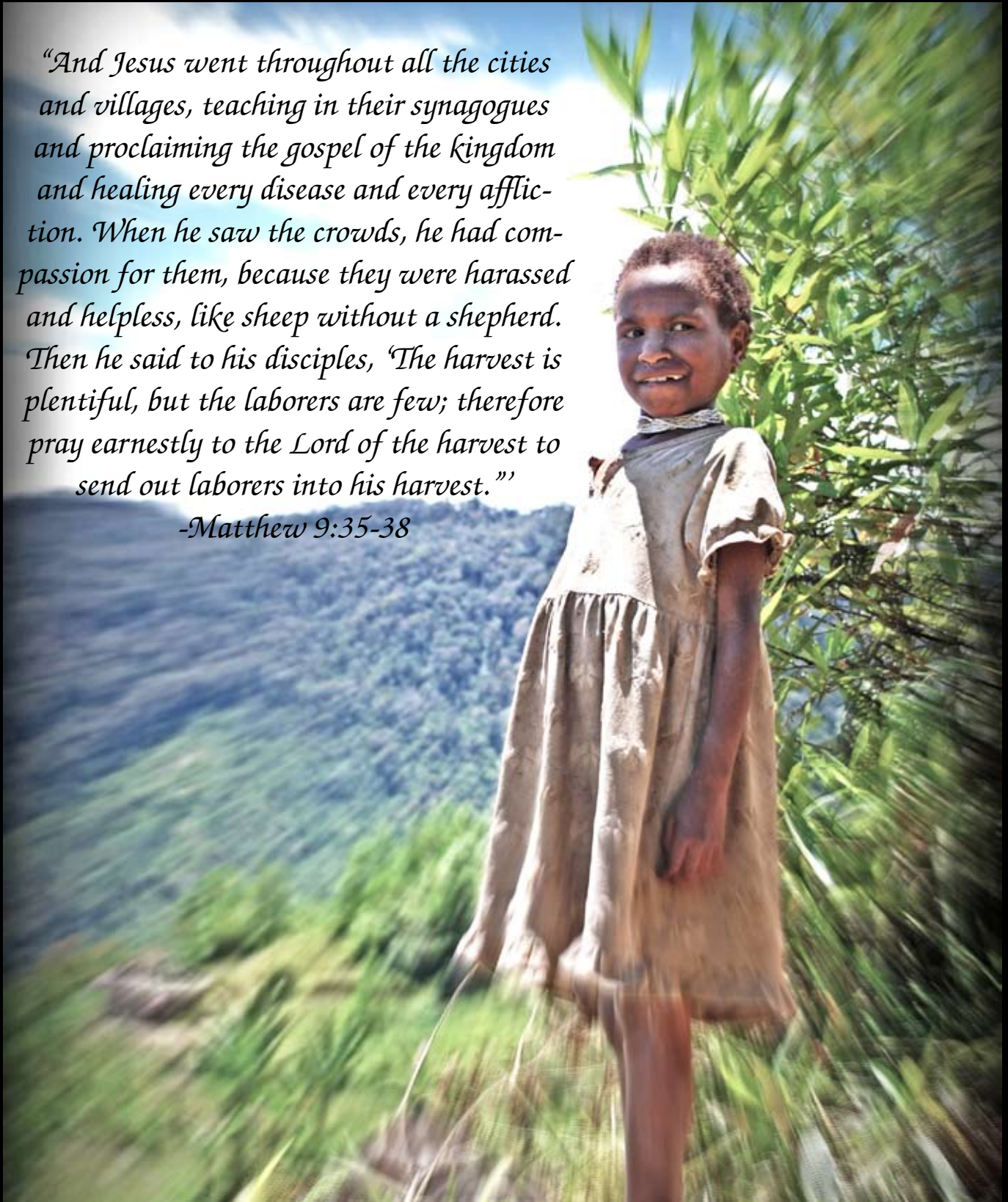
Understanding Our
Muslim Neighbors



Papua, Indonesia

“And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’”

-Matthew 9:35-38

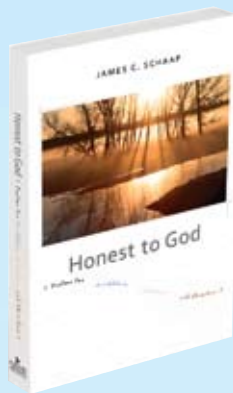


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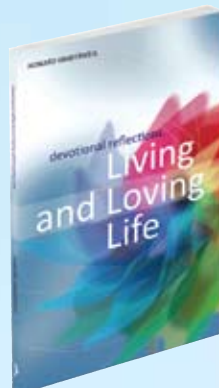
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True Dialogue

IT WON'T BE A QUIET WEEK IN BANNERLAND.

Two articles in particular will generate some heat: “Jihad: What Does the Qur’an Really Say?” (p. 18) and “*Mash’Allah*: Whatever the Will of God,” some observations from life in Kuwait (p. 40). But if those will nudge us to more honest reflection, then so be it.

No doubt you’ll have your own reactions, and we’d love to hear from you—really! But before you hit “Send” or drop that letter in the mailbox, remember, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16).

Firing off a hasty rant might make you feel better—or not—but it will soil your soul and derail a perfectly good discussion. Useful dialogue requires that what we speak, print, and text is well-informed, well-reasoned, and presented humbly as a noble gift to the body of Christ.

For example, before we share our views on Muslims, we should be sure we’ve done our homework. Have we actually *read* the Qur’an before tackling its teachings? Have we checked out our opinions with a Muslim acquaintance or two? Have we engaged enough sources to survey the vast range of differences from one Muslim (and Muslim-majority society) to another?

Fruitful dialogue doesn’t mean we need to agree on everything. But let’s forgo the bombast and snotty attitude that we learn from the media. When non-Christians or new Christians view *The Banner*’s online discussions or flip to the “Letters” section of the print mag, will they see Jesus in our conversations—or Jerry Springer?

We are *Christ*’s ambassadors. We need to adopt a respectful, diplomatic tone and (re)learn healthy dialogue.

Here are some tips I’ve received from some fine Christian statesmen/women:

- Don’t hog the discussion—speak only to the few issues you really know about, and then only a few times to leave room for others.
- Don’t repeat what’s already been well said.
- Offer an incisive question instead of a knee-jerk answer—that’s a precious (and rare) gift.
- Make generalizations only when you can quote actual data to back them up.
- During a needlessly fiery debate, throw in a “bucket” of water instead of gasoline.
- Don’t misrepresent those with whom you disagree.
- Acknowledge points of agreement.
- Humbly admit that your interpretation of Scripture or analysis of a situation could be faulty, incomplete, or wrong.
- Don’t scold, condemn, or judge others.
- Be prepared and willing to “lose” a few discussions.

Our words—open, honest, and heartfelt—must be filled always with grace, especially when we dialogue with and about such folks as Muslims, homosexual people, six-day creationists, and women clergy.

The epistle writer James sternly warns us to mind our tongues (and keyboards), then observes: “The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace” (James 3:17-18).

Please post that on your screen *before* you hit “Send.”

We can’t wait to hear from you. ■

Will people see Jesus in our conversations— or Jerry Springer?



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

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Return to Wonder

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, human beings have been struck by the wonder of mysteries we do not fully understand. The blazing sun appears and disappears without fail, driven by an unseen, eternal locomotion. Rain falls from heaven. Babies are conceived and born. Life is full of miracles.

I think of all the times when I was on a boat as a child, fishing with my father. I would brace my chest against the aluminum ridge of the vessel's edge and stare into the murk, transfixed.

Mysterious things lay latent in those depths, evidenced by the slick, gasping, hook-jawed creatures we withdrew after patient baiting. I wondered what else the lake might hold. A sunken boat? A boot? A gargantuan sturgeon who might swallow my boy-body whole?

Gingerly I would push the tip of my forefinger into the surface of the dark liquid. Taut-nerved and enchanted, I spent hours provoking any lurking monster below.

As human beings began to understand complexity, we declared that we had

found the realities behind the mysteries. We reduced the sun to a mechanical, looping ball of hot gas. The Bible became fiction. We invented vaccinations and movable type, yet bleached God's world of its color. We determined a thing's value by the use we could make of it. Wordsworth saw this, lowered his eyes, and muttered, "We murder to dissect."

I remember studying RNA replication at Calvin College. I watched awestruck as these strands, spiraled like pasta (why?), unzipped and matched themselves to proteins, spinning shut once the orders were delivered. I realized that a kaleidoscope of microscopic ribbons spin open and shut inside me. I am alive, able to sing songs and have friends, because of their dance.

We have not eliminated wonder entirely, but we have certainly marginalized it. Our analytic arrogance has squelched the process of taking delight in what we do not understand. Yet wonder can still be found if we look at things with childlike eyes.

Thankfully, there is no edge to anything. Small things are made of smaller things, tiny things are woven of the even

tinier. If the smallest units of life are spinning atoms, then all the world's sidewalks ripple and heave like the surface of an ocean.

Ask the most learned scientist, "What is reality *really*?" He will beg for a glass of water, and his wandering postulations will begin to sound like a 4-year-old explaining where babies come from.

I want to pull wonder back to the center, back to the exhilaration of dipping my finger in the lake, back to angels suddenly appearing over flocks at night, back till it encompasses everything. We were right all along. The world is steeped in unknowns and thick with miracles.

During moments of despair, I chide myself to remember Annie Dillard's realization that nothing shines brighter than what it reflects. All this beauty is the canvas of an even more beautiful God. And suddenly I am bursting. ■



Simon Cunningham is a church planter for Roots Church, Seattle, Wash.



PHOTO BY HIRYUKI TAKEEDA

Beauty and grace are performed whether or not we sense them. The least we can do is try to be there.

— ANNIE DILLARD

U.S. Budget Cuts Could Harm Poor

IMHO



It seems that no one speaks on their behalf these days.

I ATTENDED A MEETING RECENTLY in Washington, D.C., that left me deeply disturbed. At the meeting representatives from a number of denominations and faith-based organizations heard a presentation by a staff person from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities that made it clear that the current discussions about the budget deficit in the United States may well result in substantially reduced spending for the poor.

Scripture tells us over and over that God is very concerned about the poor. For example, Deuteronomy 15:11 states, “I command you to be openhanded toward those of your people who are poor and needy in your land” (TNIV). And Proverbs 31:9 says, “Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

I believe the budget deficit and overall debt load of the United States is one of the most significant problems my country currently faces. However, I believe it would be morally wrong to solve that problem “on the backs” of the poor.

Some of the current proposals would certainly do that. For example, there is considerable support for a proposal to

cut all “discretionary spending” by a certain percentage. This cutting across the board on a relatively small part of the budget will mean substantial cuts for programs that help people who have low incomes, programs such as Medicaid, SNAP (formerly food stamps), and CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program).

Moreover, I’ve been astonished by how little emphasis we’ve placed on helping the poor in our political discourse in recent years. Even President Obama failed to mention the poor in his latest State of the Union address; he was only the second president since Truman to do so. It seems that no one speaks on their behalf these days. Given Scripture’s emphasis on helping the poor, Christians should speak loud and clear for them!

The Christian Reformed Church’s Office of Social Justice Office is one vehicle that enables us to exercise that responsibility. I encourage everyone to go to www.crcjustice.org and subscribe to OSJ’s newsletter—which regularly provides opportunities to contact your congressional representative on proposals that impact the poor.

And, when deciding whom to vote for in an election, I urge you to find out the views of political candidates on this issue.

It sometimes seems easy for Christians to become passionate about certain social issues, such as abortion. Those issues are important; yet we can’t ignore the fact that Scripture also places great emphasis on justice and poverty. ■



Gary Mulder, formerly director of Faith Alive Christian Resources, is the Washington, D.C., representative for the CRC’s Office of Social Justice.



Global Warming Bandwagon

Regarding “Get Off the Environmental Bandwagon” (IMHO, April 2011), I encourage Paul Rhoda to look deeper at Christian environmentalism. While I fully acknowledge the challenges of weeding through science, there are still deep issues of stewardship and social justice involved. Sure, let’s not make decisions based on alarmist rhetoric, but let us thoughtfully acknowledge how our food, transportation, and living choices affect others both locally and globally.

Reducing such choices to an issue of scientific argument at best selfishly forgets the deeper social effects of how our consumption often comes at the expense of others—and highlights our privilege of discussing this topic without experiencing its direct effects.

—Kyle Wigboldy
Chicago

Muslim-Christian Chasm

The article “The Muslim-Christian Chasm” by Rev. Paul Hansen (IMHO, April 2011) is one of the best I have read in *The Banner*! I would like to add a small correction: the email address recommended for the two-day seminar offered by Rev. Marvin Heyboer should be drmarvinw@yahoo.com.

—Bill Kooman
Red Deer, Alberta

TTERS

While the Crusades were initially motivated by a pious desire to reclaim Jerusalem, they were largely fought by men seeking personal gain (wealth and land), a convenient way to be absolved of their sins, or an escape from punishment for being on the wrong side of a power struggle in the never-ending cycle of intrigue and murder that constituted politics in medieval Christendom. There was no unified “Islamic empire” against which the Crusaders fought.

Moreover, Rev. Hansen writes of Islam and Muslims as if they constitute one unified, unchanging entity. Rather, the differences between Calvinists, Baptists, and Catholics mirror the differences between Sunnis, Shias, and Sufis—and each of their sub-denominations. The debate over how literally to read, interpret, and implement sacred texts exists in both Islam and Christianity.

—*Matthew de Zoete*
Dundas, Ontario

I recommend Rev. Hansen and all to read *A World Without Islam*. You may gain further insights as to why the Eastern Orthodox Church and non-Western peoples have great suspicion of the motives and actions of Western Christians.

Also, I take exception to paragraph three of the article, which states, “Most of the Crusades were efforts to throw back the Islamic empire.” If we could have only been present in Constantinople during the Crusades when the crusaders demanded that this Christian city and its Christian people surrender and promised to spare all. When those poor people agreed, the crusaders plundered the city and killed all. On the other hand, years later, the Muslims also came to this city and demanded surrender with a promise to spare all—and honored their word.

Let’s realize that much darkness, at its root, stems from factors such as culture, geopolitics, and the pursuit of power and not religion.

—*David Daugharty*
London, Ontario

Gracious Lutherans

When I saw the April *Banner*, I was pleased to see the Christus Rex from the chapel of Valparaiso University, my Lutheran alma mater, featured on the cover. (I have since found a welcome home in the CRC.) Depicting the resurrected Christ ascending off the cross into his rightful role as King of Kings, it is certainly the perfect illustration for your cover article “The Kingdom on Earth or in Heaven? Living into the reality of the resurrection we await.” (The motto of VU is “In thy light we see light,” from Psalm 36:9).

I bet it was just a simple oversight, but nowhere in the magazine did this photo receive attribution as that of VU’s sculpture.

—*Gregg Shewan*
Big Rapids, Mich.

You really should credit the photos you use. I am a Lutheran pastor in Iowa. When the post office accidentally delivered the recent *Banner* to me instead of to the local CRC congregation, imagine my amazement at your cover photo. That particular graven image graces the chapel of my alma mater, Valparaiso University, a good Lutheran school. I was drawn to read the magazine, which I found informative and delightful. I am blessed to be sharing a community with CRC folk.

—*Rev. John Wolf*
Inwood, Iowa

Editor’s note: Oops! Please see our correction to the right.

Help Regarding Homosexuality

It isn’t really clear to me what sort of conviction the author of “Talking Biblically About Homosexuality” (March 2011) has regarding this issue. Is he asking the CRC synod to reaffirm its 1973 and 2002 decisions, or is he suggesting that it change them?

I’m in favor of open discussion on this issue, even though “it may not necessarily be easy or safe.” I do think it would be courageous, comforting, reassuring, and gratifying if synod would reaffirm what we believe the Bible says about marriage and about moral and immoral sexual behavior and reaffirm our commitment to compassionate counsel and support of those who struggle with wrongful sexual inclinations and/or behavior.

—*Harry Vriend*
Edmonton, Alberta

Corrections

In a rather incredible oversight, we neglected to credit our Lutheran brothers and sisters for the wonderful image on our April (Easter) cover. The Christus Rex (Resurrected Christ) is the focal point in the Chapel of the Resurrection on the campus of Valparaiso University, Indiana.

Speaking of oversights, we mistakenly changed the church membership of Susan Collins in our review of her book *Starting from Scratch* (April, p. 37). She belongs to Rochester (N.Y.) CRC. Ironically, an article by her husband, Tim, appears on pp. 38-39 of that issue, and he’s pastor of Rochester CRC!

The Banner humbly apologizes for the errors.

NEWS

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CRC Executive Director Resigns

Rev. Gerard (Jerry) Dykstra has resigned from his position as executive director of the Christian Reformed Church, effective immediately, for personal and family reasons.

The announcement came from Rev. Mark Vermaire, president of the denomination's Board of Trustees, at a special meeting of all staff at the church's U.S. headquarters in Grand Rapids, Mich.

"The board is thankful for Jerry's gifts in the past five and a half years," Vermaire told staff. "We are prayerful that God will continue to lead and guide him in this [next] stage of his life."

Vermaire said that Dykstra and the board agreed that it was a mutually acceptable time for him to depart.



Rev. Jerry Dykstra

Dykstra served as executive director since 2006 after one year as the denominational director of ministries. Prior to that, he pastored churches in Michigan and California.

Rev. Bruce Adema, director of Canadian ministries for the CRC, will fill the essential duties of the office until an interim executive director can be named.

Vermaire said the board hopes to name an interim person within the next couple of weeks, in time for Synod 2011.

Further decisions about appointing a new executive director are yet to be dealt with by the board and synod.

"Jesus Christ is Lord of the church, and in every situation he leads and guides us," Vermaire said. "We trust . . . God will lead us through this time."

—Gayla R. Postma with
Jena Vander Ploeg

Sunday Service Includes Surprise Wedding

Members of The River Christian Reformed Church in Redlands, Calif., were recently surprised to find themselves guests at a wedding during the Sunday-morning worship service.

Late in March the congregation witnessed the marriage of Philip Daugherty, 42, and Weslene Haines, 53.

The couple, whose lives included a history of drug use and jail time, had been living together for three years prior to finding a home at The River CRC.

Rev. William Verhoef, pastor of family life at the church, said, "They were both clearly open to a fresh start with the Lord. They have wanted to get mar-



MARK LEONARD

Weslene Haines and Philip Daugherty were married during a Sunday-morning worship service.

Philip was baptized and Weslene reaffirmed her faith.

During the sermon, Elgersma highlighted God's use of extraordinary plans to redeem brokenness. "We then moved to redeeming a broken relationship by having a Christ-filled, God-glorifying ceremony to end the service," said Elgersma.

For some time, but finances were an issue."

Rev. Scott Elgersma, senior pastor, suggested they hold the wedding during the church's new members worship service in which

Ministers, Spouses, and Churches Get Dinged on New Pension Rules

Changes to the Christian Reformed Church's Ministers' Pension Fund mean that active ministers must work till age 66 to collect full benefits, churches have to pay more, and ministers and their surviving spouses will receive less retirement income.

The changes became necessary when Canadian pension regulators changed the rules for funding pension plans in 2008. Even though the Canadian plan isn't any less solvent than before, the new rules mean that it is now considered underfunded to the tune of \$20 million.

The changes proposed by the pension trustees have to be approved by Synod 2011 (the church's annual leadership meeting in June), but since the plan could be shut down if the plan

The church members who were in on the surprise found a wedding dress for Weslene and helped Philip rent a tuxedo. And instead of the usual coffee and cookies in the fellowship hall after the service, there were cakes. The deacons arranged for the marriage certificate and fees.

"It feels so great to be part of a new family, to belong to something so good," said Haines.

Member Shirley Ten Have was delighted. "We have heard about God's love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness from the pulpit. Now we have witnessed it as well."

"I couldn't have asked for a better day," said the new Mrs. Daugherty.

—Heidi Wicker

isn't in place by July 1, approval by synod is highly likely.

Even though the U.S. and Canadian pension plans are two separate plans, the denomination is bi-national and the pension trustees want all CRC ministers to be treated equitably.

Thus, changes apply to all ministers and all churches north and south of the border. There is no change for current pensioners.

What It Means for Ministers and Their Spouses

The changes for ministers mean they must now work until age 66 to collect full pension benefits.

If a minister works until age 66, the automatic benefit provided will now be paid only during his or her lifetime, for a minimum of five years. However, if a couple elects to receive a pension that includes a survivor benefit for the spouse, the pension will be reduced by about 10 percent. Under the old rules a survivor benefit was automatic.

In the example shown in the box, after a minister dies, his or her spouse could receive up to \$3,400 less per year than under the old rules.

There is a spousal subsidy to be paid to all married ministers who retire before 2017. That payment will be given to a minister or surviving spouse for a maximum of 10 years.

What It Means for Churches

The amount paid by churches to the pension funds will increase by 15 percent, effective July 1. It is hoped that this will be the only contribution increase needed for several years.

For Canadian churches, that means an increase in the church

budget of nearly \$1,300 per year per minister.

For U.S. churches, it means an increase of approximately \$1,000 per year per minister.

The U.S. surplus and borrowing \$2.3 million against the denomination's Grand Rapids, Mich., headquarters will help fund the Canadian shortfall.

In 2016, when the Canadian plan is once again considered fully funded, pension trustees and synod will have to decide whether to lower church payments or restore benefits or some combination thereof.

—Gayla R. Postma

Pension Changes

This example is based on a Canadian minister due to retire this year at age 65, after 39 years of service, whose final average salary is calculated at \$48,763, with a spouse of similar age.

Before July 1	After July 1
Ministry couple's annual pension income	
\$25,398	\$24,001
If couple opts for spousal survivor benefit	
\$25,398*	\$21,601
Surviving spouse annual income	
\$17,808	\$14,401

*currently full pension is not reduced for survivor benefits

Example is for illustrative purposes only. For specific information, please contact the Ministers' Pension Office.



MARY GREIDANUS

Dave Greidanus helps a member of the community prepare her income tax return.

Helping Give Unto Caesar What Is Caesar's

At tax time in Edmonton, Alberta, a number of volunteers help folks "give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Matt. 22:21).

Several Christian Reformed churches in Edmonton are involved in a volunteer initiative that helps low-income earners prepare their taxes.

Maranatha, Bethel Community, Trinity, and Fellowship CRCs each provide volunteers who are trained by the Canada Revenue Agency to help people with lower incomes get any refunds they are due. Volunteers also help people apply for various government subsidies they may not be aware exist.

Dave Greidanus, a member of Maranatha CRC and a former Canada Revenue employee, volunteers his time in a few different locations. "There are a lot of people who really need help to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty," he said.

—Rachel deKoning Kraay

NEWS

Florida Church Goes All Out for Haiti

New Hope Community Christian Reformed Church of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., just completed the latest of many mission trips to Pignon, Haiti.

The 13-member team who recently returned ran a health clinic, played with orphans, held revival services, and helped to build an orphanage.

New Hope Community has a close relationship with Jerusalem Baptist Church in Pignon



New Hope mission team members prepare over-the-counter medicine for distribution in Haiti.

and is finding financial and prayer sponsors for 100 children to attend the local school.

“The Christians we know in Haiti have nothing, but they have a closer, better relationship with God because the church and the Lord is so much of what they do,” said Kirby Williams, pastor of New Hope Community, who leads the mission teams. “We come away with the feeling that we live in a kind of Disney World alternate reality; theirs is the reality.”

—Roxanne Van Farowe

Youth Workers Find SoulCare

At a recent retreat in Ontario, 70 youth workers and youth pastors from Christian Reformed churches across the province heard how making time for peace and quiet with God is essential to the effectiveness of their ministry.

Rather than focusing on learning how to do youth ministry better, the retreat challenged participants to pause for reflection apart from the turmoil of ministry.

The SoulCare retreat was one of six planned across North America by Youth Unlimited to address the growing concern of burnout among CRC youth pastors.

Paula Wolters of Ebenezer CRC in Trenton, Ontario, said it was an opportunity to network and encourage. “I feel called back to focus on God and not on my crazy to-do lists,” she said.

Julie Scholman of Mountainview CRC in Grimsby, Ontario, agreed. “It was great to have quiet time with God away from the busyness of life.”

—Monica deRegt



Youth leaders from Ottawa enjoy free time at a recent SoulCare retreat.

RON HOSMAR



New Pastor Does Prison Time

For Rev. Rick Admiraal, the call was clear. “I felt a call from God not just to do ministry, but to do ministry specifically in the prison setting,” said Admiraal. “A lot of people think of prison as a dark place, but it’s also a place that is spiritually fruitful, and that very much energizes me.”

Newly ordained, Admiraal’s first parish will be New Life Prison Church, a church plant within the Newton (Iowa) Correctional Facility.

New Life will become the third Christian Reformed church behind prison walls.

While studying at Calvin Theological Seminary, Admiraal met others who lead churches inside prisons.

“We heard their stories and heard how empowering it was for inmates because they are not just ministered to, but they become servants of God; they become leaders in the church and participate,” he said. “I fell in love with that model of ministry.”

Admiraal and volunteers from several supporting churches are now hosting a weekly prayer group as well as a Bible study at the prison.

—Melissa Holtrop

The husband-and-wife team of Rev. Rick and Rose Admiraal are planting New Life Prison Church inside Newton (Iowa) Correctional Facility.

Illinois Church Packs Supplies for Haiti Students

On Sunday, Feb. 27, more than 400 adults and students from Orland Park (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church assembled 2,000 school-supply packs for children in Haiti.

The packs, which will be delivered this summer, include notebooks, crayons, markers, and pencils—things every student needs but can't always afford.

"It was a great family experience because the kids were able to get involved," said Cindy Vander Laan, volunteer coordinator for the church.

"Hopefully parents will go home and explain to their children that some kids in this world do not have crayons or school supplies. We want to teach the next generation, right away, to be more compassionate with those around the world who do not have anything."

The church worked with Elim Christian Services, an organization that works with people with disabilities. Elim's HOPE Packs program has produced everything from school packs to food packs to hygiene packs, which have been distributed around the world.

—Melissa Holtrop



Members of Orland Park CRC work with students from Elim Christian Services to assemble school-supply packs for children in Haiti.

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Wesley Timmer

1935-2011


Rev. Wesley Timmer, a sensitive encourager, dedicated preacher, compassionate listener, and sports enthusiast, died recently of unknown causes in his home.

Timmer graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1963 and served congregations in Michigan and New York before retiring in 1997.

During his retirement years he served as a hospital chaplain and as a visiting pastor.

Timmer was a dedicated preacher of the Word. He had a deep love for people. The parishioners of the churches he served testify how they looked forward to his visits.

All through the years he remained a sports enthusiast and was known as a fine softball player.

Timmer was preceded in death by his wife, Marilyn, and is survived by three children and their spouses and by five grandchildren. 

—Louis M. Tamminga

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

Highlights from Winter Classis Meetings

Two 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 Rick Admiraal, George Den Oudsten, Jeff Dephouse, Steve De Ruiter, Chelsey Harmon, Philip Landers, Brittney Salverda, David Salverda, Anthony Sytsma, Josh Tuininga, Emily Vandenheuvel, Tom Vanderploeg, Andrew Vis, and Laurie Zuverink.

Transferred in from other denominations were Rev. David Sungju Cho, Rev. Ken Kyung Hong, Rev. Kang Won Kim, Rev. Pablo Sang Won Lee, Rev. Won Chul Ma, Rev. Deog Jong Nam, Rev. Jim Kwangchul Seung, and Rev. Randall Simon.

Revs. Don Cowart, Eun Sung Lee, Randal Meyers, Martin Vellekoop, and Jude Reardon were **released from their congregations**.

Chul Sup Bang, Suh Hyun Park, David Vander Meer, and William Weber were **released from CRC ministry**.

Classes Huron and Kalamazoo have churches that continue to **protest women delegates at classis**.


New ministries were started or approved in Stony Brook, N.Y., and Grand Rapids, Mich.

Thousand Oaks Community CRC in Lake Terrace, Calif., **closed**.

Eight classes held discussions on the **Belhar Confession**.

Five classes sent overtures (requests) or communications to Synod 2011 (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) about the proposed **Covenant for Office-bearers**.

Four classes sent overtures to Synod 2011 requesting that it **not adopt the proposed revisions of the three Reformed standards** (the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort and the Heidelberg Catechism) that would give the CRC common language with the Reformed Church in America.

All materials regarding Synod 2011 will be available in the *Agenda for Synod 2011*, posted online at www.crcna.org and sent in print to every church. 

—Banner news correspondents

NEWS

Blessing Neighbors with \$100

How would you use \$100 to bless your community? Sushi dinner? Spa night?

Those were just two of the ideas resulting from a mini-grant



HITOMI URUSHIZAKI

Aya Tanaka and Matt Gleason enjoy fellowship at a sushi dinner at Sherman Street CRC.

program of Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Hitomi Urushizaki hosted a sushi fund-raising dinner for members of the church, using her \$100 to buy ingredients. She raised \$600 to send people to a conference for equipping Japanese Christians in California.

Meanwhile, Lorraine Otte, Rev. David Kromminga, and Jane Porter used a grant to purchase snacks and supplies to offer a spa night for several single mothers they had been ministering to through the church's adopt-a-block program.

Otte, a massage therapist, offered free massages, and others from the church offered a foot bath, a make-your-own-Valentine

table, snacks, tea, and socializing. Kromminga provided childcare in the nursery.

Members of the church could apply for a \$100 grant from Classis Grand Rapids East (a regional group of churches) to be used only for something that would bless their church's neighborhood.

Other grants were used to purchase raised beds for a community garden, clothes for refugee families, gloves and hats for the homeless, and business cards printed with a blessing verse to be left with a tip at local restaurants.

"I don't need the money to do this; I could do it for free," Otte said.

—Noah J. K. Kruis



Bonny Nicholas

Interim Safe Church Director Appointed

Bonnie Nicholas has been appointed to a six-month contract as interim director of Safe Church Ministry, the Christian Reformed agency charged with education about abuse and abuse prevention.

Nicholas, a member of River Terrace Christian Reformed Church in East Lansing, Mich., was most recently a case manager for Sparrow's Nest, a Lansing organization that helps homeless women and children become homeowners.

She also has experience in several organizations that deal with domestic and sexual violence and is co-chair of the Classis Lake Erie Safe Church Team.

Nicholas was appointed to succeed Beth Swagman, who resigned effective March 31.

Director of Denominational Ministries Sandy Johnson said plans are to present a nominee for director at the September meeting of the CRC's Board of Trustees.

—Gayla R. Postma

Ontario Man Wins Engineering Competition

Caleb Vandenberg, 22, took first place in Ontario and third place nationwide in an engineering competition for university students.

Vandenberg is a member of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Caledon, Ontario, and an engineering student at the University of Guelph (Ontario).

He and his teammates, Mike Bewick, Nick Walters, and David Wood, competed in the consulting engineering category in the Ontario competition, in which they had to come up with a real-world solution to a real-world problem.

Addressing sanitation issues that lead to health problems in Ethiopia, Vandenberg said the team's solution was "a community-scale anaerobic digester. Instead



ONTARIO ENGINEERING COMPETITION

Caleb Vandenberg, left, with his winning teammates

of dumping human waste in the streets, where [runoff] can contaminate the water, it is dumped [in the digester] instead. Methane gas is generated and could be used to boil water."

Vandenberg said the team's accomplishments will help them in terms of possible future careers with the companies who sponsored the competition.

—Monica deRegt

Teams Bring Home Titles on Both Coasts

Boys' basketball teams in Washington and Massachusetts brought home state titles for their schools and the girls' team brought home a provincial title in northern British Columbia.

The Sunnyside (Wash.) Christian High School team brought home its sixth title in the past decade.

Trevor Wagenaar and Steve Broersma earned individual honors.

On the East Coast, the boys' basketball team from Whitinsville (Mass.) Christian School brought home the title in its division.

Hans Miersma and Taylor Bajema earned individual honors.

Houston Christian School, in northern British Columbia, brought home the provincial championship in girls' basketball, despite being one of the smallest schools in its division.

The school is so small, it couldn't even field a complete team from grades 11 and 12, so the school added a couple girls from the younger grades.

Ruth Hamblin was named Most Valuable Player, and Allison Seinen and Dani Opdendries were named to the first and second all-star teams.

The team also brought home the award for most sportsmanlike team.

—Amy Toornstra, Calvin Hulstein, Jenny de Groot



Sunnyside (Wash.) Christian High championship basketball team

JARED DEJONG



Whitinsville (Mass.) Christian School championship team

GUSTAVO ESTRELLA



Houston (British Columbia) Christian School championship basketball team

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Elton Piersma

1927-2011

Rev. Elton Piersma, 83, an avid Bible student, man of subtle humor, accomplished counselor, articulate preacher, and specialist in congregational health, passed away following a five-month struggle with leukemia.

Piersma ran a printing business before attending Calvin Theological Seminary. He served churches in Pennsylvania and Michigan before becoming a full-time marriage and family counselor. He retired in 1989.

During retirement Piersma directed a Florida ministry to people with AIDS.

Piersma was skilled at personal ministry to people in need, and his leadership gifts in that area were widely sought. His warm personality and sincere faith will be long remembered by those who benefited from his care.

Piersma was predeceased by his first wife, Evelyn, and a son.

He is survived by his wife Aleda, seven children and their spouses, 19 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren.

He is also survived by Aleda's two children, three grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

Writer Needed

The Banner is seeking a news correspondent in lower Michigan/northern Ohio to write about Christian Reformed people and activities of interest to our readers. If you live in this region and you like to write, we'd like to hear from you. We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. All expressions of interest should be addressed via email to Gayla Postma, News Editor, at gpostma@crcna.org. Please include a resume or letter outlining your news-writing experience and some recent samples of your work.



JONATHAN NEWHOUSE

Andrea Isaak and Carl exchange musical ideas.

Cinderella Jam

Every Tuesday night, the sounds of a jam session creep out of a propped-open side entry of The Bridge Community Christian Reformed Church—but only until 10 p.m., because the musicians have to be home before curfew.

The musicians live down the street at Vision Quest, a drug and alcohol recovery house for men. Besides being conveniently located, the church's casual worship style with an emphasis on music draws them in.

Andrea Isaak, the church's worship music director, noticed that some of the men would hang around after worship and look at the instruments. She discovered that they had musical interest and talent that had been buried in the spiral of addiction.

An invitation to hang out and jam turned into a weekly opportunity to make music together.

Isaak talked about the way music opened a door for The Bridge to be a place of mutual acceptance and grace. "Music has become part of their recovery," she said. "It is redeeming for body and soul."

Like Cinderella, most of the musicians have to be back home before their curfew. But better than Cinderella, Tuesday nights at The Bridge are real.

—Jenny deGroot

Arizona Church Benefits from Preschool

Hope Community Christian Reformed Church in Flagstaff, Ariz., didn't anticipate operating its own preschool.

At first, the church served only as landlord for Pine Cone Preschool. Volunteers helped make the building changes required for a licensed preschool, said elder Dan Otten, and when the school foundered after a year, the church decided to move from landlord to operator.

"It's become a mission of the church—to get the children ready for school, to introduce them to the concept of Christianity, and to be a family to them and to their families," Otten said.

The school has since flourished, adding a daycare for children as young as six weeks of age. The preschool is now near its licensed capacity of 50 children.

Operating Pine Cone Preschool has also brought income to the small congregation.

Even better, four of the preschool families have started attending the church on a regular basis, Otten said.

—Larry Edsall



DEBBIE DEIMONBREUN

Teacher Isabel Mancini and her preschool students share a group hug.

Covenant for Officebearers Proposed

A proposed "Covenant for Officebearers" will give elders, deacons, ministers, and ministry associates a new way to affirm their agreement with the doctrines officially held by the Christian Reformed Church and to promise to use proper procedures to engage in discussion when they don't agree with them.

The new form would replace the current Form of Subscription, written in the 1600s. That document has fallen into disuse in some churches because some officebearers have reservations about signing it.

In its report, the committee that wrote the proposed covenant noted that "throughout history the [Form of Subscription]


has been perceived as unduly intimidating." The committee sought, instead, to come up with a covenant that "both encourages discussion and respects the honest confessional questions raised by those who might otherwise have been discouraged by the thought of facing a council, classis, or synod in a long process."

In writing the new document, the committee sought also to use language that "sings" rather than "plods along."

"The revisions needed to be clear, compelling, and easily transportable across cultural and linguistic barriers," the committee's report states. "Any document that calls people to covenant together should be stated in simple yet profound language

so that it might be widely understood and embraced."

The report notes that the language of covenant is communal rather than individualistic. "The document is not just an affirmation of one's personal beliefs, but an agreement on how we are called to live together as sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ," the committee wrote. "[It] conveys a promise to work through disagreements and openly and honestly deal with questions that arise, rather than to have the first reaction be to stifle dissent."

Synod 2011 will decide whether to adopt the Covenant for Officebearers when it meets in mid-June. 

—Gayla R. Postma



From left, Grace Huizingh, Nick Strooboscher, and Zoe Strooboscher participate in the “Dogs and Daisies” event in their neighborhood.

 Check thebanner.org for the expanded story.

Michigan Church Adopts Neighborhood Block

Discovery Christian Reformed Church in Cutlerville, Mich., has “adopted” 48 households in its neighborhood by providing for both their physical and spiritual needs.

As a result, several neighbors have begun to attend Discovery’s worship services.

“I think it’s a really great program,” said neighbor Alvina Welsh, who has since become a member of Discovery. “There’s a great passion from Discovery for connecting with others regardless if you’re a believer or not.”

“It is a hurting neighborhood financially—many single parents, some residents are unemployed, some are underemployed,” explained Rev. Paul Sausser, pastor at Discovery.

The church organized several events, including a block party, a “Dogs and Daisies” event during which members and neighbors ate hot dogs and planted flowers, and a distribution of winter clothing and Christmas baskets.

“We want to show Christ’s love, meet needs, build relationships, help them better their community, and allow them to give to others,” said Sausser.

“We have focused on ministering to the households here in the love of Jesus—no strings attached,” said Sausser.

Discovery plans to continue with its mission in the neighborhood even after its 18-month “adoption” period ends. —Ryan Struyk

West Michigan Family Grows Through Embryo Adoption

Kari and Chad Bonnema of Grand Haven, Mich., have four adopted children: McKenna, Madison, and twins Meredith and Mason.

But Kari actually gave birth to the twins, who celebrated their first birthday last October. They were adopted as embryos and implanted in Kari through in-vitro fertilization.

Though embryo adoption is still relatively unknown, the Bonnemas prayed about it and felt it was something they wanted to try.

“I always wanted to have the pregnancy experience. Embryos are lives just waiting to be born, so these babies would have the chance to live and I would have the chance to be pregnant,” said Kari.

Just as with adoptions of already-born babies, there are



Chad and Kari Bonnema with children McKenna, Madison, Meredith, and Mason.

several types of embryo adoptions, ranging from the donor parents selecting the adoptive parents to the adoptive parents knowing only identifying information about the donor parents.

The Bonnemas say they will continue to share their story to help others become aware of embryo adoption.

“Embryo adoption did take us three tries. I think that was God’s timing, but it did work finally, and we are so thankful. Children are a gift from God, however you get them,” Kari said.

—Amy Rycenga

Churches Deliver Pre-built Houses to Baja



Members of CrossPoint CRC after assembling a loft house in Baja, Mexico.

CrossPoint Christian Reformed Church in Chino, Calif., and The River CRC in Redlands, Calif., regularly turn their parking lots into building lots as they put together prefab loft homes to be delivered to and assembled in Baja, Mexico.

“A loft house is 12 x 12 feet, with four windows, a door, and a second-story attic loft for sleeping that is reached by an interior ladder,” said Christine Nydam, coordinator of the program at The River CRC.

Between them, the two churches have erected more than 20 houses.

“The pre-build is a day of nail-pounding fun in the church parking lot. Grand-

parents, parents, and kids come with hammer in hand ready to pound some nails,” said Nydam.

The entire operation takes about four hours per house, including loading the trailer, according to Bob and Mary Findley, coordinators for CrossPoint CRC.

The assembly weekend includes the trip to Mexico, introduction to the recipient family, devotions and worship, assembly of the house, and a ceremonial gift of a Bible and keys to the house.

“Most participants agree that the final ceremony with the family is extremely fulfilling,” said Findley.

—Heidi Wicker

BY TOM OOSTERHUIS

Jihad

What Does the Qur'an *Really* Say?

Putting our questions
directly to a Muslim scholar

ZACHARIA AL KHATIB was studying at the University of Alberta while Tom Oosterhuis was the Christian Reformed chaplain there. After university studies, Al Khatib pursued formal Islamic studies at a seminary in the Middle East, memorizing the Qur'an in Arabic as well as studying its interpretation with renowned scholars.

Al Khatib spoke to members of West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, as part of an education series focusing on outreach and agreed to participate in this interview for *The Banner*.

Since there is considerable confusion about the meaning of *jihad*, and it plays a fairly large role in discussions about Islam, especially in the media, Tom decided to put the question directly to Al Khatib. Their conversation follows.

Zacharia, thank you for agreeing to be part of this discussion. I want to start with a question about jihad. In the minds of many Christians, and others, this word has, for a long time, had a rather negative meaning. It has become associated with an aggressive approach of Muslims to non-Muslims and often with terrorism. What do you understand by that word jihad?

Well, first I want to clarify that, in Muslim belief, there isn't much room for personal opinion in matters of Scripture. God says in the Qur'an, "Do not put [your opinion] forward in the presence of Allah and His Messenger" (49:1)—meaning we're not to give our opinions voice where there is clear scriptural guidance.

So the role of scholars and students like myself is basically to clarify the intent of Scripture in cases where it is open to mul-

iple interpretations, and to clarify the best means of implementing it in our current state. What I mean by this is that what I say here isn't my opinion, but rather what our Scriptures say on these matters.

Now, regarding the word *jihad*: linguistically the word means "to struggle" or "to exert one's efforts"; from the same root we get the word *ijtihad*, which means a scholar's endeavor to derive a ruling by exerting the utmost intellectual effort.

Idiomatically the word means "to engage in battle against enemy forces." However, it is important to understand that it does not always mean a physical struggle, the same way we use the term "war" when describing a "war on drugs" in English.

Our Prophet, peace be upon him and upon all of the prophets, said, "Do not hope to meet your enemies [in battle], but if you meet them be firm," meaning that Muslims are not supposed to desire fighting. At the personal level, jihad is undertaken in self-defense. At the state level, jihad is a last resort when negotiations fail—meaning the state is not allowed to declare war without first attempting a settlement.

That being said, Islam is a complete way of life; there is guidance for every situation, including battle. The compendium of rulings relating to battle are called "ahkam al jihad," or "rules of jihad." They include things like the prophetic guidance not to kill women, children, elderly, monks; not to commit vandalism; rules of surrender, retreat, and peace settlements; and things like how to pray in battle.

How does jihad relate to the practice of Islam?

Islam means submission to Allah (God), so we're called to obey his commands in all circumstances. Historically, while there was an Islamic state, Islamic law governed individual and state actions. There were rules governing individual soldiers' behavior as well as state conduct in war. Upholding these rulings is the very essence of submission to God.

How does jihad describe your relation to Allah or your obligation and duty toward Allah?

Islamically, it is a duty to defend oneself and the oppressed; God says, "Were it not that Allah defended some people through others the Earth would be corrupted" (2:251), meaning that a Muslim state has an obligation to uphold justice and prevent tyranny on Earth. Again, battle is a last resort upon the breakdown of negotiations and the refusal of invitation to right conduct.

Is the association of aggression or forceful witness to non-Muslims totally out of line, or is there something in the history of the term jihad that lends itself to that understanding?

God says in the Qur'an, "There is no compulsion in faith" (2:256), which is clear in its meaning: faith is a matter of the heart—and no one controls hearts but God. No one can force belief.

However, all residents of a Muslim state (regardless of their religion) were expected to follow the laws of the land, which would include things like modest dress and a prohibition on immoral items like pornography or drugs. Those laws were in the best interests of society, just as we have laws against reckless driving and child pornography in Canada. »

“It is important to understand that *jihad* does not always mean a physical struggle.”

In any religion, politically motivated people, or people with specific agendas, can find texts to support their cause and will justify a particular interpretation as God’s will or command when most adherents would hold a more moderate view. Is there anything in the definition or understanding of jihad that allows politically motivated extremists to use this word from their own faith to justify something most Muslims would find wrong?

People calling to violence usually appeal to emotion more than intellect. Some definitely quote Scripture, but the real question is whether that quotation is properly contextualized and interpreted, which is often not the case. Islam does not allow vigilante acts. In attempting to solve this problem, we have to understand the political and socioeconomic reasons underlying calls to violence.

Though we do not like it, we need to recognize that Western powers have committed numerous injustices against developing nations in the past and in our own time.

“Vengeful rage”—one of the deadly sins—played a strong role in the Bush administration’s call to war after September 11. The same emotion is often evoked by those who call for vigilante violence against the U.S. and her allies. Ultimately, everyone needs to take a proactive stance in resolving these problems, which means looking at what we can do on an individual and societal level to put an end to some of the root causes of this violence.

Do we hear enough from Muslims who oppose terrorist acts and calls to violence?

The suggestion that Muslims have been too silent about vigilante violence is simply untruth, though it is often claimed by pundits. A recent article published by Imam Zaid Shakir, a contemporary Muslim leader, lists more than 100 of the foremost Muslims alive who have publicly denounced violence, such as the September 11 attacks.

The imam titled the article, “A Tree has Fallen in the Forest,” alluding to the famous saying and implying that the problem is not that no one has spoken out, but that not enough attention has been given to their voices.

Ultimately, the world will continue to have problems until the root causes of violence and revenge are addressed.

Thank you, Zacharia, for your willingness to answer our questions. I know that you share my desire for a frank and open conversation that will help us understand one another and ourselves better. ■

Editor’s note: This interview took place before the current uprisings in the Middle East, which, Al Khatib notes, have served to confirm the tensions he mentions between governments and people in that region. He points out that the uprisings emphasize our responsibility in the West to support freedom rather than tyrannical governments.



Rev. Tom Oosterhuis is a retired minister in the Christian Reformed Church. He served as a CRC campus minister for 32 years at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

A Pastor Reflects

Muslims claim a very high view of the Qur’an as Scripture. My initial reaction to Zacharia’s first response, concerning personal opinion, the authority of the Qur’an, and interpretation was that this is similar to the view of the Bible with which I grew up.

However, I think that Christians are more likely to recognize that the Scriptures are heard with different ears in different cultures and different centuries, without taking away their “God-breathed” character. Interpretation is unavoidable, and therefore, dialogue and wrestling are necessary to discover how the Scriptures continue to speak to us. My personal opinion and interpretation count, even though they are always weighed in the context of the conversation that is going on in the whole church. In Islam, the Qur’an assumes a position almost equivalent to the place of Christ.

Second, Zacharia’s comments about the Bush administration might come across as inflammatory to some. At first he was inclined to equate the Bush administration’s actions with those of the September 11 terrorists. Both Muslims and Christians do need to examine our own “house” first and ask ourselves why others see us in this way.

Finally, Zacharia’s way of defining moral law (Sharia) basically requires that everyone in a Muslim country live according to Muslim laws. In the U.S. and Canada, Christian laws (blue laws) used to prevail in our culture, but as we have become more pluralistic, the influence of a particular Christian morality has modified to make room for differing opinions among Christians as well as different customs among the various religions, including liberalism.

—Tom Oosterhuis

FAQs

Relationships

Q I'm a mother raising three teenage boys on my own, and I'm totally overwhelmed. The kids have taken over the house, and I am unable to discipline or control them. What should I do?

A It is very difficult, as a single parent of the opposite sex, to create and maintain the kind of positive relationship that will encourage your sons to navigate the turbulent teen years successfully. Being overwhelmed under the circumstances is normal, and it follows that you cannot do it alone and must seek the help of a professional family therapist who would be able to coach you and your sons toward becoming a healthier family.

In the meantime, here are some pointers to think about. First, it is your job to be the “executive” of the family, and it will help if you think of yourself as being in charge, regardless of what you feel. Learn as much as you can about parenting teens by consulting experts such as Barbara Coloroso’s book *Kids Are Worth It*.

As the executive, you have the right to set rules and insist they be obeyed—or else. With teens age 16 or older, the “or else” part essentially means that you will not allow them to live with you in your house unless they abide by your rules. Rules for older teens, however, should be minimal, should enhance their safety and well-being, and should be designed to help them develop responsibility.

Second, understand that you cannot create good behavior, and that you can only limit bad behavior by insisting your kids obey your good rules. But do model good behavior by treating your boys with respect (no yelling), and by living well yourself. Take good care of

yourself and your house or apartment and live responsibly and with joy. Have balance in your life by cultivating interests and maintaining good friendships.

Third, let the boys know you care about them. Be interested in their lives, but also be prepared to accept the heightened need for privacy that characterizes the teen years.

Last, forgive yourself for mistakes made. Take the long view. Accept that teens can be all over the map with their emotions and have tons of energy that is not always well directed. Thankfully, most of them do grow up to become responsible and likeable adults.

And, of course, love them and pray for them often.

—Judy Cook

Judy Cook is a family therapist living in Hamilton, Ontario. She is a member of Meadowlands Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ontario. You may e-mail her at judycook.thebannerqanda@gmail.com. All responses will be held in the strictest confidence.

Church

Q Our pastor informed the council and congregation that, after much prayer and reflection, God had revealed to him what direction our church should go. How can we respond? If we disagree, we'll appear to be unspiritual.

A This is really nothing new. Religious leaders in our Savior’s day also asserted that when they spoke God agreed. Sometimes Jesus had a different perspective and freely expressed it. Although they should never be closed to a new ministry direction, congregations themselves should develop a ministry plan and call pastors who are willing to help them reach their goals. Too frequently congregations shift directions with each new pastor. Not surprisingly, members are not very willing to follow the new pastor and a new direction because they know that in five to eight years someone else will be taking them somewhere else.

Pastors should not play the “spiritual trump card” of “God told me what direction this congregation should go” but should be attentive to the history, context, gifts, and interests of the people they serve. Councils should be extremely cautious when pastors use “God language” and their own authority to get their own way. John Maxwell put it well when he said, “A pastor who thinks he leads when no one is following is only taking a walk.”

—George Vander Weit

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

Calling

Q Is God's call on my life only about work?

A In short, no. There may be times when it feels that way, as when the workload extends into nights and weekends or when the easiest way to define oneself in the prime of life is by means of job or career. But if you think about the common span of many peoples’ lives, there are years of preparation for future work and years when work fades into the mists of personal history. However, the gifts and the calling remain. Purpose doesn’t ebb over time, as the psalmist states so well in Psalm 71:18, “Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.” Psalm 92:14 talks about bearing fruit in old age.

I remember my 90-year-old grandmother well in this regard. Though confined to a room in a retirement home, her sweet spirit emerged to a greater degree than when she was younger and more mobile. In looking around her tidy room, you couldn’t help but notice her well-worn Bible always within reading range, the source of a sweetness she didn’t need words to express. Through her calm inner beauty, she ministered to the next generation.

—Bonnie Speyers

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

Scholarship, Strings, and Stars

by Matt Kucinski



Luke Leisman performs with the Calvin orchestra.

CALVIN COLLEGE

Luke Leisman fell in love with astronomy while playing pond hockey under starry skies.

“One thing that keeps alive your sense of awe is astronomy,” says Leisman, a senior at Calvin

College in Grand Rapids, Mich.

When it came time for the Ada, Mich., native to choose a college, the night sky was on his mind.

Leisman wanted to study astronomy, and he thought the facilities at Calvin were comparable to those at a public university. And he’d have an opportunity to do research side-by-side with professors, which he wouldn’t be able to do as an undergraduate at a big state school.

So Leisman began his journey at Calvin.

Getting Adjusted

Leisman grew up knowing about Calvin (both his parents are alumni), knowing about Christian education (he went to Grand Rapids Christian High School), and knowing about West Michigan (he had lived there his whole life). Yet his first semester at Calvin proved a big transition.

“There was a lot of adjusting, being out on my own,” says Leisman.

One of the adjustments was the college workload: his first history assignment, which he anticipated taking him about 30 minutes, took nearly three hours.

Another adjustment was trying to develop friendships and routines—things that didn’t happen overnight. “You have lots of acquaintances, not a lot of friends,” Leisman notes.

So he put himself in position to meet a lot of people his first year. He didn’t test the waters; he jumped right in.

He introduced himself to the physics and astronomy faculty.

“I knew I had interest, so I put a foot in the door,” Leisman explains.

That small opening evolved into a great opportunity. In his first year, Leisman started working as a lab assistant in Deborah Haarsma’s astronomy class.

Shortly thereafter, Haarsma asked him if he wanted to begin doing research alongside her. It would be without pay and without credit, just for fun. Leisman agreed.

“We tell all incoming students, ‘We have these projects. Do you want to get involved?’” says Haarsma. “Luke’s a stu-

“I like being well-rounded, and a liberal arts education appealed to me.”

dent who really took advantage of that opportunity.”

That summer, Leisman began researching brightest cluster galaxies, funded by a summer research fellowship. “I like to do a lot, and here’s a place that I can,” he says.

Adding Focal Points

But Leisman wasn’t satisfied with just learning as much as he could about the night sky. Astronomy wasn’t his only passion. And it wasn’t his only focus at Calvin.

Leisman also loves to write. He wrote for his high school student newspaper and came to Calvin hoping to be a physics and English double major.

“I like being well-rounded, and a liberal arts education appealed to me,” he explains. “I knew I had an opportunity to read Milton and study some physics.”

So Leisman began taking English classes and writing for the sports section of Calvin’s student newspaper, *Chimes*. He soon realized that a double major would be tough to complete in four years, but that didn’t stop him from taking courses he thought he’d enjoy, like Gary Schmidt’s creative writing class and David Urban’s class on Milton.

And his English professors recognized not only his passion, but also his talent for writing. “Professor Schmidt is still convinced that I should be a novelist instead of a physicist,” says Leisman.

He wouldn’t surrender his passion for playing music, either. Leisman had been playing the violin nearly his entire life,

and Calvin gave him an outlet for that as well.

“It’s a nice break from physics,” he says. “It gives me a chance to express myself a little bit.”

He joined the college orchestra, which presented its own opportunities and long-standing friendships. “It ended up being one of my closest-knit communities.”

Asking Tough Questions

Leisman’s second year at Calvin looked similar to his first year. The workload didn’t get any easier, but striking a balance among all his interests became more manageable.

Still, in some respects, it was his most challenging year at Calvin because of some difficult questions.

“There are always new ideas you come across and you have to deal with,” notes Leisman. “This is a community that wants to think about those things.”

He spent many nights lying awake in bed with tough questions going through his mind, things like, “If God made night and day before he made the sun, how do you deal with that?” and “How do you deal with good and evil?”

Leisman says that it was during this time, especially, that he was making his faith his own. And he leaned on fellow students and professors to help him navigate the difficult questions.

“One of the places I’ve spent the most time is in professors’ offices,” says Leisman.

He talked with some of his physics professors about everything “from girls to grad school to physics.”

“There are really some amazing people here,” Leisman says.

While he was wrestling with important questions, Leisman continued working toward his physics major. He spent the month of January during his »



At Calvin, Luke Leisman has balanced his passion for writing, music, and astronomy.

MATT KUCINSKI

CHURCHATWORK

CALVIN COLLEGE

More to the Story

- Last summer, 90 Calvin students worked on research with 41 professors from nine departments: biology, chemistry, computer science, engineering, physics, astronomy, geology/geography, mathematics/statistics, psychology, and nursing.
- Since 2008, Calvin has successfully nominated six students for the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship.
- In 2009-10, there were 421 Calvin students studying in other countries. Calvin ranks second nationally among baccalaureate institutions for the total number of students who participate in a short-term study abroad, according to the annual Open Doors Report from the Institute for International Education.
- In the past four years, the Calvin orchestra has given 33 performances on campus and toured the Midwest, the East Coast, and China.
- Recently Calvin was recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the top 25 schools committed to undergraduate teaching.
- This past year, more than 1,500 people from the Calvin community participated in a campus-wide Bible study on Philipians.

—Matt Kucinski

A Calvin student takes in the view during her 2011 interim in Israel.



ALEXANDRA COX



MYRNA ANDERSON

sophomore year on an interim, “Astronomy in the Southwest.”

During that three-week course, he was able to visit and take data at some of the major telescopes in New Mexico and Arizona, including at the U.S. Naval Observatory, Kitt Peak, and the White Sands Missile Range, where the first atomic bomb was detonated.

Later that spring, Leisman found out he had earned a Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, a prestigious national scholarship awarded to students who intend to pursue careers in mathematics, the natural sciences, or engineering and who demonstrate the potential to make significant contributions to their chosen field.

Entering New Territory

The transition from sophomore to junior year felt much like the transition from high school to college, Leisman says. For everything that he expected, there was an equal amount he didn’t anticipate. “I was taking 300-level courses and now living off-campus, so doing my own dishes, paying my own bills . . . a whole new set of responsibilities.”

To add to the adjustment, Leisman would spend three weeks in January with the college orchestra, traveling in China.

Luke Leisman (right) with the other 2009 Goldwater Scholars on the Commons Lawn. From left: Melissa Haegert (physics), Tim Ferdinands (mathematics), Sarah Tasker (chemistry), and Alexandra Cok (biochemistry).

They saw the famous sites—the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Olympic Stadium, Tiananmen Square—and played lots of venues: concert halls, recital halls, and churches.

But what made the most impact was staying with a host family for two nights in a small town. Leisman’s host parents didn’t speak any English, and he didn’t speak much Chinese.

“It was incredible to see the amount of community we were able to have and the ways they reached out to me, especially in my unfamiliar situation,” he says. “My host brother even gave me his bed, and we actually watched a Pistons game, too, which was great.”

Kicking It Up a Notch

In the spring of his junior year, Leisman was second author of an article published by Deborah Haarsma in *Astrophysical Journal*, one of the top publications in the field. And that summer he continued his research on galaxy clusters, focusing specifically on char-

acteristics used in identifying brightest cluster galaxies.

"I put more and more opportunities in Luke's way," Haarsma says. "I suggested he choose his own research direction that summer, and he really rose to the challenge, digging into the topic and writing the first draft of our next research paper."

That same summer, he presented his research to faculty from top physics and astronomy programs in the Midwest at the Great Lakes Cosmology Workshop in Chicago. He was the only undergraduate to give an oral presentation.

"A lot of [conference attendees] remembered that presentation when he was applying to graduate programs," notes Haarsma.

Graduate school was certainly on Leisman's mind heading into his senior year. He spent many hours applying to dozens of top astronomy graduate programs.

He also found himself reflecting and journaling a lot about his beliefs. He says he stepped back and looked at his worldview through different lenses and engaged in many conversations that didn't necessarily give him all the answers but helped him understand what he believed.

"I've put a lot of thought into who I am and what I am," says Leisman. "I've

Luke Leisman and Deborah Haarsma research brightest cluster galaxies.

encountered a storm of ideas at Calvin, which, rather than knocking me down, have strengthened my foundations as I go forward in life."

Figuring It All Out

With graduation just a few weeks away, Leisman is reflecting on the breadth of experiences at Calvin that have shaped him in so many different ways.

"I know a lot more now than I did [when I started at Calvin], but tracing how I know that would be hard to do. I can't do that one-to-one mapping," he says.

He notes that the relationships he formed were as important as any lecture he heard.

"I'll miss most the community. For me, I've had a very healthy community, a great cloud of witnesses," he says.

Leisman values the little things.

He remembers Professor Molnar's annual Christmas party and his two dogs that sing along to Christmas carols. He recalls the times Professor Van Baak made liquid nitrogen ice cream for his students and the time he played football with Professor Harper. He talks fondly about pushing a handful of tables together in the Uppercrust dining area and eating French toast with his friends from orchestra.

He also values the big things.

"My academic growth and interpersonal growth were paralleled by my



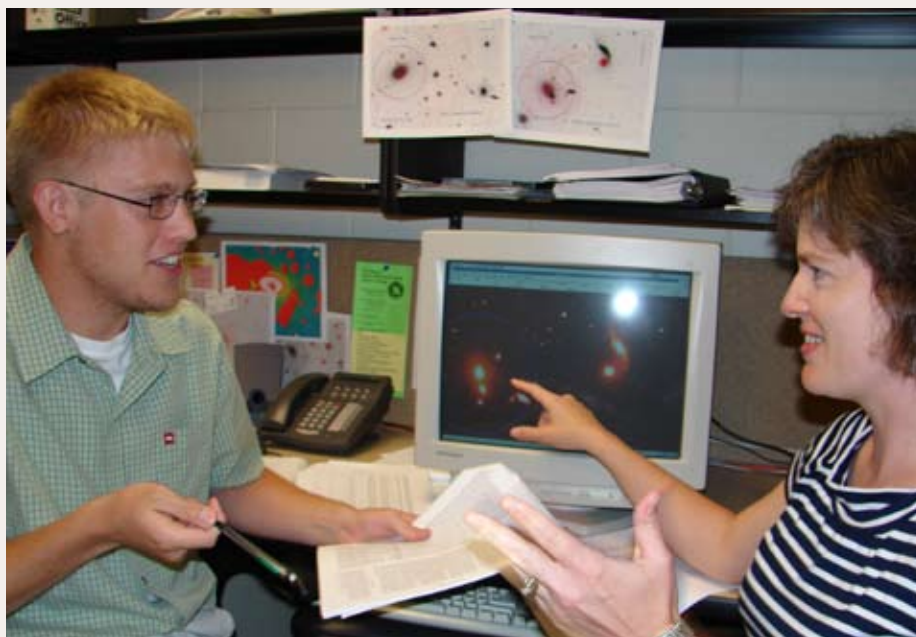
CALVIN COLLEGE

Members of the 2009 astronomy interim plan observations in Flagstaff, Ariz.

spiritual growth. It wasn't always pretty . . . or forward. But my years at Calvin provided an ideal workplace for building a relationship with a personal Savior and amazing God."

He says that at Calvin he has learned much more than how to solve partial differential equations or how to write using the active voice or even how to play the violin more fluently. He's woven all of those together.

"It gives me a balanced approach to problem solving, more ways of coming at something. Much of science is about communicating about your work. If you can't write it, present it, you won't get anywhere. I now have a broader base to stand on." ■



CALVIN COLLEGE



Matt Kucinski is the media relations manager for Calvin College.

We Need to Talk

Have you noticed how excited new parents are when a child speaks his or her first words? That first word or first sentence is a delightful milestone. Language opens up a whole new world.

There is power in words and in the way we use them. Words can build up or tear down. They can offer encouragement or cut to the bone. They can praise and they can curse. How we use words makes a world of difference in our lives and in the lives of those around us. As we converse, we teach and we learn. Understanding can grow and relationships can flourish.

As I think about the ways I use language, I reflect on the ways that we as a culture use words. As a society, and even as a church, we often find ourselves talking about each other, around each other, past each other, but not to each other.

That's particularly true when it comes to politics and religion. We've heard the jokes about the dangers of bringing either of these topics into a conversation. Yet both are such important parts of our lives that we should find ways to enter into civil discourse about them. When we do, we discover the growth that comes from hearing and sharing different perspectives and new ideas.

One of the beautiful things about the church is that every part of it—every part of the body of Christ—is important and has much to contribute. Communal conversations are important to our lives in Christ. Each one of us contributes thoughts and stories.

Even today the gracious words of God to Isaiah resonate clearly: "Come, let us reason together" (1:18). God himself invites us into conversation. Even in his anger, God calls us to talk with him (see the full chapter).

I share these thoughts because we in the Christian Reformed Church are in the midst of a conversation about the Belhar

Confession. Synod 2009 asked Synod 2012 to adopt the Belhar as a confessional statement of the church.

Synod also asked the CRC's Ecumenical and Interchurch Relations Committee to "promote the study of the Belhar Confession in the churches during the consideration period." This was synod's way of inviting the church to come and reason together. It's intended to be a time for learning, growing, and sharing.

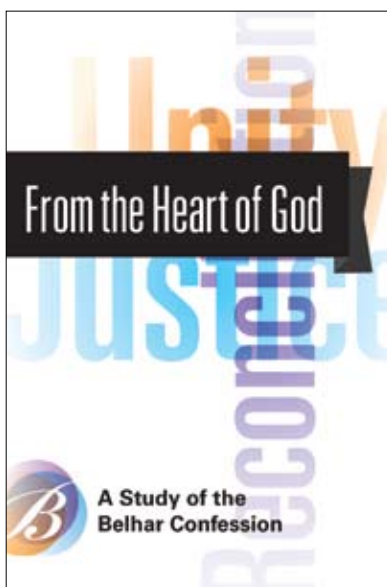
To that end, Faith Alive Christian Resources has produced study materials and devotionals to help people engage in dialogue around the Belhar Confession (www.FaithAliveResources.org; 1-800-333-8300). These materials encourage us all to determine how to most effectively use the Belhar to strengthen the church and to promote unity, reconciliation, and justice. In addition, our Ecumenical and Interchurch Relations Committee has offered seminars across North America to encourage in-depth discussion.

There is no question that CRC people hold widely differing points of view about adopting the Belhar as a confession. Some have embraced it; others have reservations. Some have suggested, as synod recommended, that it be adopted as a fourth confession; others prefer that it become an addition to our Contemporary Testimony. Still others are not prepared to adopt it at any level.

Bottom line: we need to keep talking. We need now, more than ever, to continue a civilized conversation about the Belhar. In just over a year, the delegates to Synod 2012 will be asked to determine what our denomination will do with this confession. Before that happens, it's critical to the health and life of the CRC that we continue to reason together.

We cannot afford to let our dialogue disintegrate into hurtful remarks or personal disparagements. As sisters and brothers in the Lord, we are called to speak the truth in love, so that the body of Christ may be built up and that the world may know that we are followers of the one who died to bring unity, reconciliation, and justice.

Please join me in that conversation. ■



“We need now, more than ever, to continue a civilized conversation about the Belhar.”



Rev. Jerry Dykstra is the former executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He resigned April 5, 2011 (see News story, p. 10).



Leaders Multiply Themselves in Bangladesh

As a church deacon and a theology student, Basona Areng was looking for something to deepen her leadership skills. She joined Bangladesh's first Timothy Leadership Training (TLT) group just over a year ago.

Today she is one of 19 Garo Baptist Church leaders who are using the training to develop other leaders.

The Bangladesh TLT trainings are a joint effort of Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM), the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), and the College of Christian Theology Bangladesh (CCTB). The training builds on what CRWRC and its partners have been doing in community development for many years, but is aimed at pastors and church leaders.

"It has been a challenge to promote TLT in a way that does not create dependency and reliance on CRWRC and CRWM staff," says Jeff Bos, a CRWM missionary in Bangladesh.

After completing the TLT stewardship module, Basona began training 40 others with it. Now the people she's trained are choosing a new path of funding their own ministries. Families have begun setting aside a handful of rice at every meal as a tithe to the church. Recently, women paid their own way to attend a conference instead of relying on charitable organizations.

Some of Basona's fellow TLT participants ran into unexpected difficulties. One woman arranged a TLT stewardship workshop for the Garo Baptist Women's Committee. Heavy rains and flooding pre-

vented many women from attending, but those who did are now implementing what they learned.

"It is wonderful to see how the TLT work is spreading as people are now teaching oth-

ers," says Kohima Daring, a CRWRC Bangladesh staff member.

"TLT is built to reproduce itself," Jeff Bos adds, "and already we are seeing TLT expanding to the third generation." ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort,
*Christian Reformed World
Missions*

Seminary to Train Church Planters



Carl Bosma

Christian Reformed Church pastors who have started new churches across North America and worldwide are applauding the formation of the Institute for Global Church Planting and Renewal at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Set to start this fall, the institute will offer courses and internships that help students better understand successful approaches to starting new churches.

"The institute presents a good opportunity to marry the best of the academy with the best insights and experiences of on-the-job practitioners, a way to learn from each other and a way to equip current students—whether they become church planters or pastors—for their work," says Kevin Adams, a successful church planter in California.

The primary focus of this institute, approved by the CTS Board of Trustees, will be to train men and women to start new churches and renew struggling churches, especially in multicultural urban centers.

Besides using CTS resources and tapping church planters in the field, CTS will link with groups and organizations including, but not limited to, the Center for Excellence in Preaching, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, the Meeter Center, the Nagel Institute, the Bavinck Institute, and the Timothy Institute.

Creating relationships with a range of educational institutions and making use of online learning are part of the institute's plan.

Carl Bosma, a professor of Old Testament at CTS and a long-time missionary to Brazil, where he helped to start many new churches and revitalize others, is one of the developers of the institute.

A main idea behind the institute, Bosma says, is that there are so many people "dying to hear the gospel, but there are so few people to tell them about it."

The seminary faculty, says David Rylaarsdam, a professor of historical theology at CTS, "appreciates the perspective of Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, who says that 'continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for the numerical growth of the body of Christ, the renewal of existing churches, and the overall impact of the church on the culture of any city.'" ■

—Chris Meehan, *CRC Communications*

New Home Missions Director Listens to God's Call



Rev. Moses Chung

Rev. Moses Chung was attending a revival at his father's church when the guest preacher asked people to come forward and commit to becoming pastors and missionaries. Moses, a fifth-grader in Korea, was the first to stand up.

"I knew right then that God was calling me to be a pastor," he recalls. "I ran down that aisle, knowing God's Spirit was working inside me."

Today, Moses is still following God's call. In February the Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America appointed and

approved him as the next director of Christian Reformed Home Missions. Starting May 1, he replaces interim director Ben Vandezande. Moses recently relocated to Grand Rapids, Mich., with his wife, Eunae, and children, Alvin, 12, and Jewel, 10.

In early 2010, he was asked to apply for the Home Missions position. Initially, he wasn't interested because he always saw himself being a local church pastor. Then he read

the Home Missions strategic plan: starting new churches, raising up leaders, and revitalizing established churches. "I was hooked," he says.

"Moses brings a deep passion for mission and a broad study in current missiology, along with an eloquent vision for the mission of the Christian church and the Christian Reformed Church in North America," says Sandy Johnson, the church's director of denominational ministries.

Born in Incheon, South Korea, Chung graduated from Calvin College in 1993 and received his Master of Divinity from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1999. Since 2008, Chung had been an associate pastor and executive administrator of a large staff for Sooyoungro Pres-

byterian Church in Busan, Korea, which draws 30,000 people to worship each Sunday. Before that he helped to grow churches in the U.S.

"People who know me say that one thing I have is a deep, passionate love—love for people, the church, and God," he says.

Moses believes in leading by building bridges between people, churches, and cultures—and by listening. "I want to listen well and engage in good conversations, starting with co-workers, local church leaders and pastors, other agency leaders, our neighbors, our society and culture, and most importantly with God." ■

—Ben Van Houten,
Christian Reformed Home Missions

Discussions Continue on Belhar Confession

Because Synod 2012 has been requested to adopt the Belhar Confession as a fourth confession for the Christian Reformed Church, CRC officials are asking churches to ramp up discussions on the document.

"The level and number of the Belhar Confession discussions in the denomination is on the rise," said Rev. Peter Borgdorff, executive director emeritus of the CRC and the person spearheading discussions on the Belhar. "We have met with about half of the classes and a number of congregations."

At the same time, he said, his sense is that "most of the membership of congregations are still relatively unaware of the discussion and even less what the Belhar Confession is about."

Originally adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) in South Africa, the Belhar Confession

addresses the themes of unity, reconciliation among Christians worldwide, and the justice that God desires in his world. Faith Alive Christian Resources, the publishing agency of the CRC, has available a range of resources to help people understand the Belhar (www.FaithAliveResources.org; 1-800-333-8300).

The debate over whether to adopt the Belhar Confession has spurred discussion of the church's other historic statements of belief, says Lyle Bierma, a professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary.

The dialogue has encouraged people to take a fresh look at the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, the Belgic Confession, and the CRC's Contemporary Testimony: *Our World Belongs to God*.

"This discussion on the Belhar has helped to make people interested in

what it means to be a confessional church," said Bierma, who is among those who have spoken to churches and classes (regional groups of churches) about the Belhar.

"As far as where I have spoken, there has been an acceptance of the Belhar, once people really understand it," said Bierma. "The opinion varies on whether it should be adopted as a confession or maybe accepted as a testimony."

The CRC's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee will submit its report to Synod 2012 by early September 2011; that report will be sent to all the churches in November.

"There certainly is a way to go—and we will do that as best we can," said Borgdorff. "I expect that the discussion will continue right up to June 2012." ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications



A Middle Eastern couple share time together.

Habib's Story

Habib, a 40-year-old teacher (name changed to protect his identity), heard about Jesus Christ for the first time on Back to God Ministries International's Arabic radio program. He lives in a Middle Eastern country that is closed to evangelism and often hostile to the gospel.

When Habib became a Christian, his wife threatened him, demanding he throw away his Bible and quit listening to Christian broadcasts. "Week after week she threatened to expose my faith to our family and friends," says Habib. "The community would have forced me to recant my faith in Christ or face death."

But Habib kept lovingly explaining to his wife why he could not renounce his faith. He continued listening to the program and reading the Bible and other Christian literature.

Then one evening Habib's wife surprised him, asking if she could listen with him, admitting she had been listening in secret for several weeks. She told him she had been reading his Bible. Habib's prayers were answered when his wife testified, "I am ready to follow Christ and if necessary die with you."

"Jesus has conquered her heart," Habib told BTGMI Arabic staff.

BTGMI, the Christian Reformed Church's electronic media ministry, asks people to "continue to pray for Habib and his wife as they seek to grow in Christ and live their faith."

If you would like to read more about ministry to Muslims and how you can support this outreach, visit www.BackToGod.net. ■

—Nancy VanderMeer,
BTGMI Communications

A Garden Grows in Tegucigalpa

Leanne Talen Geisterfer and a few others climbed carefully down the slippery side of a hill in Nueva Suyapa, Honduras, using old tires placed in the ground as steps to reach the bottom, where a stream, strewn with refuse, meandered.

Geisterfer is Latin America team leader for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee and was taking the opportunity on this sunny day to visit a garden project that CRWRC helps support through its partners.

The neighborhood in which the group was walking is located near what had once been the city dump for Tegucigalpa. Once a place of scattered, poorly built homes and a climbing crime rate, the area began transforming a few years ago.

"We and others have been reaching out in God's name to people who are struggling with poverty, hunger, disasters, and injustice to help them find lasting ways to improve their lives," said Geisterfer.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee has worked in Honduras since 1974. Together with its partners, it ministers to more than 17,500 people in 63 of the country's most impoverished communities.

CRWRC's work in Honduras focuses on helping poor communities develop through integrated programs that improve people's standard of living.

When Geisterfer visited, about 20 women and a few young men were hard at work in the community garden.

The plan, one of the women said, is to grow this garden to the point where they can open a fruit and vegetable stand to help support themselves. Having learned gardening techniques and having received seeds from CRWRC and others, the women are also starting to grow produce in their yards.

About 90 women in all rotate through, working certain days in the garden. Sandra Salazar, coordinator of the women's group, says that everything they do is done "to give honor and glory to God."

Celery, tomatoes, beets, lettuce, cucumbers, beans, radishes, and onions fill the plots of turned-up soil. Only a few months before, this had been a bare, scrubby plot of land owned by a local family who has allowed them to plant and harvest here, says one of the women, Gloria Flores. ■

—by Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications



Women take time out from working on the garden to pray.

Stormy Weather

Have you ever been caught outside in a thunderstorm? Were you afraid you'd get struck by lightning or hit by a falling tree? Spring and summer storms sometimes make us feel afraid because

they're so powerful. But storms are amazing too—and the more you know, the more amazed you'll be!

Weird Weather Questions

Why does it smell funny after a rainstorm?

It's not your imagination. After a rainstorm, the air sometimes does smell funny. Sometimes it's from the acid in rainwater. When it falls on the ground, it reacts with chemicals like gasoline or minerals in the soil, making that funny, fishy, after-the-storm smell.

What place on earth gets the most lightning?

If you want to see lightning all year long, go to Africa and visit the village of Kifuka in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There, each square kilometer gets about 158 lightning strikes each year. That's more than any other place on earth! (If lightning scares you, you should live in Antarctica, which almost never has lightning.)

Why do worms come out after a storm?

Worms can live underwater for quite a while, so they don't come out because they're afraid of drowning. They come out to find a mate, and they also come out because when the ground is wet they can travel easily over the land without drying up in the sun.



Only after it rains.

Make Your Own Barometer

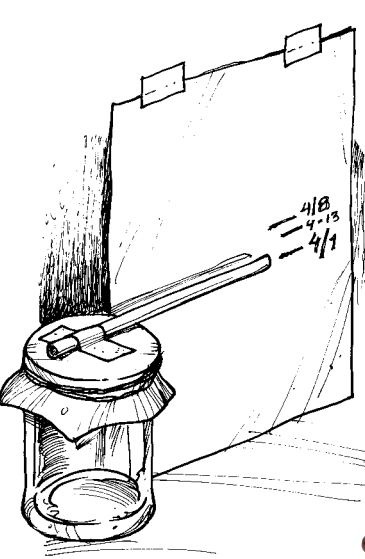
A barometer is an instrument that helps predict the weather by measuring changes in air pressure.

What you need:

- A glass jar
- A balloon
- A rubber band
- A straw
- Masking tape
- Paper and pencil

What you do:

- Blow up the balloon to stretch it, then let the air out. Cut the balloon in half.
- Stretch the top half of the balloon tightly over the top of the jar and fasten it with the rubber band (ask an adult to help you with this part).
- Tape one end of the straw to the balloon covering the jar. The end of the straw should be about 1/4 of the way from the jar edge, and the tape should be about 1 inch (3 cm) from the end of the straw.
- Tape a piece of paper to the wall behind the jar. Make a pencil mark to show the position of the straw. Label that mark with today's date and today's weather.
- Every day, check the position of the straw and make a mark. When the air pressure is high (sunny weather), it pushes down on the balloon and makes the straw go up. When the air pressure is low (rainy weather), the straw will be lower too. Try it and see if you notice a pattern.



That's Shocking!

What happens when you rub your feet on carpet and then touch another person or something metal? You get a shock, don't you? That's how lightning works. An electrical charge builds up in a thundercloud when ice particles rub against each other. When it connects with an opposite charge on the ground—ZAP!—lightning strikes. And that lightning is HOT—it can reach 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit, or 28,000 degrees Celsius. That's about five times hotter than the surface of the Sun!

Storms in the Bible

There are lots of "storm stories" in the Bible. Here are five of the wildest:

- Genesis 7:11-8:22—The biggest flood ever
- Exodus 9:13-35—hail in a hot country
- The book of Jonah—a whale of a tale
- Matthew 8:23-27—Jesus squashes a storm
- Acts 27—Paul survives a shipwreck.

In the Bible, storms often show us something about God's power or about how God cares for us when we're afraid. Read these stories with your family this week and talk about them. How would you feel if you were one of the people in this story? What would you do? What did you learn about God in this story?

Thunder: A Hole in the Air

In an average day on planet Earth, there are 1,800 thunderstorms going on. So what makes thunder? Here's an explanation from meteorologist Crystal Wicker on www.weatherwhizkids.com, a great website for learning about weather: "Thunder is caused by lightning. When a lightning bolt travels from the cloud to the ground it actually opens up a little hole in the air, called a channel. Once the light is gone the air collapses back in and creates a sound wave that we hear as thunder. The reason we see lightning before we hear thunder is because light travels faster than sound!"

Indoor Storms

You can see incredible storms even if it's not raining where you live! Check out these amazing photos and videos:

- To see a rainstorm in fast-motion (this is SO cool!) visit <http://tinyurl.com/m3x2wb>.
- For thousands of photos of lightning, check out stormchaser Michael Bath's photo galleries at www.lightningphotography.com.

To see a huge hailstorm in Phoenix, Arizona, check out this video at <http://tinyurl.com/23ow73u>.



Sandy Swartzentruber works for Faith Alive and is a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. She loves stormy weather and looking for lightning.

Our Fundamental Identity

An adoptive father and a daughter of Chinese immigrants reflect on the significance of baptism.

ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, while driving to a preaching engagement in a Christian Reformed congregation that had invited me for the first time, it suddenly hit me: *I (Syd) had been baptized in this very church building more than half a century earlier!*

My parents had spent their first two years of married life in this small community before moving to the city where I had been raised to adulthood. As I stood at the pulpit an hour later to begin the worship service, I told the congregation my baptism story and confessed that, just like most of them, I had no memory of that event. They smiled indulgently.

But there was more truth to that confession than I dared to admit. I also don't remember what my baptism meant to me as I grew from infancy to adulthood. The principal meaning that lived inside me was that I was a Dutch immigrant kid who went to the "Dutch Reform" school and was therefore an outsider in Canadian society. Peter's exhortation to "live as aliens and strangers in the world" (1 Pet. 2:11) was a visceral reality for me, but it had little to do with my baptismal identity and a great deal to do with ethnic sectarianism.

An Eye-opening Adoption

It wasn't until my wife and I adopted our first child from an orphanage in Asia almost 30 years ago that I began to ponder seriously the meaning of baptism. But even then my pondering did not lead to questions like "What significance will this baptism have for our child's identity?" Rather, I wondered, "Does

the Bible truly teach infant baptism, or should we wait until this child is old enough to make a decision?" A helpful conversation with our pastor freed us to joyfully bring our infant to the baptismal font.

Today I now serve on the Christian Reformed Church's Faith Formation Committee, which has done quite a bit of reflecting about baptismal identity. (You can find much of our reflection at www.crcna.org/faithformation.)

My prayer is that someday I'll be able to teach my grandchildren things that I was ignorant of when my wife and I were raising our children. For example, I didn't know that people from every tribe, language, people, and nation are called to find their baptismal identity in Jesus Christ, and that every other mark of identity is secondary (at best) to this fundamental identity.

Though Jesus is a Middle Eastern Jew, his deeper identity is that of the second Adam through whom we are made alive and receive God's Spirit (1 Cor. 15:22, 45). Jesus' death and resurrection have become our death and resurrection: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom. 6:4).

The implications of this are profound for all believers, not just for multicultural families. "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" are two of the primary questions teens and young adults face as they separate from their families and ponder their place in God's world. The powerful temptation to ground our iden-

“Who am I?” and “Why am I here?” are primary questions young adults face as they ponder their place in God’s world.

tity in secondary markers is rooted in the old self, which, Paul continues, “was crucified with [Jesus] so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin” (Rom. 6:6-7).

The co-author of this article faces these questions of identity as well.

Navigating Two Worlds

I (Irene) spent my childhood and youth in New York City, where my identity was shaped by first-generation Chinese family members and a first-generation Chinese church.

When these Chinese people moved to North America, they faced many choices: Which of our norms and values should we hold on to, which should we let go of, and which ones should we adopt from the dominant culture? How can we manage the tension of living in two worlds: a Western culture that typically values individualism, rights, and self-assertion and an Asian culture that values collectivism, duty, and self-effacement?

My parents prayed and worked toward giving my siblings and me a foundational identity as children of God.

Their holistic Asian and holistic Reformed worldview helped them navigate the cultural differences they faced after immigrating—the ones you can hear, smell, touch, taste, and see (language, food, and clothing), as well as the differences that go deeper.

Just as I’ve been reminded of my physical birth on many occasions and in many different ways, so I’ve been reminded of my identity in Christ. Baptism isn’t just a one-time event to be forgotten, but an identity that needs reaffirmation. In their book *Celebrating the Milestones of Faith: A Guide for Churches* (Faith Alive), Laura and Robert J. Keeley suggest some tangible reminders of our baptism:

- a baptism candle
- a baptism book
- pictures
- video clips
- a present
- a certificate
- an annual baptism anniversary celebration
- a faith chest.

In my own life, the many beautiful “I am” statements in Scripture eventually morphed from Sunday school memory verses into the foundation of my identity and an integral part of my faith journey:

- I am God’s child (John 1:12).
- I am chosen by God and adopted as his child (Eph. 1:3-8).

- I was bought with a price and belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
- I am a citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:20).
- I am God’s workmanship (Eph 2:10).

When factors such as gender, ethnicity, family, education, nationality, and financial status threaten to overshadow my Christian identity, my faith community prays for me and reminds me of who I am in Christ. It encourages me to be salt and light according to how God made me and in whatever setting God places me.

Practicing more frequent, intentional public celebrations of our identity in Christ in the worship life of our churches will also help ground us in God’s steadfast love.

I’ve never had the opportunity to attend a baptismal renewal service, but I hope to someday. Imagine that in the final 15 minutes of a worship service, all the children and infants who were in the nursery or in Sunday school have joined their families in the sanctuary. Imagine the entire congregation filing to the front, row by row, while singing a medley of songs celebrating our baptismal identity.

Each person walks past the baptismal font, dips a hand in the water, and draws a cross and open tomb on his or her forehead—the very youngest aided by older siblings or parents. Some of the younger teens giggle in awkward self-consciousness, but they nonetheless feel enveloped by the steadiness of the entire community participating in the same liturgical act.

The last person returns to her seat, the singing ends, and the pastor declares, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Pet. 2:9-10), followed by the benediction.

Someday I’d like to experience that service with my adult children, then say to them during Sunday dinner, “Let me tell you how this morning’s service reminds me of something I neglected to do while you were growing up. . . .” ■



Dr. Syd Hielema serves as chaplain and associate professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. He is a member of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster.



Irene Bakker is a substitute teacher and volunteer. She is a member of Hebron Christian Reformed Church, Whitby, Ontario. Both Syd and Irene are members of the Synodical Faith Formation Study Committee.

Love Wins?

FULL DISCLOSURE: TO DATE, I have embraced all that I've read from Rob Bell. However, I can't say the same for his controversial new book, *Love Wins*.

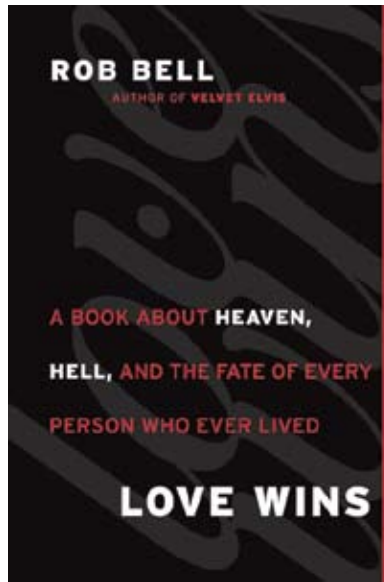
I get why Bell saw the need to write a book like this: there are lots of big questions and scary misconceptions on the topic of hell. I applaud him for taking the risk. But I'm not at all sure he got it right.

This book attempts to present a view of hell that stands in opposition to the thinking of the "turn or burn" crowd, which uses hell to scare people into heaven. But by pushing back against that caricature, Bell has swung too far in the other direction, into what clearly appears to be universalism (the belief that God will eventually save everyone and that there is no eternal hell).

I'll admit that I love the possibility of this being God's plan. But I just can't square it with either the Bible or 2,000 years of God-held Christian tradition. Parables of rich men and beggars, foolish virgins, and sheep and goats (along with a few other biblical texts) all seem to speak of a point of no return, of some kind of eternal hellish reality. Surely the church hasn't been totally wrong on this issue, has it?

There are all kinds of scriptural references that *seem* to support a more universalistic perspective ("I am making everything new," Rev. 21:5). And there are just as many verses that *seem* to sup-

Everything about who God is and how he thinks is fraught with mystery.



port an eternally hot and fiery hell. So what's a thoughtful Christian to do?

Perhaps the Bible's ambiguity is meant to point us to a greater truth: that none of us can know or understand the mind of God. Everything about who God is and how he thinks is fraught with mystery. He's all-powerful and good, yet God allowed evil to infiltrate his good creation. God solved that problem of evil by *mysteriously* taking on human flesh, then *inexplicably* letting himself be crucified. God is sovereign even as he has given us free will. God is three even as he is one.

So who are we, on either side of this hell issue, to make a judgment on what God's take is on such a weighty eternal matter?

I hope Bell's book stimulates all kinds of healthy dialogue regarding the doctrine of hell. And I pray that, as we engage this complex and mysterious topic, humility wins. ■



Rev. John Van Sloten is pastor of New Hope (Christian Reformed) Church, Calgary, Alberta, and the author of *The Day Metallica Came to Church*.



Only One You

by Linda Kranz
reviewed by Sandy Swartzentruber

"There's only one you in this great big world; make it a better place." "If you make a wrong turn, circle back." That's the type of gentle life guidance offered by this colorful, one-size-fits-all-ages picture book. Illustrated with schools of whimsical fish made of hand-painted stones, *Only One You* is a perfect little gift for graduates. For an extra-special touch, paint a stone fish of your own and slip it into a gift bag with this book. (Rising Moon Books)



There Be Dragons

reviewed by Kristy Quist

Opus Dei founder Josemaría Escrivá became a priest during the early rumblings of the Spanish Civil War. This film chronicles his obedience to the call, while a fictional childhood friend, Manolo, takes a completely different route. Manolo turns away from the priesthood, eventually joining the fighting. Beautiful cinematography enhances an epic story of finding meaning in suffering and the chaos of life. Director Roland Joffé (*The Mission*, *The Killing Fields*) does justice to themes of love, grace, and forgiveness. In theaters this month. (Mount Santa Fe)

Bach: A Strange Beauty

by Simone Dinnerstein
reviewed by Otto Selles

Sir Francis Bacon said, “There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion.” According to young up-and-coming pianist Simone Dinnerstein, the beauty of Bach’s music comes not from its mathematical precision but from how the composer plays with forms and patterns. This CD showcases Dinnerstein playing two of Bach’s keyboard concerti, accompanied by the Kammerorchester Staatskapelle Berlin. But her talent shines in



her delicate solo work, particularly the transcriptions of three hymn chorals, including “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring.” (Sony Classical)

Message from an Unknown Chinese Mother

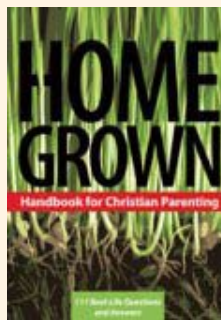
by Xinran
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

According to Xinran, the question most often asked by Chinese girls adopted into Western families is “Why didn’t my Chinese mummy want me?” This book is her answer to their question. Forthrightly and compassionately, she relates the tragic stories of women whose lives were destroyed by detrimental societal policies and attitudes: China’s one-child policy, lack of sex education after Westernization radically altered gender roles, lack of respect for women, and disregard for the sanctity of human life. (Scribner)

Home Grown: Handbook for Christian Parenting

by Karen DeBoer
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Christian parents want their children to love God and to grow in faith. This parenting handbook answers 111 questions that believers might ask about nurturing their children’s faith. Karen DeBoer’s practical, insightful answers are based on her own experience and the expert advice of several counselors, theologians, parents, grandparents, pastors, and professors. A study guide and a DVD consisting of introductory interviews for each session complement DeBoer’s informative manual. (Faith Alive)



Ultimate Camp Resource

reviewed by Ron Vandenburg

Great for your next church or youth retreat, this website offers 2,000 activities including group games, fun skits, silly camp songs, icebreakers, and team builders. Recently, they’ve begun adding videos to demonstrate games and teach songs. The “Things You Can Build” page (under Camp Staff Resources) lists projects that could be constructed for a game room or camp property. Birthday party planners, teachers, and youth group leaders could have lots of fun with a suggested Theme Day. And don’t forget to look over the campfire stories before you go camping! (www.ultimatecampresource.com)



THE LOWDOWN



Life Time: Film buffs will be thrilled to hear that director Terrence Malick’s new movie,

The Tree of Life, is set to open in theaters late this month. (Fox Searchlight)



More Max: If you enjoy reading Q & As, you’ll love this. Max Lucado’s book *Max on*

Life is an extended question and answer session with the popular spiritual writer. (Thomas Nelson)



Living Legacy: John P. Kee’s latest album *The Legacy Project*

is made up of 12 gospel quartet songs, in collaboration with a long list of stellar gospel and soul singers. (Verity)



Mom’s Moment: Looking for gift ideas for Mother’s Day? Check out our picks in the Tuned In section of *thebanner.org*.

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



BY JAMES KOK

The Hardest Death of All



DEATH is an inevitable part of life. Every death hurts. Seldom does one occur without pain and unhappiness, without changing our lives.

It is not wise to compare one death to another or to rank losses on a scale of which is most difficult. For one thing, each loss is different. No one knows how a death will affect the survivors. The death of a brother may be more devastating to one person than the death of a mother is to another. Grief is hard. We should avoid comparisons.

There is one exception to that rule: the death of one's child is in a league by itself.

When Shauna Stuewe died several years ago on Valentine's Day, something awakened in me that is not likely to change. An articulate, beautiful young Christian cheerleader, she slipped to the floor in the practice gym and could not be revived. What awakened in me was the realization that such a death stands alone on the scale of heartbreak.

I had been close to other such tragedies where children had died—car accidents, suicide, drunk drivers, even murder by a father. All were tragic beyond words. But Shauna's death, for some reason, opened my eyes. I regret that I didn't realize years earlier the enormity of the death of someone's child. I saw so much more clearly that those deaths were much more tragic than I had previously realized. I am deeply apologetic for my lack of sympathy and empathy.

The death of a child is so wrong. Children are not supposed to predecease their parents. They are supposed to grow up, enjoy life, laugh, learn, love—live. Someday they are supposed to “lay their parents to rest,” not the other way around. Every father and mother carries that timetable deep in their heart, and when a child dies there is no capacity to fit in such a reversal. It is not the way life is supposed to be. It is wrong. Hopes, dreams, plans, and joys lie shattered with no hope of revival. They are ended.

Faith Crisis

But when Christians experience such tragedies, they are in a different place

than others. On the one hand there is usually the strong assurance of their young one's being safe in the arms of Jesus. But that is not where they want their child. They want their child in their own arms. Still, there is profound comfort in Jesus' promise. This comfort is more of a valued belief than a true anesthesia for parents' broken hearts. The pain is not lessened. It will never be gone.

Sometimes the death of a child is harder for Christians than for others. It can be spiritually very confusing, even enraging, if God is seen to have allowed or been the author of this terrible, untimely death. Some people, when a child dies, turn their backs on God and

I regret that I didn't realize years earlier the enormity of the death of someone's child.

never return. Others find it possible to accept the death as God's will, as heart-broken as they are. And there are a few for whom the only comfort they can find is the conviction that this unwanted disaster is in the plan of God.

Leaving Healing to God

At our church cemetery there is a steady trickle of people coming to visit gravesites. Most of them, by far, are parents who have lost a child. That underscores the main point here, that the death of a child stands alone and far beyond other deaths.

My observations are limited, but the truth seems to be that most who lose a child survive, regain their strength and spirit, and live again as productive and even life-enjoying people. The pain never goes away. The loss is always felt, but a meaningful life can go on.

That, I believe, is the healing of God. God does restore the crushed, but the pain endures.

Believing that God heals is essential for those who love and care for those who have lost a child. Embracing that conviction allows, and declares, that caring people are not expected to try to make this incredible heartache less awful. Caring people will leave the healing to God and concentrate on love and compassion. They will not endeavor to fix things when they put their arms around the brokenhearted. They will shelve their remedies and answers and concentrate on lovingkindness.

I have spent many hours with grieving parents. I am convinced there is nothing I have said, other than a prayer, that has ever made a difference. I am also certain that my time with them has been appreciated and helpful. My presence is love. Love contributes to the healing process.

When someone loses a loved one, people respond with calls, visits, messages, help, food, prayers—for a few weeks in most cases. But when a parent loses a child that help should be multiplied many times, and instead of lasting for a few weeks it should go on for a few years.

Another theological perspective, other than the traditional, is to believe that God's heart breaks with those parents whose child has died. What Jesus says, slightly paraphrased, is this: “Inasmuch as it happens to the least of these my children, it happens to me.” What an amazing help it is to see Jesus weeping with us in our sorrows.

The family of God can adopt the same posture, surrounding the brokenhearted and being brokenhearted with those who have lost a child. “Weep with those who weep,” says the apostle Paul. That is where Jesus is, and more than anything else, that helps. ■



Rev. James Kok is a pastor of the Crystal Cathedral congregation in Garden Grove, Calif. His focus is Care Ministries, which includes responding to illnesses and other serious crises in the lives of the church members and others.

Mercy for an Addict

I GREW UP in a wonderful Christian home, the youngest of four children. I remember going to church and participating in any and every activity our church offered. Our daily family life focused on faith. My parents taught us how to pray and read the Bible and to try our best to walk the way Jesus did.

But from as far back as I can remember, I was attracted to the world. My desires were for what was exciting and popular and for what drew attention to me. I started partying in high school, seeking acceptance from my peers. That only grew worse as I went off to college, trying anything that came my way.

I was fearless with drugs and alcohol and jumped from man to man to fill the emptiness those things created. After college I began a successful sales career. Making lots of money at a young age, I spent it on things that would create happiness for a short time. But eventually the emptiness returned.

At 25 I tried Vicodin, which my doctor prescribed for some pain. I loved it! My feelings of being bored, unfulfilled, and misplaced disappeared. But eventually I needed more and more of it to fill the void.

After eight years it became a full-time job to achieve the high. I visited walk-in clinics, emergency rooms, and a rotation of about 15 doctors to supply my habit, taking close to 60 pills each day to numb the vacancy in my heart.

In 2004 a doctor finally caught me and was going to send me to prison. I pleaded my case, and instead he sent me to my first secular rehab. There I met

people who did heroin. Within a week of my release, I was shooting it into my veins and begging for more. After three weeks I was introduced to crack cocaine, and what was left of my life completely fell apart.

I couldn't stop. Drugs had such a suffocating hold over me, I was convinced my fate had been sealed.

On January 16, 2006, I was homeless and jobless, doing whatever I had to do

Drugs had such a suffocating hold over me, I was convinced my fate had been sealed.

to get my drugs. My parents didn't know if I was dead or alive. I was 90 pounds and dying. Then, for no deserved reason at all, God touched my life.

I saw no bright light. I heard no voice. I didn't get down on my knees and pray, though I know my parents had been doing so for years. But I was touched and changed right there in my dirty hotel room. One minute I was lost and empty; the next minute I was filled with a peace I had never known. I didn't yet know it was God, but I knew something had changed. God gave me the strength to call my mother, who came and got me.

Over the next year and a half I began seeking this God who had pulled me out of my darkness. I read God's Word and built a relationship with him through prayer. I knew that staying close to God was the answer, not just for my drug addiction but for my life.

Today, several years later, God has led me to Arusha, Tanzania, where I've started a nonprofit that creates jobs for poverty-stricken women and educates their children. I am also blessed to visit many churches and tell this story, God's story, of God's great faithfulness.

God accomplishes the impossible. He continues to move in my life and achieve things I could never do alone. I am amazed by God's grace and mercy

for a hopeless, drug-addicted sinner. God sent his Son to die for *me* and rise again so that I too can live in "newness of life" and share God's love for this world (1 Tim. 1:16). ■



Jennifer Vander Galien started *Shining a Light* (www.shiningalight.org) to help poverty-stricken women in Tanzania become

self-supporting through making beautiful hand-beaded leather sandals, which are then sold in the U.S. The nonprofit also provides a classroom and material for the local preschool so the women's children may get a head start on their education.

Why Give?

AT A TIME when budgets have been pruned and purse strings tightened, the outpouring of generosity following disasters in Haiti and Japan has been amazing.

Yet amid this overwhelming support I have also heard some comments (and confess that similar thoughts have crossed my mind) surrounding the point of it all: *Yes, I'll give, but what difference will it make? Haiti's reputation for chaos and poverty prior to the earthquake makes people question whether change is truly possible. Yes, my dollars will provide food and shelter to the hungry and homeless, but in five years will Haiti still be the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere?*

This is not the first time I've had such doubts about the effectiveness of relief and development work. Sometimes it all seems so futile, as if all our efforts are a mere drop in the ocean.

Please don't revile me yet. My point is to raise an important question: *As Christians, what is the goal of our relief and development efforts?* I argue that if we're aiming for effectiveness and efficiency, we will end up disappointed and disillusioned. The work will never be finished, success stories will almost always be in the minority, and sometimes, despite our best efforts, we will fail miserably.

So why do we invest in these efforts?

Because.

Because we are to love our neighbor. Because it's the right thing to do. Because it's our calling.

I'm not saying we shouldn't plan for success and strategize accordingly. Far from it. During my time volunteering in India and Bangladesh with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, I was humbled by the incredible work of dedicated staff and volunteers that helps transform villages and slums, families and communities. Planning and setting goals for success is important.

All I'm saying is that our goal should not, first and foremost, be "effectiveness." Our calling is to be faithful disciples of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus calls us

to love, to give, to serve, "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with [our] God" (Micah 6:8). That is why we give to Haiti. That is why we support seemingly hopeless causes.

In a strange paradox, the more pessimistic I am about my world, the greater is my hope. As I realize my inability to save this world, my realization of our need for a Savior increases. Children starve, earthquakes destroy cities, and families fall apart; our brokenness reminds us that things are not the way they're supposed to be.

By acknowledging that, we can celebrate when we see glimpses of God's kingdom, when we see streams of that light shining through in our battered world. For we know what miracles these glimpses truly are!

When Julianna in northeast India, who had to drop out of school as a child after her parents died, learns how to read through an adult literacy class, I celebrate.

When the adolescent girls from a slum in Dhaka, Bangladesh, perform the skits and songs they've composed to share lessons on health, awareness, and advocacy with their families and friends, I celebrate.

When today, unlike on his initial visits, the villagers of Beldarchak warmly welcome Bablu Pramanick, Cluster Supervisor of the Child Survival Project in Jharkhand, India, as a trusted friend and eagerly apply his lessons on child and maternal health, I celebrate.

These stories of transformation proclaim hope and bear witness to fullness of life. They are gifts of grace and testify to the fruits of faithfulness.

So why do we give? Because. Because it is what we do and who we are. ■

Antonia De Boer volunteered with CRWRC in India and Bangladesh and hopes to return in the future. She is a recent graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary with a master's degree in cross-cultural studies with a focus on international development and urban mission.

NEXT



The more pessimistic I am about my world, the greater is my hope.

Mash'Allah: Whatever the Will of God

WHEN MY WIFE AND I ARRIVED IN KUWAIT a few years ago, we thought we'd brought with us an informed perspective on the Middle East.

But when we faced Kuwaiti heat for the first time, we realized there might be a gap between our academic preparations and the actual life we were undertaking. At 10 p.m. the temperature was more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (42 C). It felt like we were standing behind the exhaust pipe of an idling car. The next day brought a temperature of 122 degrees (50 C), and we again had to adjust our definition of the word *hot*.

Similarly, we realized quickly our lack of appropriate language in the West to describe the influence of Islam on Middle Eastern life. In parallel with our culture, Reformed Christians have adopted the language of separation between everyday life and religion. In the Arab world, however, life and religion remain so infused that many Muslims do not even have words to describe a separation between them.

The Middle East's deserts contain some of the most unforgiving terrain on Earth, and those who dwell here must live according to strict practices in order to survive.

Mohammed, Islam's most venerated prophet, was first a shepherd. He was intimately familiar with the hardships of desert life and, as a result, Islam's basic tenets reflect an unbending adherence to ritual and tradition. Centuries later, Muslims still unquestioningly adhere to those tenets because Allah, through his desert-wise prophet, left little room for questions.

When Christians in the West try to decipher the Muslim mindset, we do so at great disadvantage: we simply have little conception of the strength of a message born in such an unforgiving environment. We often label Muslim devotion as extremist, linking the terrible things we see on the news and the extreme language we hear with the average Muslim.

The simple reality of millions of Muslims faithfully and peacefully observing the rituals of their faith should give us

The **language of God and devotion to Islam** are as pervasive as the heat that dictates life in the Arab world.

In classical Arabic—the language of the Qur'an—there is little capacity for the future conditional tense. You do not hear, even translated to English, “That might happen tomorrow” or “Maybe I'll come by next week.” Rather, you get used to hearing, “It will happen tomorrow, *Insha'Allah*” or “I will come next week, *Insha'Allah*.”

Insha'Allah, “by the will of God,” is one of the few Arabic religious phrases that have crossed into Western awareness—often as a source of frustration for Western businesspeople who think it means they cannot secure a firm commitment from their Arab counterparts.

But when Muslims speak that way they are not being evasive. Nor would it be accurate to describe *Insha'Allah* as merely an expression. Rather, it is a seamless integration of faith and language that we cannot fully appreciate until we see how everything in Arab life—from business transactions to driving to parenting—happens, literally, according to the will of God.

Thus the language of God and devotion to Islam are as pervasive as the heat that dictates life in the Arab world, the birthplace of Islam.

something to ponder. I cannot claim to live a seamlessly Reformed Christian life; when I say “God willing,” it is often as an add-on—one with more doubt than certainty. And I do not know many Christians—even among our pastors and leaders—who get down on their knees to pray, much less five times a day.

After four years living in the Middle East, we still agree that the call to prayer, the *adhan*, is perhaps the most potent reminder of life in our adopted home. Five times a day, from before sunrise to after sunset, the hauntingly beautiful voices of the *muezzins* blanket Kuwait, calling the faithful to prayer with *Allahu Akbar*, “God is great.” With mosques on almost every block, the reminder to prostrate oneself before the Creator finds its way into every corner and crevice, just as the desert dust sifts into our clothing.

We do our own faith irreparable harm when we dismiss such devotion as superstition or fanaticism. Rather, we have much to learn from Islam, a faith that demands so much of its believers. ■ **WEB Q'S**



Brent van Staaldin teaches high school English, journalism, and film at an international school in Kuwait City. He is a member of Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Ancaster, Ontario.

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Denominational and Classical Announcements

CALL TO SYNOD 2011

The council of Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan, hereby calls all duly elected delegates to Synod 2011 to meet in the Van Noord Arena at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Friday, June 10, at 9:00 a.m. All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday morning, June 12, 2011, at 11:00 a.m. at Madison Square CRC, 1434 Madison Square Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. David H. Beelen will deliver the message. All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 5, and on Sunday, June 12.

Council of Madison Square CRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Admitted into the Ministry

ADMITTED TO MINISTRY Candidates David Salverda and Brittney Salverda were examined by Classis BCNW on Tuesday March 1st, 2011, for the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Christian Reformed Church. They successfully sustained their examinations, and were

ordained and installed in the Victoria CRC in Victoria B. C. on March 19th 2011. The Lord's blessings to them both as they begin their ministries and service to our Lord.

Andy DeRuyter, Stated Clerk, Classis BCNW.

ADMITTED TO THE MINISTRY Candidate Chelsey Harmon was examined by Classis BCNW on Tuesday March 1st, 2011, for the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Christian Reformed Church. She successfully sustained her examination, and was ordained and installed in the Christ Community Church in Nanaimo B. C. on April 3rd 2011. The Lord's blessings to Chelsey as she begins her ministry and service to our Lord. Andy de Ruyter, Stated Clerk, Classis BCNW.

CLASSIS GRAND RAPIDS EAST examined and approved Bryan Blakely for the office of ministry associate on Feb. 17, 2011. Mr. Blakely will serve as Coordinator of Bates Place on behalf of First CRC in Grand Rapids.

CLASSIS GRAND RAPIDS EAST On Feb. 17, with the concurrence of synodical deputies, Candidate Steve De Ruyter was examined and approved for ordination as a minister of the Word in the CRC. Mr. De Ruyter will lead Square Inch Church Plant in Grand Rapids, upon call from the Eastern Ave CRC.

Available for Call

ELIGIBLE FOR CALL Grace CRC of Cobourg heartily recommends its former pastor, Rev. Jack VanderVeer, to the churches for call. He has recently completed an MA in counselling. Email pjackv@telus.net or phone 403-457-5001.

AVAILABLE FOR CALL Having ministered to the congregation of The Christian Reformed Church of Maple Ridge, B. C. since July 2001, Rev. Martin Vellekoop is declared eligible for call by the church council. Rev. Vellekoop can be reached at martinvellekoop@gmail.com or 604-306-9461.

Congregational Announcements

Church's 125th Anniversary

1ST CRC OF FULTON, IL is celebrating it's 125th anniversary. We have set June 19-26, 2011 as our week of celebration. We would like to extend an invitation to all former members to join us as we celebrate. Those planning to attend or for more information contact the church office at 815-589-3790 or e-mail firstcrcfulton@live.com.

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Church's 100th Anniversary

SANBORN CRC of Sanborn, IA will celebrate its 100th anniversary on July 8, 9, and 10, 2011. Former members and friends are invited to attend. Information is available on the church website www.sanborn-crc.com or by contacting Jerry and Carol Buteyn by e-mail at jcbuteyn@mtcnet.net or (712-729-3262)

Church's 50th Anniversary

FAITH CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP of Walnut Creek, CA, is celebrating 50 years of God's grace and faithfulness on July 30-31, 2011. We invite friends and past members to attend. For more information, visit 50years.faithfellowship.com.

PIONEER CRC OF Cedar Springs, MI will celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness on June 12, 2001, at 10 am. We invite friends and past members to join us for this special worship service with a luncheon to follow.

Church's 25th Anniversary

NEW LIFE CRC of Abbotsford, BC is celebrating 25 years of 'Touching Lives with the Transforming Love of Jesus' on May 28 & 29, 2011. We invite friends and past members to attend. For more information visit www.newlifecrc.ca.

Retirement

The Council of Byron Center 1st CRC would like to announce that after 30 years of faithful service in the United States Air Force Chaplain Corps, Colonel Richard M. Hartwell will retire effective July 31, 2011. Chaplain Hartwell seeks the Lord's will and guidance for future service

in the Christian Reformed Church. We are happy to declare him eligible for a call and heartily recommend him to the churches. He may be reached at richard.hartwell@sheppard.af.mil or (940) 228-5592.

Announcements

SWIM CAMP AT CALVIN Come spend a week this summer in the new Venema Aquatic Center on the campus of Calvin College. Coach Gelderloos invites swimmers of all abilities to come learn from the best. Calvin offers two opportunities, including a comprehensive camp for ages 10-18 that focuses on all 4 competitive strokes and an elite sprint camp that brings in top sprint coaches from around the country. Both camps also have opportunities to talk about how to be a successful athlete from a Christian Reformed Perspective. For more information and registration, go to www.tpscamps.com.

Birthdays

100th Birthday

EVELYN (EEUWKJE) DE JAGER (van der Kooy) 99 Golden Hill Dr. Kingston NY 12401 will celebrate her 100th birthday on May 4 D. V. Her children: Akke and Jan, George and Ann, Elbert and Wilma, Jennie and Lou, 7 grandchildren and 14 great grand children thank God for her faith and long life and the blessing she is to our family.

95th Birthday

ALICE FLASMAN, nee De Hoog, Holland Home, 16300 S Louis, South Holland, IL 60473, will celebrate her 95th birthday on May 8. Her niece Donna Medema & family are thankful to God for her long life and her love for us and her many friends. God bless you, dear Auntie.

JEANETTE (SCHEMPER) Vander Wal Meninga, 1001 Northfield Ct. Modesto CA, celebrated her 95th birthday on March 1, 2011. We are thankful to God for his faithfulness and blessings in her life.

90th Birthday

MARTHA C. BEL 2105 Raybrook SE Apt 5026 Grand Rapids MI 49546, celebrated her 90th birthday on April 29. Her life is celebrated by her family with thanksgiving to God for His goodness.

HILDA KUIPER, 2500 Bretonwoods Dr SE, Apt 2058, Grand Rapids, MI 49512, will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 11. Love from Ada & Peter, Mary & Larry, Marilyn & Jim, Fred & Diane, Helene & Jack, 11 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.

HELEN (DEWIT) STAM, 333 E. Lakewood Blvd. #173, Holland, MI 49464 celebrates her 90th birthday on May 22. Her children and grandchildren thank God for her life and His blessings to her. Happy Birthday Mom.

DURK SYBESMA looks forward to celebrating his 90th birthday on May 15, 2011. His wife Shirley and their children & grandchildren celebrate with him, grateful for his presence in our lives. 38 Brussels Ct., Visalia, CA 93277.

Church Positions Announcements

CORNERSTONE CRC of Chilliwack, BC is seeking a Senior Pastor to lead our staff and congregation. Contact search@cornerstonecrc.ca (www.cornerstonecrc.ca)

LAKEVIEW CRC by Valentine, NE seeks a senior pastor to lead our congregation. Contact Don at 605-429-3374; Vern at 605-429-3315 or mlogterm@esu17.org

NEW JERSEY: Covenant CRC is seeking a pastor to lead us during our next chapter. We are located in suburban North Jersey, a largely un-churched area. We are evangelistic and have an influential youth ministry in our community. We are blended in worship style and desire strong preaching and teaching. Please contact Dan Steenstra at dan@scnorthjersey.com and check out our website at www.covcrc.org if you are interested in this unique opportunity.

PASTOR Wayland Christian Reformed Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Interested men should send their resume to office@waylandcrc.org or 303 E. Elm, Wayland, MI 49348

DIRECTOR YOUTH & CHILDREN Oakdale Park CRC seeks candidates for our new position, full time with benefits, leading youth and children's ministries. OPC is a diverse middle-size church located in a multi-ethnic neighborhood in the heart of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Oakdale's youth and children's ministries, supported by 90 volunteers, engages 200 multiethnic young people from nursery age through high school. The successful candidate will be an experienced youth/children's ministry leader with demonstrated passion for Christ and for leading in discipling youth and children. Interested persons may view a position description at www.oakdalepark.org or call 616-452-5764 for information, and apply to Oakdale Park Church, 961 Temple SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507, attn. Youth/Children Leader Position, or to www.oakdalepark.org.

YOUTH DIRECTOR, the congregation of the Charlottetown CRC in Prince Edward Island, Canada is prayerfully seeking a full-time Youth Director who is spiritually committed to cultivating the relationship between our youth and Christ and to those around us. Position avail-

able August 1st. Experience and training with youth necessary. For more information, or to submit a resume contact Alan McIsaac at (902) 569-3656 or jamcisaac@assembly.pe.ca. Website: www.charlottetowncrc.org.

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH of Grandville, MI is seeking a Senior Pastor with a passion for teamwork and building Christ-centered relationships. First Church is a multi-generational, missions and community outreach focused church with an experienced staff and a wide array of established ministries in a community with 500+ weekly attendees. We are currently engaged in a season of discernment and will soon initiate a process of prayerfully-seeking a dynamic and experienced pastor with strong Biblical preaching and leadership skills. To learn more about First Reformed Church please visit www.firstgrandville.org. If you feel the "nudge of the Spirit" please contact the search committee at pastorsearchteam@firstgrandville.org.

PASTOR: Maple Ridge CRC is seeking a pastor to eagerly join our staff and lay team with passion and vision for our congregation. We wish to step into the future together with our new pastor to serve one another and the community. We are a multigenerational congregation located in a rapidly growing suburb near Vancouver, BC, just an hour from Regent College. We seek strong Godly relational leadership through Biblical preaching, teaching, and modelling. Proposals from a pastoral team are welcome. Detailed information available on our website at mapleridgeccr.com or from our PSC Chairperson John Vroom seekingpastor@gmail.com

OAKLAND CRC of Hamilton, MI is seeking a Senior Pastor to lead our congregation. Please send inquiries to oaklandrcsearch@gmail.com

PASTOR TO SENIORS Heritage Fellowship CRC in Brampton, Ontario, is seeking a full time person to join our pastoral team. Our members live in Holland Christian Homes, a senior's residence of some 1,100 residents. For more information contact hchurch@hch.ca with "pastoral search" in the subject line, or call 905 796 7424.

PASTOR OF YOUTH AND OUTREACH First CRC of DeMotte, IN is seeking a full time Pastor of Youth and Outreach. Both ordained and non-ordained applicants will be considered. Job descriptions can be found at www.1stcrdemotte.org. E-mail resume and letter of interest to firstcrc@netnitco.net

SAN DIEGO CA CRC is seeking a pastor. We are looking to grow through community outreach and missions. Our new pastor will have a commitment to sound Biblical teaching, faithfully leading us according to God's will. Sermons will be delivered with enthusiasm and sincerity and will be relevant to all age groups. Loving God & our neighbors and joining God in His mission is central to all we do. Check us out at sdccr.org. For information contact sdccr.pastorsearch@gmail.com

PASTOR: Cedar Hill Christian Reformed Church, located in Northern NJ, is seeking a full-time pastor who is committed to biblical preaching and teaching that can be applied to everyday life. Cedar Hill CRC is active in outreach to the professional community we serve through programs for all members of the family and desires a pastor to lead us in growing this ministry. Candidates should possess exceptional relationship, communication, and leadership skills and desire to be visible in both the church and the community. Interested applicants should send resume with letter of interest to cedarhillccr@optonline.net.

YOUTH DIRECTOR-CADILLAC CRC Are you in love with Jesus Christ? Do you love the Reformed faith? Are you energetic and organized? Do you have a passion for helping kids and families grow in a relationship with Christ? Would you like to work with a caring church staff and loving congregation in beautiful Cadillac Michigan? If so, we want to hear from YOU! Cadillac Christian Reformed Church seeks a dynamic Youth Director to lead high school and middle school youth ministries. Full-time position, competitive salary and benefits including medical insurance. Bachelor Degree and experience in youth ministry preferred, but not required. E-mail youth@cadccr.org for additional qualifications, detailed job description and application instructions.

MARGARET (OOSTEMA) VAN THOLEN will celebrate her 90th birthday with her family and friends at an open house at Faith CRC, 1070 South Prospect Ave. in Elmhurst, Illinois on Sat. May 21st, 2011 from 12:00 noon till 3:00 P. M.. Margaret and her husband, the late Henry are the parents of 12 children, the late John (Alice), Peter (Winnie), Henry Jr. (Nancy), the late Ronald (Christine), Robert (Jo Ann), Kenneth (Linda), Grace (Robert) Dryden, Thomas (Val), William (Ginny), Margaret (Ronald) Cramer, James (Beth) and George (Mary). She is also the proud Grandmother of 40 grandchildren, 69 great grandchildren and 2 great, great grandchildren. We thank God for a blessed life of 90 years.

JANE VELZEN (RYSKAMP) 2121 Raybrook SE, Rm 358, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546, will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 19. Her children (Pat and Gary, Mary and Jim, Ginny and John, Jack and Sally), 11 grandchildren and 19 great grandchildren praise God for richly blessing her life. And we thank mom for blessing ours!

EDNA VERDUIN AND ALMA POST will be celebrating their 90th birthdays on Saturday, May 21, 2011 with an Open House at the Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan located at 515 East Main. The party will be from 2:00 until 4:00. All of the children are looking forward to a fun time with Mom and Alma's friends and family. Hope to see you there.

JENNIE VISSER(DEJONG), will celebrate her 90th birthday on June 9, 2011. Wife of Simon Visser they will celebrate 70 years of marriage on July 2, 2011. Open house June 4, 2011 (10-2) at 16553 Blossom Lane Tinley Park, IL 60487. What a blessing you are to us! Love your children, grandchildren & great grandchildren.

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

DEN OUDEN, Les and Ange (Pasma) of 913 Second Street, Ripon, CA 95366, will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on May 27, 2011. Congratulations and love from your children: Francis & Judy Groen, Bud & Deanna Den Ouden, Sandy Visser, and Robin Meeuwse, 10 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

65th Anniversary

COK, Jacob and Nelle (Alberda) of Manhattan, MT, celebrated 65 years of marriage on March 17, 2011. Praising God for His faithfulness and the gift of their love! Ron & Joan Cok, Yvonne Schut, Tim & Lois Cok,

Bill & Theresa Cok, Lisa & John Pausma, Janelle & Eric Gustafson, 19 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren. Loved ones in heaven: 3 infant sons Daryl, Dale, David, granddaughter Amanda, son-in-law Bernard. Psalm 33:20-22

KUIPER, Richard and Ruth (Osinga), 11710 Spring St, Sturtevant, WI 53177 will celebrate 65 years of marriage on May 10, D.V. Their children Cynthia (Michael) Owens, Marcia (Kenneth) Brondyke, Dennis Kuiper and four grandsons praise God from whom all blessings flow!

60th Anniversary

PETROELJE Justin & Connie (Michmerhuizen) 56 Newcastle, Zeeland, MI 49464, will celebrate their 60th anniversary on May 19. Congratulations and love from your family: Rob & Sally, Dawn & Jerry, Nancy & Jack, John & Brenda, Joel & Deb, Dan & Kathi, 21 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. Praise God for His faithfulness!

SCHILDHOUSE John & Thelma (Knoll) 2201 Raddiff Circle Dr. GR, MI 49546 celebrate 60 years of marriage May 11, 2011. Children Linda & Jim, Dan & Arlene, Kristie, David & Pam, 7 grandchildren & 2 great-grandsons thank God for their love and faith.

VAN OOSTRUM Jake and Rena (Abma) will celebrate their 60th anniversary on May 11. The anniversary caps off a year of milestones for their children as well. Jantena (Rob) [35], Bill (Beverly) [35], Anny (Ed) [30], Henry (Marilyn) [25], and Audrey (Don) [20]. They have 13 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren. 325 S. 5th Str., No. 1, Sunnyside, WA 98944. "You, God, have given me the heritage of those who fear your name."

55th Anniversary

DEBOER Frank and Hilda (Wesseling) 1746 Good Ave., Park Ridge, IL 60068 celebrated their 55th anniversary on March 31. Their children and grandchildren praise God for their faith and love. Psalm 91:1-2.

SWIERENGA, Dr Robert and Joan (Boomker) will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on June 16, 2011. Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren: John Robert III (deceased in infancy), Robert Jr., Sarah Swierenga (Sydney), Celia and Mark Groenhout (Jacob, Trent, and Jillanne), Daniel, and Suzanna and Brent Breems (Henry, Louis, and Katherine). His faithfulness continues through all generations (Ps. 100:5b).

50th Anniversary

HORSTMAN Virgil and Joan (Boon), Hull, IA, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on May 2. Praise God for His faithfulness!

TAMMINGA, Rev. Ed & Muriel will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on May 26. Children: Mark & Beth, Ken & Shelley, Joyce & Mike VanDinter, Marianne & Dusty Hawk. 10 grandchildren. To God Be the Glory!

Obituaries

BANGMA Catherine D., of Whitinsville, MA went to be with her Lord on Tuesday Feb. 22, 2011. She is predeceased by her husband, Raymond Bangma of Whitinsville in April of 2010. She is survived by her children Les (Rebecca) Bangma, Todd (June) Bangma, 5 grandchildren, Stacy & Justin Pominville, Jason & Jennie Bangma, Kimberly Bangma and 3 great grand daughters Nora & Eliza Bangma and Zoey Pominville. Memorials to Pleasant Street CRC Memorial Fund 25 Cross Street Whitinsville, MA 01588.

BOER, Jennie, nee Van Dyke, called home March 14, 2011. 6713 Fairmont Ave, Downers Grove, IL 60516. Wife of the late Cornelius; mother of Marilyn (the late James) Preslicka and Peter (Jan) Boer; grandmother of Tammy (Todd) Messmer and Jim Boer; great-grandmother of Brandon, Megan, Ryan and Amelia; sister of Peter (the late Estelle) Van Dyke and Margaret (the late John) Harasen and preceded by Agnes (the late Al) Oosterman, William (the late Bonnie) Van Dyke, Dorothy (the late Henry) Enders and John (the late Jean) Van Dyke; aunt of many nieces and nephews. Memorials to Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church Building Fund are appreciated.

BOERMAN, Donald, age 89, born June 4, 1921, passed away March 3, 2011, 4081 Byron Rd, Hudsonville (Forest Grove), MI 49426. Surviving are his wife Leona (Veltema), son Daniel and Linda, daughter Gayle and Phil Poortenga, son-in-law Paul MacBrien, 6 married grandchildren, 3 single, 10 great-grandchildren, sister-in-law Della Boerman. Preceded in death by mother of his children, Jeanette VerBeek, daughter Beverly, and many siblings. God is so good.

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BOOT, Robert E., Kalamazoo, MI/ South Haven, MI/ & Naples, FL went to his heavenly home on his 82nd birthday, Jan. 2, 2011. Bob is survived by his wife of 60 years, Marjorie (Kok). His children: Sheri (Charles) Ippel; Susan Boot Meyerer; R. Scott (Sue) Boot. Grandchildren: Seth (Mary) Triezenberg; Eric Triezenberg; Kysa Meyerer; Cory Meyerer; Erinn (Dan) Hoekstra; Christopher (Erin) Boot; Caitlin Boot; Marta Boot; and Robert Alan Boot (deceased). Great Grandchildren: Ryer and Henry Triezenberg; Keegan and Zoe Hoekstra. Brother: John Boot Sister-in-law: Marcia (Dean) Boot. God blessed us with Bob's love and Christian faith and we celebrate his return to his savior, Jesus Christ.

EPPINGA Mrs. Anne Gertrude (Batts); age 95; March 24, 2011; She is survived by children: Dick and Judy, Jay and Shirley (grandchildren Matthew, Margaret Anne and Jeff Fierstine, and Laura, and great-grandchildren Evyn, Claire, Connor Jacob, and Carter), Susan and Mike McCarthy, and Deanna and John DeVries (grandchildren Chelsea and Brittany DeVos). Her husband, the Rev. Jacob Eppinga, entered heaven

before her on March 1, 2008. She is survived also by brothers and sisters John and Ruth Batts, Herm and Marge Batts, Stuart and Helene Batts Eppinga, Jerry and Arlyn Batts, Johan and Betsy Eppinga, and Pieter Eppinga.

HOVING Hermina, aged 91; March 24, 2011; She was preceded in death by her two brothers, Abel (Jen/Jo) Hoving and Richard Hoving and two sisters, Florence (Jack) DeKruyter and Thelma (Clarence) Werkema; She is survived by three sisters, Betty (Edwin) Hoogstra, Dorothy (Elmer, deceased) Ribbens and Marcia (Peter) Noor, her sister-in-law, Elaine Hoving; 58 nieces and nephews, 108 grandnieces and nephews and 55 great-grandnieces and nephews.

JABAAY Raymond, age 79; March 25, 2011; DeMotte, IN. He is survived by his wife Gerry and his children Nancy (Alvin) Hamstra, Judy (Joel) Schaafsma, and John (Jerri) Jabaay, 12 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren.

LUCHIES, Wilma, age 89, went to be with the Lord on March 5, 2011. Married to Rev. Vernon Luchies since May 22, 1951, she served with him in ministry in the US and Canada. She will be missed by her husband and children, Sharon Scheenstra (Rich), Ron Luchies (Sandi), Ken Luchies (Janet) and Joy Rose (Joe), 11 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren and 4 great-great grandchildren.

LUCHTENBURG Alfred, 78, Bradenton, FL, died Feb 16, 2011 5080 Chauncey Dr, NE; Belmont, MI 49306 Wife: Mary (Stob); Sons: Paul, Fred; Daughters: Sharon, Ruth & Becky; Brothers: Jake, Lawrence & Ralph; Sisters: Martha, Catherine; 16 grandchildren & 2 great-grandchildren. Well done Thou good and faithful servant!

SCHEMPER Garrietta (Petroelje), age 88, of Oak Park, IL, went to be with her Lord on March 19, 2011. She was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother; a missionary; a teacher; a lover of nature; a world traveler; and in all, a faithful follower of Christ. Garry is survived by her husband of 64 years, Rev. Chester Schemper. She was the mother of: Carla and Lugene Schemper (Erica and Erik [Zora and Abram], Emily, Benjamin [deceased], Mark and Allison, Anna); Calvin (deceased); Thomas and Susan Schemper (Benjamin, Jacob, Peter); and Mary Denny (Katrina, Jonathan, Elena). She is also survived by one brother, Justin Petroelje, and was predeceased by 4 brothers and 3 sisters. Her life was a gift to us from God. She will be missed.

TIGCHELAAR, Ann, aged 90, went to her heavenly home on February 28, 2011. Loving mother of Helene Davis (Richard), Donna Schuurman, Calvin (Marianne), Douglas (Janet) and Jennifer Morgan (Roger), 17 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. Preceded in death by her husband, Stewart, her sister Betty and her brothers, Thys, Sid and Bill. Ann is also survived by her sister-in-laws Diny Reitsma, Martha Tigchelaar and Joan Tigchelaar and her brother-in-law Joe Tigchelaar. Ann was blessed to live the last 10 years of her life under the loving care of the staff of Shalom Manor in Grimsby, Ontario; her second family.

VAN SOMEREN Rev Bernard A, age 89, March 9, 2011. 500 Parkside Dr, Apt 274, Zeeland, MI 49464. Survived by wife Gertrude (Laarman); children: Randall & Marcia Van Someren, Mary & David Cok, Ellen Henderson, Janice & Glenn Meister; grandchildren: Elizabeth (Cok) & Morgan Knighton, Jonathan & Faith Thomas, Joseph & Sara Henderson, Alexandra Cok, Paul Henderson; his brothers and in-laws Anthony Van Someren, Richard & Carol Van Someren, Myra Van Someren, Wilma Stadt, Delores Van Someren, Harold Zoerhof, Jeanette Hulst. Preceded in death by his parents Peter C & Jennie (Leinse) Van Someren, step-mother Esther, infant daughter Linda, sister Marie Zoerhof, brothers George, Lawrence, and Lloyd, sister-in-law Helen Van Someren, brother-in-law Elmer Hulst. He was pastor of CRC congregations in Ada, MI, Oostburg, WI, Sully, IA, Paterson, NJ (Second CRC) and was calling pastor for Cottonwood, Jenison, MI. Memorial contributions: Calvin Theological Seminary.

VEURINK, Margaret, (Krediet), age 88, of New Holland, SD, entered her eternal home on March 23, 2011. She was preceded in death by her husband, Gradus, in 1975, and is survived by her children, Helen (Rod) Green, Gary (Ruth) Veurink, Rosalie (Edgar) Ligtenberg, Marlys (Dean) Severson, 11 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren. Her family is grateful for such a wonderful mother and grandmother, and we call her "Blessed."

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WALSTRA Virginia Ruth (Botting) aged 85; March 29, 2011; She was preceded in death by her husband, Christopher, and infant son Steven. She is survived by her children: Jane and David Post, Richard and Jennifer Walstra, Douglas and Jane Walstra, Mary and Donald Bratt; nine grandchildren and one great granddaughter.



WILMS Grace, age 104; went to be with the Lord in Lindsay, ON, Wed, Feb. 16, 2011. Predeceased by her husband John Wilms and daughter Margaretha Johanna. Grace was the loving mother of Jim and (Grace) Wilms, Nell and (John) deBoer, Winnie VanderBorgh, Anna and (Tymen) Van Halteren, Bill and (Lena) Wilms, John Wilms, Richard and (Cora) Wilms, 33 grandchildren, 67 great grandchildren and 1 great-great grandchild. Funeral was Feb. 21. Interment at Riverside Cemetery, Lindsay. Donations may be made to Heritage Christian School, 159 Colborne St., W. Lindsay ON K9V 5Z8.

Employment

AUTO BODY REPAIR Independent west Michigan body shop seeking an Auto Body Repair Technician with a minimum of 5 years experience in all areas of collision repair and refinishing. Paid vacation, health insurance. Please email resumes to autobodyrepairman@rocketmail.com

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

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT needed at Cary Christian Center, Cary, MS. Please contact Dorsey Johnson at dorsey@carychristiancenter.org or call (662)873-4593. Job description is located on our website: www.carychristiancenter.org

DIRECTOR WANTED. We are seeking a mature, self-motivated team player for a mid-size service focused volunteer powered organization. This is a part-time position based in North York. We are accepting resumes until May 30. For info please contact Ed. Miedema@gmail.com or visit us at www.neighbourlink.org

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Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies is seeking a full-time Executive Director who will lead, inspire and engage Au Sable's stakeholders. The successful candidate will inspire others by word and example to commit their lives to serving as stewards of God's creation. Submit resumes in confidence to ASI Search, P. O. Box 5096, Dearborn, MI 48128, or email EDSearch@ausable.org. Details and position description at www.ausable.org



FULL TIME PASTOR NEEDED Josephburg Community Church, an independent non-denominational church with a reformed background, is seeking a full time pastor with strong outreach skills. The Heidelberg Catechism and infant baptism are very precious to us. Applicants who are ordained or have a Master of Divinity degree will be given preference. Contact us at josephburgchurch@albertacom.com for an information package. Josephburg is located 25 minutes north east of Edmonton, Alberta. 780-998-9331

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COPPER MOUNTAIN Colorado condo for rent. 1 bed, 1 den; 2 baths; sleeps 6. SUMMER SPECIAL (May-October) 7 nights \$395.00 + Tax. doand@mho.net

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FOR RENT: Gulf waterfront 5th floor condo on Bonita Beach. 2 bdrm, 2 ba. Jan-Mar \$4500; Apr & Dec \$3000; May-Oct \$2,000, Nov \$2500. For more info please e-mail hesler2@yahoo.com or phone 317-842-1644

FT. MYERS POOL HOME FOR RENT 2 bed, 2 bath, sleeps 10, heated pool, hot tub, bikes, quiet cul-de-sac. 9 mi. to beach. Photos available. 905-332-6711

CONDO FOR RENT Naples, FL, 2 bedrooms, 2 baths and pool, avail. Jan-Mar, 2011. Email pinkhippo2@yahoo.com or call 708-836-1130.

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

ORLANDO CONDO RENTALS in Ventura Golf Resort. Fully equipped; close to Disney; sleeps 6. Call 616/318-7248; <http://dslobe.home.comcast.net>

BEAUTIFUL LONG BOAT Key, Florida near Sarasota, Bradenton. 2 BR 2 BA condo directly on white sandy beach. Newly decorated. \$1,000 and up depending on season. 630-655-2888.

OCEANFRONT CONDO RENTALS, 2BR/2BA New Smyrna Beach, FL, Daily, Weekly, Monthly rates. Reference Banner ad for 10% discount. 800-874-1931 or OBCRENTALS.COM.

CHICAGO 2 BED LUXURY CONDO 4 sale-1020sq ft on the 25th fl overlooking Lake Mich. 1.5 bath, indoor htd parking, hwd flrs, granite, balcony. RichardCDykstraJr@gmail.com or 708-870-1971



LAKEFRONT CABIN MT VERNON, ME Quaint, rustic cottage on Lake Torsey, Maine. sleeps 7. 2brdm, outside fire pit, gas grilling, h/w \$ 700.00 weekly. 350.00 deposit hold dates. summer/fall rentals lv msge 860-748-6599

WEEKLY RENTAL: Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Walk to the beaches of Lake Michigan from this Newly remodeled Vacation Home, 7Br, 4Ba—comfortably sleeps up to 14. Call Ken @ 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com for info.

FOR RENT: Hudsonville Apartment, triplex unit. Within walking distance to downtown shopping. 2 BR, 1 BA, no pets. Call Stephan at 616-340-1734.

COTTAGES on Selkirk Lake, 30 min. south of Grand Rapids, MI. 2-3 bedrooms, 600-700/week. 616-335-5202

HOLLAND, MI Nice 1 bedroom guest house located across the street from the South shore of Lake Macatawa., \$375 wk \$80 nt www.hollandplace.com 616.335.8766

CONDO FOR RENT lower level \$350 Kentwood (Grand Rapids) MI. Private bedrm bath living/dining rm w/shared entrance kitchen 5min from Calvin College rmwestra@netzero.net

PENTWATER MI, SUMMER COTTAGE Views of Lake MI and channel. A few minutes walk to beach. Bike or walk everywhere. pentwater tuckaway.com 616-550-4900

WEEKLY RENTAL: Douglas/Saugatuck, MI: Newly built Lake Michigan family guest house, 2br, loft w/ 2.5ba - sleeps 8-10. Lake Mi view & private beach. Call Ken @ 630-268-1531 or email Groenjk@aol.com for info.

LAKEFRONT LOG HOME 2+ bed. Sleeps 6-8. 30 min N of GR on Englewright Lk. Sandy bottom. Incl. fishing boat, kayak, swim raft. \$695/wk. Call 616-583-0407

COTTAGE 4 rent. 4 bed, 3 bath, updated. Sleeps 12, Hess Lake, MI. \$1,200/week. Call Lonnie 616-942-0048.

COTTAGE VACATION Lakefront cottage for rent on all-sports Brooks Lk (Newaygo, MI). 4 bdrm, 2 bth, heat & AC, canoe & paddleboats, sleeps 10, \$875/wk. 616-772-9040

FOR RENT COTTAGE Big Star Lake, 3 Bedroom Sleeps 10, Fishing Dock, Washer Dryer, Very Private and Relaxing \$1000 per Week Call 616 786-4338

COTTAGE FOR RENT 1 hour north of Grand Rapids, 6 bedroom, on all-sport lake. Good swimming, boating, fishing. Fishing boat, kayaks. 269-998-2991

FOR RENT BIG STAR LAKE cottage sleeps 10. \$750 p/w. Guest cottage sleeps 7 - \$250. additional. 616-886-2839

COTTAGE FOR RENT Available June-Sept. 11'. Big Rapids, Mi. on Hillview lake. New in 04; 3 bedroom loft, on water, beach and playground for kids. \$800/wk. E-mail for pictures at jamar47@juno.com. (616)893-9979 Jim.

LAKE MICHIGAN 6 BDRM View: www.greatlakehouse.net Call: 231.981.8883; Email: rental@greatlakehouse.net

FEMALE ROOMMATE NEEDED Three bedroom condo to be shared with two other Christian females. Zeeland, MI. annisekoops@hotmail.com for pictures and details.

COTTAGE RENTAL On quiet Campbell Lake near Hart, MI. 2 BR, all sports lake, kayaks, swim raft and row boat furnished. Great golf nearby. \$499 per wk. 616-844-7154. email for pictures @ eedz2@charter.net

COTTAGE FOR RENT Very nice 3 BR/2BA Cottage on Stony Lake. Private 75 foot of beachfront w/dock. Approx. 2 miles from Lake Michigan. Prime rental weeks still available. See photos at www.cottageonstonylake.shutterstock.com For available dates, call (231)861-4004

CONDO IN BYRON CENTER FOR SALE Private end unit condo in the Amber Ridge complex of Byron Center, MI. 2BR, 1.5BA, 4-season room, deck, open floor plan, vaulted ceiling, and many recent updates. \$129,900. 616-540-4794 or brendahofman@comcast.net

TRAVERSE CITY COTTAGE FOR RENT Cottage on 2500 acre Duck Lake for rent. 4 bedroom 2 bathroom (sleeps 12). Large deck and right on the lake. Call 231-709-0511

PICKEREL LAKE COTTAGE FOR SALE Newaygo, MI - All Sports Lake - Private Beach - Member of an Association - Call 616.868.0982

ROOM FOR RENT Female roommates wanted. 2 rooms available. Newer home 10 min from downtown, 15 min from Calvin. 616-301-4868.

The Banner 2011 Ad Schedule

Space is limited. Ads are inserted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Issue date	Ad deadline	Ship date
June	05/02/11	05/20/11
July	06/06/11	06/24/11
August	07/05/11	07/22/11
September	08/01/11	08/19/11
October	09/06/11	09/23/11
November	10/03/11	10/21/11
December	10/31/11	11/18/11
January	12/05/11	12/23/11

See thebanner.org

BEAUFORT, NC: 1 br furnished cottages for rent in historic coastal town, near beaches, w/d, TV, internet, grill, bikes. www.theshellcottage.com; 252-504-6262

KIAWAH ISLAND, CHARLESTON, SC 3 Bedroom, 2 two bath cottage. 5 minute walk to beach. Fully furnished including linens. Golf, Tennis, Biking, Fishing, pool complex. Visit: gembisinletcove.blogspot.com.. or cgembis@gmail.com. 989-274-1201

SMOKY MT CABIN RENTAL in Pigeon Forge, TN, area. Jacuzzi, Hot tub, fireplace, Hiking/attractions. Great for couples and families, 219-322-2722.

LYNDEN WA CONDO FOR SALE Lovely ground level 3 BR, 2 bath, hardwood floors & other upgrades. 1500 sq ft. Built 2005. Homestead Golf & CC. 360.933.4688 or krista.schaafsma@gmail.com.

FOR SALE North WI cabin on beautiful 120 acre lake 25 mi W of Minocqua. 3 bdrm, 3 ba, 2 fireplaces excellent cond. 299,900. For photos and info 920 2774151 or randalljcook@gmail.com

Travel

NIAGARA FALLS Trillium Bed & Breakfast all rooms on main floor with a/c, private bath, 905-354-3863 www.Trilliumbb.ca, info@trilliumbb.ca

TOURS FOR 2011: May 5 "Down the road Brown Bag Tour" Includes many gifts and dinner in an Amish Home. \$92.00 • June 13-18 "Joseph" in Lancaster and Historic Philadelphia - \$889.00 • July 30 Tiger Ball game vs Angels includes Old Country Buffet \$95.00 • Aug 17 Quilt Gardens Tour, gigantic gardens depicting quilts, dinner Amish Home \$87.00 • Aug 23-25 Great Mystery \$439.00 • Sept 30-Oct 1 Ladies only

Shopping & Theatre \$209.00 • Oct 3-5 "CelebrationBelle" cruise on the Mississippi, Dubugue IA to PrairieDuChien WS. \$459.00 • Nov 14-18 Branson at Christmas 6 shows. These tours offer many attractions and require a must-see itinerary. Call (616)791-4334 or toll free 888-922-4334 or email huddyd@gmail.com. Alpine Pleasure Tours, Cliff & Helengene Doornbos 3074 Richmond St NW Gr Rps, MI 49534

HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE Travel with experienced host, Pastor Carolyn Wharton Oct.26-Nov.4 for \$2799. For a detailed brochure: cwharton@phccr.org

THE CALVIN ALUMNI Association and the Calvin Academy for Lifelong Learning (CALL) are sponsoring two tours this fall. America's Majestic National Parks ~ September 8 – 18, hosted by John Apol. This tour includes the scenic splendors of Grand Teton, Yellowstone, and Glacier National Parks as well as a scenic float trip on the Snake River, Grant-Khors Ranch, Big Fork, Idaho Falls and more. China Past and Present ~ October 24 – November 7, hosted by Dr. Donald De Graaf and Johannes Witte. Explore renowned historic sites and immerse yourself in the fascinating cultures of Beijing, Xi'an, and Guilin. Then head to exciting Hong Kong where old and new blend together in a kaleidoscope of memorable experiences! A highlight will be the various opportunities to interact with Calvin alumni and Calvin students in Beijing and Hong Kong. For more information on these tours, contact Witte Travel & Tours, (616) 957-8113, 800 GO WITTE, or groups@wittetravel.com. For a complete list of tours, visit www.wittetours.com



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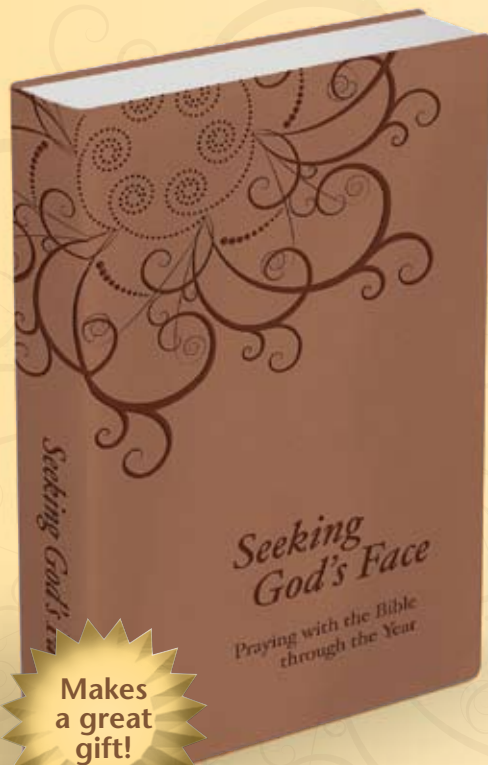
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Punch Lines

Banner readers, what has made you smile lately? Got a joke or funny story you'd care to share? Please send it to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or email it to editorial@thebanner.org. Thanks!

A father believed his son was spending too much time playing computer games. In an effort to motivate the boy to focus more attention on his schoolwork, the father told him, "When Abraham Lincoln was your age, he was studying books by the light of the fireplace."

The son pointed out, "When Lincoln was your age, he was president of the United States."

—John Veltkamp

I was playing a game with my young grandson, and we had a small disagreement about the rules. So I told him that when Daddy came to pick him up, we'd ask his father about it—"because daddy's know everything, don't they?"

He hesitated a minute, then said, "No. He don't know how old God is."

—Grace Van Ryswyk

Her name was Wilmina. Her pastor always called her Wilhelmina—that is, until the time she mustered the courage to say, "Please leave the 'hel' out of it."

—Ivan and Ruth Mulder

Do you know Noah's favorite song?"

"No, what is it?"

"Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head."

—Dick Bylsma

Our 2-year-old grandson was being read the story about Jacob and his brother Esau, with the hairy arms. The next night the story was again about Jacob. Our grandson asked, "Where's Chewbacca?"

—Jack and Terri DeJong

My wife and I were in church with our 5-year-old granddaughter. It was Communion Sunday, and because it was the season of Lent, our pastor chose to celebrate the Lord's Supper with a Passover theme, using unleavened matzoh bread. As the plate was passed, our granddaughter noticed that it appeared to hold crackers instead of the usual bread cubes. After pondering that a moment, she turned to my wife and whispered, "Oma, do you think it will ever be chocolate chip cookies?"

—Henry Hess

My 7-year-old grandson and I were in the arena, waiting for his mom and 10-year-old sister after a Ringette game. Trying to pass the time, I suggested we play "I Spy." So, spotting a garbage can, I began, "I spy with my little eye something that starts with g."

"I know," he said. "Jesus!"

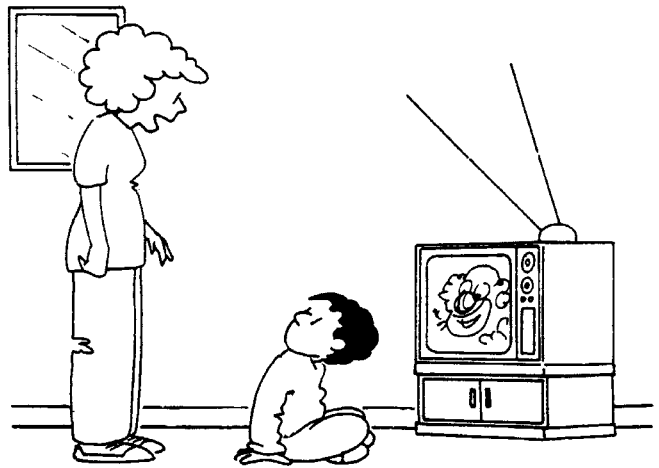
—Tiena Jones

We adopted our youngest son, Joseph, when he was 5. Shortly after that he lost his first tooth. Of course the Tooth Fairy visited that night and left him a dollar under his pillow. Later on we were talking about the Tooth Fairy, and he confided, "Mom, I know there really isn't a Tooth

Fairy." Not knowing what he'd learned from previous foster families, I asked, "Well, who left the money under your pillow, if not the Tooth Fairy?"

He answered confidently, "I know it was really God!"

—Marilou Richardson



"You've been staring at that screen all day. Why don't you go do something else?"



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