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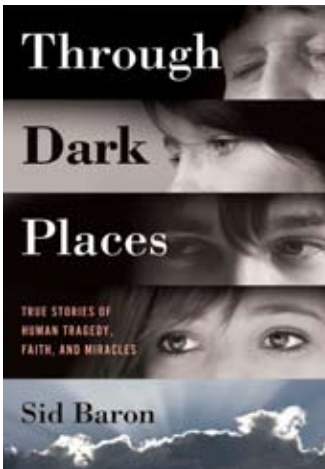
<sup>32</sup> Buried Treasures

<sup>36</sup> God's Love for Diversity

<sup>7</sup> Hope Amid  
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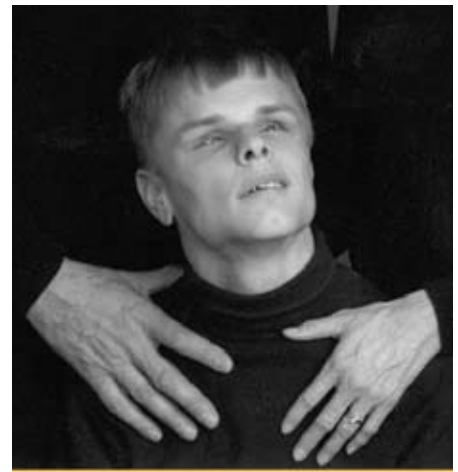
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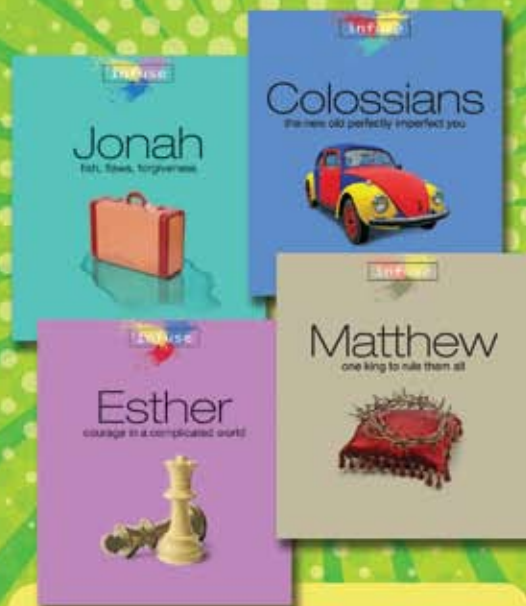
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**Cover:** A young woman does the family laundry in front of their new home provided by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee in the Leogane region of Haiti. The region was hard-hit by the earthquake that struck one year ago.

PHOTO BY GAYLA R. POSTMA



# Security for Whom?

**IT'S SCARY** how easily the media swing our attention away from what really matters to what really doesn't.

As I write this, newspapers, television, and the Internet are abuzz with the latest on airport security procedures. *The* topic of debate is whether full-body scans and pat-downs are over the top or merely common sense. This while thousands of abortions take place in North America every single day.

But abortion stopped being news a long time ago, so we forget about it. We allow Diane Sawyer and Lloyd Robertson to set our agendas. And that's wrong.

The position of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) on abortion can be found at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org). (Type "ethical positions" into the search bar.) Here's a summary:

- From the point of conception on until we die, all human beings are made in God's image and have unique value.
- "The church condemns the wanton or arbitrary destruction of any human being."
- "An induced abortion is allowable only when the life of the mother is genuinely threatened by the pregnancy."
- Believers should show Christian compassion and offer support to women experiencing unwanted pregnancies, as well as to women who have undergone abortions.
- Christians should "promote action and legislation that reflects these biblical teachings."
- Christians should reject all violence toward those who perform or assist in abortions.

By and large this position still enjoys a good deal of support among us, with the possible exception of whether abortion should also be considered an allowable option in cases of rape or incest.

But governments in both the U.S. and Canada have moved on. We're dreaming if we think that either country will toss this "hot potato"

back on the political agenda anytime soon. That doesn't mean we should stop trying to bring it to their attention—and we do, through such agencies as the denomination's Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action and the Committee for Contact with the Government in Canada.

In the meantime there are countless CRC folks who quietly and steadfastly continue the battle against abortion. Agency employees and volunteers offer counsel and essential support to women and families faced with unwanted pregnancies. Others support single parents who face overwhelming challenges. Still others work diligently to bring people out of the cycle of poverty and the heartrending moral dilemmas it brings. These efforts have brought the number of abortions down significantly in both countries.

At the start of this New Year, consider making a resolution to seek out these sisters and brothers. Thank them for their work. Encourage them. And, if you're in a position to do so, join them in those efforts.

And don't do this only once. Regardless of the direction the news hounds may be off in at the moment, keep this in your prayers. Standing in line at a security counter could jog your memory—or witnessing a baptism.

Let's care enough to routinely take note of all God's children who could have seen the light of day but were needlessly denied the opportunity. Then let's lend a prayer and a hand to bring Good News into that painful tragedy. ■



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

## Thanking God for the folks who quietly and steadfastly continue the battle against abortion.

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# In the Palm of God's Hand

*Let the wicked forsake their ways  
and the unrighteous their thoughts.  
Let them turn to the LORD, and he will  
have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,”  
declares the LORD.*

*“As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

*“As the rain and the snow  
come down from heaven,  
and do not return to it  
without watering the earth  
and making it bud and flourish,  
so that it yields seed for the sower and  
bread for the eater,  
so is my word that goes out from my  
mouth:*

*It will not return to me empty,  
but will accomplish what I desire  
and achieve the purpose for which  
I sent it.”*

—Isaiah 55:7-11

**LATELY I’VE BEEN THINKING A LOT** about my mother. She has spent the last four-and-a-half years in a nursing home 300 miles away, living with some kind of dementia. Mom used to be a force to be reckoned with—an energetic woman who worked outside the home during a time when few women did. A woman who,

with my dad, raised six daughters and then spent several years at Dad’s side when he was in a nursing home bed, unable to arise, but with his mind and spirit intact.

Now Mom spends her days in a Broda chair. She can’t walk or talk or even eat much anymore.

How sad, people say. Does she know who you are?

That’s the question, isn’t it?

The honest answer is that I don’t really know.

The honest answer is that the last few times I’ve visited, I’ve hardly recognized her myself. Had to check the name on the back of her chair to be sure it was really her.

What kind of life is that? I can’t help but wonder. What is God thinking?

I don’t really know for sure. But over the years, as Mom has progressed from forgetfulness to confusion to being completely dependent on others, my sisters and I have gotten some inklings, some hints of what God might have in mind.

We’ve come to realize that our mom is still teaching us some important lessons.

Lessons such as the fact that our value as humans doesn’t lie in what we do or accomplish, but simply in being children of God. Even when the personality that once drew people to us, the work that gave shape to our life, and the health that enabled us to move through our days are all gone, our name is engraved on the

palm of God’s hand. God knows us. Whenever we screw up or fall short of what we hope to be or do, that’s a comforting reminder.

Mom’s also teaching us that it’s not all about us. When we visit her or anyone else who doesn’t seem able to appreciate our presence, it’s an opportunity to show the love of Christ, even if the person we’re visiting can’t remember our name or say hello.

Every once in a while my sisters and I are surprised by a note of grace: a gleam in Mom’s blue eyes, a look of recognition. It’s as if her spirit is swimming to the surface from a long way away. Those are reminders that she is still capable of giving and receiving love.

God’s ways are not our ways, says Isaiah. But God accomplishes what he sets out to do in our lives.

As we walk alongside the people in our lives, as we join in their struggles, weaknesses, and joys, we may wonder about how God is working in a particular situation. But we can remind them and ourselves that God’s ways are not our ways. And we can trust that God is good. All the time. ■



**Judy Hardy** is an editor for Faith Alive and a member of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.



From beginning to end, everything is grace,  
everything is given.

—RICHARD ROHR

# Saying No to the Belhar

LE

OPINION

Adopting it as a confession would divide the church of Jesus.

## I AM A CONVERT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE.

For a long time I found it easy to make excuses not to help the poor. I rationalized a lukewarm commitment to the vulnerable people of our society. I minimized—or denied—problems in the structures and systems of our society.

Sure, I knew that Jesus cared for the poor and that in some way we should share that concern. But that knowledge never really translated into action.

My perspective began to change when I preached a series of sermons on the Minor Prophets: I saw how seriously God takes society's concern (or lack of it) for widows, orphans, and immigrants. I've become increasingly convinced that the task of social justice—addressing racism, fostering reconciliation, and caring for the vulnerable and disadvantaged—is one the church cannot neglect.

Yet I am not a convert to the Belhar Confession.

I see a number of reasons to be concerned about its language. For example, the Belhar states that “God is, in a special way, the God to the poor.” I'm not convinced that is biblically accurate. Does God play favorites? Does material poverty somehow earn God's favor? Did not Jesus also have a deep love for the rich

young ruler who came to him? Wouldn't it be more accurate to say that God “has a deep concern for the poor”?

Many favor adopting the Belhar on the basis of its *content*. That is, they point out that the themes of the Belhar—unity, reconciliation, and justice—are biblical and therefore ought to be confessional. But many who oppose adopting the Belhar as a confession don't deny that those are biblical themes. The question is whether this statement of belief ought to be *elevated* to a standard that binds the consciences of officebearers of the church.

Recently Rev. Bryan Berghoef suggested that we are uncomfortable with the Belhar “because it will have some say in how we act day to day” (“Our Discomfort with the Belhar,” December 2010). He goes on to argue that the Belhar calls us to action, while our current doctrinal standards do not. I find that logic puzzling. The Heidelberg Catechism spells out many practical ways we are called to live, including (among many other examples) how we must “do all we can to guard and advance [our] neighbor's good name.” Does that not include practicing social justice? To suggest that the Reformed confessions de-emphasize action is simply untrue.

Finally, we need to ask, “Would the Belhar unite our denomination?” (After all, one of its underlying themes is the unity of the church.) It would not. The differences of opinion regarding the Belhar are such that adopting it as a confession would divide the church of Jesus.

Rather, let's adopt it as a contemporary testimony of faith, subject to our three forms of unity. ■



Rev. Rob Toornstra is pastor of Sunnyslope CRC, Salem, Oregon.



## A Modest Proposal

Since you ask . . . I can't say I think much of your “Modest Proposal” to elevate *Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony* (December 2010). In the first place, creeds are not intended to root us in history, and they don't. They root us in a particular understanding of biblical truth. In effect, you propose establishing a “living creed,” the same way some jurists in the U.S. want a “living Constitution” that gets regularly revised. But a foundation that is constantly changing is no foundation at all.

—Rev. Eric Verhulst  
Sioux Falls, S.D.

In my opinion not only is your proposal modest, it is excellent! I had wondered early on why the ideas of the Belhar could not be worded into our contemporary testimony, to be followed by giving the testimony a higher status. Your proposal seems a good way to do this, while at the same time addressing needed changes in the Form of Subscription. (The proposed revision of the latter is a huge leap forward compared to the antique I've signed several times!)

—Bruce Nikkel  
Pella, Iowa

You really hit the right chord in my heart with this proposal. I have been uncom-



# LETTERS

comfortable with adding the Belhar to our confessions—where would this stop when culture continues to change? I hope CRC leaders will jump on this.

—*Marion Van Sloten*  
Hull, Iowa

## Hope for the Journey

“When Kids Stop Walking with God” (November 2010) reminded me of my dad, who stopped walking with God in his teens but stepped on the road back at age 80—though God took him home before he could darken a church’s doorway.

Parents may not see their child’s return to the fold in this life, but they should not despair of meeting the prodigal in heaven. Even tough nuts to crack are not too hard for God.

—*Michèle Gyselinck*  
Montreal

## Adopt the Belhar?

My concern over adopting the Belhar as a confession for the CRC (“Adopt the Belhar,” November 2010) is over what the document excludes. In its current form it highlights only one of two chief attributes of God that Scripture almost always states together. The Belhar focuses on God’s (and our responsibility for) mercy, while leaving out elements that would highlight God’s (and our responsibility for) holiness.

—*Ron Vanderwey*  
Boynton Beach, Fla.

## In All Honesty

I was disappointed with the editorial “In All Honesty” (November 2010), in which the editor reflects on the Islamic presentation in our congregation. In my opinion, he gets it all wrong when he alleges that Allah, too, is a God of grace. My recent study of Islam revealed a strong emphasis on the belief that all who reject Allah

as the one true God are infidels and must be destroyed. To suggest that Allah is a God of grace flies in the face of what the Bible teaches about grace.

I agree that we must not misalign Muslims falsely, but on the other hand we must see all false religions for what they are.

—*John Piers*  
Edmonton, Alberta

Your warm embrace of Islam and its representatives in your church to the degree that you encouraged their prayers to Allah was stunning. What typically happens when those who follow Islam reach majority status is that they kill Christians and burn churches, as witnessed just this year in Nigeria. As with many other issues, I do wish you would be a bit more balanced in our denominational magazine.

—*Rev. Paul Hansen*  
Hull, Iowa

As a missionary to Muslims for more than 30 years, I was deeply troubled by your editorial. In my numerous conversations with Muslims responding to evangelistic broadcasts and the related website I coordinate, I encounter a religion based totally on “works righteousness.” Muslims live in fear of their eternal destiny, under the profound stress of trying to exceed their accumulation of sins by accumulation of sufficient merit. If we define *grace* biblically, in line with historic Christian theology, it is an undeserved, free gift from God. That is simply not the case in Islam.

—*Name withheld*

I found this editorial interesting, albeit completely naïve. If you want to learn about Islam, you need to talk to *former* Muslims who have converted to Christianity. I know several, and they will tell

you about a practice called *Taqiyya*, which allows Muslims to disguise their true beliefs, intentions, etc., in order to promote the cause of Islam.

—*Rick Smits*  
Austin, Texas

How could you allow prayers to a false god in a sanctuary dedicated to our triune God? Your flippant comment “the church is a people, not a steeple” is no justification at all.

—*Charles Douma*  
Brampton, Ontario

We seem to be so focused on people—trying to understand and love them—that we’ve lost sight of focusing on God and God’s love, justice, and judgment. We need to do both.

—*Chaplain Ren Vandesteeg*  
San Antonio, Texas

Such discussions desensitize Christians in the West to the dangers of Islam for the Christian church around the world. Wherever Islam is the dominant faith, no such discussions take place!

—*Klaas Brobbel*  
Oakville, Ontario

### Correction

Regarding “Disaster Response Pioneers Reunite” (p. 17, December 2010), the photo caption erroneously identifies Erwin (Erv) Mosher as Ed Mosher. Both men and their spouses have long been involved in disaster recovery work through the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

Sorry about the mix-up!

# NEWS

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**Brenda Visser**  
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**Heidi Wicker**  
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Classes Georgetown, Grandville,  
Grand Rapids South  
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In Memoriam articles  
616-949-4539

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

## A Firsthand Look at Rebuilding Haiti



ALL PHOTOS BY GAYLA R. POSTMA

“In Haiti, it never ends,” one relief worker I met recently in Haiti told me. He was right.

It was early November, and on top of losing an estimated 200,000 people to the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake, the remaining displaced and traumatized population now had Hurricane Tomas hovering to the south and a cholera epidemic spreading from the north.

Although Tomas did not make a direct hit, it dropped enough rain on the mountains to cause major flooding.

Cholera deaths have topped 2,000 as I write this. The situation in Haiti can indeed seem hopeless.

Yet Christian Reformed personnel are providing help, comfort and hope, backed by \$12 million dollars, \$8 million of which came from CRC donors.

Their optimism and commitment to being agents of change in Jesus’ name amazed me as they drove me past acres of tent camps on rutted roads lined with garbage and earthquake rubble.

Port-au-Prince, Haiti’s capital, is a noisy, crowded city of 3 million. Some headway has been made in clearing rubble, but ample evidence of the earthquake remains.

These missionaries from the U.S. and Canada make up *Sous Espwa* (Source of Hope), an integrated team sent by

- Back to God Ministries International, the media ministry of the CRC
- Christian Reformed World Missions
- Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

Even more remarkable are the Haitian leaders I met, the ones who lead the Christian organizations with whom *Sous Espwa* works.

These leaders lost family members, friends, homes, and churches. Yet they continue ministering, ever hopeful of the healing message they bring to their communities.

The following stories are about only a few of those leaders and how, with the help of the Christian Reformed Church, they are rebuilding Haiti, one day at a time.

### Broadcasting a Message of Hope

Reformed Perspectives, or *Perspectives Réformées* as it is known in Haiti, has been broadcasting a gospel message of hope despite facing enormous challenges after the earthquake. Radio is still the primary method of mass communication in Haiti.

Rev. Sem Hypolite, director of the program, lost his home and



**Rev. Sem Hypolite,**  
director of *Perspectives Réformées*, a radio ministry in Haiti



Nevertheless, the program has aired a number of messages recorded by Rev. Paul Mpindi specifically for post-earthquake Haiti. Mpindi is the French-language minister for Back to God Ministries International.

Despite the earthquake, 3,000 Haitians continue to work on their related Bible study lessons.

In addition to covering the cost of a replacement home for Hypolite, \$55,000 will fund new radio messages in Creole, the language far more Haitians speak than



**Pastor Lemete Zephyr** collects equipment for people who have lost limbs.

already home to several hundred thousand people with amputations.

Rev. Lemete Zephyr, director of MDK, collects equipment for them to use: walkers, canes, crutches, wheelchairs. They register with and receive their equipment through local churches, which allows MDK to also help them with earning a living.

If funding can be found for it, a micro-credit program will help people with amputations start small businesses. "In

this society, amputees are rejected, seen only as someone to be helped," Zephyr said. "We're also educating society through radio and conferences to accept and give opportunities to amputees."

MDK also trains pastors and deacons and produces simple Bible study and discipleship materials in Creole. New materials are available to help deacons doing pastoral care in a post-earthquake society.

"Leadership is the key to change," said Zephyr. "Community members can organize and have

more impact." (See <http://mdkhaiti.org/Welcome.html>.)

### One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

*Pwogram Fomasyon pou Oganizasyon Dyakona* or PWOFOOD also trains deacons and leaders to help transform communities using literacy and micro-credit programs.

After the earthquake this ministry worked with people at Camp Bethel, a tent city that received little aid because of the danger of gang-related violence. The deacons helped people get organized, lent tools for clean up and rebuilding, and arranged food distribution.

But the ministry's office building was completely destroyed, which also meant a loss of rental income that helped fund its programs.

The micro-credit program was wiped out after some people with loans died, others moved away, and still others lost everything they had.

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#### Sous Espwa Staff

- Ad and Coby DeBlaij
- Rev. Zachary King
- Rev. Sharon Seegar-King
- Jenny LeMahieu
- Lesley Millar and San Diego Toussant
- Howard and Ruth Van Dam
- Lorigiana Meneide

The *Sous Espwa* building in Port-au-Prince

French, said Lesley Millar Toussant, with *Sous Espwa*. And there will be a trained pastoral counselor available at the ministry follow-up center to listen and pray with people. (See <http://perspectivesreformees.com/> or <http://www.backtogo.net/>.)

#### Independence for the Injured

"Please, Give Me a Limb" is the newest program of *Ministè pou Devlopman Kreyen*, or MDK. An estimated 10,000 people in Port-au-Prince lost limbs as a result of the earthquake—in a city that was

had to send his wife and baby to live in the countryside. His assistant, Margalita Petion, lost her mother.

Many of Haiti's large radio stations were destroyed by the quake, driving up the cost of air time.



**Rev. Pierre Mérisier** coordinates a ministry that trains deacons to help transform communities through literacy and micro-credit programs.

# NEWS

## Haiti: It Isn't Just About the Houses

The bulk of the \$12 million collected by the Christian Reformed Church for Haiti is bankrolling simple wood houses in five small communities of the Leogane region,

miles) west of Port-au-Prince, and it's where the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's International Disaster Response team has focused its rebuilding efforts.

The WASH program (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) has become more urgent with the spread of cholera in the region. It includes installing wells and latrines, handing out soap and purification tablets, and providing education on proper sanitary practices.

But sometimes a house and clean water aren't enough. That's the easy part. Much more complicated is alleviating people's trauma and fear, which can keep them living in a tent even when their own home is undamaged.

I went with Cleeford Dalce to a small community meeting in Masson. Men and women of all ages gathered in a small clearing, along with children who should

Two young children were able to move from their tent (right) to a new home (behind them).

where 85 percent of the people lost their homes. So far, half of the 1,700 planned houses have been built.

Leogane, the epicenter of the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake, is 29 cratered kilometers (18

Cleeford Dalce (right) addresses a community meeting in Masson.



Consultant Jos Jooisse of CRWRC demonstrates the tap at an artesian well.

have been in school but whose parents can't afford the fees.

Dalce is a social worker who goes into the tent camps both to conduct surveys to see who needs what and to help people with their fears.

Dalce told me of one woman whose home was deemed safe but who wouldn't move back into it. "She was too afraid. After we talked awhile, now she lives in her house," he said.

The meetings don't always go well. Some are angry that they haven't gotten a house yet. Others are angry that property owners receive priority. But the meetings give people a place to share their stories and fears and to learn stress management techniques.

"I had a bad stomach," Mme. Henri told the small group gathered. She wore a white skirt and top that were startlingly clean in a place where recent rains had turned everything to mud. "I learned to drink more water, and I received counseling. Now it is much better," she said. Another man shared a similar story.

After registering a number of families and giving them ID cards, Dalce led some stretching exercises, drawing laughter from many of the women.

As we climbed into the truck to leave, an older man pulled Dalce aside to speak privately. "He's having trouble in his marriage ever since the earthquake," Dalce sighed as he returned and climbed into the driver's seat.

It isn't just about the houses.

To support the work in Leogane, contact CRWRC at [www.crwrc.org](http://www.crwrc.org) or 1-800-730-3490 (Canada) or 1-800-552-7972 (U.S.).

—Gayla R. Postma



» continued from p. 11

Pierre Mérisier, program coordinator, said it has been difficult for staff to see the program get set back like this. “We were close to being self-sustaining,” he said. “It is quite hard for us to get out of this. We ourselves feel like small children, set back again.”

Rev. Ernst Jean-Louis, literacy coordinator, noted that they have to be careful with their preaching because people are angry—with governments, the international community, and God.

“If a person has lost a husband and two kids, how do you talk about God’s love?” he asked. “We’re

**Rain left behind by Hurricane Tomas caused major flooding in Leogane.**

working on how to present good news in times of tragedy.”

He also noted that more people are attending and getting engaged with the church. “Some see hurricanes, earthquakes, and flooding as signs that we are in end times, that time is short,” he said.

The CRC is supporting this program by providing a pre-fab building for an office, along with furniture and computers. The program will receive an extra \$20,000 for each of the next two years until a new building is constructed. Volunteers from North America are expected to be instrumental in that project.

The ministry will also receive \$15,000 for cleanup and a survey at Camp Bethel.



**Pastor Ernst Jean-Louis, literacy coordinator:** “The fact that our security is in God is now more real in our lives.”

### Haitian CRC as Salt and Light

The Christian Reformed Church of Haiti continues to be salt and light in the communities where it has congregations, particularly in the Jacmel area, south of Port-au-Prince.

Leaders of the Haitian CRC have suffered too.

E. Jean Edouarnus Estivil, Haitian CRC diaconal coordinator, ran home after the earthquake to find his three-story home in Port-au-Prince collapsed with his mother and two sisters inside. He was able to free one sister, but they couldn’t get his other sister out until well into the night. She suffered partial paralysis.

When they were able to dig out his mother’s body, Edouarnus drove her until the roads were impassable, then carried her another six hours on foot to make sure she had a proper burial in Jacmel.

He also lost his best friend, Caleb, national youth coordinator for the Haitian CRC. Caleb, like so many other young adults, was in late-afternoon classes at his university when the walls came crash-

ing down. Caleb was never seen again.

*Sous Espwa* provided Edouarnus with a new home, where he is now the sole provider for his seven siblings.

Edouarnus said he received great comfort from fellow Christians such as Jenny LeMahieu and Zach King from *Sous Espwa*, and now he comforts others.

“The God of all comfort comforts us so that we can comfort



**E. Jean Edouarnus Estivil, Haitian CRC diaconal coordinator, lost his mother, his best friend, and his home in the earthquake.**

those in any trouble,” he said, quoting 2 Corinthians 1.

Rev. Elihu Metellus, president of the Haitian CRC, was helping complete construction of a new church building when the quake struck. The building survived intact, but Metellus learned that his own church in Jacmel had been destroyed. Many other buildings in that town were also leveled.

With \$130,000 from the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Haitian CRC will provide community members with cement for home repairs.

It will also help 100 vendors restart their small businesses. »



# NEWS



**Rev. Elihu Metellus,** president of the Haitian CRC, was helping complete work on a new church building when the earthquake struck. He soon learned his own church had been destroyed.

Son-beam International from West Michigan will help rebuild the Jacmel church.

## Helping Schoolchildren

CRECH helped 124 teachers from 33 schools provide group therapy and trauma counseling for more than 3,000 children following the

**Tents alongside a once-beautiful church, now destroyed**



Tents went up in any available space.

earthquake. CRECH also picked up the tab for the teachers' salaries for months while parents couldn't pay.

CRECH is the Consortium for the Reinforcement of Christian Education, founded by Christian Reformed World Missions and others to support Christian schools and write curriculum for them.

Director Louisenette Casseus reported that up to 70 percent of their 400 schools now meet in tents. "Because of wind and rain, the teachers walk home carrying all their supplies, bringing them back again the next day," she said.

There may be an initiative to help rebuild schools, but details are not yet available. For more information, see <http://crechhaiti.org>.

Indeed, in Haiti, trouble never seems to end. Haitian Christians know from hard experience that there is ultimately only one solution for Haiti. As Rev. Jean-Louis said, "The fact that our security is in God is now more real in our lives."

And so these leaders carry on, one day at a time, trusting God to provide strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

—Gayla R. Postma  
Banner News Editor



**Louisenette Casseus,** director of CRECH, which supports Christian schools: "Schools are meeting in tents. Teachers now walk home carrying all their supplies, bringing them back again the next day."

For more information or to donate to any of these programs, contact Christian Reformed World Missions at 1-800-346-0075 (U.S.) or 1-800-730-3490 (Canada). Or visit [www.crwmm.org](http://www.crwmm.org) and type "project giving guide" in the search box.



# Haiti: A Philosophical and Funding Dilemma

**A**n inter-agency skirmish over how to spend the \$8 million sent by Christian Reformed churches for Haiti reveals just how complicated it is to mesh the work of long-term development with the rapid pace of disaster relief.

It also reveals the setting the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee must operate in as an agency representing the church and faith community in a world of large, secular relief and government organizations.

The March *Banner* editorial (“Taking the Long View in Haiti and Elsewhere”) noted that because the CRC has had staff in Haiti for the past 35 years, it was uniquely positioned to provide immediate help after the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake, when larger relief organizations found themselves gridlocked at a defunct airport.

Personnel from Christian Reformed World Missions, Back to God Ministries International, and CRWRC knew how and where to bring in supplies and distribute them efficiently despite a collapsed infrastructure.

When their supporting churches asked “What can we do?” the personnel requested donations to CRWRC for Haiti relief.

That seemed to make sense. In Haiti there is no distinction between the agencies. They work as a single entity called *Sous Espwa* (Creole for “Source of Hope”). And they believed money sent to CRWRC for Haiti would be available to them as that single entity.

But as the money poured in, CRWRC’s International Disaster Response team set its sights on working in the hard-hit Leogane region, and the *Sous Espwa* staff back in Port-au-Prince discovered that getting money to help their longtime ministry partners was initially like getting blood from a stone.

Wayne DeJong, director of CRWRC’s International Disaster Response, explained: “Some of [*Sous Espwa*’s] work was disaster response, but they have to continue with their activities and we had made a commitment to spend our money in Leogane.”

*Sous Espwa* said, in effect: “Helping our partners that do long-term development *is* disaster relief. Their homes are gone, their family members are dead, and many have no food.”

There was no ill will on anyone’s part, but rather a matter of two different approaches to the work. As DeJong noted, in community development you build capacity taking a long-term view. But when there’s a disaster-relief project that needs to go quickly, it takes a different management style requiring speed, accountability, reporting, and evaluation to deal with a lot of money in a short amount of time.

Eventually *Sous Espwa* received a one-time grant of \$250,000 for its partner ministries. In addition, a grant-writing and approval process was put in place whereby *Sous Espwa*, which includes CRWRC, and its partners can apply for funds from CRWRC’s Disaster Response for specific projects.

“We appreciate that the grant process forces us to develop better projects, but it takes so long,” said Rev. Zachary King of *Sous Espwa*.

Co-worker Lesley Millar Toussant is less patient. “A scrutiny is being applied to us that’s not fair. We’re [also] an agency of the CRC, and you’d think they would have confidence in our standards and the way we do our work,” she said.

The grant-writing process was new to *Sous Espwa* and was taking up too much staff time. So CRWRC used some Disaster Response money to hire José Magloire-van der Vossen in Port-au-Prince to help *Sous Espwa* and its partners write proposals. Linda Dykstra in CRWRC’s Burlington, Ontario, office reviews the grant proposals before passing them on to a regional review team for consideration.

Grants are beginning to be approved, and the money is starting to flow.

## Philosophical Dilemma

A deeper issue may be that CRWRC must balance the requirements of governments and secular organizations that give money with certain strings attached, while being faithful to the supporting church that expects that the relief being given is done in Jesus’ name.

As DeJong explained, “We subscribe to a number of humanitarian standards. One thing all have in common is that disaster response should not be used as vehicle for faith outreach, and faith or religion should not be a condition of beneficiary selection.”

Howard Van Dam from *Sous Espwa* said, “I think [CRWRC Disaster Relief] thought we were going to cherry-pick Christians and churches. Yes, we wanted to be able to help our [Christian] partners—so they could effectively respond to the needs of the larger community.”

King, who works for World Missions, said it’s a difference in philosophy that centers on proselytizing, or evangelizing.

“Proselytizing is anathema for relief projects,” he said. “We had no intention of designing projects that would make the receiving of aid dependent on making a faith commitment. But at the same time we are open and excited to help believers use the resources of their faith to help them heal. We don’t want to mix proselytizing with relief, but we want faith to have a place in relief.”

For Van Dam the bigger issue is that CRWRC gets some of its funding from secular sources.

“In my mind, they still have a catch-22,” he said. “They represent the church, but at the same time have become partners with groups with other values. I think they are trying to appease both groups.”

DeJong sees no such dilemma. “We’re free to share when asked and tell why we’re doing this,” he said. “But whether it’s food or shelter, it’s not a vehicle for converting people. We don’t spend money on proselytizing.”

—Gayla R. Postma

# NEWS



Congressman Vernon J. Ehlers

## Writers Needed

The Banner is seeking news correspondents in regions that include Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Manitoba, and northern Ontario to write about Christian Reformed people and activities of interest to our readers. If you live in one of these states or provinces 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](mailto:gpostma@crcna.org). Please include a resume or letter outlining your news-writing experience and some recent samples of your work.

## Retired Michigan Congressman Reflects on Faith and Politics

Congressman Vernon J. Ehlers retired in November after 17 years in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Ehlers, a member of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., said faith has been at the center of his political career. "If our faith is sincere, it should affect every part of our life, including our political activity."

Ehlers was a faithful participant in a weekly prayer breakfast and a weekly Bible study.

He began his political career with a goal to serve honorably. He saw tremendous need in the area

surrounding his church, and wanted to help ensure that all children had access to a good education. He was also concerned with the national infrastructure, and didn't hesitate to tell people that if they wanted better roads they would need to pay for them.

He also felt called to care for God's beautiful creation, which led him to pass the most comprehensive environmental bill to date while he was serving in the Michigan legislature. That bill went on to serve as a model for other states.

Ehlers wishes more church members would run for political office. "[Church members] should be more politically active," he said.

Asked about the timing of his retirement at age 76, he responded, "This seemed like a good time to retire before I lost important faculties. I didn't want to become one of the old fogies in Congress."

Prior to going to Washington, Ehlers had been a university professor, including a stint at Calvin College, which is owned by the CRC. He also served 11 years in the Michigan legislature.

—Noah Kruis

## The Bananer Turns 40

The *Bananer*, the much-storied lampoon of *The Banner*, turned 40 this past year.

Luke Reinsma and Steve Sieberson created *The Bananer* in 1970, when they were both seniors at Calvin College. They were reunited at a class reunion in Grand Rapids, Mich., for the first time since their caper rocked the Christian Reformed Church.

*The Bananer* included a mock meditation on a passage from the fictional book of Hezekiah, the confession of a young woman who had kissed her boyfriend at a drive-in movie, an advertisement for "Warp College" in Slough Center, Idawa (referring to Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa), and obituaries for alter egos of *The Banner* editors themselves.

John VanderPloeg, *Banner* editor at the time, fired off a four-page editorial titled "Do we just laugh this off?"

A scathing editorial in the Sioux Center (Iowa) Christian School Bulletin resulted in Sieberson's parents leaving the CRC. And an accusation of



NOAH KRUIS

Steve Sieberson (left) and Luke Reinsma, editors of *The Bananer*, shared their story at their 40th class reunion.

producing "religious pornography" was leveled by the consistory of Reinsma's local congregation.

Sieberson recalls Calvin College president, Dr. William Spoelhof, showing him a thigh-high stack of complaint letters and stating, "This is going to be the death of Calvin College, and drive me to an early grave."



## Ontario Church Gets Art-Full Sermons

In most churches, “multimedia” means overhead projectors and PowerPoint, not paintings. In Waterloo (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church, multimedia recently meant integrating a series of paintings with a series of sermons based on the book of Revelation.

The idea came from Rev. Vicki Cok and the church’s worship committee. “It was quickly apparent to me,” said Cok, “... that Revelation is a book that needs to be seen and experienced.”

Cok asked church member and artist Wilma Vanderleeuw to create the paintings. Vanderleeuw read and reread the passages on which the sermon would be based, prayed, and discussed the focus of the service with Cok. Once she had a feel for the colors and images



Rev. Vicki Cok, left, and artist Wilma Vanderleeuw display a painting based on Revelation, chapters 1-3 and 4-5.

that might best illustrate the themes, she set to work. Each painting took about 48 hours to complete. The process was very faith-building, Vanderleeuw said.

The congregation responded positively to the series, saying that it was helpful to have a portrayal of some of Revelation’s imagery in front of them.

“[Wilma] has a great gift, and we don’t always know how to use everybody’s gifts,” said Cok, “so this was a wonderful thing for all of us.”

The paintings are available for loan to other congregations. Visit [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org) for more information.

—Anita Brinkman

### IN MEMORIAM



#### Rev. Willard Van Antwerpen 1926-2010

Rev. Willard Van Antwerpen, cheerful and devout pastor and preacher, a man given to much prayer, and a diligent student, died on September 28.

Van Antwerpen entered the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church in 1951 after graduating from Calvin College and Seminary.

He served congregations in New York, Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois, retiring in 1991.

Though the pastoral ministry was the love of his heart, he remained a student of theology. In 1984, Calvin Theological Seminary awarded him a master’s degree.

He had a most winsome way with people. A man of joyful godliness, his parishioners remember his prayers.

Van Antwerpen was deeply interested in the challenge of missions. In 1956 he accepted an appointment to serve under Christian Reformed World Missions in Argentina but was unable to go because of family illness.

Van Antwerpen is survived by his wife, Berdela, five children and their spouses, 14 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by a son and a son-in-law. —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*.

Spoelhof, in fact, lived to a ripe old age, passing away in 2008 just shy of his 99th birthday.

Sieberson and Reinsma agree that Spoelhof is the unsung hero of the story. He contributed to Calvin’s history of allowing vigorous debate and did not kick them out on the spot.

At their 25-year reunion, Spoelhof gave Sieberson a hug, saying, “I’ve waited for 25 years to tell you that I loved *The Bananer*.”

Reinsma and Sieberson believe that the notoriety of *The Bananer* is owed to the fact that it hit at a particular moment in history when segments of the Christian Reformed Church were clashing.

Reinsma, 62, is on the faculty of Seattle Pacific University and attends Northminster Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Wash.

Sieberson, also 62, is Episcopalian and a member of the law faculty of Creighton University in Omaha, Neb.

Calvin College, located in Grand Rapids, Mich., belongs to the Christian Reformed Church.

—Noah Kruis



BEV MANTTEL

## British Columbia Church Restores Access to Remote Town

“Bring your chainsaw” was the word that went out to members of Terrace (B.C.) Christian Reformed Church after an autumn windstorm swept through the remote hamlet of Rosswood. Fallen trees cut off access, and power was not expected to be restored for several days.

Forty people, including the youth group, traveled 40 kilometers (25 miles) to Rosswood, chainsaws in tow. After Terrace CRC members cleared the access roads, members of the community fed them a chili dinner at the community center in thanks.

Sylvia Johnson, a local resident, thanked the congregation in an open letter published in the *Terrace Standard*: “The Christian Reformed Church has shown a wonderful example of what can be done in the face of an adversity that might strike a northern community.”

—Jenny deGroot

## Three West Michigan Schools Win State Titles

Three West Michigan high schools recently won state championship titles.

South Christian High won that school's first ever boys' soccer title. Coach Bruce Huttenga said winning wasn't the only goal. "One of the main goals [was] to be sportsmanlike and Christ-like. It was a great opportunity to show what a Christian school is all about."

Calvin Christian High in Grandville locked the championship in boys' cross-country, after placing a close second in 2009. "It's always rewarding when you see kids



LAURENS TENKATE



AMY J. DEVERES



LINDA MCCARTHY

work hard toward a goal," said coach Laurens TenKate. TenKate was also named Coach of the Year by the Michigan Track Coaches Association.

Grand Rapids Christian High won its title for girls' cross-country. Coach Doug Jager led the team to its third championship in the last six years. He said the team had three goals: first, to pray for their teammates; second, to reflect Jesus at the final; and third, to compete well for a fast time.

—Ryan Struyk

(Top) The Calvin Christian High School championship boys' cross-country team

(Middle) The South Christian High School championship boys' soccer team

(Bottom) The Grand Rapids Christian High School championship girls' cross-country team

## Urban Ministry Writer Needed

Do you have a passion for what God is doing in the city through the Christian Reformed Church and its people? Do you like to write and desire to tell the untold stories of the CRC at work in urban settings? Then we'd like to hear from you. *The Banner* is seeking a correspondent who is strongly connected with urban and multi-cultural CRCs and their members. We'd especially welcome writers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. If you are interested, please contact Gayla Postma, News Editor, at [gpostma@crca.org](mailto:gpostma@crca.org).

## British Columbia Church Enfolds Those with Disabilities

Long before the Christian Reformed Church had a Disability Concerns ministry, Willoughby CRC in Langley, British Columbia, was actively welcoming and incorporating people with disabilities into the congregation.

One of those people, Fred Siemens, recently shared his testimony on his 65th birthday. Read by Rev. Ken Boonstra, the testimony spoke of his commitment to love and follow Jesus.

The congregation as a whole has been blessed by the church's inclusiveness. Cindy Ruitter spoke of the blessing to her family, which includes three children now in their teens. "Fred and others have added an extra dimension of love for our family," she said.

Support for people with disabilities includes ramps, an elevator, large print materials, audio support, and more.

Siemens attends the church's Tuesday evening dinner and Bible study. Kim Holgrem and her husband, Paul, attend with him. Holgrem, also a longtime member at Willoughby, said she goes because "this is my community; these are my friends."

—Jenny de Groot



CINDY RUITTER

Fred Siemens (left) shares his testimony with help from Rev. Ken Boonstra.

# FAQs

## Mission

**Q** I'd like to give my time and money to organizations in my community. How do I justify this to my church?

**A** God has called us to serve both in a local congregation and in our community. Although the two aren't identical, we must not dichotomize them and devote ourselves to only one. However, we may find ourselves in a season of life where we are only able to utilize our time and talents in one area or are called to address a particular need in the community.

At mosaicHouse, a Christian Reformed church plant in Edmonton, Alberta, where I serve, one of our core values is that the church is the *people* who are commissioned and sent by the One who himself was sent from God the Father. We believe we must go out into our neighborhoods and communities embodying the hands and feet of Jesus.

Here's what I recommend: approach the leadership of your congregation and request that they commission you in a formal service as a missionary to a community organization. I cannot overemphasize the importance of this agreement between you and your church—that when you invest your time, talents, and treasure in that organization you are doing so not merely as an individual but as a missionary of a local congregation, sent and commissioned by Jesus Christ. In fact, has not the church commissioned hundreds of missionaries to meet the needs of communities like New Orleans shortly after the Hurricane Katrina disaster? Yes, we must be sent by the church in the name of our God, who is indeed a Sending One.

—Victor Ko

*Rev. Victor Ko is a church planter with mosaicHouse Church in Edmonton, Alberta.*

You are a missionary of your local congregation.

## Calling

**Q** Our culture puts so much emphasis on "success." I have a job, but it's not nearly as impressive as I had originally hoped (I'm basically doing clerical work even though I have a college degree). How do I make peace with my life when I know that what I do is important but it's not a leadership position or a money-making one?

**A** You are absolutely right in your evaluation of cultural pressures towards "bigger" equaling "better." More status, more influence, more upward mobility—it's as if there's a "success train" that college grads are expected to board once they graduate. But for many, that's not the path they've found themselves pursuing, either deliberately or perhaps by default.

In response to your comment about "making peace with your life" as you lean against this pressure, I would suggest picking up a copy of *No Little People* by Francis Schaeffer (reprinted by Crossway Books, 2003). I have returned to his first essay, by the same title, at various times over the course of my working life. Each time I've found myself getting re-grounded in Scripture and re-rooted in God's perspective. Schaeffer's premise can be summed up by the following quote: "We must remember throughout our lives that in God's sight there are no little people and no little places. Only one thing is important: to be consecrated persons in God's place for us, at each moment" (p. 25). He further suggests that we work hard where we are until God literally extrudes us to a higher place—not of power

but of servant leadership. I hope this idea will encourage you as you serve in your current place of ministry.

—Bonnie Speyers

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

## Church

**Q** May candidates for elder or deacon actively campaign for their own election? If so, what ways are appropriate?

**A** Before electing delegates to synod, some classes ask if there are officebearers who wish to attend. It's far better to elect people who really *want* to attend than to delegate people who will merely serve because they are elected. The same is true on a congregational level. Some nominees hope they are not elected; others are eager to serve because they have both the interest and the time. It would be helpful if the congregation knew that.

How to make that known in ways that do not appear self-seeking is difficult, and sometimes a "campaign" can insure a nominee's defeat. In personal conversations, an honest expression of interest is appropriate. Close friends can also indicate the interest of a nominee.

—George Vander Weit

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

## The Comeback Catechism

HISTORICALLY, THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY of grounding new believers in the essentials of Christian faith has been known as *catechesis*. Specifically, catechesis is the systematic instruction in the foundations of the faith, including what we believe, how we pray and worship, and how we conduct our lives.

Traditionally, we've used the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments to teach basic theology, prayer and worship, and lifestyle and ethics to the faithful. The Heidelberg Catechism has played that vital role in the Christian Reformed Church.

While catechesis flourished between the second and fifth centuries of the ancient church, during the Reformation, and in the Puritan period, it has waxed and waned in popularity through the centuries. For most contemporary Christians, the idea of catechesis is largely an alien concept, one greeted with suspicion.

However, two recent books from evangelical publishers point toward a resurgence of

interest in this classic method of passing on the faith.

First, Kevin DeYoung offers *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism* (Moody). DeYoung, a pastor in the Reformed Church in America, introduces the Heidelberg Catechism by dividing its 129 questions into 52 reflections—offering a convenient road map of devotional commentary to understanding the 450-year old teaching tool and the robust riches of the gospel.

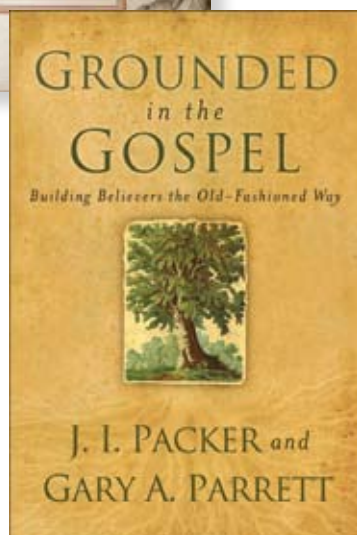
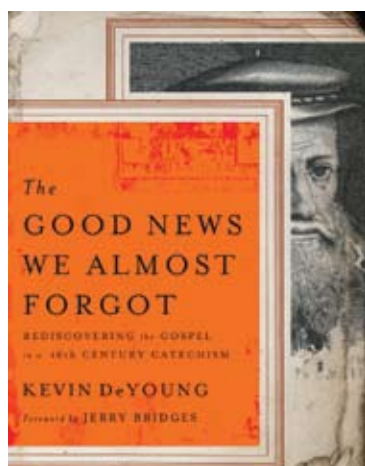
Second, for those who want insight into the historic practice, J.I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett provide *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Baker). They make an extended case for a recovery of significant catechesis as a non-negotiable church practice, showing it to be complementary to,

and of no less value than, Bible study, expository preaching, and other formational ministries. The authors urge evangelical churches to find room for this biblical ministry for the sake of their spiritual health and vitality.

While both books have

broader audiences in view, they can serve as helpful reminders to Christian Reformed churches of the ongoing value of their faith foundations. ■

For most contemporary Christians, the idea of catechesis is largely an alien concept.



**Robert N. Hosack** is executive editor at Baker Publishing Group and a member of Church of the Servant CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.



by **Eric Metaxas**  
reviewed by **Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor and theologian who died at Nazi hands for his part in the plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler, knew years earlier “that he had been ‘grasped’ by God; that God was leading him, and sometimes where he preferred not to go.” In this thorough, inspiring biography, Metaxas leaves no doubt that the crisis faced by Bonhoeffer and other Christians in Germany was a “battlefield between Christ and Antichrist.” (Thomas Nelson)

## To Change the World

by **James Davison Hunter**  
reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

In this landmark book, Hunter (*Culture Wars*) asks why Christian efforts to change the world have so often failed. He trenchantly critiques the most popular models of world-changing, which turn out to be the political theologies of the Christian Right and Left and the Neo-Anabaptists—Colson, Wallis, Crouch, and Hauerwas all fall short. Hunter argues that these political theologies fail the creation mandate in “implicit theory and explicit practices” and suggests a deeply theological alternative: the practice of “faithful presence.” (Oxford)



## Symphony of Praise

by Prague Symphony Orchestra  
reviewed by Lloyd Rang

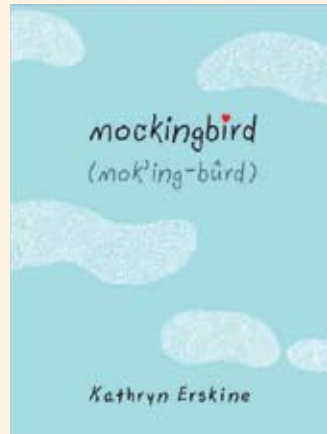
SYMPHONY OF PRAISE  
PRAGUE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

If you enjoy great orchestral music, you need to buy the Prague Symphony Orchestra's three-CD set, *Symphony of Praise*. Themed around the persons of the Trinity, the album weaves together hymns and other worship music with symphonic threads that will move lovers of classical music and those who grew up with these great songs of faith. Halfway through the first CD, a meditation on God the Father, I felt a lump in my throat as the truth of his love for all creatures was illuminated anew. Quite simply a brilliant work of praise.

## Foursquare

reviewed by Lloyd Rang

The social networking tool-of-the-moment is *Foursquare.com*—a service for cell phones and other mobile devices that lets people tell their friends where they are or where they have been. Users receive points for how often they check in at particular locations, and a good deal of the fun comes from competing with friends to become “mayor” of certain spots around town. As with all social networking tools, privacy is an issue, and new users would do well to weigh the pros and cons before diving into Foursquare headfirst.



## Mockingbird

by Kathryn Erskine  
reviewed by Kristy Quist

Ten-year-old Caitlin prefers black and white. She likes shirts without itchy tags and hates the noise and crowd at recess. She has Asperger's syndrome. She and her father are also recovering from the loss of her older brother, who was killed in a school shooting. This sweet, sensitive, and funny juvenile novel is written from Caitlin's perspective as she navigates and works to become part of the confusing world around her. Ages 9-12. (Philomel)

## THE LOWDOWN



**Our Town:** Hip-hop singer TobyMac encourages Christians to bring hope and healing to their hometowns and the world in his book *City on Our Knees*, a compilation of thoughts, quotes, prayers, and anecdotes. (Bethany House)



**Fun Run:** Love Facebook? Love running? Try the social networking site for runners: *Dailymile.com*.



**Call to Worship:** The Calvin Symposium on Worship reconvenes Jan. 27-29 at Calvin College and Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich., bringing together worship leaders, pastors, students, and anyone else interested in worship.

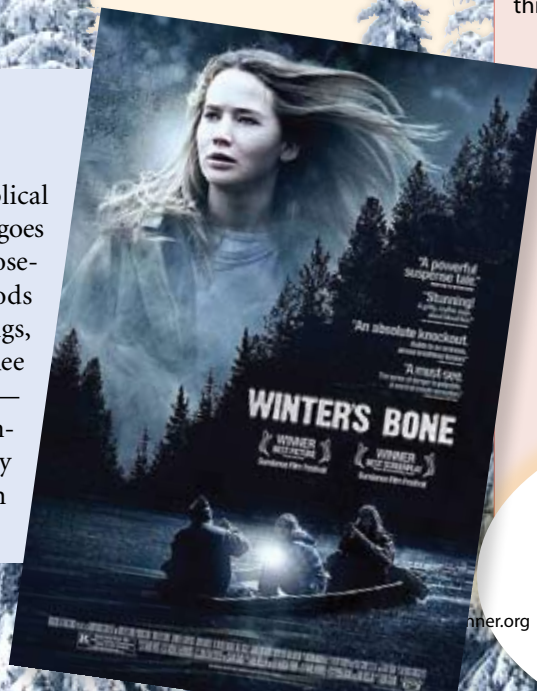


**Exit Here:** Christian pop singer Brandon Heath releases *Leaving Eden*, his latest album, this month. (Provident)

## Winter's Bone

reviewed by Josh Larsen

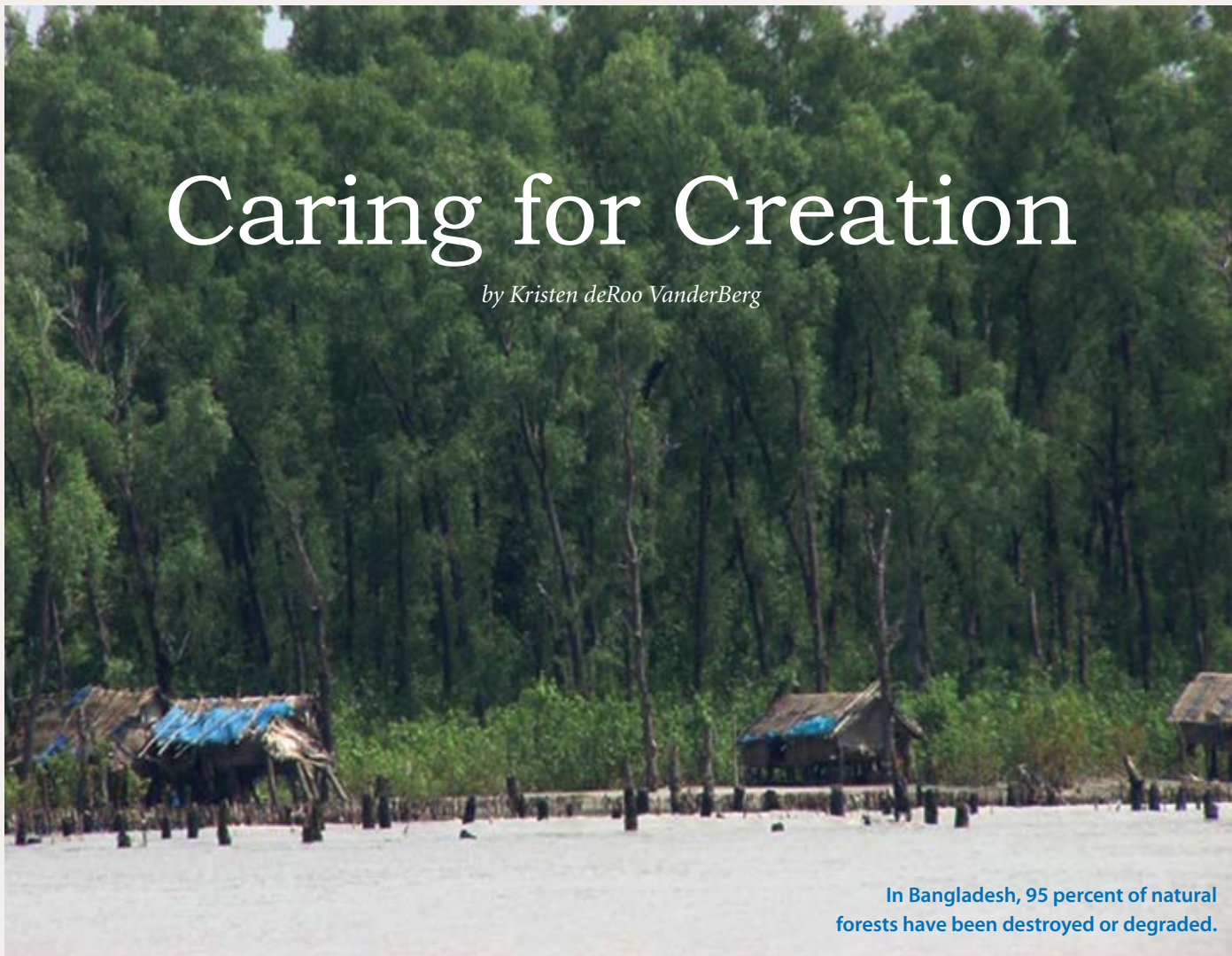
With the courage and feminist foresight of a biblical heroine, 17-year-old Ree (Jennifer Lawrence) undergoes a harrowing journey toward nobility in this purposefully dingy independent film. Stuck in backwoods Missouri with a catatonic mom, two young siblings, and a drug-cooking dad who has disappeared, Ree must navigate a cruel, patriarchal subculture—lawful and otherwise—in order to achieve independence. While watching this tough story of an unlikely triumph, don't be surprised if the Bible's Deborah comes to mind. (Lionsgate)



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

## Caring for Creation

by Kristen deRoo VanderBerg



In Bangladesh, 95 percent of natural forests have been destroyed or degraded.

**F**ertile soil, plentiful fuel, clean water—in the midst of such blessings it’s easy to overlook the crucial role our environment plays in sustaining our lives and livelihoods. But for many people around the world, ignoring this connection can have dire consequences.

Take Bangladesh, for example. This Asian country, about the size of the state of Iowa, is home to 156 million people, almost half of whom live on the equivalent of less than one U.S. dollar a day.

Recently, Bangladesh has made great strides in improving its economy by producing garments, leather, seafood, rice, and other exports. But these advances

have often come at the expense of its natural resources.

“Bangladesh is very vulnerable,” says Kohima Daring, Bangladesh country consultant with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

“There are impacts from floods, cyclones, misuse of farmland, and more, all of which impact crops, food security, housing, and the ability of poor communities to survive.”

Poor families living in the countryside cut down trees to sell as firewood and overwork the land to grow more food. As a result, 95 percent of Bangladesh’s natural forests and 50 percent of its freshwater wetlands have been lost or degraded.

The consequences are devastating. Depleted soil makes it harder for families to grow food and make a living. When monsoon rains or cyclones come, deforestation means that crops get washed away and homes destroyed. This leaves impoverished families even more desperate.

And Bangladesh is not alone. Similar things are happening in many countries around the world.

“Poverty and environmental degradation go hand in hand,” said Stephan Lutz, program consultant in Kenya for CRWRC.

“The environment—soil, trees, water—is literally the basic sustenance

# ☞☞ Poverty and environmental degradation go hand in hand. ☞☞



Millions of Bangladeshi families depend on the sea for food.

of livelihoods on earth,” Lutz says. “How we treat our environment affects the quality of our lives in the future, and this is most evident among those whose lives are so closely tied to the land.”

That is why the Christian Reformed Church includes creation care as a key component of its global ministry.

Jeffrey Bos, a project leader and educator with Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) in Bangladesh, Kohima Daring, and others organized a conference last October, bringing together pastors, community leaders, and non-government organization staff members to talk about the environment.

The Restoring Creation conference was held at the College of Christian Theology Bangladesh (CCTB). It was organized and supported by



Abubakkar Sidique supports his family by growing rice, eggplants, pumpkins, and other vegetables. This year his crop will be one-quarter what it was last year due to late, heavy rains.

CRWRC and CRWM, as well as Tearfund-UK, St. Andrew’s Theological College, and CCTB.

People from those agencies, as well as from the CRC’s Office of Social Justice and A Rocha (a Christian nature conservancy organization), made presentations at the »

## CRC STUDIES ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) has formed a task force to study a range of environmental issues and make recommendations on how the denomination can better care for God’s creation.

Synod 2010 instructed the board to form the task force, which reflects an ongoing concern within the church for creation care.

A report to Synod 2010 said that the Christian Reformed Church has “a long history of making significant intellectual, theological, and spiritual contributions to environmentally responsible living.” But it also noted that the denominational leadership has said little about the topic.

Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the CRCNA, says one of the original mandates God gave to all of us was to take care of his creation. “Creation doesn’t belong to us, but we are to care for all of God’s creatures and his people. We are also to care for the ground itself as well as the resources we’ve been given.”

As Reformed Christians who believe that every square inch of the world comes under God’s dominion, “we need to engage with this topic fully,” says Dykstra. “One of the issues we must look at is climate change and those who are abusing creation.”

It is time for the CRC to take a careful look at the deeper issues, Dykstra says. “Not only must we study what is happening and why, but we must also ask how we as Christians can respond.”

Last February the CRC’s Board of Trustees signed a declaration on creation stewardship that had been endorsed by church leaders around the world. The declaration, naming stewardship of creation as a priority, echoes the commitment expressed in section 51 of the 2008 revision of the CRC’s Contemporary Testimony *Our World Belongs to God*:

*We lament that our abuse of creation has brought lasting damage to the world we have been given: polluting streams and soil, poisoning the air, altering the climate, and damaging the earth. We commit ourselves to honor all God’s creatures and to protect them from abuse and extinction, for our world belongs to God.*

The CRC’s Office of Social Justice has a variety of resources to help congregations take action on creation care. These include an environmental audit that churches can use to evaluate their environmental impact and better incorporate creation care into the life of their congregation, as well as Green Grants to help churches carry out earth-keeping projects. ■

—Chris Meehan and Kristen deRoo VanderBerg

### CHRISTIAN COLLEGES MODEL CREATION CARE

Several times a year Calvin College students, church members, business people, and others drag tires, soggy wood, and piles of garbage out of Plaster Creek, the most polluted stream in the Grand Rapids, Mich., area.

It seems like a never-ending struggle, but they are committed to restoring the stream and the surrounding watershed. Through their efforts, they are following God's mandate to preserve and protect his glorious creation.

"What we have done and are doing helps us embody in a concrete way the mandate of creature care that starts in the book of Genesis in the Bible," says Gail Heffner, director of community engagement at Calvin. "We teach students to live stewardly lives."

Other colleges are doing the same. Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, is restoring a wetland on campus, as well as 20 acres of tall-grass prairie along a nearby bike trail. Faculty members say that restoring the prairie provides a habitat for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife.

Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, offers an environmental studies program to "help you fulfill your calling to love God and your neighbor by learning about the impact of humans on the environment and how we can live in ways that reduce our negative impact," according to the university's website.

Redeemer also has a "Green Team," a student club that works to promote stewardship within the university community.

"The biggest thing that we as students do is to lead by example," says Jody Van Dorp, one of the team's coordinators. "We also run the on-campus composting program to divert organic waste from the landfills. . . . We hike to local waterfalls and clean up the garbage that has inevitably been left behind."

Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill., has a Campus Ecological Stewardship advisory group that has worked to create a water retention basin—a way to manage storm water runoff. Trees and shrubs were planted in the basin in 2008, providing an educational laboratory in addition to habitat restoration.

In its 2010 Strategic Direction statement, The King's University College in Edmonton, Alberta, identifies creation care as one of the institution's characteristic features. The statement says the college "fosters a commitment among members of the academic community to care for creation."

Faculty and students have also focused on the environmental damage associated with the mining of oil sands in Alberta ■

—Chris Meehan



Jeffrey Bos outlines what the Bible says about creation stewardship.

conference. Conference participants explored the biblical call to be stewards of creation, reviewed scientific facts about the current state of the environment, and considered what the church could do in response.

At the close of the conference, they filled out an environmental impact survey

communities. Ideas included educating churches and communities about creation care, reducing consumption of resources, starting recycling programs, and planting trees.

"This was a good example of the CRC coming together on the issue," said Bos.

Christian Reformed missionaries are similarly working to incorporate creation care as part of the training they provide to pastors and other church leaders.

"As we work to build up church leaders around the world, we help them recognize the importance of caring for God's creation and the essential role that the church can play in leading this action," explained Sarah Van Stempvoort, who works with CRWM in Burlington, Ontario.

In Romania, for example, Steve Michmerhuizen works



CRC agencies joined with others to hold the Restoring Creation Conference to help church leaders in Bangladesh learn about and commit to their role as stewards of God's creation.

called "How Green Is Your Church?" and came up with some next steps to take back to their congregations and

with New Horizons Foundation to incorporate creation care teaching and training into NHF's youth ministry.

"Because church, community, and school leaders of tomorrow are in the high schools of Romania today, New Horizons Foundation is beginning creation care teaching and training within the



youth ministry of NHF,” Michmerhuizen said.

“I also hope to begin teaching classes on creation stewardship at an evangelical seminary here in Eastern Europe.”

Other CRC agencies are also developing programs with care for the environment in mind.

“One of the most difficult things we see constantly is how unpredictable weather has become,” said Jacqueline Koster, who lives in Uganda as CRWRC’s



**CRWRC encourages communities to consider the environmental impact of their actions. They also encourage people to improve their land through activities such as tree planting.**

disaster-response program manager for East and Southern Africa.

“Rains that used to come in October now come in December or, worse yet, they stop and start. Poor farmers often only have enough seed for one planting, if that, so when the rains start they plant immediately. But if rains that used to last for months only come for a few weeks, the seeds will not flourish.

“This was particularly evident in northern Mozambique this year,” Koster said. Farmers started planting when the

rains started. Then the rain stopped. They lost all their seeds.

“Those who could gather some more seed came down to the flood plain where they could irrigate their crops, but then there was an excess of rain and it flooded . . . so some farmers were hit by both too little rain and too much rain in the same year.

“When you’re talking about people living under the poverty line, this is an almost insurmountable blow.”

To lessen the impact of future disasters, CRWRC regularly includes tree planting and other environmental protection initiatives as part of its disaster-response activities.

“In Kenya, when CRWRC provides food aid, we distribute split peas instead of beans,” explained Koster. “While beans are more common in the local diet, they take a lot of firewood to cook. Split peas, which are also eaten locally, can be cooked in smaller portions and in a lot less time. Community members were happy to receive peas instead of beans. Choices like this help to prevent deforestation.”

Similarly, CRWRC encourages communities to plant trees and use soil-conservation techniques as a means to increase food production and prevent future problems.

“We feel it is urgent for the church leadership in Kenya to be sensitized to the importance of caring for and advocating on behalf of creation,” said Lutz.

Lutz says some church partners have been using the Canadian International Development Agency’s environmental assessment tools and, in collaboration with Tearfund-UK, are receiving aid that will help their communities mitigate the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

“Whether climate change is a reality or not, the reality is that God will care for his earth and promises never to destroy it (Gen. 9), and yet we are crushing it with the weight of our building projects (Gen. 11),” said Bos.

“The problems facing poor communities concerning the environment, poverty, and justice are there whether or not you think the polar ice caps are melting. The church is part of that problem and should also be part of the solution.” ■



**Kristen deRoo VanderBerg** is communications project manager for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

#### CREATION CARE BOOKS FROM FAITH ALIVE

- *Earth-Wise: A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues*, by Calvin B. DeWitt
- *Living the Good Life on God’s Good Earth*, edited by David S. Koetje
- Not entirely focused on creation care, but valuable: *What Do I Owe? Managing the Gifts God Gives You*, by Rolf Bouma

Faith Alive is the publishing arm of the Christian Reformed Church in North America ([www.FaithAliveResources.org](http://www.FaithAliveResources.org), 1.800.333.8300).



## Our World Belongs to God

**W**hen I was 10 years old, I wanted a new bicycle. For a long time, I had had my eye on a Schwinn Corvette. It was a beauty and, being a person of good taste (even at the age of 10), I insisted that I had to have that particular bike.

The problem was that it cost more money than I had saved. I had enough for the model with the painted fenders, but I wanted shiny chrome fenders. Being short on cash, I cajoled and pleaded until my father gave in and contributed some of his. I will never forget the day my new bike arrived. I was absolutely giddy with delight. Thanks to my parents' generosity, I now had the best bike in the neighborhood.

But the story didn't end there. Life changes rapidly when one is 10. By the time I was 13, chrome fenders and fancy headlights were no longer "in." Now it was cool to have a stripped-down bike with no fenders, no accessories, and no frills. So I took out my dad's tools and stripped away those pieces.

I will never forget the look on my father's face when he saw what I had done. His expression was one of surprised disappointment. He gently reminded me how much I had insisted on those chrome fenders and other frills, then he quietly walked away.

I learned a few lessons that day about the value of things, about priorities, and about a parent's unconditional love; but most of all I learned something about gifts. When I saw the disappointment on my father's face, I realized that casting aside the chrome fenders told him how little I valued that gift.

One has to wonder how God reacts when he sees his children misuse and abuse the gifts he has given us. All too often, I find myself acting like the 13-year-old me. I take God's beautiful creation and abuse it, even destroy it, for my own convenience and personal satisfaction. I take my God-given talents and abilities and misuse them. I spend my financial resources on fleeting moments of personal gratification.



PHOTO BY KENARRON

We live in a culture that aborts the unborn, destroys the environment, abuses the poor, consumes the earth's resources at an unprecedented rate, and generally pays little or no heed to the Father who provides it all.

Let's never forget that our world belongs to God. This simple but profound statement has the power to change how we think about God and how we think about our world. It sets the proper foundation for our thinking, our behavior, our discussions. This world is not ours to do with as we please. Creation was here when we arrived and it will be here when we leave. It belongs to God who, in his love and kindness, has lent it to us for a time.

This month, the Church at Work section of *The Banner* focuses on creation care. I invite you to read it carefully and thoughtfully. Ask yourself these questions: How should Christians treat God's world? Does it make a difference that we understand that our world is God's creation and not simply the result of some cosmic forces?

You and I do not care for this world simply because it is the politically correct thing to do. Nor do we do so because it is popular to be "green." We do so because this world and everything in it belongs to God, who has appointed us to be stewards of all he has made.

Synod recently reminded us that we, as the Christian Reformed Church, are called to care for this world. It told the Board of Trustees to instruct the denominational staff to give greater attention to creation stewardship as it works with CRC members and congregations.

It is my hope and prayer that each of us will work faithfully and diligently so that the look on our Father's face will be one of satisfaction and pleasure in response to the care his children have taken with his gifts. ■

“ This world is not ours to do with as we please. ”



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

BTGMI producer Laisin Cheung



## HERE AND THERE

### From Listener to Friend

**T**he darkest hour of Waiyee's life came in March 2007, when she learned that her father had terminal colon cancer. "I was trying to encourage him when I saw his sufferings, but I was so weak," she says.

Born with disabilities that cause her to use a wheelchair, Waiyee was facing her own health issues and seeing eight specialists. "Life seemed so meaningless, and I really thought about ending my life right then."

During this period, Waiyee heard the Back to God Minis-

try International program *Listen to My Heart*. She contacted the producer, Laisin Cheung. Laisin carried on several email conversations with Waiyee, offering hope and encouragement from God's Word, says Rev. Jimmy Lin, Chinese ministry leader for BTGMI. Waiyee says Laisin

"helped to pull me out of that deep valley of the shadow of death."

The two became good friends, and Waiyee now regularly contributes to the blog on [www.listenheart.org](http://www.listenheart.org). Last summer she made the trip from Hong Kong to Chicago to meet Laisin and Rev. Lin.

Waiyee still struggles with medical issues and depression, but she has found ways to let the love of Jesus provide comfort. She finished her education and works in a social welfare office in Hong Kong.

At BTGMI's international studio, Waiyee recorded her testimony, which was included on a CD called *A Companion Through the Storms*. BTGMI has distributed the CD to listeners in Hong Kong, South-east Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and North America. A number of people who received it have written to say that it encouraged them. ■

—Nancy VanderMeer,  
BTGMI Communications

### Church Planters Launch Philly Initiative

**W**hen Manny and Blanca Ortiz and Randy and Sue Baker and their families moved to Philadelphia in 1987, there were no Christian Reformed churches in the city.

They soon launched Spirit and Truth Fellowship CRC downtown—a church firmly rooted both in Scripture and in the community—with the vision of reaching neighborhoods through further church planting.

Today, there are eight Christian Reformed congregations and a house church in the region, together with a newly-launched school to equip developing leaders to start even more urban churches.

Manny Ortiz and Sue Baker are co-directors of the Home Missions-supported "Philly Initiative." One of their primary goals is the development of a cluster of the new CRC church plants that will meet every five to six weeks for encouragement, sharing, and prayer.

Another aspect of the initiative is coaching and mentoring church-plant

pastors and leaders, in partnership with Home Missions Eastern U.S. regional leader Drew Angus. A new training institute, the Philadelphia School of Bible and Urban Mission, has been established to assist with the development of emerging and indigenous leaders.

"There is a great need for grassroots training of leaders in this city," says Ortiz, pastor of Spirit and Truth Fellowship.

The School of Bible and Urban Mission provides biblical and theological education for leaders emerging in the church plants. It also provides instruction for church planters who are in ministry and those who are emerging to meet together for what is called "Church Planting Fellows."

The Fellows program encourages church planters with new ideas and refines the principles that guide them as they grow their local ministries. Fellows represent a broad range of leaders from the community, many of whom have little training but do well through experience and tutoring. Some students

have theological training but lack experience.

A third program, a seminary for juniors and seniors in high school, encourages a desire among young people to grow in biblical understanding and to consider their gifts for ministry. ■

—Ben Van Houten, *Christian Reformed Home Missions*

Manny and Blanca Ortiz



## Walking for Peace in Nigeria

**M**ore than 100 people in Nigeria walked 200 miles to celebrate peace in their communities.

The Nigeria Peace Walk commemorates the Nov. 28, 2006, signing of the Takum Peace Agreement, which ended a violent land dispute. The walk involved traditional leaders from several ethnic groups.



Nigerians walk to celebrate a historic peace agreement.

Organizers also hoped to raise funds, public awareness, and willingness within the Nigerian government to return the ownership of the Mbiya Government

Secondary School to the Reformed churches in Nigeria.

The school was founded by missionaries from the Christian Reformed Church and then deeded to the Nigerian churches. During the period of unrest, the Nigerian government took over public structures and services, including schools and hospitals.

Mbiya School is supported in North America by Worldwide Christian Schools, Christian Reformed World Missions, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and the Christian Reformed Office of Social Justice.

Participants ranging in age from teens to the elderly walked this year from church to church, picking up additional walkers along the way.

Last year participants stopped at churches each evening to eat together and promote peaceful coexistence among the people in the communities they visited, translating their message into local dialects as they went. In every village representatives from each major ethnic group—Tiv, Jukun, Kuteb, and Chamba—prayed for peace among the tribal groups represented.

A solidarity walk was also held in the city of Jos, to commemorate the relative peace in Taraba.

The rebuilding of Mbiya School serves as a symbol of reconciliation as well as a source of hope for a legacy of peace in the area. The Nigerian churches hope to raise 5 million naira (\$42,371 US) to complete a 10-year construction plan in partnership with Worldwide Christian Schools. ■

—Beth DeGraff,  
CRWRC Communications

## A Slice of Faith

**F**or Jack and Cindy Ippel, Christian Reformed World Missions partners in Hungary, pizza parties equal ministry opportunities.

Jack teaches English conversation to public high school students in Budapest. Cindy does administrative work for two missions agencies. Several times a year the Ippels make pizzas at their small apartment to feed Jack's hungry teenage students and a few colleagues.

"Pizza parties are just one way of allowing students into our lives and, hopefully, us into theirs. It's very unusual for students to get into a teacher's home, and they are intrigued and appreciative of the invitation," says Jack.

Every fall for three years the Ippels have returned to Hungary, committed to sharing their faith with their colleagues and Jack's students.

Many Hungarian youths know little about Christianity. During 40 years of communist rule, religion was sharply repressed. By the time communism fell, Hungary had become a largely secular society.

"Because of the oppression . . . over many generations, there is a sense of hopelessness and fatalism," Jack says. "Alcoholism touches every family."



Jack Ippel poses with some of his students during a pizza party.

Most Hungarian youths are resigned to life never changing for the better, and think of church as something for older people.

Convinced that true hope comes only in Christ, the Ippels model a Christian lifestyle and focus on building relationships with Jack's students, praying students will yearn to know more.

The approach seems to be working. Last year after one of Jack's classes, a student said he'd observed Jack's faith and wondered how to become a Christian himself. Jack now regularly meets with that student.

"We can see that God is using us to bring hope into [our colleagues' and students'] lives. . . . This is where God desires us to be." ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort, *Christian Reformed World Missions*

## Seminarians Go to Prison

Last fall a group from Calvin Theological Seminary visited the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, La. The group included six seminary students, professors Ron Nydam and John Rottman, and me, a recent graduate of CTS with a passion for prison ministry.

The prison is massive: its grounds cover 18,000 acres, and the buildings house 5,000 prisoners. It also has many unique programs, such as a prison rodeo and *The Angolite*, a magazine produced by inmates. One of the prison chaplains took the group on a tour that included a visit to the death chamber, where inmates are executed by lethal injection.

The visit to Angola focused primarily on the Bible college at the prison, which is an extension of New Orleans Baptist Seminary. Under the leadership of John Robson, it has experienced tremendous success. The power of God at work through the Bible college has dramatically transformed the prison culture.

Violence has been reduced by more than 70 percent since the Bible college started in 1995. Graduates find purpose in life by ministering to fellow inmates. Some become preachers or teachers. Others are sent in teams of two as missionaries to other Louisiana prisons. Those gifted in pastoral care offer compassion to people who are dying at the prison hospice.

During the visit, Nydam helped to equip the inmate students to administer pastoral care, and Rottman instructed them in preaching effectively. On the final day, author James Vogelzang joined the group, giving encouragement to the inmates

with copies of his devotional book *Doing His Time*.

During the seminars the group interacted with students eager to learn. In the evenings, we attended chapel services at three different prison camps. We listened to an inmate preacher teach about temptation and were asked to participate by sharing our testimonies. Nydam reflected on how God had healed him of acute leukemia.

A highlight of the visit was lunch with the warden, Burl Cain, who was a January Series speaker at Cal-



**Back row, from left: Stephen Jackson, Andy Hanson, Ron Nydam, John Rottman, Jessica Driesenga. Middle row: David Brander, John Eigege, Rich Visser. Front: Rick Admiraal.**

vin College in 2010. Cain said that most inmate education programs only create smarter criminals. Moral rehabilitation, he said, can best be accomplished by the church.

We were inspired and changed by the prison visit, and God is leading me to plant a prison church in the Newton (Iowa) Correctional Facility. God willing, New Life Prison Church will begin in January with the support of Classis Central Plains. ■

—Rick Admiraal is a 2010 graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary.

## Calvin Symposium Focuses on Worship

Calvin College will host the 24th annual Calvin Symposium on Worship Jan. 27-29, 2011.

The conference, cosponsored by Calvin Theological Seminary's Center for Excellence in Preaching and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, is expected to attract 1,500 guests from 40 countries, including more than 300 students and teachers from 70-plus high schools, colleges, and seminaries around the world.

The conference will feature Calvin philosophy professor James K.A. Smith and Calvin alumna Ruth Padilla DeBorst in plenary sessions, along with about 100 different break-out sessions led by more than 80 presenters.

One highlight of this year's conference is the expanded number of worship services. This year's theme, "Every Time I Remember You: The Letter to the Philippians," is the culmination of this past fall's campuswide Bible studies, which involved more than 1,800 Calvin students, faculty, and staff studying the letter to the Philippians and using the new book *Dwelling with Philippians: A Conversation with Scripture through Image and Word* (Eerdmans, 2010).

Karen Campbell, Scott Hoezee, Denise Kingdom-Grier, Trygve Johnson, Ron Rienstra, and Jerry Pillay will be preaching at these services, which are free and open to the public.

In addition to the five plenary services, conferees will be able to attend three of seven vesper services, each with a distinct focus and flavor, and each intended to offer attendees something they can take home for worship in their own congregations.

Emily Brink, program director of the symposium, says that the heart of the event is the fellowship and joy that come from learning and worshipping together with a large and diverse part of the body of Christ.

Check-in and walk-up registration for the conference will be held at the newly renovated and expanded Covenant Fine Arts Center at Calvin. See <http://worship.calvin.edu> or contact Kristen Verhulst at 616.526.6831. ■

—Matt Kucinski is media relations manager at Calvin College.

# Come to Your Senses



God gave you some pretty wonderful senses. With them you can smell your pizza, watch the snow fall, listen to music, and taste hot chocolate. Your senses really help you enjoy life!

But they also help protect you. Because of your senses you feel a pin pricking you, hear a siren, and see a curb. You can walk without falling—and it's all because of something in your ears! Does that surprise you? You're not

alone. Most of us don't give a second thought to how our senses protect us.

Think about your senses in a new way for a few minutes. Read about some built-in protections and try the experiments. Imagine life without your senses. Then thank God for them!

## The Nose Knows

Quick—name two things that smell really bad. Would you eat either of those things? They're probably bad for you, aren't they?

Think about that: most things that smell bad to you are bad for you. That's hard to explain; it's just the way God made you.

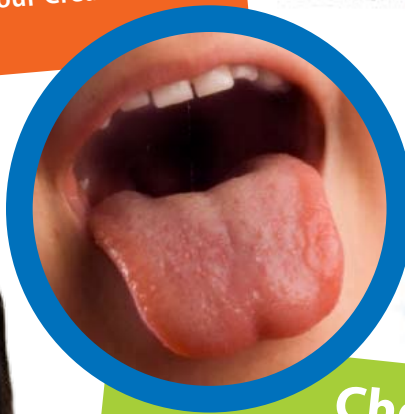
Thankfully your sense of smell isn't super terrific. How would you like to smell all the rotten garbage within a mile of you? You only need to smell rotten stuff close to your mouth so you won't eat it. Trust your nose, it knows.

Your nose knows a bit more. At least one "long-distance" odor always catches your attention: smoke from a fire. Your Creator knows exactly what you need.

Sniff  
Sniff



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



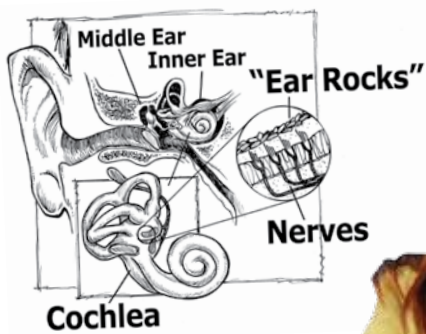
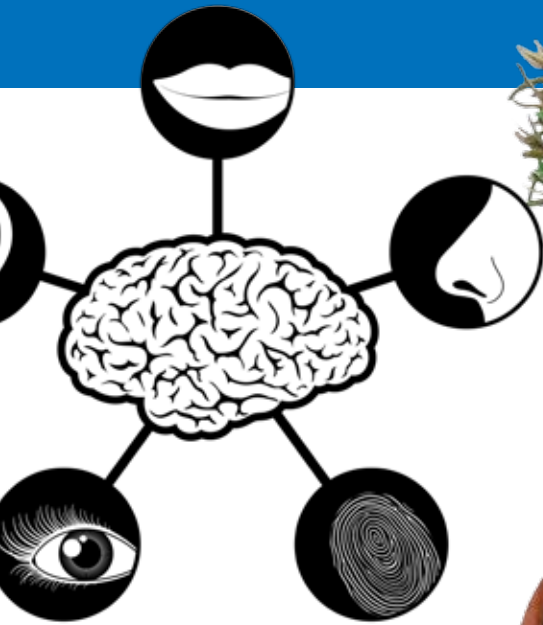
## Chew on This

Scientists say that you need saliva (spit) to taste food. Want to test that statement? Dry your tongue with a paper towel. Then taste a cracker. Let your saliva flow to wet your tongue, then taste another cracker. Can you tell the difference? Aren't you glad you've got a little spit in your mouth?

Your spit also helps you chew and swallow. Imagine eating pizza completely dry. You'd have all those toppings rolling around separately in your mouth. Without saliva, you might choke on it.

Yet there's more. Special chemicals in your saliva start to digest your food as you chew. Other chemicals kill some bacteria, fighting off infections in your mouth. And still others help clean your teeth as saliva rinses your mouth. Honest!





## What's the Point?

Try this: Bend a paper clip into a U-shape. Keep the two points about an inch (2.5 cm) apart. With your eyes closed, have someone touch your back with the points. Do you feel one or two points? Now touch your upper arm. Don't look. One or two points? Now touch your fingers. Aha, two!

Here's the point: Your fingers can feel what's poking you better than most other places on your body. That's because you have more "touch" nerves there. You also have more in your feet and near your mouth.

Why? Think about it. What parts of your body reach into the world first? Your hands and feet. If you're going to bump into something, your hands or feet will tell you. And think how much stuff you put into your body through your mouth. What would happen if your mouth were numb every day like you had just been to the dentist? Get the point? Your touch nerves are in all the right places!

## Rocks in Your Head

You have rocks in your head. That's true! They're called "calcium carbonate otoliths"—that means "limestone ear rocks." They're as tiny as grains of sand, so they're really "limestone ear grains."

They're tucked into your inner ears with your hearing equipment. But they don't help you hear. They help you tell up from down.

These rocks are sealed into tiny sacs that are full of nerves. When you move, the rocks tumble over the nerves. The nerves send messages to the brain. These messages tell you which direction is up.

Nearby are tiny tubes, looped and filled with fluid instead of rocks. They work the same way to keep you balanced, so you don't fall over.

You can mix up this equipment. First, find a safe place to fall. Spin around quickly about 10 times, then try to walk a straight line. You'll find out why you should thank God for the rocks in your head!

## Eye Spy

Imagine that you're about to cross a busy street. Out of the corner of your eye you see a bright red van speeding toward you. What's the most important thing to know about that van? That it's bright red?

When you see something from the corner of your eye, it's hard for you to tell color and shape. But it's easy to see movement.

That's exactly what you need. The color and the type of van are not important. The fact that it's moving toward you is VERY important. You'd better stay out of the way! Thank God that you see movement before you see color and shape.

You can test this. Take different colored pieces of paper. Cut them into different shapes. Have a friend move each paper at eye level from behind you, around the side of your face toward the front. Look straight ahead. Don't look sideways. Notice when you see its movement, its color, and its shape.



Joanne De Jonge is a park ranger in northern Michigan.

BY JAMES K. A. SMITH

# Buried Treasures?





To flourish in the  
future, we need to  
value our past.

**I** **MAGINE** that you've been invited to the home of new friends. You've driven by their house a few times and noticed that it's a gorgeous Arts and Crafts masterpiece—an exquisite work of craftsmanship dripping with the sort of quality and heritage that's rare in our modern world.

Based on what you know, you expect to be ushered into an interior lifted right out of a Frank Lloyd Wright museum. A foyer leading to a parlor lush with warm wooden trim and mission style cabinets in dark oak finishes. Morris & Co. wallpaper hand-blocked on cloth, and floors covered with sumptuous handwoven carpets. A dining room featuring the ancient handcraft of custom glass, leading to an elegant, classic kitchen.

In short, you're eager to visit the house because, if you're like me, it seems to promise everything you love about architecture and design. You're expecting a house that stands out precisely because of its anachronism, its connection to traditions—of craftsmanship, quality, and design—that have been lost in a culture more driven by pragmatism, speed, and the bottom line.

Imagine your surprise, upon entering the house, to find something starkly different.

Garish linoleum covers the precious tile that you just *know* lies beneath on the

entryway floor. Dropped ceilings have shut down the transcendent space of what would have been 10-foot ceilings. At some point in the '70s, someone decided that orange Astroturf was better than classic hardwood. At some point in the '80s, someone must have surmised that tacky mirrors were more contemporary than stained glass. And as you make your way into the kitchen, you notice that someone in the '60s, armed with pea-green plastic, thought he could improve on the ancient craftsmanship you just know is dying to breathe underneath all that renovation.

You find yourself reeling from the cognitive dissonance between what you were expecting when you were outside and what you find on the inside.

### Finding Treasure

I offer that as a sort of allegory, but it will make more sense if I share a bit of my testimony.

I was not raised in the Christian Reformed Church. I am a convert to the Reformed world-and-life view, a pilgrim who has made his way to the Reformed tradition, and the Christian Reformed Church in particular, as my confessional and ecclesiastical (and intellectual) home.

I converted relatively late to Christian faith, having been raised in a non-Christian home. I came to Christ through a sector of Christendom that was on the more fundamentalist end of evangelicalism. But in my sophomore year at college,

I made my first discovery of the Reformed tradition: in older voices like John Calvin and B.B. Warfield, but also in more contemporary voices like Francis Schaeffer and Alvin Plantinga. For me, it was like finding buried treasure.

What attracted me to the Reformed tradition? It was not any *one* thing. Instead, it was a kind of seamless cloth of related emphases that, I think, are the unique “apostolate” of the Reformed tradition, and the CRC in particular. That is, the CRC is a unique expression of the Reformed tradition that tends to hold together an array of gifts that in other places are separated. I've especially appreciated the following four distinct emphases:

#### 1. A celebration of a covenant-keeping

**Lord.** Central to the Reformed tradition is a unique emphasis on both the unity of the narrative of Scripture and a strong sense of our *communal* identity as “a people.” There is an entire theology packed into the pronouns of Scripture. From the opening *us* of the creational word in Genesis 1:26 (“Let us make human beings in our image”), to *them* in Genesis 1:27 (“male and female he created them”), to the plural *you* of the creational mandate in Genesis 1:29 (“I give you every seed-bearing plant”), God's creation is laden with plurals!

And all those *you*'s throughout the Bible are plural. Those of us formed by the individualism of North »



I came running to  
 the CRC expecting  
 to find inside all  
 the riches of an  
 Arts and Crafts  
 masterpiece.

American culture tend to read Scripture as if it were addressed privately to each of us (to *me*). But I think our indigenous and Korean brothers and sisters hear Scripture more clearly on these matters: the *you* is *us*. It's not *me*, but *we*. It's just this sort of communal emphasis that the Reformed tradition's covenant theology highlights—which is also why it yields a holistic, unified reading of Scripture as the one unfolding story of God's covenant with his people.

2. **An affirmation of the goodness of creation.** Contrary to the dualism and functional Gnosticism of wider evangelicalism—a focus almost exclusively on the spiritual—the Reformed emphasis on the goodness of creation (especially as taught by Abraham Kuyper) is one of the real gems in the Reformed treasure chest, and one that distinguishes the CRC's heritage from other, narrower versions of Reformed theology.
3. **An exhortation to “make culture” well.** Growing out of an affirmation of the goodness of creation, the Reformed tradition values good work as an expression of God's calling. But it is also discerning and knows that God desires culture and institutions made for the flourishing of creation. It is precisely this emphasis on culture that informs our concerns about justice: think of the laments in *Our World Belongs to God*, which recognize the range of ways God wants to delight us but also the plethora of ways that we've fallen short, creating institutions and practices that run counter to the grain of the universe.
4. **A connection to our catholic heritage.** This might seem a little strange, but

for me, becoming Reformed was a way of becoming “catholic.” What do I mean by that? The Reformers were not revolutionaries—that is, they were not out to raze the church to the ground, get back to some “pure” set of New Testament church principles, and start from scratch. They didn't see themselves as leapfrogging over centuries of post-apostolic tradition. They were *re-forming* the church. And in that respect they saw themselves as heirs and debtors to the tradition that came before them. Indeed, they understood the Spirit as unfolding the wisdom of the Word over the centuries in the voices of Augustine and Gregory the Great, in Chrysostom and Anselm.

To say the Reformed tradition is “catholic” is just to say that it affirms this operation of the Spirit *in history*, and thus receives the gifts of tradition as gifts of the Spirit, subject to the Word. This is inscribed in the very heart of the Heidelberg Catechism, which explicates the Christian faith by unpacking the Apostles' Creed—a heritage of the church catholic.

Let me unpack that last point just a little more. What I mean to emphasize is that the Reformed tradition is not just a set of doctrines, nor is it just a unique

worldview. It is also a unique nexus of practices, including worship, that represent the accrued wisdom of the Church led by the Spirit. (You can find a wonderful summary of this in the prologue to Faith Alive's *Worship Sourcebook*.)

Worship is where we meet God, and worship is how the Spirit forms us into the people of God. So how we worship is an intentional, embodied, received expression of what it means to be Reformed—and the shape of that worship is a gift from the “catholic” heritage of the Spirit at work in history.

This tapestry of interrelated themes, often rent asunder in other traditions, has led the CRC to produce a unique configuration of ministries.

**Buried?**

Covenant, creation, culture, and catholicity—these themes drew me to the Reformed tradition. And I was surprised to find that one denomination held all of them together—no mean feat! Again, it was like discovering buried treasure. Christians and new converts all over the world are finding in these gifts of the Reformed tradition a new, deeper spirituality that conforms them to the image of Christ. When folks like me discover the Reformed tradition, we ask in amazement, “Where have you *been* all my life?”

But permit me one observation. As someone who looks on these Reformed emphases as incredible gifts of the Spirit—welcome nourishment compared to the spiritual impoverishment I knew before—I'm puzzled as to why so many CRC congregations, institutions, and agencies seem almost eager to *paper over* some of these emphases.

As a pilgrim and convert to the Reformed tradition in all its fullness, I came running to the CRC expecting to



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embarrassed by.

find inside all the riches of an Arts and Crafts masterpiece. Instead, often enough I've found something more like the garish orange living room—something that aims to be an “updated” version of the faith covering up the riches underneath.

Now, I think I understand why this might be: some have been rightly concerned that what was often valued as “Reformed” was really just “Dutch.” And they rightly understand that the proclamation of God’s kingdom, and the invitation into the people of God, is not a matter of taking on the particularities of some ethnic heritage. So we have spent a generation sifting the tradition, as it were, in order to separate the dross from the treasures of the Spirit.

That’s a crucial concern. Yet I worry that something else has happened along the way: that we have inadvertently fallen into the trap of thinking that Reformed Christian faith is a kind of “content” or “message” that can be distilled and then dropped into other so-called “relevant” or “contemporary” containers.

But the Christian faith—and the Reformers understood this—is not just a set of doctrines or beliefs, a know-*what* message that we come to believe. Christian faith is also a kind of know-*how* into which we are apprenticed—it is an understanding of the world that we absorb through practice. And that understanding is embedded in the received practices of Reformed worship—which is precisely why the Reformers were so concerned about the shape of worship.

The Reformers did not think worship was just a pragmatic matter of getting people’s attention and disseminating a message. Rather, worship is a formative encounter with a living, active, covenant-keeping Lord. The Reformers appreciated that we are indebted to the accrued wisdom of the Church, which, led by the

Spirit, discerned certain nonnegotiable elements of the *form* of worship that carry all the distinctives of Reformed Christian faith. We are what we worship; we are also *how* we worship.

So if we’re considering the future of the CRC and the nature of Reformed identity, we might do well to ask ourselves some uncomfortable questions:

- Have we papered over the riches of our Reformed heritage?
- In our desire to be relevant, have we buried the treasures of Reformed identity?
- In our quest to be contemporary, have we overlooked the missional resources in Reformed particularity?
- In sifting the dross of an ethnic heritage, have we tossed out the treasures of the Spirit?

**Our Future**

I worry that in trying to update the Reformed tradition, in trying to be contemporary and relevant, we’ve sometimes abandoned the historic wisdom of the tradition. Sometimes we’ve done so because we think this is “the future” of the CRC—that if the CRC is going to survive, we need to “get with it” and start to look more like others. But that, my friends, is to bury exactly the riches we

have—and the riches that others are looking for.

If the CRC wants to become generic evangelicalism or bland Protestant liberalism, there’s really no reason for us to exist. There are others already like that.

But I want to testify that people all over the world are hungry for the treasures we’re sometimes embarrassed by: there are Christians in Indonesia and Nigeria, Vancouver and San Francisco, who are hungry for what we take for granted. There are young people all over the world who don’t yet know Christ who will be drawn to him not by another “event” that looks like the concert or club they went to last weekend, but by the strange transcendence of Reformed worship in all its unapologetic fullness—and who will see that these are the practices of a people concerned with justice and flourishing *in this world too*.

I fear we spend a lot of energy trying to figure out how to be like others when others are actually envious of what we already have. I want to suggest to you that the richest future for the CRC might be in remembering the riches of our heritage—sifted and refined, to be sure. And with that discernment, I want to provocatively suggest that the future of being Reformed might be catholic. Our future is most hopeful, I think, when we think of it not as a renovation project but as an intentional, careful *restoration*. ■



**James K.A. Smith** teaches philosophy and congregational and ministry studies at Calvin College. He is the author of *Letters to a Young Calvinist*:

*An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition* and is a member of Neland Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

# Your Kingdom Come

Living out God's love for diversity



**A** GROUP OF ANIMALS gathers at a water hole: A lion drinks next to a zebra. An ostrich runs alongside a lioness. A meerkat dives from a giraffe's head into the water, then climbs onto a crocodile's back—predators and prey at play.

No, this is not the scene of the peaceable kingdom Isaiah describes (11:6-9). It's a television commercial for Travelers Insurance.

The world embraces diversity and equality, especially to promote and sell products. Biblically, the church has an even greater motive to pursue these values.

In the peaceable kingdom, we see diverse relationships based on submission to the will of God. We see unity. The predator and prey lie down together. We see peace. A child will lead the calf, the lion, and the yearling together. We see equality. The lion will eat straw like the ox. We see a lack of fear. The infant plays near the cobra's hole. We see a sense of completeness. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

Now, more than ever, the church needs to reflect these qualities of God's kingdom so the world can glimpse life as God intends it to be.

## Our Reality

Let's look at our present reality within the Christian Reformed Church.

We've progressed on some fronts: a growing number of Christian Reformed churches are requesting assistance in becoming culturally aware and intelligent. They want to

connect more effectively with people of color in order to fully reflect the diversity of their communities. (I would suggest that's part of becoming healthy congregations, a CRC emphasis.) Some of our agencies are creating successful cross-cultural, collaborative ministries.

Yet we still struggle with attitudes, policies, and structures that continue to be barriers for people of color. For example, 40 years ago, 11 a.m. on Sunday morning was considered the most segregated hour of the week. More often than not, that's still true today.

Yes, many white church members today want to worship and fellowship with their black, First Nations, and Hispanic neighbors. Our desire for multicultural worship is good. But it's one thing to worship and fellowship with people of color and quite another to desire them as leaders and pastors.

You're probably aware that there are many Christian Reformed churches without pastors. What you may not realize is that it's not for a lack of people of color available for a call.

Outside of the local congregation, we still fail to fill senior leadership positions in denominational structures with people of color. I say this not to make white people feel guilty; I say it so that we will *all* take responsibility for not including people of color, and I say it so that we will *all* work toward changing attitudes, structures, and policies that still negatively impact our brothers and sisters.

## Our Destiny

We cannot ignore the dramatic cultural diversity rapidly defining 21st-century North America. Challenges of racial/ethnic

diversity will not go away but instead become more and more urgent. Some suggest that we should “just preach the gospel” or that we should “just be missional.” But our gospel witness is much more complex than that.

Diversity plays a vital role in building God’s kingdom. The sin of racism that divides us persists not only in society but also in the church. It is so all-encompassing that we call it “the corporate sin of racism,” and it has left its spiritual mark on us.

It’s no secret that the North American economy was built on free land stolen from First Nations’ people and free labor kidnapped from Africa. Yet we remain perplexed as to how to address the injustices that our brothers and sisters continue to experience.

Because the church in North America has had a long history of complicity in the sin of racism, it’s urgent that we address justice, reconciliation, and unity. The present time is more than an *opportunity* to engage God’s call for reform and reconciliation—it is our *destiny* (see Rev. 5 and 7).

We cannot base diversity primarily on tolerance. We must base it on the unity that our triune God values, loves, and demands of us. The integrity of our witness as part of the universal church of Jesus Christ is at stake.

The CRC has publically proclaimed that “the uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God’s eternal plan for the ages” (principle 5, *God’s Diverse and Unified Family*). That’s the vision Isaiah is getting at: “They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (11:9).

## 12 Biblical Principles . . .

In 1992, at the request of participants in the CRC’s Multiethnic Conference, synod (the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church) appointed a committee to help the church “articulate biblical and theological principles for the development of a racially and ethnically diverse family of God.” In 1996 the CRC adopted that committee’s report, *God’s Diverse and Unified Family*, and committed to “reflect[ing] more fully the racial and ethnic diversity of Canada and the United States.”

The report outlines 12 biblical principles, including the following:

- The world as God created it is rich and God-glorifying in its diversity.
- The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (namely, his oneness and threeness).
- A fundamental effect of sin is the breakdown of community.
- Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God’s saving work.
- The church is God’s strategic vehicle for embodying, proclaiming, and promoting the unity and diversity of the new creation.

You can find the full text of the report online at [http://www.crcna.org/site\\_uploads/uploads/racerelations/diversefamily.pdf](http://www.crcna.org/site_uploads/uploads/racerelations/diversefamily.pdf) or purchase it in booklet form from Faith Alive, the CRC’s publisher: 1.800.333.8300; [FaithAliveResources.org](http://FaithAliveResources.org).

### A Place to Start

The following resources can help us go deeper in understanding the effects of racism:

- *Inheriting the Trade* (Beacon Press) and *Traces of the Trade* (PBS) by Thomas Norman DeWolf
- *RACE—The Power of an Illusion* (PBS)
- *Silent Racism: How Well-Meaning White People Perpetuate the Racial Divide* by Barbara Trepagnier (Paradigm Publishers)
- *Dancing on Live Embers: Challenging Racism in Organizations* by Tina Lopes and Barb Thomas (Between the Lines)
- *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* by Soong-Chan Rah (IVP Books).

### Actions to consider:

- Notice what ethnic groups are missing from your workplace, neighborhood, church, and social groups.
- Speak up when you hear someone make a racist remark.
- Get to know coworkers or neighbors from different ethnic groups.
- Think about why people find it so difficult to talk about racism in an ethnically mixed group.
- Develop effective listening and cross-cultural communication skills.
- Form a group to talk about racism, or join with others who are taking active steps to overcome it.

## Great Expectations

While God’s value and love for diversity drive us, God’s Spirit and power inspire us. We serve a God who reveals his work through events that overthrow human expectations.

Where we see situations as hopeless, God disrupts our thinking. He surprises us. Consider, for example, the stories of Peter, Philip, and Paul in the book of Acts. God used them as instruments to turn their world upside-down for racial inclusion. Indeed, God can use us too.

God calls us not only to *proclaim* our identity in Christ, but also to *teach* and *model* our identity in Christ. He calls us to create and maintain a posture of inclusion and integration—to pursue equitable practices at all levels of his church.

The God we serve clearly shows us his ideal for the church. Our attention to racial diversity is not simply a matter of inviting participation; it is a lens into our essential tasks of missions, ministry, discipleship, and transformation.

Our God is an awesome God! ■



Rev. Esteban Lugo is director of Race Relations for the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

# Surrender the Queen

Reconsidering the role of

**I AM AN EXCEPTIONALLY BAD** chess player. I'm told I rush too quickly to bring out the queen. It's clearly the best piece, so I can't help myself. Despite practice, my skills have not improved.

At a recent church-planting conference the presenter suggested that all of us wishing to improve our chess games should adhere to one simple rule: surrender the queen. He proposed that one of our first moves in any chess match should be to rid ourselves of the most valuable piece on the board. "This will force you to learn how to use every other piece and how to use them together. Over time, you'll become a much stronger player." Then he asked, "In your church, what's the queen? What is that piece that you overuse and probably trust way too much?"

My answer came quickly: Sunday-morning worship.

I'm a church planter in Kentwood, Mich., and as I write this, I can't wait to start holding Sunday-morning services. On that first Sunday there may be a crowd or there may not be. Regardless, the reason we're starting a new church is simple: to reach and disciple new people.

How? That's a good question to ask. The diversity in any congregation can make this difficult. On any given Sunday morning, there may be some people in the worship service who've never been before. But there may also be middle-aged couples with a combined 100 years of Sunday-morning worship experience. After the service, a first-time guest might ask the pastor what it means to "ask Jesus into her heart." In the meantime, someone else may be waiting to ask why we can't learn more Greek and Hebrew in the sermon. Other people wish we could spend more time talking about marriage, while others want to hear about money and still others are asking tough questions about caring for aging parents.

It's very difficult to reach and disciple that whole group in one hour each week. We might be wise to consider other options.

For way too long now I've thought that Sunday morning could be a comfortable entrance-point into church life and provide enough to effectively disciple everybody in attendance. Maybe it can, but it shouldn't have to. Sunday morning doesn't need to bear all that responsibility. What would happen if we surrendered the queen? I'm willing to stake our church's late launch date on the claim that a delayed start will teach us how to use small groups more effectively.

We'll trust small groups to carry the load of teaching people about the subjects they care most about. Patience in the short run may also encourage us to find other events to bridge that gap between sleeping in and attending worship. Hosting a community carnival or 5k fun run may be a better way to meet our neighbors anyway. As we learn to use these other pieces together, every aspect of our new church will be strengthened.

By the end of the church-planting conference, our team decided to delay the start of our worship services. We're still starting our new church early, but without the worship service. We're committing to learning how to reach and disciple people apart from a worship service so that when we do introduce it, we'll know how all the pieces best work together. ■



Rev. Dirk VanEyck graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary and accepted a call from Brookside CRC, Grand Rapids, Mich.,

to plant Encounter Church in Kentwood, Mich. At the time of publication, the church had begun holding worship services.

**“In your church, what’s the queen? What is that piece that you overuse and probably trust way too much?”**



# Yield to the King

Sunday-morning worship

Lashing ourselves to the mast of weekly worship might be the most important practice for the church to orient our lives around Jesus.



**DIRK, THANKS SO MUCH** for your good thoughts and gutsy gospel endeavor to plant a new church. Church plants and campus ministries are the R&D department of our denomination, and I need to listen well to the issues and struggles you encounter.

I like your instincts. You recognize something is off in how we understand the church. I feel that in my bones too, and I'm convinced we must allow mission to organize and shape our church life.

I'm equally certain, however, that we have been discipled by our consumer culture. It has seeped in way deeper than we ever thought, shaping even our expectations of church and worship. Worship has become a commodity that we take in or casually take a pass on, depending on our lifestyle preferences and personal tastes: Did I like the music? Did the sermon feed me? Was it at a convenient time/place for my busy schedule? Did it deal with the issues I care about?

Church plants sometimes get accused of selling out or dumbing down to be relevant to culture, but I find many established churches equally, if not more so, shaped by this individual-focused consumer mind-set; they just have code words that mask it well: Was the worship "uplifting"? Did the sermon "feed" me? These may be valid questions, but notice that the reference point is still *me*!

We're all "drinking the Kool-Aid." Our consumer culture has formed us all into American Idol judges, rating our experiences of church and worship. Of course, the problem is that you can never worship or meet Jesus from the judge's seat.

Speaking of idols, your conference presenter's question about your queen—"What do you trust way too much?"—is really an idol question. In what do we place our deepest trust to grow our churches: a kickin' worship band or sublime organ, a compelling preacher, refined liturgy, small groups that meet our felt needs?

Notice the assumption within the question—that ministry tools and the right strategy will build your church. I find techniques, helpful as they are, easy idols for us church leaders and people of the pew, who are so desperate to see churches flourish again. Instead, what we need most is a change in lifestyle. We need to center our lives on Jesus.

While I'm tempted to chuck the whole worship show, I'm holding out for the practice of public Christian worship to reclaim its countercultural edge again. Where else do people gather together with others they usually don't associate with, to focus on Someone other than themselves, and pay attention to news that mostly contradicts their personal assumptions and challenges their idolized cares? Lashing ourselves to the mast of weekly worship might be the most important practice for the church to orient our lives around Jesus and resist the siren call of consumerism.

To do that, we'll need to help people reimagine worship within God's mission, to understand it as a relationship (covenant) renewal ceremony, where our unique identity in the gospel is formed and fed, where the reality of the resurrection is reinjected into our living, where we're formed in the way of Jesus and learn to live yielded lives to the King. That's hard work, especially when we're groomed to bow to the authority of our desires. But that makes it all the more vital that we give the best of our thought, prayers, and energy to this reimagining.

So how can we call people to follow Jesus in a way that doesn't force them to make massive cultural leaps, but find in Jesus the most hopeful reality for living in our world? I hope that we can continue this conversation, because together we're better. ■



Rev. Phil Reinders is pastor of River Park Church in Calgary and the author of the newly released book *Seeking God's Face: Praying with the Bible through the Year* (Faith Alive).

## Ten Words, Nine Commandments

**JEWS AND CHRISTIANS** have long recognized the words recorded in both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 as the heart of the Old Testament's moral law. But for nearly as long, Jews and Christians—and various Christian traditions—have disagreed about how these words ought to be divided. You and I call them the Ten Commandments. They are the *words* God spoke at Sinai. And there are ten of them. But they are not all commandments.

The Jewish tradition understands God's first words at Sinai as, well, his first "word": "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2). Most Christians consider that merely the prologue. It is a failing of the Heidelberg Catechism that, unlike its Presbyterian cousin the Westminster Catechism, it nowhere comments on this so-called prologue. But it is not merely prologue; it is God's first word.

The Jewish tradition—as well as the Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions—then combines what the Reformed tradition counts as commandments 1 and 2. In the Jewish tradition, this is God's second word; in the Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions, it is the first commandment:

"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

There is good reason to consider this God's second word and the first commandment. First, all the other initial commandments contain a reason or a promise—for example, "the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name" (v. 7). It makes sense, then, that "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God" is the reason given for the single command that we have no other gods before him nor make or bow down to idols.

Second, the grammar requires that this be one word from God. We are forbidden from bowing down to *them* or worshipping *them*. The pronoun's antecedent is not *idol* but *other gods*, as in "you shall have no other gods before me."

What the commandment forbids is not making an image of God, as the Reformed tradition has long taught, but mak-

God's **first word**  
at Sinai is one neither of  
instruction nor command.

ing images (or idols) of other gods. The commandment against idolatry is just that—a commandment against idolatry, not against iconography. (Other passages in Scripture, such as Deut. 4:15-18, speak more explicitly about images of God.)

The Jewish and Reformed traditions enumerate the final eight commandments the same way. The Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions divide what is in the Jewish and Reformed traditions the tenth word or commandment into commandments 9 and 10: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house" and "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." But such division is problematic. For one thing, both commandments forbid the same thing: covetousness. For another, the catch-all phrase "anything that belongs to your neighbor" implies a single commandment. We are not to covet anything. The commandment's list of objects is illustrative, not exhaustive.

In summary, then, the Jewish tradition most faithfully enumerates the Ten Words God spoke at Sinai. His first words were not merely prologue; they were his first word: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." It is a word of neither instruction nor command, but a word of grace.

And that's just the point. God spoke all these words—ten words, nine commandments. His first word was, is, and ever shall be a word of grace. ■ **WEB Q'S**



Rev. Ryan Faber is pastor of worship and administration for Faith Christian Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa.



**Advertising Information**

**Deadlines:** February issue is 1/3/11; March issue is 1/31/11. Visit [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org) for complete details.

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**Denominational and Classical Announcements**

**Retirement**

**THE ELLSWORTH CRC** announces the retirement of Pastor Carl Afman after 40 years of faithful service. He and his wife Jan have faithfully served in Hancock, MN, CRWM-Taiwan, Hammond, IN, CRWM-Philippines, and Mokenca, IL. They will continue to reside in Ellsworth and remain as the Counselor. We wish them many more years of service to the Lord.

**Available for Call**

The council of **Nelson Ave Community Church** (Burnaby, British Columbia) would like to announce to the churches that Dr. Alan van der Woerd is available for call. Rev. van der Woerd has served for many years training pastors with World Mission (Mexico) and more recently has served with Open Doors with Brother Andrew. He is an experienced and gifted pastor and has a heart especially for preaching / teaching, outreach, prayer, and church leadership development. We commend him to the churches for their consideration. Rev. van der Woerd can be reached at 604-575-8380; e mail: [alan@alabanza.ca](mailto:alan@alabanza.ca).

**Eligible for Call**

**WE ARE PLEASED** to announce that Steven J. De Ruiter has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word.

Rev. Gerard L. Dykstra, executive director

**Financial Aid**

**CLASSIS KALAMAZOO, MI** invites students from their Classis who are planning to pursue full-time ministry in the CRC (undergraduate or graduate level) and are in need of financial aid for the academic

year 2011-2012 to apply no later than February 28, 2011 by contacting Paul Vander Kamp, 2221 Ridgefield Rd., Portage, MI 49024, phone 269-321-0709, or e-mail [vdrkmp@juno.com](mailto:vdrkmp@juno.com). Undergraduate students must be at least in their junior year during 2011-2012. Students presently receiving aid must reapply."

**Meetings of Classis**

**CLASSIS GEORGETOWN** will hold its February 2011 meeting at the Fairway CRC of Jenison, MI. The meeting will begin at 7 PM. All items for the agenda must be received by January 7, 2011.

Harold Postma, Clerk of Classis

**CLASSIS ILLIANA** will meet in regular session March 2, 2011 at 9:00 AM at the First Christian Reformed Church of Crown Point, IN. All agenda items are due January 26, 2011 and should be sent to Rev. Robert Jipping, Stated Clerk, 1212 Blue Bell Trail, Schererville, IN 46375. E-mail [bandajipping@aol.com](mailto:bandajipping@aol.com)"

**CLASSIS YELLOWSTONE** will be meeting in special session Friday, January 21, 2011, at 1:00pm, for the purpose of a Classical examination at Gallatin Gateway Community CRC, Bozeman, MT.

Del VanDenBerg, Stated Clerk

**Congregational Announcements**

**125th Anniversary Celebration**

First Christian Reformed Church of Prinsburg, Minnesota, is celebrating "125 Years of God's Amazing Love and may all who follow find us faithful" in 2011. The church was established on April 29, 1886. Celebration and special events are planned for May 1, July 3, and August 3. We would like to extend an invitation to all former members to join us for these events. Information is posted on our website: [www](http://www).

[firstcrocprinsburg.org](http://firstcrocprinsburg.org) or contact the church office for more information. Tel. (320) 978-4323, e-mail: [office@firstcrocprinsburg.org](mailto:office@firstcrocprinsburg.org)

**Church's 100th Anniversary**

**BURDETT CRC** of Burdett, AB is celebrating 100 years of God's Faithfulness July 8-10, 2011. We invite friends and past members to attend. More information can be found @ [www.burdettcrc.com](http://www.burdettcrc.com)

**Church's 50th Anniversary**

**BETHEL CRC** of Waupun, Wisconsin, will celebrate 50 years of God's blessings on February 19 and 20, 2011! There will be a special evening of celebration on February 19, followed by a commemorative worship service on the morning of February 20. All friends and past members are invited to attend. More information can be found on the church website [waupunbethelcrc.com](http://waupunbethelcrc.com) or by calling the church office at 920-324-4962.

**Announcements**

**LOOKING TO ESCAPE THE NORTHERN COLD WINTER?** Consider warm, sunny paradise on the S. W. coast of Florida at Venice. Enjoy warm, friendly welcome at the Reformed Church, 1600 Banyan Dr. (US Highway 41 and Center Rd.) Sunday morning worship, 10:30, 941-493-3075.

**Help Feed Families in Ukraine**

**Years of Communist oppression have left many families destitute in Ukraine. Millions live on less than \$2.00 per day.**

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Toll Free U.S. 1.800.245.9191 [www.mwb.org](http://www.mwb.org)

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To apply please email [preaching@calvinseminary.edu](mailto:preaching@calvinseminary.edu)

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

**WINTER VISITORS** When in the Phoenix/Sun City Az area, please visit the West Valley Christian Fellowship Church. 10:00AM & 6:00PM Sundays. [www.westvalleychristianfellowship.org](http://www.westvalleychristianfellowship.org)

**PSALTER HYMNALS** Needed: 40 Centennial Edition 1959 Psalter Hymnals for new church in Mo.. Contact Hop Nguyen at 816-258-3301 or e-mail [info@mopawpaw.com](mailto:info@mopawpaw.com)

**WINTER RESIDENTS** on the Treasure Coast and the Palm Beaches join us for a series on Revelation with Pastors Scott Vander Ploeg and Wilbert Van Dyk. Weekly Sunday worship at 6:00 PM from Jan 9-April 3, 2011 Sunlight Community Church, 477 SW Cashmere Blvd, Port Saint Lucie 772-879-6326 [www.sunlightcc.org](http://www.sunlightcc.org)

## Birthdays

### 95th Birthday

**ELIZABETH JOOSSE** (VanderLugt) celebrated her 95th birthday on Nov 3. Her sons Stan, Wayne, Mark and their families thank God for her life. 1452 Pheasant Run #102, Racine WI 53405.

**WILLIAM STOUB** celebrated 95 years on Dec. 12, 2010. His wife Fennetta (late Ann), 12 children, 51 grandchildren, 96 great and 1 great-great; and his stepfamily of 3 children, 6 grand, and 7 great thank our Lord for his love and faithfulness.

### 90th Birthday

**HARRIET A. DE KRUYF** (Hoogveen) residing at 11614 183rd St. #209 Artesia, CA. 90701 celebrated her 90th birthday on Dec. 5 at an

open house with her family and friends. We give thanks to God for the blessing she has been to all of us.

**EMMY ELEVELD**, 1950 S. Mountain Ave, Apt. 4015, Ontario, CA., 91762 will celebrate her 90th birthday on January 12, 2011. Wife of belated Johannes Eleveld. Children: Johanne & Rick Daniels, Janny & Rick Ligtenberg, Bart & Jody Eleveld, Maria & John Los, Martin & Neut Eleveld. 10 grandchildren, 6 great grandchildren. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

**PEARL LEISTRA** (Zylstra), 531 Cambridge Ct, 1-D, Munster, IN 46321 celebrates her 90th birthday Jan. 3. Her children, Phil Jr.(deceased) & Nancy, Wayne & Kathy, Cindy, Jim & Laura, grandchildren & great grandchildren give thanks to God for her good health and example of love and faith.

**ROGER VAN DELLEN**, 1600 NW Crista Shores Ln, #B-17, Silverdale, Washington 98383, 360-204-5518, will celebrate his 90th birthday on

## Church Positions Announcements

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

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

**SENIOR PASTOR.** River Terrace Church (Christian Reformed), located on the edge of the Michigan State University campus, seeks a pastor who will lead the church as it seeks to cultivate hearts and minds to flourish in Christ. (Dr. Clayton Libolt, our current senior pastor, will be retiring later in 2011.) Responsibilities include preaching, worship, and leadership as pastor of the congregation and head of staff. Send resume and letter of interest by March 1 to: Search Committee, River Terrace Church, 1509 River Terrace Drive, East Lansing, MI 48823 or [search@riverterrace.org](mailto:search@riverterrace.org). More info at [www.riverterrace.org](http://www.riverterrace.org)

**DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES** ~ Faith CRC in Elmhurst, IL is seeking someone passionate about working with youth and helping them experience God's word, express God's love, and be equipped for Christian service. Fulltime, with benefits. Mail detailed resume to Youth Director Search Team, 1070 S. Prospect, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or email to [FaihtYouthDirector@gmail.com](mailto:FaihtYouthDirector@gmail.com).

**PASTOR** Celebration Community Church in Muskegon, MI is seeking a full time pastor experienced in ministry with the ability to organize, lead, encourage, motivate and work with others. Be a gifted preacher with a deep pastoral sensitivity as well as a clear conviction that all God's people must be spiritually growing and reaching out to others. If interested send resume or contact Dick DeBoer ([deboerwmc@yahoo.com](mailto:deboerwmc@yahoo.com)). Interested applicants can forward a CD or DVD of a recent sermon to Celebration Community Church, 1260 W. Sherman Blvd., Muskegon, MI 49441.

**PASTOR:** Grove Church (RCA) North Bergen, NJ seeks FT pastor to revitalize congregation & develop family ministry; full details at [www.groverepreformedchurch.org](http://www.groverepreformedchurch.org) - future vision tab. 201-863-7030 201-863-7030

**WORSHIP TEAM DIRECTOR** Unity Christian Reformed Church in Prospect Park, NJ is looking for a person who can provide musical leadership for their worship team. Unified is a worship team that helps the congregation learn and sing a greater diversity of worship songs. Responsibilities include selecting music that fits the worship theme, leading a weekly rehearsal, and leading music in worship at the weekly

Sunday morning service. Please send inquiries and/or resumes to: Unity Church, Attn. Administrative Board, 339 N. 11th St. Prospect Park, NJ 07508 or call the church office for more information at 973-595-8573.

**GRANT CRC** located 30 miles north of Grand Rapids, MI is accepting applicants for our new pastor. Over 100 yrs. old, our church is both traditional and progressive, enjoying blended worship times and dynamic fellowship with a wonderful mix of old and young members. Prospective ministers should contact the church at 231-834-8443 or [grantcrrc@i2k.com](mailto:grantcrrc@i2k.com)

**CALVIN CRC** of Grand Rapids is seeking a full time ordained person to join our staff as Minister of Congregational Life. Job description and church profile available upon request. Direct all inquiries before Jan. 31 to Search Committee, Calvin Christian Reformed Church, 700 Ethel St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506, or email: [rps2@calvin.edu](mailto:rps2@calvin.edu).

**PASTOR OF PASTORAL CARE** Prairie Edge CRC seeking part-time Pastor of Visitation (40 hours/month). Full job description at [peccr.org](http://peccr.org). Interested men may contact Tom VandenBerg at 269-207-4024 or [tvandenber@gmail.com](mailto:tvandenber@gmail.com)

**BETHEL CRC** Saskatoon, SK, is actively seeking a full-time pastor (m). We are a growing congregation of about 200 people, located just outside the city. We hope and pray that God will send maybe YOU as the right person to lead and nurture our congregation. As a church we strive for a continuance and an improvement to all activities that promote unity, caring, fellowship and spiritual growth in a positive, uplifting and loving manner. We truly thank God for our previous pastors. Please let us know if you are interested to hear more about us or would like to receive our information binder. Contact Art Rekman, [ineke@shaw.com](mailto:ineke@shaw.com) or call 1-306-384-5198.

**BRIDGE OF HOPE MINISTRIES CRC** in Sioux Center, Iowa is seeking an effective preacher/teacher who is culturally relevant and deeply in love with the Lord. Ideal candidate should be able to work well on a team, can encourage people to use their gifts and relate their faith into their daily lives. For more information or to submit a resume please e-mail Mark Borger at [mborger@mtcnet.net](mailto:mborger@mtcnet.net). Please mark "Confidential" in the subject line.

**OUTREACH DIRECTOR** Inglewood CRC in Edmonton, AB is seeking a part-time Outreach Director. Interested candidates should visit [www.inglewoodcrrc.org](http://www.inglewoodcrrc.org) for details.

**CHURCH PLANTER** Seeking a pastor to begin a new church in the Tacoma/Olympia area of western WA. For more info, contact Mark Van Haitsma at 360.357.4439/ [mark@olyccrrc.org](mailto:mark@olyccrrc.org)

**REFORMATIONAL WORLDVIEW** Small, reformationally minded church seeks pastor. Liturgical worship guided by the lectionary with emphasis in the arts. [trinitypastoralsearch@gmail.com](mailto:trinitypastoralsearch@gmail.com) for information.

**LAKEVIEW CRC** Valentine, NE seeks a Senior pastor to lead our congregation, effective Feb. 1, 2011. Contact Tom at 605-429-3338 for more information.

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2/24/11. His wife, Nell, and children, Joyce, Roger Jr. (celebrating in Glory), Carolyn Cartwright, and Dr. Al Van Dellen and their families are thankful for his faithful witness to God's blessings in his life and his love for his family, ministry, and friends. "Great is Thy Faithfulness".

**THELMA VANDERHOVEN** 2121 Raybrook SE #251 Grand Rapids MI 49546 celebrates her 90th birthday on Jan 3. Her family thanks God for her gracious Christian example in our lives.

**WILDSCHUT, HELEN** (nee Wiersma) 276 Felch, Holland, MI, 49424 will celebrate her 90th birthday on Feb 3. We thank God for her love, friendship, faith and Christian example.

## Anniversaries

### 65th Anniversary

**HUGEN** William & Gerlene (Ozinga) 2121 Raybrook St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary January 1, 2011. Love from their children: Marla & Jan DeRoos, Beryl & Marlene Hugen, Janna & John Grimberg, Joel & Judy Hugen, 12 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren. Thanks be to God!

### 60th Anniversary

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

**GUEMAN** Russ & Jean, 4908-5th A St E, Bradenton FL 34203 celebrate 60 years of marriage Jan. 19. Your children, grandchildren & great-grandchildren thank God for your faithful witness to His love.

**RUDEGANGA** Ed and Sylvia (Van Til), 10406 Timberidge Lane, Highland, IN 46322 celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 10. Children Jack (Liz), Russell (Elizabeth), Joan (Adam) Wegner. Grandchildren Sarah, Jayne (Bryan) Hoogerwerf, Ben (Kristi), Ryan, Morgan, Ashley (Kevin) Toland and Erich Wegner. Praise God for His grace and faithfulness!

### 50th Anniversary

**HIEMSTRA** Rev. Harold & Judy, Ripon, CA celebrated 50 years on January 13. Love: Lisa & Roger Vos (Rachel, Derek & Jenna), Sara & Rick Jocham (Kyle & Delaney), Marla & Mike DeVries (Morgan, Jared & Nathan), Blake and Carla (Jacie, Kenna, Avery & Carter). We praise God for His faithfulness!

**TACOMA** Roy and Marilyn (Talsma) will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Jan. 6, 2011. Congratulations and love from your children Deb and Mark, Dave and Ruth, Rick and Kris and grandchildren Jordan and (fiancee) Stefanie, Kevin and Yuki, Andrew and (fiancee) Christina, Reuben, Wesley, Logan, Landen and Lexie. An open house will be held on Sat. Jan. 8 from noon to 3pm at the Aetna CRC, 3459 S. 8 Mile Rd, Falmouth, MI.

**VANDENACRE** Gerald & JoAnn (VanDyke) Vandencacre of 416 S. Iowa St., Conrad, MT 59425, celebrated their 50th anniversary on Oct. 14, 2010. Your children and grandchildren praise God!

## Obituaries

**DE VRIES**, Dorothy, age 85, went to be with her Lord November 6, 2010, South Holland, Illinois, formally of Roseland-Chicago. She was born, raised, married and raised her children in Roseland and in the First CRC of Roseland. She attended Roseland Christian grade school and Chicago Christian High School. April 12, 1947 she married the late George De Vries also of Roseland. She was born October 9, 1925 to George Harmsen and Catharine Prince Harmsen. She survived her brothers; John (Jennie) and Marvin, both of Arizona and is survived by her sister Eleanor F. Derks (Robert) of Lansing, Illinois. Dorothy and George were blessed with three children; George A. (Darlene) of Lansing, Illinois, the late Sandra K. Sperling and the late Calvin J., 8 grandchildren; Dr. Amber L. Briggs (Bruce) of Soldotna, Alaska, George

A. Jr. (Melanie) of Madison, Wisconsin, Matthew J. (Laurie) of West Fargo, North Dakota, Camie C. CIRRIONE nee Sperling (Sal) of Tinley Park, Illinois, the late Bruce R. Sperling (Jill) of Lombard, Illinois, Calvin R. Sperling (Christy) of Palos Heights, Illinois, the late Mark R. Sperling and Jacqueline "Jackie" De Vries and 15 great-grandchildren; Jewell N. Briggs of Loyola University Chicago, Illinois, Anthony J. G. "A. J." Briggs, Dylan J. Briggs, Jaide C. Briggs, Jared J. Briggs, Reagan Briggs all of Soldotna, Alaska, George Owen "Owen" De Vries, Ella S. De Vries of Madison, Wisconsin, Brenna A. De Vries of West Fargo, North Dakota, Trevor Stephens; Skyler CIRRIONE, Carly CIRRIONE, Ty Sperling all of Tinley Park, Illinois, Hunter Sperling, Brock Sperling all of Palos Heights, Illinois. Dorothy's funeral service was held November 12, 2010 at Colonial Chapel located in Orland Park, Illinois. She was interred at Chapel Hill Gardens, South Oak Lawn, Illinois. You may express your thoughts and condolences at [www.colonialchapel.com](http://www.colonialchapel.com).

**DYKSTRA** Art, 80, 10/27/10, Survived by his wife of 57 years, Marilyn, and children Pat, Nancy & Dale Venhuizen, Mary & Joel Gesink, Jill & Don Montsma, 12 grandchildren.

**GARVELINK**; Thelma Winifred aged 88; November 3, 2010; Grand Rapids, MI; She was preceded in death by her husband, Jay (August 2006); two brothers, Don (August 2006) and Frank (September 2006). Thelma is survived by her children, John and Mary Garvelink of Colorado Springs, CO, Robert Garvelink, Joann and Ron Balk, Sandy and Bill Selles, Bonnie and Dave Eckhart of Newaygo, MI and Dawn and Brad Leete of Grand Rapids, MI; 12 grandchildren; 23 great grandchildren; sister and brother-in-law, Dawn and Rev. Wendell Gebben of Grand Rapids, MI.

**KINGMA**, Martin, age 94, 2300 S. Sultana Ave., Sp. 297, Ont., Ca. 91761 went to his eternal home on Nov. 2, 2010. He was preceded in death by his wife, Agnes (VanderSchaaf) and 1 son, Lieuwe. He is survived by 6 daughters, Helen (Jasper) DeHoog, JoAnn (Joe) SanPaolo, Susan (John) VanZanten, Dorothy (Bart) Bartman, Wilma (Phil) Busman, Dena (Charlie) VanderZee & 1 son Louis (Cheri) Kingma, 15 grandchildren & 19 great-grandchildren, 4 brothers, Arnold, Wieger, Harry & Andy.

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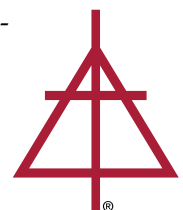
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The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is seeking a Director of Safe Church Ministries. Safe Church Ministries works to create awareness of abuse, provide resources, conduct seminars, develop policies and protocols, train Safe Church Teams and Advocates, and consult with church leaders when allegations of abuse arise. The Director will give leadership to this mandate and specifically, in the areas of education, prevention and response to issues of abuse within the church context.

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A full job description is available at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) under Career Opportunities. To apply send cover letter and resume to [ministrysearch@crcna.org](mailto:ministrysearch@crcna.org) by January 20, 2011.





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**MALDA**, John N., age 89; Sept. 14, 2010; Muskegon, Michigan. He was preceded in death by his son John William. He is lovingly remembered by his wife Dena (VanAndel), his daughter Joan (Michael) Stob, seven grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, brothers William and Ben, sisters Elizabeth (Willard) Hewitt and Helen, and many in-laws, nieces and nephews.

**MEIJERS** Helena (Lenie) Roorda Our dear mother has passed away. For years we have longed with her for peace, freedom from disease and an eternity of glory and reunion. On November 21, 2010, our prayers were answered. For many years Helena struggled with Alzheimer's disease. While her decline into illness was painful and slow, we rejoice in the knowledge that this disease was not remotely able to define our mom. She was way bigger than Alzheimer's. Throughout the years, Lenie and Enno enjoyed life in Ontario, Connecticut and Iowa, and have always been thankful for the friendships and experiences in each place. Lenie's rich life was punctuated by the birth and lives of her six children. She loved us ferociously and we, in turn, adored her. She was creative, fun, interesting, loyal and encouraging. We are: her husband, Enno Meijers; her children, Helena (Henk) Top-Meijers, Hinke (Ed) Weening-Meijers, Gloria (Cal) Van Eek-Meijers, Corinna Meijers, Enno Jan (Ruby Gietema) Meijers, Phyllis (Jeff) Alberts-Meijers. Fifteen grandchildren and four great grandchildren in Holland and Canada have known and loved their Oma. Well done, Mom. Matthew 25:21. Correspondence: Enno Meijers, 282 Hurst Dr. A-119, Barrie, Ontario, Canada L4N 0Z3.

**OVERWEG/HAM** Fannie, age 93 of Manhattan, MT died Oct. 18, 2010. She was preceded in death by two husbands, Dick Overweg and Ray Ham. She is survived by daughters Genevieve Stremmer and Delores Graham, 5 grandsons and 13 great grandchildren.

**ROSENDAL** William P, age 85, went to be with his Lord on Nov. 3, 2010 in Baldwin, WI. He was the beloved husband of Ruth (Vander-Maar). He left three daughters: Cheryl, Ruthanne (Jim) Fick, Lynette, and son-in-law Cal Kooiman. He had 10 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by daughter Elaine Kooiman. He will be greatly missed.

**RYPSTRA**, Jurjen (Jerry), passed away 10/21/10 in San Jose, CA. He is survived by his wife Catharina, children; Brenda Rypstra-Loman, Jim, Fred, and Don Rypstra and their families.

**SANDSTRA**, Ulbe. Taken quietly into glory Nov 23, 2010 after a long life of 100 yrs, 2 months. He leaves to remember him his 8 children, their spouses his 6 stepchildren and families and a large extended family. His faithful and trusting life was a great example for all of us. We thank God for what he has been.

**SCHUTT** William, 4106 Gilbert Ave, Western Springs, IL 60558. Husband of the late Mae D. Schutt, nee Tromp. Father of William L. (Greta) and the late Joyce Mae Schutt. Grandfather of Janet (Joseph) Marder and William T. (Joanne) Schutt. Great-grandfather of Hannah Mae and Greta Elizabeth Schutt and Elizabeth Anne Marder. Brother of Mae (the late Paul) Urbanick and Gertrude (the late George) Jousma and preceded by Herman (the late Marie Ter Haar) Schutt, Jennie (the late Harry) Van Ryn, Ann (the late Martin) Rosier, Lena, Grace Schutt, and Jesse (the late Richard) Jousma. Uncle of many nieces and nephews.

**STOB**, Joan Helena Dahm, passed away peacefully on Nov. 8 with family around her. Preceded in death by husband Rev. Dr. George Stob in 2002. Survived by her children Forrest, Georgine, David, 3 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren. Donations in her memory to the charity of your choice.

**VANDER LEY**, Juliana, nee Feenstra, age 91 Passed away Oct. 15, 2010. New Holland, S. D. Preceded in death by Art her husband. She is survived by 4 children, 13 grandchildren, and many great-grandchildren.



**VANDER SLIK** Cornelia "Kay" (Koopsen), 95 years old, passed away in Port St. Lucie FL on Nov. 4, 2010. A model Christian called to be a wife, mother and homemaker, she is survived by Julius, her husband of 74 years. Her children are Jack (Gertrude Bonnema), Judith (Bruce) Thompson and

James (Marge Westra), eight grand children and seven great-grandchildren. Sympathy to Julius at 2508 Covenant Dr., Fort Pierce, FL 34981.

**VANKALKER** Terry, age 68; November 19, 2010; 6610 Ravineview Rd. S. E., Caledonia, MI 49316; Terry was preceded in death by his parents, Albert and Helen Vankalker; sister, Diane Mather; and parents-in-law, Martin and Ruth Nagel. He is survived by his wife, Sharon (Nagel); sons: Steven Vankalker and Joel (Rachel) Vankalker; daughters: Sharla Seath (Mark Miller) and Lisa Vankalker (Craig Masselink); grandchildren: Andrew Seath and Brianna Masselink; sisters: Ruth (Jerry) Mather, Eileen (Tom) DeKraker, Sharon Mae Vankalker; sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law: Linda Nagel, Mary (Bob) Fiers, Marsha (Harry) Burgess, Jim (Lisa) Nagel.

**VERDOES** Anne (Meijer) aged 98, died November 4, 2010 in Mount Vernon, WA. She was predeceased by her husband Abraham (Bram) and their son Dick. Anne is survived by her children Cora, John, Henrietta, Joe and Martin. Also survived by 14 grandchildren, six great grandchildren and 2 great-great grandchildren.

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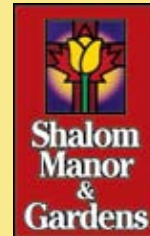
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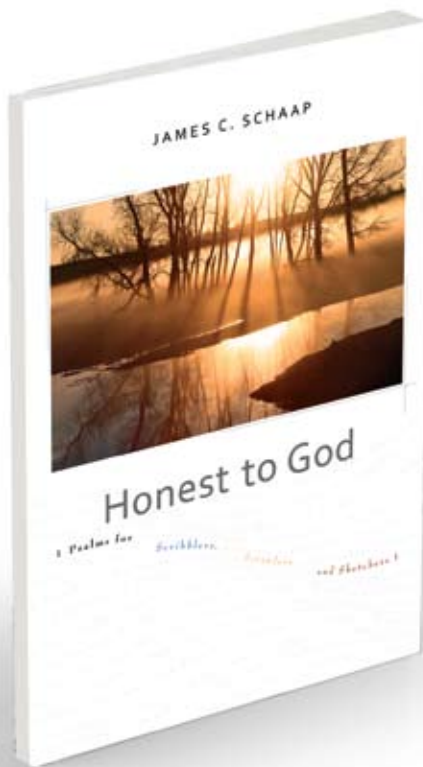
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# Punch Lines

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

**A**n elderly man rushed into the doctor's office and shouted, "Doctor! I think I'm shrinking!!"

The doctor calmly responded, "Now, settle down. You'll just have to be a little patient."

—George Vander Weit

**S**am shows up at the monthly prayer meeting, seeking help. "I need you to pray for my hearing," he tells the pastor. The pastor puts his hands on Sam's ears and prays. When he's done, he asks, "How is your hearing now?"

"I don't know," says Sam. "I don't go to court till next week."

—Dan Brucken

**W**hile Dad was driving his children to school, they passed an entrance to a cul-de-sac. The kindergartner in the backseat said, "Boy, I'm glad I don't live on that street." When Dad asked him why, he replied, "Those houses don't have any electricity."

"How do you know that?" his father asked.

The kindergartner answered, "The sign says no outlet."

—Peggy Bierma

**I**t was Palm Sunday, and because of a sore throat 5-year-old Johnny stayed home from church with a sitter. When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm branches. The boy asked what they were for.

"People held them over Jesus' head as he walked by," Johnny's parents explained.

"Wouldn't you know it," the boy fumed, "the one Sunday I don't go, he shows up!"

—Gene Potaka

**W**hat's your father's occupation?" asked the school secretary on the first day of registration. The young girl responded, "He's a magician."

"That's interesting," the secretary replied. "What's his best trick?"

"I like the one where he saws people in half," said the girl.

"That does sound pretty impressive," the secretary responded. She then continued to complete the registration form and asked the girl, "Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

She replied, "Yep, one half-brother and two half-sisters."

—George Vander Weit

**M**other decided that 10-year-old Cathy should have something "practical" for her birthday. "Suppose we open a savings account for you?" Mother suggested. Cathy was delighted. "It's your account, darling," Mother said as they arrived at the bank,

"so you fill out the application." Cathy was doing fine until she came to the space for "name of your former bank." After a slight hesitation, she put down "Piggy."

—John Veltkamp

**I** teach science in a Christian middle school. In study hall one day, I had this conversation with a student:

"Mr. Lubbers, who was it that turned into a pillar of salt?"

"Lot's wife."

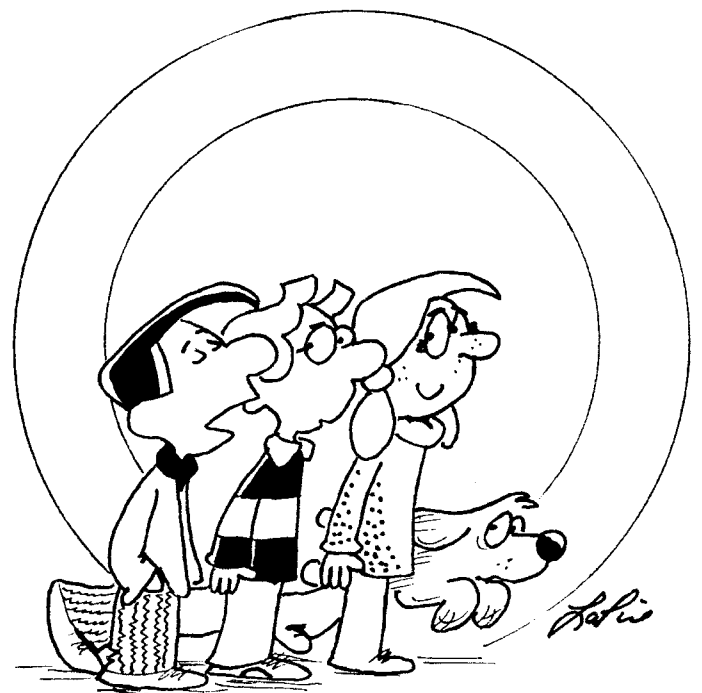
"Was her name Sodom or Gomorrah?"

—Clay Lubbers

**I** have a habit of speaking to everyone I meet while out for a walk. My granddaughter was with me one time when I greeted to a gentleman along the way. Afterward, I asked her, "Didn't you meet that man one time when your father took you to Tim Hortons?"

"Well, Grandma," Rachel said, "the only old people I know are relatives!"

—Muriel Robertson



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