



# BANNER

May 2012 | [www.thebanner.org](http://www.thebanner.org)

**36 Urban Ministry**

**38 Confessions: Past, Present, and Future**

**22 Leaders for a Growing Church**



**18 Pentecost Dreaming**



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# BANNER

Volume 147 | Number 05 | 2012



## FEATURES

- 18 Pentecost Dreaming**  
*To dream is to trust, but it is also to surrender.*  
by Mary S. Hulst
- 36 Urban Ministry: Looking for a Place to Call Home** [STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)  
*Wherever Jesus is in the city, there is urban ministry.*  
by Brian Walsh
- 39 The God of Material Things**  
*Never a meal but there sat God, smiling and blessing and keeping his elbows off the table.*  
by David Schelhaas

## DEPARTMENTS

**Editorial: Which Line to Toe?** by Bob De Moor **6**  
*We need to continually re-confess our faith as we follow the Holy Spirit into each new age.*

**Catch Your Breath: What's That Smell?** by John Luth **7**  
*Christ replaces our shame, anxiety, and hostility with confidence, faith, and hospitality.*

**IMHO: The Blessing** by Richard Vandezande **8**  
*Should everyone who preaches—not just ordained pastors—be allowed to raise their hands while offering God's blessing?*

**Letters to the Editor** **8**

**News: Synod 2012 Asked to Make Climate Change Declarations** **10**

**On the Journey: "How's Your Mom?"** by Stacia Polinder Hoeksema **20**  
*Fumbling for the right way to answer a difficult question.*

**Just for Kids: Life on Noah's Ark** by Sandy Swartzentruber **30** ▶  
*Taking care of all those animals was no picnic!*

**Tuned In: Apple's Core** by Otto Selles **32**  
*Do genius and tyranny come as a package deal?*

**Reformed Matters: Past, Present, and Future** by Karin Maag **34** [STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)  
*Let's reacquaint ourselves with the text of the confessions we already have and with their dramatic early history.*

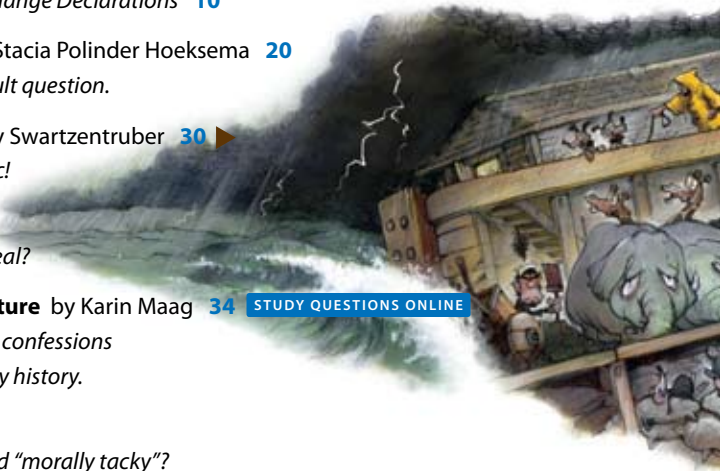
**Frequently Asked Questions** **41**  
*Do we need a new category of behavior called "morally tacky"?*

**Punch Lines** **47**

## TOGETHER DOING MORE

**Leaders for a Growing Church** by Sarah Van Stempvoort **22**  
*Napali leaders are needed to guide the church to full maturity.*

**The View from Here: Once . . . and Four 'Alls'** by Joel Boot **26**



# Which Line to Toe?

## IT'S BEEN SOME FOUR HUNDRED YEARS SINCE OUR CONFESSIONS WERE PENNED.

During that time our church has earnestly and prayerfully studied Scripture and creation revelation so that we may accurately confess and address God's Word to each new generation. And folks like Abraham Kuyper have wonderfully widened our biblical vision on the reach of God's kingdom.

We'd expect that all of that would trigger major revisions to those confessions, especially since every officebearer must subscribe to them.

Substantive changes, however, are underwhelming: in the Belgic Confession there is one substituted paragraph limiting the role of government and one dropped paragraph that was nasty to Anabaptists. In the Heidelberg Catechism we placed Q&A 80 in a smaller font because it's uncharitable to Roman Catholics. That's it.

Why no further upgrades? Because the confessions are historical documents representing our founding, heritage, and identity. So we shouldn't mess (much) with them.

But that's problematic when we *also* insist on keeping these creeds and confessions as the present-day arbiters of orthodoxy. Then all that spiritual growth from our interaction with Scripture and the Spirit's movement in our world becomes unnecessarily constricted, something the confessions' authors never intended (see "Reformed Matters," p. 34).

We did add a Contemporary Testimony (already once revised), which elegantly summarizes our biblical faith in our contemporary context. It demonstrates much of that growth of our understanding and clearly addresses our society, culture, and Zeitgeist. Yet it remains the poor stepchild, with subordinate standing to our confessions.

The revision of the current Form of Subscription contemplated by Synod 2012 is a good move, presenting in more contemporary language our denominational covenant. But that doesn't go far enough. We need to make the Contemporary Testimony what we sign on to instead of the historic confessions. That way we affirm our current understanding of Scriptural teaching and of creation revelation and always keep before us the necessary challenge of praying, working, and reflecting together on how our key sign-on document should be updated to keep us ever biblical and relevant.

That alone is the safe path for us: to continually re-confess our faith as we follow the Holy Spirit into each new age.

Of course, we shouldn't dream of jettisoning our historic confessions. As Rev. Gordon Pols puts it: "Our posture to our historical confessions should be the same as that to our parents: we *honor* them." To honor them means we don't mindlessly obey them as we mature. It means we fully recognize what they taught us and the direction they set us on. As we grow, we continue to heed their guidance. But we also continue to find our own calling in the light of Scripture and the Spirit's leading. As the church in the third millennium, we affirm our roots as we publicly profess our *owned* faith.

We could also carefully describe that ongoing relationship to the historic confessions (including also the Belhar?) in the Contemporary Testimony itself. That would allow many more officebearers and profs to sign the form of subscription without holding their nose. ■



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

The revision of the current Form of Subscription contemplated by Synod 2012 is a good move . . . but it doesn't go far enough.

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# What's That Smell?

**F**OR A WHILE, we're not sure just how long, there was a bad smell in our church. If the doors were open long enough, the offending odor dissipated, and so some people never noticed it at all. But one "scentsitive" boy whispered to his dad as they sat down together, "It smelled like poop when we walked into the church!"

I smelled it myself sometimes—a sharp whiff. I checked the garbage and looked under the chairs in the parents' room in case a stray diaper had been missed. Nothing.

Last Saturday morning a few guys turned to each other and said, "Eeuwww, what's that smell?" Then they called Tony, a plumber who attends our church. Tony's first thought was, "Sewer gas getting past the P-traps downstairs?" A quick inspection, some water down each of the three floor drains, and problem solved. No more bad smell.

Of course! Any homeowner knows that one. Yet it took a call to Tony to take care of the problem.

All our stories fit into the great Story, I think. Even this one.

There are lots of "bad smells" we grow used to or just decide to live with. Let me suggest a few:

- *The smell of shame.* This "smell" is so offensive to our olfactory glands that we may deny it is even in the air. We try to overcome the smell by pretending to be someone we are not, hiding our true selves from each other, from God, and even from ourselves. Sometimes, when we sense it in others, we reject or bully them or try to dump our own shame on them.
- *The smell of anxiety.* No matter how many apps we download, we have no control over the most important things in our lives—like the decisions our kids make, for one. As parents we can be so "stinking" anxious that we get drawn into lifelong battles with our children, trying to prevent them from making mistakes—especially mistakes that might shame us. They may fight back with behaviors that are more and more destructive.
- *The smell of hostility.* This smell is so prevalent in our culture that we may not even recognize it. (As farm boys, neither I nor my friends thought that cows had any noticeable smell at all.)

Hostility comes in many "flavors." It can present itself in the way we cocoon ourselves from others, such as wearing earbuds so we can choose our own tunes over the voices of people around us. Hostility also often surfaces in the assumptions we make about other people.

What kinds of smells do you live with?

Paul has the best advice for dealing with these unpleasant odors: "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:1-2). As we follow Christ together, he replaces our shame, anxiety, and hostility with confidence, faith, and hospitality.

Thanks, Tony! ■



John Luth is pastor of St. Albert (Alberta) Christian Reformed Church.

*The only true perfection  
available to us  
is the honest acceptance  
of our imperfection.*

— RICHARD ROHR



# The Blessing

**Are we just as blessed by an unordained person who offers a blessing without outstretched arms?**

**AS MY WIFE AND I WERE WALKING** home from a Sunday morning worship service led by our student pastor, we mused over the blessing. It was not the words he spoke, because he spoke them very well. Nor was it that the blessing was unbiblical, because it came from Numbers 6. Rather, we observed that there was no physical, outward enunciation of that blessing. As my wife and I clasped each other's hand and lifted our free hands to receive the blessing, we received the spoken Word without experiencing the physical dimension of raised arms granting the blessing.

We wondered about the practice of the Christian Reformed Church not to permit student pastors, ordained elders, or others with a license to exhort to raise their hands when providing a blessing to the congregation. We asked ourselves if the CRC was right in maintaining such a practice, since the blessing is intended to enhance the congregation's understanding of God's love and care for them as they enter into a new week.

Does the congregation understand this practice of the CRC? Are we just as blessed by an unordained person who

offers a blessing without outstretched arms (or arm)? We wondered if there was any thought by either the congregation or the student pastor that perhaps the congregation is not receiving a full blessing the way God or church practice intended the congregation to have when such a blessing is offered. Is a congregation missing something of God's blessing during a pastoral vacancy when a student pastor, ordained elder, or someone with a license to exhort is ministering to them?

This is not a salvation issue, nor is it an issue we raise to cause divisions in the church. It is simply an observation of something my wife and I feel could be better addressed. We feel very blessed to have a student pastor who ministers to us on Sundays through the prayers he offers for us as a congregation, through the solid, biblically based sermons he preaches, and through the spoken words of God's blessing he offers. But we would also like to know that our student pastor, ordained elders, or others with a license to exhort can bless us fully with lifted arms before we leave the sanctuary. ■



**Richard Vandezande** is a manager for the Township of Uxbridge, Ontario. He is a member of Hebron Christian Reformed Church in Whitby, Ontario.



## Stewardly Economics

I just read your editorial ("Can Good Stewards Grow the Economy?" March 2012) and got a little excited. It's not the responsibility of economists and politicians to fix our economy. It is my responsibility first. I can have a great impact simply by buying local whenever I can. I can invest in the younger generation of businesspeople who need encouragement, opportunities, and resources to start up new business ventures.

Of course, wisdom is warranted in any investment activity. Prudence and diversification are so important. The older generations have saved for retirement, and for most of us [savings are] invested in distant corporations. It is sad to see corporate bosses receiving millions in payouts and bonuses when our youth are lacking opportunity!

—Clarence Haak  
Orillia, Ontario

## Changing the World through Creativity

I appreciate Perini's perspective that everyone is creative ("Changing the World: One Creative Act at a Time," March 2012). Creativity, like intelligence, can be expressed in many different ways. A creative approach to a math problem or a new insight into a particular issue may not seem as creative as painting a picture, but all are valid examples of creativity.



# LETTERS

Creativity requires courage. . . . When something new or different is proposed, people have a tendency to find flaws in it. A creative person needs to be confident and willing to risk ridicule to see his/her approach through. Creativity allows people to take ownership of their work with a sense of empowerment. God shows incredible beauty through the diversity of his creation. He has also given image-bearers diverse gifts to be used to further his kingdom. Creativity is something that needs to be encouraged and celebrated . . . it can be a way for us to find the person God intended us to be.

—Jason Visser  
Lethbridge, Alberta

## The Jesus Questions

I read “The Jesus Questions” (March 2012) with interest. I liked the concept of students reading questions that Jesus posed, and they were good ones to ponder.

However, I have noticed a trend in churches and post-secondary schools that concerns me. Many Christians today believe it is a noble and high calling to question the Bible, question the faith we have been brought up in, question the things that Christians have considered sin for centuries, question whether salvation can be obtained in any other way than what the Bible outlines. Some of [this thinking] is a result of the “seeker-sensitive movement” where many have tried to dumb down the gospel to make it more understandable or less offensive. As well, it seems that daily Bible reading and study is a rare thing among the new generation of believers, causing us to lose touch with our ultimate reference source for spiritual answers. Ultimately, God calls us to trust his Word and his leading.

—Jim Verwoerd  
Abbotsford, British Columbia

## Binational Church

The statement “The BOT Canada must and can become the direction-setting agency for Canada” (“Why Being a Binational Church Is So Important,” March 2012) has been an unfulfilled promise for 30 years or more. When will the CRCNA become a “partnership umbrella” for the CRC (U.S.) and CRC (Canada) equally working together as “binational churches with one mission”—the gospel of Jesus Christ? Many Canadian charities whose missions were nurtured by the vision of U.S. Christian leaders are now fully functioning on their own, understanding and funding uniquely Canadian ministries and joining in partnership efforts around the world. I believe we have dedicated (CRC) Christians and knowledgeable people with skills and determination in Canada that can accomplish that. Let’s wait no longer.

—John Schuurman  
Burlington, Ontario

## Living Together

In an attempt to debunk the use of biblical proof texts, Ms. Lettinga cites Jesus’ example in John’s account of the adulterous woman in John 8:11 (“Mom, We’re Living Together,” February 2012). She asserts, “Consider Jesus’ response. . . .”

I did just that and here’s what I found: forgiveness and a charge to leave her life of sin. In this regard I couldn’t agree more. This article would have been much better summed up as follows: “What should we do in response to cohabiting Christian couples? Approach them in love, offer forgiveness, and charge them to sin no more.”

—Mark A. Staal  
Southern Pines, N.C.

Virginia Miller Lettinga’s article calls to mind Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s words “It is

not love that sustains the marriage. It is the marriage that sustains love.”

—C. Fred Stassen  
Kingston, Ontario

When I saw the cover of the February *Banner*, I thought of a possible photo of Joseph and Mary *anno* 1 B.C. They too had their questions and problems. But after some serious, loving reflection, advice, and divine inspiration, they came together again in Nazareth. The picture then taken could be a farewell one at the eve of their departure: They agreed to go together for Jesus’ sake to Bethlehem.

—Jan Pereboom  
Jordan, Ontario

## What Do You Believe?

I very much agree with the article “What Do You Really Believe” (January 2012). I am in my early thirties and grew up in the church (not the CRC). I had the head knowledge and even tried to put my knowledge into action, but it has just been in the last couple of months that the Holy Spirit has really come alive in me. I have renewed amazement at what Jesus and God are doing in the Scriptures and have a new-found passion to love God’s people.

The church has to more openly show love to one another, and then we can spread that love to the rest of the world with the help of the Holy Spirit. I was glad to know that I am not the only person going through something like this. There is evidence that God is still at work in our world.

—Melissa Slomp  
Brooks, Alberta

[MORE ONLINE](#)

### We’re sorry . . .

Sharp-eyed *Banner* readers may have noticed a printer’s error resulting in some missing punctuation in “A Letter from CRWRC” (April, p. 4). You were right. And we’re sorry that happened!

# NEWS

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## Synod 2012 Asked to Make Climate Change Declarations

**T**he Creation Stewardship Task Force asked Synod 2012 to affirm that climate change is real, is very likely due to human activity, and that it poses a significant threat to future generations as well as to those who are poor and vulnerable.

Using detailed explanations of the science involved, the report stated that the increasing greenhouse gas concentrations are increasing the earth's surface temperature.

It also said that there is no ambiguity within the scientific community that human activity is responsible for that increase.

The report laid out at length the biblical mandate for humans

to be God's caretakers of creation. Thus, the human activity causing climate change is a moral, ethical, and religious issue, and the task force wants Synod 2012 to declare as much.

The report calls the church to urgent action at a personal, community, and political level to address climate change, especially by mitigating the significant threat to communities that are particularly vulnerable, such as those subject to flooding and drought because of changing rainfall patterns and rising sea levels.

This report asked synod, among other things, to request the denomination's Board of Trustees to reduce the denomination's

carbon footprint, to ensure that educational resources are developed to promote participation in the global conversation about creation care, and to place appropriate creation care organizations on the list of those recommended for financial support.

For much more, please visit [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).

All materials regarding Synod 2012 will be available in the *Agenda for Synod 2012*, posted online at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org) and sent in print to every church.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Michigan Women Sew Sundresses for Haitian Girls



Girls at Fellowship CRC model dresses for Haiti. Back (l-r): Jaylen Schroeder, Delaney Sall, Hannah Sall, Valerie Krause, Lydia Sall; Front (l-r): Hannah Los, Violet Talsma, Erin Gorby, Anneke Krause

What can be done with a bunch of old pillowcases? Just ask Lois Minier from Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in Big Rapids, Mich., who has been busy this winter sewing more than 150 dresses made from gently used pillowcases for children in Haiti.

Minier said her sewing group made more than 400 dresses. The dresses will be sent to a village in Cayes, Haiti, through Harvest International, and will be given to "yard orphans." These children have no home or parents and live in Haitian people's yards, because even the orphanages are too full to take them in.

"The neat thing is that God can use people at any age. This has been such a blessing for those of us who are older, because we have time to sew," Minier said.

**MORE ONLINE**

—Daina Kraai

One of the coastal castles established as part of the trans-Atlantic slave trade

TERISA BENNETT



## African American Group from Michigan Visits Africa

Nine people from Madison Square Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., all with an African American heritage, spent two weeks traveling in West Africa, visiting churches and missionaries in Ghana and Liberia.

Ghana was one of the major exit points for slaves on their trans-Atlantic journey. Liberia served as a reentry point for freed African slaves.

The group spent time working at Providence Baptist Church in Monrovia, Liberia, where former Madison Square pastor and Liberia native Samuel Reeves now serves.

The group also connected with Renita Reed, whose micro-financing work with Partners Worldwide in Ghana has been supported by Madison Square for many years.

Laura Carpenter, director of diversity and worship at Madison Square, hopes this is the first of many groups of African Americans who will travel to Africa to see themselves as global citizens, missionaries, and business leaders.

Carpenter said, “[We need to move] our people from stereotypically being the receivers to being the missionaries, the evan-

gelists, the givers. That takes a change of mind, a realigning of our identity.”

Beverly Weathersby, who went along on the trip, said she always dreamed of traveling to Europe on vacation, but when people in Africa said, “Welcome home,” she was moved. She said, “I never thought of going to Africa, but I should have done this a long time ago.”

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Noah J. K. Kruis

## Book Bingo in Dearborn

As letters and numbers were randomly spit out of a rolling bin filled with colorful balls and called out, youngsters perused the bingo cards sitting in front of them. Slowly but surely, cards filled up.

“Did we win?” young Noelle Rumschlay asked her mother.

“Not yet,” Elizabeth Rumschlay replied, smiling. “We’re almost there.”

Before long, Asher Englert yelled out, “Book Bingo!”

For kids at Dearborn (Mich.) Christian Fellowship CRC, National Reading Month translated into Book Bingo.

Book Bingo winners got to choose from nearly 200 books donated by church members and area schools. Each participant left with at least one book.

“We just thought this (event) would be something fun,” said organizer Elise Englert said. “Every-



JEFF ARNOLD

Noelle Rumschlay fills out her bingo card with her mother, Elizabeth.

one likes to get something new, and we thought it would be a good way to get kids to get some new books.”

—Jeff Arnold

## Trinity Adds Master's Degree Programs

Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Ill., has added two master's degree programs—in counseling psychology and special education—to its offerings, starting in Fall 2012.

The new programs mean Trinity joins other colleges related to the Christian Reformed Church in offering master's degrees.

“The master's degrees in counseling psychology and special education are both focused on professional callings,” said Steven Timmermans, college president. “Leaders trained to be Christian psychologists and special educators—based on an understanding of God's sovereignty in all areas of life—can be used mightily in the transformation of lives and even society.”

Both degrees can be earned with a combination of online instruction and evening face-to-face classes.

Patti Powell, director of the special education graduate studies program, said, “At Trinity our students will graduate with a well-established Christian world-and-life-view that understands the place of special education and children with special needs in our world.”

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Melissa Holtrop

# NEWS

## Reconciling Science and Faith Seminar



(L-r) Joy Bonnema, Loren Haarsma, Jaclyn Busch, and Steve Datema

**I**n a world saturated with technology, we as Christians are often fearful at best and disdainful at worst when we talk about science. It's as if the Bible and creation are at odds with each

other," said Jaclyn Busch, pastor at McBain (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church.

That was just one of the reasons Busch decided to hold a seminar recently, entitled "Recon-

ciling Science and Faith," at Cadillac Christian Reformed Church.

Sixteen pastors, scientists, and Christian school teachers from across northern Michigan and the greater Muskegon area attended the seminar.

Loren Haarsma, associate professor of physics and astronomy at Calvin College, offered a science and theology lesson, revealing the often underlying tensions that can occur between scientific data and biblical interpretations.

Joy Bonnema, pastor of congregational life at Madison Square

Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., and former biology professor at Calvin College, led a discussion with practical advice on integrating science and faith in the classroom as well as in worship.

Scott Hoezee, director of the Ministry Theorem website recently created by Calvin Theological Seminary's Center for Excellence in Preaching and the Science Division of Calvin College, said, "The overall goal is to have thoughtful conversations that move beyond the stereotypes of science as the enemy of the faith or of churches that are simply anti-science."

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Daina Kraai

## Artist Creates Memorable Murals for N.J. Church

When Lisa Tanis, the worship aids artist at Midland Park (N.J.) Christian Reformed Church, started to paint a mural in the church's Friendship Hall, she never thought it would take her a year to finish. So she titled it *Perseverance*.

*Perseverance* depicts two figures leaving the church door, going "into the world to preach the good news." In the background is the skyline of New York City, representing the world—a scene readily observed from many locations around this church.

The church was built in 1907 with a cobblestone foundation. For Tanis, each of these cobblestones represents a member of the church, providing support and a firm foundation.

Don Holwerda, a long-time member of the church, says Lisa Tanis and her family "have been a wonderful blessing to our church." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Calvin Hulstein



## Michigan Church Celebrates 125 Years



PETER REEDER

LaGrave's choirs lead in worship at the anniversary service.

LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Mich., celebrates 125 years of ministry this year with the theme "Grow in Grace," a reminder to continue maturing and reaching out to its community.

Since 1887, LaGrave has remained in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids and has grown to over 1,700 members. It was the first Christian Reformed church to hold services in English instead of Dutch.

In an anniversary service, pastors Stanley Mast and John

Steigenga reflected on God's faithfulness but also recalled difficult changes: an additional worship service, a new building, and discussion about the ordination of women.

"We live in rapidly changing times, and that does not bypass the church," said Steigenga, who has been with LaGrave since 1978. "But by God's grace, we have been able to enjoy stability—even through the changes."

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ryan Struyk



## California Groups Hold Historic Meeting

In March, Classis Central California of the Christian Reformed Church (a regional group of churches) met together with Classis Central California of the Reformed Church in America (RCA), to worship and talk together.

The two days included a question and answer session with seminary presidents and denominational leaders, as well as the regular work of the classis.

Tom DeVries, general secretary of the RCA, said that for too long we have been two kingdoms even though we have one King. "Kingdom living is not done with division but with unity," he said.

Presidents from three seminaries served communion to approximately 400 worshippers. Tim Brown

**Leaders from both denominations lead in worship. Back row (l-r): Tom DeVries, Joel Boot; front row (l-r) Jul Medenblik, Tim Brown, and Scott Sherman**

of Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Mich., Jul Medenblik of Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich., and Scott Sherman of Newbiggin House of Studies in San Francisco, shared how those institutions of higher learning are joining together in a spirit of collegiality and unity to shape the leaders of our future.

The two denominations are in conversation about holding their synods simultaneously on the same campus in Iowa if the logistics can be worked out. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Heidi Wicker

## Eugene Peterson Visits Classis Yellowstone

Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message*, spent a day with the delegates of Classis Yellowstone, a regional group of Christian Reformed churches.

Peterson was part of a continuing education event at this meeting in Missoula, Mont.

"When you have someone who is almost 80 years old, filled with wisdom of years of pastoring, church planting, teaching, you are humbled," said Del Vandenberg, stated clerk of the classis. "More so you are blessed with the living proof that God is faithful to those who serve him."

Peterson spoke about pastoral excellence and church planting. "One of the things I really liked about our meeting was that we got to see how, in their ministry, he and his wife have embodied a discipleship of presence," said Mark Hofman, pastor of Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Manhattan, Mont. "They don't sit detached, somewhere high up, spewing information. [They] were almost more interested in hearing our stories than they were in telling us theirs, which was incredibly humbling." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Sarah Boonstra

## Highlights from 2012 Winter Classis Meetings

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

Several people were **welcomed into ministry** in the Christian Reformed Church, including seminary graduates Randall Buurisma, John Harold Caicedo, Steven Eckersley, Matthew Eenigenburg, Andy Hanson, Daniel Kinnas, Sam Lee, Ruth Lemmen, Sarah Roelofs, Eric Schluckebir, and Mark Van Drunen.

**Transferred in** from other denominations were Henry Cho, Chris Choe, David Leem, and Jay Song.

John Aasman, Cindy Holtrop, Margaret Hummelman, Il Yong Kan, James Pott, George Rowaan, Henry Reyenga, Verlan Van Ee, and Ryan Veeneman were **released from their congregations**.

Eneyas Frietas and Paul Hahn were **released from CRC ministry**.

Brad Center was **deposed**.

Classes Kalamazoo, Alberta South/Saskatchewan, and Lake Superior have churches that continue to **protest women delegates at classis**.

**New ministries were started or approved** in Classis Arizona and Classis Pacific Hanmi.

Rogers Heights CRC in Wyoming, Mich., and The Gathering in Sacramento, Calif., **closed**.

**Belhar Confession:** Two classes requested that Synod 2012 adopt it, eight classes requested that Synod 2012 adopt it as a testimony, and 13 classes requested that Synod 2012 not adopt it. One classis requested further study. (Synod is the CRC's annual leadership meeting.)

Four classes sent overtures (requests) to Synod 2012 about the proposed **Covenant for Officebearers**.

Seven classes sent requests to Synod 2012 regarding the report from the **Creation Stewardship Task Force**.

Classis Minnkota requested an **independent review of the Ministers' Pension Plan**, and Classis Lake Erie requested that synod **drop the requirement that all motions at synod must be made in writing**.

All materials regarding Synod 2012 will be available in the *Agenda for Synod 2012*, posted online at [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org) and sent in print to every church. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Banner news correspondents

## Men with Tools Help Build the Kingdom



MARY FLOHR

Jason Flohr works on a car.

and have them fixed," explained Burke.

"It's amazing, the cost of repairs on stuff. A lot of times, a large part of it is in labor," explained Bob DeJong. Sometimes the recipients cover the cost of their own parts; other times the church pays for the supplies as well.

"We wanted to make an intentional male-focused ministry, and what do we do?" asked Jason Flohr, one of the leaders. "We like to fix things."

Even experienced handymen like Flohr and DeJong can learn from each other. "When I'm working with the car guys, I know nothing about cars," laughed Flohr. "It's a chance to learn skills too."

"It's nice to [do] hands on ministry rather than just dumping [money] in the collection plate," added DeJong.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Ryan Struyk

A Michigan church is helping to build the kingdom of God—one broken car and leaky faucet at a time.

The Men with Tools ministry at Harvest Community Christian Reformed Church in Lake Odessa, Mich., has worked on a variety of projects, including houses, roofs, washing machines, dryers, landscaping, and cars.

"We're serving God by serving the community," explained volunteer Phil Burke.

Roughly 20 members of the church, ages 20 to 60, volunteer their time and labor. "Some people just can't afford to take their cars



Mombachito coffee farmers with the Farmer-to-Farmer team.

## Partnership Helps Coffee Farmers Find a New Way

Terry and Mary Hubers, along with their daughter, son-in-law, and three granddaughters, traveled to Nicaragua recently to see a project run by a Farmer-to-Farmer program.

Farmer-to-Farmer (Nicaragua) now includes over 80 farmers operating on six shared land banks. North American partners with experience in agricultural production offer mentoring and encouragement.

"We go there with the love of Christ to hopefully raise their

income for medical purposes and so they can send their kids to school. And we're seeing that," Hubers said.

The Hubers, who attend Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center, Iowa, spent about three days of their trip visiting with farmers, checking up on the land and a roaster and a grinder the farmers had recently received money for.

—Kate Padilla

## Minnesota Church Holds "Invite Your Neighbor to Church Day"



Anthony and Sara Sysma

Emden Christian Reformed Church opened its doors to the community of Renville, Minnesota, with its "Invite Your Neighbor to Church Day," which drew about 20 neighbors to worship.

The special worship service was planned to encourage community members to go to church and to educate them about worship.

On the day the neighbors came, the pastor, Anthony Sysma, explained the singing, the greeting, congregational prayer, the offering, the importance of the Bible and the preaching of the Word, and what the benediction is.

About one-quarter of the visitors continued to attend the church in weeks following. Sysma has been visiting with some of the new people to get to know them better and answer their questions about the church. Some of them have become involved in church activities.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Carla Wiersema

## Sports Highlights

The following individuals and teams achieved high honors in recent months:

- Manhattan (Mont.) Christian School: girls' volleyball, state champions
- Kerri Smit, Milford, Nova Scotia: All Canadian First Team, women's university volleyball
- Jim Eekhoff, Hull, Iowa: National Coach of the Year, boys' basketball (Western Christian)
- Carissa Verkaik, Holland, Mich.: Academic All-American, women's basketball (Calvin College)
- Western Christian, Hull, Iowa: girls' basketball, state champions
- Denver (Colo.) Christian: boys' basketball, state champions
- Dordt College (Sioux Center, Iowa): men's basketball, national quarterfinals

For complete stories and photos, please visit [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).

—Banner news correspondents

## Ontario Church Hosts Preaching Seminar for Exhorters



SCOTT HOZIEE

A full-day event was held recently for people licensed to exhort (preach) within their classis, though it was also open to pastors and others interested in preaching.

They came from four classes (regional groups of churches) to Community

### John Rottman leads a preaching workshop.

Christian Reformed Church in Kitchener, Ontario.

The workshop was sponsored by Calvin Theological Seminary's Center for Excellence in Preaching.

Rita Klein-Geltink, pastor of Lucknow (Ontario) Community CRC, noted that while pastors have an expectation and opportunity for continuing education, "we examine [our exhorters] at classis and review them periodically, but other than that, they are on their own. Rather than simply encourage them to further equip themselves, we decided to offer them a vehicle by which to do so."

Participants were very appreciative; more than one remarked that "nothing like this had ever been done" in their twenty or thirty years of preaching.

—Anita Brinkman



CAROLYN KOSTER YOST

Bob Aukeman takes Sunday sermon preparation material on the road with him.

## Preparing for Sunday Sermons

Whether Bob Aukeman, 57, is on the road driving his semi or at home in West Michigan, he anticipates the next sermon he'll hear at Bauer Christian Reformed Church in Hudsonville.

Every weekday, he reads a Scripture passage and ponders a question as part of a devotional program geared to preparing church members for the Sunday sermon preached by Timothy Holwerda, the church's pastor.

Each week, Holwerda gives the Scripture and sermon topic to Aukeman, who formulates the devotionals, called "15 Minutes with Father."

Holwerda said it helps him connect with the congregation. "It's helped me think more about how our congregation would think about this passage in their weekly lives," he said.

Devotional reader Gary Tamminga, 57, said, "It gives you a focus for the week, and you start to dwell on preparing for the sermon."

—Carolyn Koster Yost

## Lay Leaders Minister at Denver Church

A Denver area church uses lay leaders to comfort and support people affected by difficult life circumstances through its Stephen Ministry.

First Christian Reformed Church in Denver, Colo., has trained 12 people to work in the ministry in the past four years.

"We are not professional counselors. We are lay leaders trained to provide Christian care and a listening ear," said Alice Waanders, one of the leaders of the ministry. Stephen Ministry counselors do not deal with addictions or severe psychological problems, nor do they offer services to anyone under age 18.

Waanders noted that not just anyone can become a Stephen minister. "They have to interview and be accepted," she said.

Stephen Ministry is a national program that provides 50 hours of training for those working in the ministry.

One recipient of the care at First CRC said, "The most beneficial part of being on the receiving end was knowing that I could share my feelings in confidence, receive wonderful spiritual care, and spend meaningful time in prayer." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Sarah Boonstra



Stephen Ministers at First CRC meet together.

## Write for *The Banner*!

*The Banner* is seeking a news writer for Alberta and Saskatchewan. If you like to write and have a passion for telling stories of how God is at work in the Christian Reformed churches in your area, 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@rcna.org](mailto:gpostma@rcna.org). Please include a resume or letter outlining your news-writing experience and some recent samples of your work.

# NEWS

## Synod 2012 to Decide on Adopting Belhar Confession

**A**fter three years of discussion and debate, Synod 2012 (the church's annual leadership meeting) will vote on whether to adopt the Belhar Confession as a fourth doctrinal standard for the Christian Reformed Church.

The report recommending the adoption of the Belhar comes from the CRC's Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee (EIRC).

The Belhar was written in South Africa during the 1980s when the "colored" Dutch Reformed Mission Church (which is now part of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa) declared that apartheid was a heresy and a misrepresentation of the gospel. The primar-

ily white Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa was associated with that system of forced racial segregation.

The EIRC's report noted that a history of discrimination is not unique to South Africa. "All who know something about the respective histories of Canada and the United States can recall the stories of injustice, discrimination, and marginalization that most often were inflicted on members of ethnic minorities," the report said.

The EIRC pointed out that there is "substantial consistency in the content of synod's decisions concerning matters of racial justice and what is confessed in the language of the Belhar Con-

fession." Among those decisions was the 1996 adoption of a report known now as *God's Diverse and Unified Family*.

The committee said that the Belhar fills a significant gap in our confessional heritage because significant biblical themes of unity, reconciliation, and justice are larger in Scripture than some of the other themes in our historic confessions.

Though some would prefer to see the Belhar adopted as a testimony instead of a confession, the EIRC believes that speaking confessionally to such issues as unity and justice is different from affirming or endorsing the Belhar as a testimony. The report pointed out that our Contemporary Testimony

is a document written by the CRC for the CRC, and was not written as a confession for the global Reformed community.

If adopted, the Belhar would join the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort, all of which were written during one 60-year period between 1561 and 1619. It would also be the first confession to come from the Reformed church in the Southern Hemisphere.

For more, please visit [the banner.org](http://thebanner.org).

All materials regarding Synod 2012 will be available in the *Agenda for Synod 2012*, posted online at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org) and sent in print to every church.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Collecting Scrap Metal for Haiti



Scrap metal drive volunteers took in donations that raised \$4,700 for a mission trip to Haiti.

JACK INVENHUIS

Scrap metal from West Michigan is helping rebuild a building used by the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Haiti. The structure was destroyed in the 2010 earthquake.

Hanley CRC in Grandville, Mich., was looking for a way to raise cash for a mission trip to help with construction in Haiti.

Since some members have businesses linked to scrap metal

resale, the metal drive fit. In February, one business placed dumpsters on the church property to receive scrap metal, another business owner trucked metal from donors who answered Hanley's newspaper advertisement, and another gave steel shavings. Elements such as copper, brass, and aluminum, as well as large metal items that included vehicle body parts and appliances were traded in for \$4,700 in cash.

With an additional \$2,700 raised from a soup supper, 15 Hanley adults and youth spent a week in March helping to rebuild the Program for Diaconal Formation building used for training deacons and working with community leaders. The team was the third one this year since construction began in January.

CRWM missionary Howard Van Dam said the structure, expected to be ready this summer, conforms to new construction techniques for seismic capacity. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Carolyn Koster Yost

## Building Ties with South Sudan

A group of Sudanese refugees who began meeting for worship in homes discovered the Christian Reformed Church when it needed a larger facility and stumbled upon Woodlawn CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Simon Gouk serves as pastor for the fledgling congregation, which has embraced the CRC.

Gouk escaped South Sudan in 1986 amid dire conditions of persecution of the ethnic African Christian population.

Woodlawn CRC has aided the group in many ways, as has Clasis Grand Rapids East, a regional group of churches, even though the congregation is not yet officially affiliated with the CRC.

The congregation, which now calls itself Cush Christian Reformed Church, supported the effort to rebuild Haiti, which got some people thinking about what the denomination might be able to contribute to the ongoing crisis in South Sudan.

Many in the congregation still have family living there. One member of Gouk's congregation who recently visited Sudan reports that Christianity is growing, comparing it to the early church's massive growth in the face of persecution.

Gouk believes that the growing church could learn from the structure he's found in the CRC. He also sees the need "to develop humans, giving them confidence in spite of having lost loved ones or possessions." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Noah J. K. Kruis





ANITA BEEM

Twenty-six volunteers from North Hills CRC spent several hours sorting food for Forgotten Harvest.

## Reaping the Forgotten Harvest

Imagine 96 billion pounds of food—that's 43 billion kilograms.

That's how much food is thrown away each year in America, as a group of volunteers from North Hills Christian Reformed Church in Troy, Mich., recently discovered.

Church members spent several hours sorting food thrown away by local restaurants and businesses. The food, which would otherwise end up in landfills, instead feeds people in need, thanks to a not-for-profit organization called Forgotten Harvest.

A few hours of sorting tomatoes and onions provided North Hills members with a glimpse into a growing problem.

"It gives us a reminder of all the people in the area who really on a daily basis go hungry," said Anita Beem, North Hills's director of education and outreach. "We thought we can make a difference—we can keep things from not only being wasted, but we can also help people who really need the help." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Jeff Arnold

## Arizona Mentors Help Local Kids

One-on-one relationships mean some students at Thomas Elementary School in Flagstaff, Ariz., are getting much-needed attention. That's thanks to members of Hope Community Christian Reformed Church in Flagstaff, who have become mentors through Kids Hope USA.



Dave Reynolds (right) and Jerimiah Jenson

"The teachers noted that as the year progressed, the children became more and more interactive and seemed happier in their classroom setting," said Patricia Jasper, Hope Community's Kids Hope director. Eighteen members of the church are involved with the program.

Jasper also recently trained two other Flagstaff churches interested in the program. "Every elementary school has children who need someone to work with them on a one-to-one basis, someone to care and let them know they are special," Jasper said.

—Shashi DeHaan

## Revised Covenant for Officebearers Coming to Synod 2012

Maybe the third version of the Covenant for Officebearers will be the one that gets adopted by synod (the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church).

Synod 2012 will decide on this latest version after previous versions were rejected in 2008 and 2011.

The proposed covenant is intended to replace the old Form of Subscription. That is the document signed by officebearers to affirm their agreement with the doctrines and teachings of the CRC, which has fallen into disuse in some churches.

The process started when a church in British Columbia

asked Synod 2004 to study the Form of Subscription. A committee was assigned that task in 2005 and reported in 2008, but its efforts were sent back to a reconfigured committee.

That second committee brought the fruit of its labors to Synod 2011, but delegates last year were still not satisfied. Synod asked the committee to come back with a new draft that included more positive, declarative commitments to teach, defend, and actively promote the Reformed doctrines of the CRC.

The primary changes made to this year's version are in the first and fourth paragraphs. In the first paragraph, the phrase

describing Scripture now reads "which proclaims the good news of God's creation and redemption through Jesus Christ."

In the fourth paragraph, an added phrase referring to the creeds and confessions reads: "We heartily believe and will promote their doctrines faithfully..."

Synod 2012 will decide whether or not to adopt the covenant when it meets in June.

All materials regarding Synod 2012 will be available in the *Agenda for Synod 2012*, posted online at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org) and sent in print to every church.

—Gayla R. Postma

## Church Offers Vegan Fare

Every week, worshipers at Square Inch Community Church share a communal meal. But at this church plant of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., every meal is vegan.

These "love feasts," as they are known, are one way the new church extends radical hospitality. The church website says, "We recognize that food is often a contentious issue. We are deciding to make our meals as inclusive as possible. Everyone can eat a bean chili, but not everyone can eat a ground beef chili."

Nate Vanderzee joined Square Inch Community near its inception. "I eat a vegan diet and liked being in a place where I didn't have to pick and choose what I could eat," he said.

"Some people think of it as an exotic diet that is difficult to accommodate, but when they hear that we enjoy a simple meal of soup and bread, it doesn't seem so hard," said Steve DeRuiter, pastor of the church plant.

Even communion is a way to practice this radical hospitality: only gluten-free bread is used in the weekly sacrament, fresh-baked by a member that morning.

—Noah J. K. Kruijs



# PENTECOST DREAMING

“**I’M GIVING UP ON LOVE,**” my friend said to her counselor. Frustrated by years of few good dates and even fewer godly men, she was seriously considering stopping the search and giving up her dream.

“I think,” responded her counselor gently, “we should increase our sessions to once a week.”

My friend laughed as she told me this story, and as we laughed we thought about the oddness of dreaming. For her the dream of marriage and children had practically been assumed. She’d never

thought it wouldn’t happen. It was only a matter of time. But as time passes and she moves gracefully into midlife, she, like many of my single friends, doubts more and dreams less.

It’s as if by not hoping for it, not imagining it, not dreaming it, we think the pain of not having it may possibly be lessened.

But it won’t be.

We know this. We see the eyes of a 50-something woman tear up at a baptism, her dream of bearing children lost years ago but the pain of that loss as

fresh as yesterday. We see the grief in the eyes of the divorced dad who loves his children more than life and desperately regrets past choices that cost them so much. We see the hunched shoulders of the 20-year-old working a job he doesn’t love because the college fund was emptied when the stock market tanked.

Good dreams by any measure: love, children, family life, college. All of these dreamers had reason to dream, reason to hope.

And reason to grieve.

# THE BIGGEST, HARDEST, MOST IMPOSSIBLE DREAM HAS ALREADY COME TRUE.

The loss of a dream is an odd sort of grief. There is no burial, really. No end date. The loss of a dream comes gradually upon you as the calendar pages flip, until you realize the dream may not come true. The adoption from China. The graduate degree. The baby. The promotion. We age out of our dreams, and there is nothing we can do to stop that aging. There is nothing we can do to stop the losing.

Except, like my friend, to consider giving up the dream.

But if you have ever tried this, you know how hard it is. “Hope dies hard,” a wise friend told me once. “Hope dies hard.”

The tears in the crow’s-foot-edged eyes of the woman at baptism tell us that. The heavy silence in the car as the dad drives away from his children tells us that. The sighs that meet the sound of the alarm clock tell us that.

Hope dies hard. Dreams die hard. But often—too often—they die.

## Pentecost Dreams

“Afterward,” God declares through the prophet Joel, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”

The apostle Peter quotes the prophet Joel in this passage we read at Pentecost. Accused of being drunk, Peter rises to defend his group. “We’re not drunk,” he says. “We’re just dreaming!”

It does seem an odd passage to quote. Psalm 2 may be a more fitting choice. It’s more obviously Messianic, and isn’t that what Peter is trying to get at? That Jesus was the Messiah and he was raised from the dead? Why start with Joel? Why start with the dreaming when what Peter is

trying to say is that their long-shared, long-kept dream, the dream that had survived bad kings and worse exiles, the dream that had seemed like false hope for so long, the dream that God would show up in a mighty way as he had in the days of old, the dream of a Messiah had come true! The Messiah was here, Peter is saying. For real! Not a dream!

So why Joel?

Because Joel was a dream-keeper. Sure, his book starts with an awful warning about locusts who “rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows.” Gross! But then he writes a beautiful word of promise: “Then the Lord was jealous for his land and took pity on his people.” Joel then goes on to describe God providing grain, new wine, and oil. “I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten,” the Lord tells his people. And then the Lord speaks of the sending of the Spirit and the fermenting of dreams.

You will dream again, God is saying to his people. You will dream again. You will no longer be so concerned with survival that you will not be able to dream. You will no longer lie awake all night with worry so that there is no space to dream. You will no longer look to your future with anxious doubt, with palpable fear, with a bad feeling in the pit in your stomach. You will look to your future with hope. And not just the young, who will not remember the pain, but even the old ones who have seen it all and know better. Even they will dream.

And so, as Peter stands up before the crowd to speak of the Messiah, what the Spirit brings to his mind in that moment is a word of hope, a word of restoration, a word that calls people to believe that God will repay the years the locusts have eaten.

“We’re not drunk, you cynics! We’re dreaming! We are dreaming of the day when all people everywhere, in every language, in every place, will tell the work of the God who restores, who revives, who redeems the dreams of the brokenhearted.

“And we dare to dream these dreams because the biggest, hardest, most impossible dream has already come true: that God fulfilled his promise to send a Messiah, and that the Messiah has conquered the worst dream-killer of all, death itself.

“So we stand here, spouting about God in a cacophony of tongues, because he has given us permission to dare to dream again.”

## Dare to Surrender

The act of dreaming is an act of trust—that my future could look like this, that I will stay healthy enough to see it, that I will be disciplined enough to achieve it, that God will protect me enough to receive it. To dream is to trust, but it is also to surrender. To believe that even if this dream does not come true, even though, as another prophet says, “the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines, I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation.”

So, Peter says to us, go ahead and dream. Go ahead and trust. And dare to surrender. Because what we have seen of this God, what we have seen of this Messiah, is enough for us to stake our lives on, dreams and all. ■



Mary Hulst is chaplain for Calvin College and teaches at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Mich.

## “How’s Your Mom?”

**“HOW’S YOUR MOM?”**  
 Because my mom has brain cancer, I get asked this question several times a day, and I find myself fumbling for words in an effort to answer. Don’t get me wrong—I want people to ask about my mom. I would rather struggle to answer than have people ignore the pain in my heart.

But I find myself wondering whether the person really wants to know or is simply being polite. Is this a passing question like “Hi, how are you?” If so, I’m fine with a short answer—“Doing better today, thanks.” There is a time and place for that type of interaction. Yet I struggle because I want to be honest, and that short answer just doesn’t seem to capture our reality right now.

There’s even more to consider.

How much time does this person have? How much detail do I divulge? Is she comfortable with the tears that may come or other emotions that may surface as I answer honestly? How much time and energy do I have at the moment? Should what I share change if I have my children with me?

I want to be honest, yet not share too much. I want to be hopeful, yet not minimize the pain. I want to focus on the positive, yet don’t want people to stop praying because it seems like my mom is fine for now. I want to be realistic, yet not doubt what God can do. I want to be thankful for today, but tomorrow’s unknowns are very unsettling.

### A Question with Three Layers

“How’s your mom?” is a question, I’ve come to realize, that has three layers. The first layer focuses on the temporary: How is your mom *today*?



Today is better than yesterday and certainly better than a few weeks ago when my mom was in a coma. She is making great progress, and we are so thankful. But we’re worried about her eyes and her vision and her short-term memory and some other changes we see, not knowing if they are permanent or temporary. We don’t know how these

things will affect our lives and how we function as a family.

Several times during these weeks, we thought she might die, and we are so thankful to have her yet.

Still, she was supposed to be in Michigan with my family at the beginning of September, not in Swedish Hospital in Seattle. She was supposed to help my

sister get settled in her new house in Lynden and enjoy having grandchildren nearby for the first time in her life. She was supposed to be gearing up for a trip to Thailand to be with my brother and sister-in-law when their baby is born. Yet saying “supposed to” makes it seem like God owes me these things, which is certainly not the case.

The second layer is tougher: What is your mom’s prognosis?

The honest answer is that the prognosis is not good. My mom has the “most lethal” form of brain cancer—so lethal that we were relieved to hear that with

nosis changes priorities a bit—and I think it should.

I know God can heal my mom, and I pray fervently for that. I want to believe he will. At the same time, I had never prayed for healing so hard in my life as I did when my niece, Olive Hope, was alive, and God answered that prayer differently than I had hoped. It seems to be God’s decision, not mine. But, believe me, I’m asking!

I think of my friends who have lost parents and siblings and children and spouses, some in tragic circumstances. Many died suddenly, and there was no chance to say “Goodbye” or “I love you”

deep pain, I know that they are true. (Which doesn’t mean you should say them to someone who is grieving!)

“My only comfort in life and in death,” says the Heidelberg Catechism, “is that I am not my own, but belong—body and soul—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head . . . Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life” (Q&A 1).

I know that God is walking with our family in this valley and has a perfect plan for our lives. It just doesn’t always feel that way. See how complicated this gets?

My mind floods with an array of responses to “How’s your mom?”: some sweet, some sarcastic, some spiritual, some sorrowful. So here’s my best answer:

- a) In the short term—improving.
- b) In the mid term—devastating.
- c) In the long term—better than we can imagine.

Really, it’s all of the above. ■

## The honest answer is, not good.

aggressive treatment and with the vaccine trial she may live another two to four years. Who knew I could be pleased to hear such news? A few years is so much better than six months or six weeks, but much of the time I want to curl up and just sob—or throw up. But life continues, and I have four children who need me.

Still, any of us could die today or tomorrow or the next day. I could die before my mom, for that matter. My father-in-law called and left a message: “*God* numbers our days, not a diagnosis.” So true. I am resting in that.

For 10 years I worked for hospice—so I know enough to know I don’t want to sit around hoping my mom will be fine instead of doing what I can do to enjoy each moment of the time I have left on this earth with her . . . which is not the easiest thing to do when you live 2,500 miles away.

I know we are supposed to make the most of each day with the people we love—but the reality of a terminal diag-

or “I’ll miss you.” I think of people around the world for whom my life would be a dream. I think of friends who lost their moms when they were children or teenagers or in their 20s—people who would have given anything for their mom to be at their wedding or to see their children or to simply be a part of their lives for many more years. I think of friends and neighbors whose moms were crack cocaine addicts or whose moms were in prison for most of their childhood . . . and this puts things into perspective.

The third layer to the question is the triumphant one: How’s your mom . . . eternally speaking?

The answer is, she’s great! She loves Jesus. She has hope for eternal life. It is all in God’s hands. God, whose timing is perfect, works everything for good. We have the hope of seeing her again in heaven. Thank God for the resurrection. He is more than enough.

While I’ve found that these answers sometimes ring hollow in the midst of



**Stacia Polinder Hoeksema** is an adjunct professor in social work at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Troy Bierma (right) and Arbin Pokharel (second from right) with Nepali Christian leaders.

## Leaders for a Growing Church

by Sarah Van Stempvoort

**A**n expanding Christian church in Nepal is taking the gospel forward, making inroads in a place where Christian testimony was once severely restricted. As the church expands, strong Nepali leaders are needed to guide the church to full maturity.

Nepali Christians share their faith in Christ in the face of significant financial, political, religious, and logistical challenges.

“They pray for what they lack, they take what resources they have, and they go,” says Troy Bierma, a Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionary in Nepal.

Many Nepali churches hold evangelistic programs in their communities or lead outreaches in other communities.

About half of Nepali Christians have come to Christ through their own or someone else’s testimony of healing from spiritual oppression or physical illness. Others have been drawn to the gospel through Christians’ witness and care for others.

The church Troy and Faith Bierma are a part of has had more than 20 adult baptisms in 10 months. Although the church began only a few years ago, it has already planted five daughter churches, a couple of which have also started

churches. This growth is mirrored in other Nepali churches.

“The greatest blessing of the Nepali church has been sharing the gospel on a personal level and through the churches,” says Arbin Pokharel. Arbin and his wife, Bimala, Nepali Christians, are CRWM partner missionaries committed to building up their country’s Christian leaders. “But as we enter the second generation of church history in Nepal, leadership skills and adequate training are severely lacking. Because of that, churches are less than healthy.”

In 2011, Troy Bierma began teaching at Evangelical Presbyterian Theological Seminary (EPTS) as part of World Mis-

sions' commitment to help strengthen Nepali Christian leaders. The seminary's 55 students come from a variety of denominations across Nepal.

"There is a danger here that immature believers who lack leadership may fall away," he says. People may give in to discouragement "or be led astray by false teachings from cults who are taking advantage of the young church or confusing past life, Hindu ideas, and 'theology [as] Christian truth."

Recently Bierma asked his hermeneutics class how they would counsel Christians who had taken work in an idol factory. His question stemmed from a

conversation he'd had earlier with a Christian friend whose boyfriend, a new believer, had done just that.

To Bierma's surprise, at least half of his students responded that it was okay for Christians to make idols if they couldn't find any other work and as long as they didn't trust the idols. His students argued that it could be an evangelism opportunity and quoted texts about "do[ing] everything for God's glory."

Bierma had his class research and write a paper on the Bible's teachings on idol worship. "They started to see how much they allowed their culture and poverty to influence their interpretation and their willingness to read texts out of context," he said.

"They came away having both theological understanding of what's at stake and the practical knowledge about how to counsel new Christians who are tempted to make idols for a living."

These discussions and studies are preparing Nepali church leaders for the often difficult task of guiding a wider church community into a deeper relationship with Christ.

Shyam, an EPTS graduate, intimately knows the value of these studies. As someone from the *dalit* (or untouchable) caste, Shyam grew up believing he was inferior to everyone. His posi-

tion in the caste system dictated his whole life—whom he could marry, his access to education, and his job opportunities.

But as he studied, he realized that he was made in God's image and is an equal member of the church. He discovered untapped leadership gifts and joy in serving the church.

"Shyam's testimony packs an amazing punch," says Bierma. "It is so counter-cultural in a place that allows caste to dictate so many facets of one's life and purpose. He is and will continue to become one of Nepal's great Christian church leaders and planters.

"By teaching church leaders to serve and disciple their own peoples, the church of Nepal, with the Spirit's leading, can grow in unity, maturity, and grace." ■



Praying over a Nepali believer.



Arbin Pokharel (in blue jacket) prays with others in his fellowship group.



Sarah Van Stempvoort is a writer with Christian Reformed World Missions.

#### CRWM Quick Facts

Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) is all about joining God's redemptive momentum. With more than 200 missionaries and many partners, our work extends to more than 40 countries. We focus our efforts around the world on

- multiplying believers and churches.
- equipping and connecting leaders.
- reaching teachers and students with a biblical worldview.
- strengthening churches and organizations.

CRWM has several projects integral to this work. To learn about or to donate to these projects, visit [crwm.org/projects](http://crwm.org/projects). ■

## Seeing Education with New Eyes

**S**pencer Okoroafor, a Nigerian Christian school principal, firmly believes that his school needs to be grounded in a biblical worldview.

He's attended several Christian education training workshops in recent years. Each time, he says, he's found ways to apply what he learned to his school.

"While he could just tell the teachers what to do and change in their teaching and classrooms, he doesn't see this as a reasonable solution," says Sheila Dykstra, Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) education consultant in West Africa, who led several of the trainings.

"He desires his teachers to actually change the way they think about Christian education as well. For him and others,



Spencer Okoroafor leads a talk.

this is a long process of walking alongside teachers, modeling new ways of doing things, providing trainings and dialogue opportunities for teachers to explore and be challenged."

Okoroafor once had the school's art teacher create a bulletin board that illustrated the story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. He then led each class to the bulletin board, explaining the biblical worldview and giving examples from their studies. When Dykstra visited



Sheila Dykstra with teachers in Christian education training.

the school's fifth-grade classroom a week later, she saw an interesting change.

The class was studying mosquitoes that day. Before, the teacher would write the lesson notes on the board and the students would copy and later memorize the material. This day, however, the teacher led a discussion. »

## Changing from the Inside Out

**U**nderneath bridges and in empty lots or abandoned buildings, men and women have made homes in some of the toughest neighborhoods in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

These *nidos* or "nests" have become small communities for people seeking shelter from the streets and a place to get high. But they're also places where a network of local Christian leaders are extending God's grace to people searching for hope and meaning.

Kenia and Guillermo are leaders in this network. Kenia is a Church of God pastor.

Guillermo trains teachers in the Dominican Republic Christian Reformed school system. Both received training from the Center for Transformation Mission, a Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) partner, to reach out to people often ignored by the church.

"The trainings have enabled Kenia and Guillermo to celebrate signs of God's grace in the midst of the chaos and suffering of the street," says Joel Huyser, a CRWM missionary in Central America.

"It has also connected them for encouragement, learning, and collaboration with others who are ministering with the 'least, last, and lost' of Santo Domingo."

Kenia and Guillermo have nurtured a vision in their

church for the "least, last, and lost." Church members are actively building relationships with people in the *nidos*, and the church has helped people enter treatment centers for their drug addictions.

Several people have become Christians through the church's witness. Now some of them are leaders in the church themselves and are reaching out to others caught in the *nidos*.

CRWM is involved in similar transformation networks in places such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Nigeria. Networks are also starting in Canada, Romania, and Mexico.

Each centers on two questions. First, what does the good news of Jesus look like here and now? Second, how is God calling us to work

together to make this a reality in our community, city, and nation?

Responses to the questions vary by location. For Kenia, Guillermo, and others in the Dominican Republic, it means ministering in *nidos*. For Christian government leaders in Abuja, Nigeria, the response includes leading with integrity.

But the goal of transformation networks remains the same: to identify, encourage, equip, and connect Christian leaders for Christ-centered renewal in lives, communities, and culture.

Through a growing chain of networks, people and communities are being changed through practical applications of the gospel in their contexts. ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort



They talked about mosquitoes being created by God and having a purpose. They talked about sin's effect on the world through itchy bites and malaria and what they as Christians could do to deal with some of those problems.

"This was a beautiful picture for me on so many levels," says Dykstra. The teacher and her students weren't seeing biblical worldview as an abstract concept, but as something intimately tied to their daily life.

Since few Christian universities in Africa have an education department, most African Christian school teachers have studied at secular universities and have never encountered a biblical perspective on education. They know their subjects, but they've never heard how their faith should impact their curricula or their care for students.

CRWM and its partners are helping to change this picture. Through workshops on Christian education, Christian school administrators and teachers across Africa are seeing Christian education with new eyes.

"As I sit in meetings with a group of teachers, I am in awe of their desire to see Christian education become a deeper reality in their schools, in their lives, and in Nigeria as a whole," Dykstra says.

"We exchange ideas and ask questions, and the group takes initiative for their learning and personal development. They are ready to be distinct and set apart. They are ready to be used in service for God's kingdom.

"May God speak to each of them about how he is calling them to be used as his ambassadors for God's kingdom throughout Nigeria and even West Africa." ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort



A Nigerian teacher interacts with students.

## Making the Gospel Known

**T**imothy" (not his real name) heard about Christ as a young boy in his West African village. He had attended a kids' club led by a Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) missionary and had personally experienced answers to believers' prayers for healing. Yet he wasn't convinced of the truth of the gospel until he began studying the Bible to prove that it was wrong.

Since becoming a Christian, Timothy has felt compelled to tell others about Christ. He texts his friends about Jesus and shares the gospel with travelers on public transit.

After feeling "out of sorts" for a few days last fall, he asked God what was wrong. He realized that he hadn't been sharing Christ enough that week because of his busy work and study schedule.

"Keeping the Good News to himself that week had made him 'soul sick,'" says the missionary who introduced Timothy to Christ. Recently Timothy, eager to learn and share more of God's Word, added Bible school night classes to his busy schedule.

"He is in a rush to be trained to serve the Lord knowing that daily, people are entering eternity without a Savior," said the missionary, whose name is withheld for security reasons.

As a Christ-follower, Timothy is a minority in his predominantly Muslim West African culture. His ethnic group has followed Islam for generations; their faith is part of who they are as a people.

People who become Christ-followers are seen as having betrayed their culture and family. Often believers are ignored, cast out, or ridiculed by family and friends for choosing to worship Christ. And yet, like crocuses coming up after a long winter, small clusters of believers are emerging in West Africa.

In Timothy's hometown, several young men have become believers through the witness of missionaries and local Christians. One works at World Missions' ministry center, reaching out in Jesus' name to people who come in to use the center's computers and Internet access.

Another was forced to leave the city because of his witness. A third believer, who fled to the city because of persecution in his own city, is being trained in Christian education. Now these believers are sharing with others who do not yet know Jesus as Messiah.

God is moving in West Africa. He is building up a generation of young believers who are committed to following him no matter the cost. In faith they eagerly share the gospel with others, asking God to speak through them as they share his Word. ■

—Sarah Van Stempvoort



Young men in a West African village read together.

## Once . . . and Four ‘Alls’

**A**s I write this, I am preparing to speak to a joint meeting of a Christian Reformed classis and a classis from the Reformed Church in America. I have been asked to speak on the urgency of the gospel message, the importance of getting the Word out.

I can think of no better text than Matthew 28:16-20, the Great Commission, where *once* Jesus spoke to his disciples and in four *alls* gave them—and us—a message: *all* authority is mine; *all* nations are your mission field; *all* I have commanded you is the message; and for *all* time is how long I will be with you. That is what the church must be doing. And that is what Christian Reformed World Missions is accomplishing, by God’s grace.

It is, however, not just a message for a world mission enterprise but for us all.

“Go.” To go into the world is our task. Its best rendering in English is not just *go* but *be going*. Always on the move. Always reaching. Always aware of our mission. Always, constantly, consistently, keep going. Where you live; where you learn; where you shop; where you play; where you are. Be on the go for Jesus.

“Make disciples.” In the familiar English translation, *disciple* is a noun. In the original it is a verb, and its meaning is to fashion folks into faithful followers. That can, of course, only happen when the folks trying to fashion others are themselves simultaneously being fashioned into faithful followers.

This is a call not just to increase membership in the church but to be present and at work in the church. Not just to have faith but to put faith into practice. That is who disciples are. That is what they do.

**Obedience is a tremendously significant aspect of our commission, but it’s also one of our greatest failures.**



“Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” I suggest that the little word *in* in that sentence is actually at least as important as the verb *baptize*.

It refers not so much to proper administration of the sacrament, or to proper methodology, or even to proper vocabulary. It evidences that the act by which folks are brought into the church brings them *in*—or better yet, *into*—a deepening relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is why during baptismal services we promise to instruct these little ones in the faith. Their baptism is *into* the possession of and *into* relationship with Jesus.

“Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Somewhere between A.D. 114 and 165, Justin Martyr described Christians as those who “are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly.”

Obedience is a tremendously significant aspect of our commission, but it’s also one of our greatest failures. Think about it. Do we everywhere,

always, in all circumstances, on all occasions, in every instance, under all conditions, obey what Jesus has commanded us?

Do we consciously seek to obey Jesus at the bank, in the office, in heavy traffic, when deliberately wronged by someone, in the voting booth, around the kitchen table, in the hospital, beside the hospital bed—obeying “everything I have commanded you”? This is not only our mission; it is our mandate.

It strikes me that World Missions goes where we cannot go to do what we must be doing where we are. It strikes me that this is not only the Great Commission, but a fearsome one.

Like the original disciples, we may hear this Commission with some doubt—read hesitation, a dramatic pause—even while we worship. How can folks like us do something like this?

The Commission and the gospel end with the answer: “And surely I am with you always, to the very close of the age.” ■



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

## HERE AND THERE

### Broadcasting Christ's Love in Kinshasa

**L**esha worked as a prostitute in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. Like many young women in her country, Lesha (not her real name) saw this as her only way out of poverty.

One day, she heard a woman named Charlotte Mpindi talking on the radio. Something about the message, offering hope as well as direction, kept bringing Lesha back to the weekly broadcast.

She eventually decided to visit the ministry center in Kinshasa that produced the program. There she met Mama Pasteur Francoise, the women's discipleship coordinator for the French-language outreach of Back to



Lesha and her mentor, Mama.

God Ministries International (BTGMI).

Mama Francoise took the time to speak with Lesha about her life, the Bible, and salvation in Jesus Christ. Listening, Lesha felt the Holy Spirit moving in her heart, and she ended up giving her life to the Lord.

Although everyone knew her as an outcast and a prostitute, Lesha was committed to leaving prostitution. With Mama Francoise's help, Lesha joined a church where members welcomed her, loved her with Christ's love, and helped her grow in faith. They stood by her

as she left her old life and underwent a transformation.

Lesha recently reported to the Kinshasa staff that a new life awaits her. She is engaged to be married to a Christian young man who loves her with a godly love.

With the assistance of the Christian Reformed Church's Ministry Shares program and through other avenues of support, BTGMI continues to help people like Lesha experience hope and a new life through the power of the gospel. ■

—Nancy VanderMeer,  
*Back to God Ministries International*

### Calvin College: At the Heart of Transformation

**I**n 1997, fewer than 10 percent of graduates from Manley Career Academy High School on Chicago's west side went on to college.

In 2011, 65 percent of the graduating class was college-bound. What accounts for such a dramatic increase?

The answer is not *what*, but *who*: a group called "Umoja."

Umoja, shorthand for the Umoja Student Development Corporation, is 27 adults who are invested in long-term, supportive relationships with students at Manley.

Since 1999, Ted Christians, a 1996 Calvin College alumnus, has been one of those adults; he is now Umoja's executive director.

"For us, relationships open the door to helping young people see and believe in the best version of themselves," Christians said.

"We ask, 'Who are you meant to be? What do you have to offer the world?'"

Then we say, 'Let's talk about what it takes to get you there.'"

Umoja walks with students along the road toward their dreams, offering academic skills workshops, job shadowing and internship opportunities, leadership and service training, scholarships and college visits.

Crucial to Umoja's success has been its partnership with Manley High.

"They understand that we have to address our young people's social [and] emotional needs," says Christians. "If we don't look at the whole person, it doesn't matter what anyone teaches. It's not going to take."

Umoja now partners with nine other deeply challenged Chicago schools, bringing long-term, supportive relationships to over 8,000 students. ■

—Calvin College, CRC Communications



Ted Christians (third from left) leads a meeting.

## Home Missions Helping Restore Lives

**G**len McCarthy is a hip-hop musician, community improvement manager for Chicago Public Schools, and pastoral associate who wants to challenge today's world, where technology rules and hopelessness reigns, with "God's way of doing things."

With the help of Ministry Shares, Christian Reformed Home Missions has been able to back such efforts as McCarthy's Restore All Ministries, a new church in the heart of Chicago's south side.

Along with his wife and partner in the ministry, Briana, and their two children, McCarthy plans to use a variety



**Pastor Glen McCarthy of Restore All Ministries**

of means to develop a church and church team whose ministry of restoration will proclaim the glory of God and impact the people of the community. "I believe Christ can restore this community with his Word," he says.

One of the ways in which he and his wife plan to work is through gospel, soul, and contemporary music. Both of them are musicians.

McCarthy, who goes by the name "The Ghostwriter" as a hip-hop performer, was born on the south side of Chicago and comes from a family of

pastors and church leaders. Growing up, he was greatly influenced by the urban youth culture around him. The raw, uncut self-expression of hip-hop was part of that.

"I want to minister through my music," he says. "God can use hip-hop to reach young people."

The new church is located for now in a space at its parent church—Loop Christian Ministries, the Chicago Christian Reformed congregation where McCarthy is a pastoral associate. He also works as the manager of family and community involvement for the Office of School Improvement at Chicago Public Schools.

Having received his M.Div. degree from North Park Theological Seminary, McCarthy

hopes to be ordained in the CRC this September.

His strategy, he says, is for the new church to develop an advisory council, take advantage of multimedia and social media tools for marketing, begin a weekly Bible study, and hold a monthly worship gathering.

He also wants to develop and train young urban leaders.

"God has called me to a ministry of restoration," he says. God has also given him the kinds of gifts and community improvement experience that can help him and others, he says, to "develop a dynamic church that is involved in the life of its neighborhood." ■

—Ben Van Houten, *Christian Reformed Home Missions*

## Student Recalls Tour of Bible Lands

**W**hen I first got the email, I dismissed the idea altogether. There was no way I could leave my wife and three children for two weeks for a biblical study tour.

Then a classmate at Calvin Theological Seminary convinced me to attend the informational meeting. The all-inclusive trip to Turkey and Greece was explained in great detail—trips to Ephesus, Smyrna, Laodicea, Athens, and Corinth. As I listened with mounting interest, I went from, "I can't go" to "I can't not go" in pretty short

order. I'm fortunate that my wife also viewed this as a valuable opportunity.

Thirteen of my fellow Calvin Theological Seminary students and I, along with seven others, departed from Grand Rapids in early January for two weeks of discovery and learning in Turkey and Greece.

Our trip was led by New Testament Professor Jeffrey Weima and divided into two parts. The first half was spent in Turkey visiting, among other things, the sites of the seven churches of Revelation.

Stops in places such as Pergamum, Laodicea, Sardis, and Ephesus opened up the cultural and historical contexts of churches John was inspired to address.



Seeing ancient roads, pagan temples, strategic locations, and massive sculptures provided new insights into life for first-century Christians that will inform our understanding of the biblical text and our ability to preach about it.

The second half of the tour focused on the missionary journeys of Paul and his com-

panions in Greece in such places as Philippi, Athens, Thessaloniki, and Corinth. History takes on a whole new dimension when you can look at the Parthenon in Athens and realize that it has been there for more than 2,000 years. ■

—Michael Ten Haken, *second-year M.Div. student*

You add.  
God multiplies.



## Safe Church Offers 'Driver's Training' Manual for Teen Dating

The Safe Church Ministry of the Christian Reformed Church has produced an accessible, story-driven resource to help parents—and especially teens—better grasp and live out biblical teachings on sexual temptation, gender roles, intimacy, and the overall topic of human sexuality.

The booklet highlights the reality that God created humans to be in relationships and to be members of a community. In addition, God created people “with a longing for intimacy, with him and with others,” according to coauthors William Veenstra, a Canadian pastor, and Gayla Postma, news editor for *The Banner*.

Titled *Driver's Training for Dating: Sex and Intimacy in Healthy Relationships*, the resource aims to educate young people on how to travel the tricky road of sexuality in today's sex-saturated society.

“You need to know the rules of the road, and you need a GPS system to guide you where you are headed. You need to know where the potholes are and how to drive defensively, even if the cultural traffic lights are askew and the other drivers aren't paying attention,” the authors write.

The authors intentionally chose a narrative style that uses stories as a way to talk about this so-human and so-complicated topic.

Teaching the path to healthy sexuality is one of several tasks that Safe Church Ministry undertakes. Supported with assistance from CRC members through the Ministry Shares program, the ministry grew out of the need several years ago to address the problem of sex abuse by church leaders in the denomination.

The online resource is available by visiting [crcna.org/pages/safechurch](http://crcna.org/pages/safechurch).

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

## CRWRC Helps Libyan Refugees Help Themselves

The civil war that broke out in Libya last year had far-reaching consequences, not just for the Libyan people but for many families who had come to rely on relatives employed in that North African country.

“Thousands of people from around West Africa had been living for years in Libya, working and sending remittances back to support their families,” says a Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) West Africa staff member.

CRWRC serves in communities across West Africa, helping people find lasting solutions for overcoming poverty, disaster, and injustice. In many of these communities, families already struggling to sustain themselves couldn't offer jobs or much else to help family members returning from Libya.

CRWRC was able to partner with a church organization last October in a four-month project that provided jobs to Libyan refugees in exchange for rice, beans, and oil to feed their families. The project helped some 650 vulnerable families—approximately 3,900 people in all.

The work included tree planting, street cleaning, building terraces in fields to prevent soil erosion, and training people in new skills so they could continue working, such as bricklaying, gardening, and small business management.

The Bible recounts how, faced with political genocide, Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus fled as refugees to Africa, where they lived until it was safe to return home. This story, says the CRWRC staff member, takes on a new meaning after spending time with those who fled for their lives from Libya, often with little more than the clothes on their backs.

“Even though times and circumstances are different, Jesus understands their plight,” says the staff member. “Even more so, we are



Libyan refugee works in the field.

reminded that whatever we do for those in need, we are doing it for Christ.”

Before, people in this area didn't talk about Jesus and had no interest or were afraid to attend church. But some program participants who experienced the love and compassion shown by those who came to their aid, now proudly attend a church. “We pray that these positive changes, both physical and spiritual, continue,” says the CRWRC staff member. ■

—Kristen Vanderberg, CRWRC

# Life on Noah's Ark

Did you ever wonder what it would be like to be on Noah's ark? You can read about it in Genesis 6-9. Picture books sometimes make the ark look

like fun, but it wasn't fun. Living on the ark took a lot of work and a lot of patience. While we don't know exactly what Noah and his family

thought and did, here's what it might have been like if Noah had kept a diary.

## Day 1—Rain

We boarded the ark a week ago, as God told us to, and today the rain began. It's as if the heavens have opened up! The sky is dark, and it's dark inside the ark. The animals are terrified of the thunder and lightning. We trust God to keep us safe, but we've never seen a storm like this before.

## Day 3

Even though we knew a flood was coming, actually seeing it happen is scary. Water is churning and swirling around the ark, washing away everything—and everyone—in its path. Sometimes we just can't look.

## Day 7

The rain is still beating down on us. Since it started, it hasn't stopped, even for a

minute. The water has risen so high that the ark is floating. The waves are huge! The animals are seasick, and we humans are too. Now we know what "sick as a dog" means. I hope we get used to the rocking of the ark soon. We all feel awful.

## Day 10

It's still raining. But we're all feeling better, which is a good thing because it's a LOT of work to care for all these animals. Here are some of the chores we do every day:

- Feed and water the animals in the morning and the evening. This takes hours, even when we all work together.
- Tend to sick animals. Today the male donkey is very ill. He won't eat, and he can barely raise his head off the straw. If he dies, there won't be any more donkeys on the earth, so we're doing our best to doctor him.

- Clean out stalls and throw manure overboard. This takes hours too.
- Let some of the animals out of their stalls for exercise on the deck. Playing with the animals makes us laugh, and that's good for our spirits.
- Check the food supplies to make sure we aren't eating too much, since we don't know how long we'll be on the ark.
- Fall into bed, exhausted, and sleep until the rooster crows. Then get up and do it all over again.

## Day 22

Drat those mice! They gnawed their way out of their cage and got into our grain supply. They're eating themselves sick, and we need that grain for the other animals—not to mention for making our

## Noah's Ark Today

A Dutch man named Johan Huiber has spent the past four years building a full-size model of Noah's ark. He's using the measurements in the Bible. This ark is almost 500 feet long (150 meters) and 80 feet wide (25 meters). That's as long as two and a half hockey rinks, or almost one and a half football fields! It's in a harbor near the city of Dordrecht, The Netherlands, and it's almost finished. When it's done, it will be able to sail all over the world. To see a news story about the ark, visit [tinyurl.com/dutchark](http://tinyurl.com/dutchark).



Sandy Swartzentruber works for Faith Alive and is a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. She's pretty sure she would not be a good Noah.

own bread. My son Shem is rigging up a trap to catch the mice without hurting them—he's handy that way. Outside, it's still raining. We can't even see the mountaintops now. It's a scary feeling to see only water everywhere we look.

### Day 25

Still raining. The chimpanzees had a fight, so we're practicing our bandaging skills on them.

### Day 27

Rain, rain, rain. Seems like our clothes never completely dry out, and our hands are all prune. It sure would be great to be back home with a good bed, no rain, and the animals to complain, because we know God chose us for this important task. But it would be nice to be dry.

### Day 28

More rain. Mice out again. Am tempted to build them a tiny ark of their own and send them off. Why on earth did God make mice in the first place?

### Day 30

It's been one month since the rain began, and it's still raining. Today we were talking about all the things we miss. We miss walking on grass, feeling the sunshine on our faces, and eating fresh fruits and vegetables. Most of all, we miss our family and friends. We wish they had believed God when he said the flood was coming. We wish we could have convinced them to come on board the ark with us. Sometimes we wonder if we'll ever get out of here, but we know God is with us, and we're thankful that we have each other.

### Day 36

Still raining. But good news: the female elephant was pregnant

when she came on board, and last night her calf was born! I woke everyone up in the middle of the night to watch. It's like a miracle. It's always good to see new life on this boat. (The mice had babies today too—not good.)

### Day 40

Yet more rain. Mice finally behaving, but we'll see how long that lasts.

### Day 41

We can hardly believe it—we woke up this morning to find that **THE RAIN HAS STOPPED!** After raining for 40 days and 40 nights, the rain is done! It's so much quieter without the constant pounding of rain, and the animals are calmer too. But now we have to do a very hard thing. We have to wait. We'll wait for the water to go down and for God to show us what to do next. That might take a long time, but we'll try to be patient. We know God has a plan!



## Apple's Core

**IN 1984 I EXPERIENCED** my first “Apple moment.” As I opened the boxes holding my brand-new Apple Macintosh computer, I was wowed. I had never seen such fancy packaging for an electronic device before. And the actual computer was so unlike the other clunky machines of the day. The edges were rounded, the cables fit in so easily, and the screen seemed inviting. Who could have designed a product so slick?

The Mac reflected the fruit of Steve Jobs’s gift for brilliant product design and marketing. Over the years, I experienced similar Apple moments as I got to flip the click wheel or brush a finger across the screen of the newest i-device. The design was always so sleek, practical, and playful.

As an Apple fan, I had read many articles about Steve Jobs and knew about his difficult character. I had no idea, however, how extremely difficult a person he was until I started reading Walter Isaacson’s best-selling biography *Steve Jobs* (Simon & Schuster).

Surprisingly, for someone who may have been the ultimate “control freak,” Jobs gave Isaacson complete freedom to tell all—and the resulting portrait isn’t always pretty.

Jobs was arrogant, self-involved, and cruel to his family, friends, and coworkers. At Apple he regularly flew into fits of rage and criticized his employees mercilessly. Jobs would attribute an employee’s idea to himself or show complete disregard for rules and reality, creating impossible deadlines for Apple engineers and designers. Isaacson summarizes: “At times, great creativity occurred. But people around him could pay a price.”

The resulting portrait isn’t always pretty.



ISTOCKPHOTO

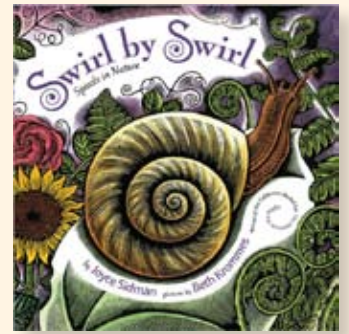
Still, for Isaacson, Jobs was a genius who “could absorb information, sniff the winds, and sense what lay ahead” and “thus became the greatest business executive of our era.”

As I finished the biography, I couldn’t help but regret that such greatness came at such a cost to those around Jobs and to Jobs himself. Why is it that creativity often rhymes with tyranny? Could a kind and considerate businessperson with equal creative gifts have done as much as Jobs? Our society and business culture doesn’t seem to have a place for a selfless genius.

With those questions on my mind, I went to bed, turned on my iPod to listen to a podcast, and considered a bittersweet Apple moment. ■



**Otto Selles** teaches French at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. He is a member of Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church.



## Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature

by **Joyce Sidman**  
reviewed by **Kristy Quist**

A spiral is an elegant form, whether it turns up in a staircase, a seashell, or your own DNA. In her latest picture book, Joyce Sidman takes readers on a hunt for spirals in their natural state; children (and adults too) will be amazed to see how many she turns up. Caldecott winner Beth Krommes provides illustrations that are as elegant as the spiral itself. The simple text, combined with more in-depth notes at the end, offers an opportunity to marvel at the detailed design apparent in God’s glorious creation. Ages 4 and up. (Houghton Mifflin)

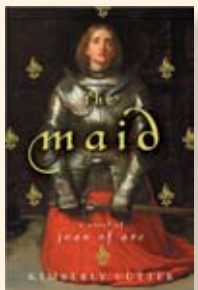




## The Maid: a Novel of Joan of Arc

by Kimberly Cutter

reviewed by Sonya  
VanderVeen Feddema



During the Hundred Years' War, Jehanne, later known as Joan of Arc, heard saints' voices directing her to save France from British domination. Kim-

berly Cutter's novel presents Jehanne as a simple peasant with no power or influence. Yet eventually she led a vast army to accomplish her goals. When opposition from unexpected sources confronted her, Jehanne struggled to discern and implement God's will and to overcome her fear that he had abandoned her. The book contains vulgarity and profanity, which is sharply contrasted with Jehanne's crusade against ungodly behavior. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)



## Old Ideas

by Leonard Cohen

reviewed by Robert N. Hosack

At age 77, Leonard Cohen has just released a new album. For his legion of fans, it echoes familiar themes. New listeners may find the intensity of the world-weary *Old Ideas* more than they can bear. His gravelly, ravaged voice is reminiscent of Tom Waits or Johnny Cash. Like an Old Testament prophet descending the mountaintop, Cohen wedges proclamations between apocalypse and atonement. Raised as a Jew, now a Buddhist monk, he asks the big human questions. Claiming that he is "never to lament casually," this recording can be received as a 21st-century version of psalms of lament. It is an album of "old ideas," modern spirituals of questions and yearnings. (Columbia)



## The Call of Story: An American Renaissance

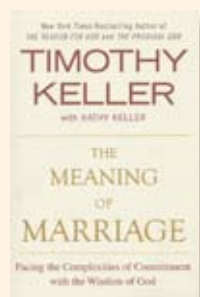
reviewed by Ron Vandenburg

Do you love a good story told well? In this one-hour documentary produced by Brigham Young University, six professional storytellers talk about being family. Some tell how their parents shaped them into who they are today. Others tell stories of raising children and how hard it is to let go. Still another shares her love for her grandmother, who taught her how to appreciate her native culture. All six discuss how every person's life is a story, why we can't lose the art of storytelling, and what makes everyone sit up and listen. ([www.callofstory.org](http://www.callofstory.org))

## The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God

by Timothy Keller and Kathy Keller

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



Both single and married people are addressed in this insightful exploration of marriage and God's purpose for it, namely, that "marriage was created to be a reflection on the human level of our ultimate love relationship and union with the Lord." Biblical insights, 37 years of marriage, and numerous counseling sessions with both married and single people inform the authors' critique of the cultural problems associated with marriage and the solutions for today's couples and singles. (Dutton)

## THE LOWDOWN: ON PRAYER

The United States observes a National Day of Prayer on May 3, 2012—but every day is a day of prayer. Here are some resources that might help your prayer life:

**Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home** by Richard Foster offers insight and suggestions for deepening the practice of prayer. (HarperOne)

**Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?** by Philip Yancey explores the meaning and purpose of prayer. (Zondervan)

**A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World** by Paul E. Miller. Perhaps the title says it all. (NavPress)

**So You've Been Asked to Lead in Prayer** by Timothy J. Mulder gives tips for praying aloud, including during worship services. (Faith Alive)

**The Lord's Prayer** by Tim Ladwig is a gorgeously illustrated picture book that sets contemporary images alongside the Lord's Prayer, putting the prayer squarely into a young girl's everyday life. (Eerdmans)



## Confessions: Past, Present, and Future

### WHEN I GAVE A PUBLIC LECTURE AT CALVIN COLLEGE

in November 2011 to mark the 450th anniversary of the Belgic Confession, I expected a fairly small crowd: a few colleagues from the college and Calvin Theological Seminary, a sprinkling of people interested in Reformation-related topics, and friends who faithfully attend every event we organize. Yet the room was packed.

What drew so many people that afternoon was the hope that we would discuss the Belhar Confession. Right now in congregations and classes across the CRCNA, study groups and individuals are reflecting on whether the Belhar should be adopted as a confession in this denomination. Others had come because they wanted to reflect together about the role confessions have played and still play in the Reformed faith and the Christian Reformed Church.

What are confessions for, exactly? Since we have the Bible, why do we need confessions? Why did sixteenth-century Reformed Christians spend so much time and energy creating these confessions? Are these old documents still relevant, and do they still speak to us today?

### An Overview

A quick overview of the history of confessions can help address some of these questions. The practice of producing confessions of faith stretches back to the early church: the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed, for example. These statements of faith were intended to convey, reasonably concisely, what the church believed and, either implicitly or explicitly, what it rejected.

Creedal statements were never issued in a vacuum, but instead emerged as a result of controversies or disagreements in the church—over the two natures of Christ, for instance, or the doctrine of the Trinity. Creeds and confessions were ways for the community of faith to hammer out what it believed. In the process, these texts clarified which beliefs and doctrines the church upheld and which it did not.

In the Reformation era, the practice of issuing confessions gathered steam as each branch of the Christian church sought to articulate its own understanding of its beliefs. The Swiss and south German Anabaptists held to the Schleitheim Articles in

It might be more helpful to consider the confessions as living documents rather than texts set in stone.

1527, the Lutherans adopted the Augsburg Confession in 1530, and the English church established the Thirty-Nine Articles in 1571. Not to be outdone, Reformed believers in the Swiss cities united around the First and Second Helvetic confessions in 1536 and 1566; the French Huguenots agreed on their own confession of faith in 1559; the Scots issued theirs a year later in 1560; and the Belgic Confession appeared a year after that, in 1561.

So even among Reformed believers, there was never just one confession held by everyone. Instead, each linguistic and cultural group developed its own, though there was a great deal of cross-fertilization. For example, Guy de Brès, the author of the Belgic Confession, made extensive use of the French confession of faith of 1559 in his own version.

None of these creeds and confessions, whether adopted in the early church or in the Reformation era, was ever intended to stand in the place of Scripture. In fact, in many instances, the confessions had biblical references in the margins so readers could check that the doctrines presented were grounded in God's Word.

### A Dual Audience

The purpose of the confessions was to articulate in a reasonably compact and accessible form what the community of faith believed, both to bring together members of that community around a set of shared principles and to provide accurate infor-

mation to those who held to different beliefs. In other words, these were documents with a dual audience.

Here's where the historical context is important. Guy de Brès wrote the Belgic Confession, for example, primarily for the Catholic authorities in the Netherlands. During a period when the Catholic powers in the Netherlands were actively searching out, arresting, and executing those whom they labeled as heretics, getting the true story across about what the Reformed church believed was a challenging task. In fact, someone (possibly de Brès himself or another Reformed leader) took advantage of the dark autumn nights to toss a wrapped-up copy of the Belgic Confession over the wall of the castle in Tournai in November 1561, to get it safely into the hands of the Catholic leadership without endangering him or herself. We know that the booklet was found and read the next day, because a letter survives from the castle garrison to the Regent Margaret of Parma about the incident.

The original text of the confession was also accompanied by two letters, one for King Philip II and the other for the magistrates of the Netherlands, explaining that Reformed believers were not seditious rebels and asking for toleration and protection. In the confession, de Brès took particular pains to distinguish the Reformed views from the beliefs of the Anabaptists, who were perceived by every other confessional group at the time as dangerous sectarians. Yet the Catholic authorities seemingly were not convinced: when de Brès and fellow pastor Pérégrin de la Grange were arrested following the outbreak of Reformed iconoclasm and a revolt against the troops of Margaret of Parma in the city of Valenciennes, the two men were swiftly tried and executed by public hanging in May 1567.

However, once the Belgic Confession began to be adopted as an official statement of faith of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands beginning in the mid-1560s, the internal audience for the document began to take precedence over the external one. By 1581, the Reformed synod of Middelburg made it mandatory for pastors, elders, deacons, schoolteachers, and professors of theology to subscribe to the Belgic Confession.

Thus, over the course of twenty years the primary aim of the document changed from one designed to tell Catholics

about Reformed beliefs to one meant to ensure a common confessional outlook among the Reformed leadership in the church.

### What about the Belhar?

So where does that leave us? It is clear that the original authors of these confessions were writing in response to very pressing contemporary circumstances, often ones of religious conflict. They were not consciously planning to write a perfectly-crafted document for the ages. In fact, many of these texts, such as the French confession of faith and the Belgic Confession, went through numerous revisions at the hands of successive synods within a few years of their publication. It might be more helpful to consider the confessions as living documents rather than texts set in stone.

As the CRCNA considers whether or not to adopt the Belhar, maybe one of the most helpful steps we could take would be to reacquaint ourselves with the text of the confession we already have and with its dramatic early history. Some of the discussion about adopting the Belhar might be more fruitful if we come to realize that, like the Belhar, the sixteenth-century confessions also were grounded in a particular time and place, and were written with particular burning contemporary issues and specific audiences in mind. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE

For the complete text of the Belhar Confession, visit [crcna.org/pages/belhar.cfm](http://crcna.org/pages/belhar.cfm).



**Karin Maag** is the director of the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies and professor of history at Calvin College. She is a member of Woodlawn CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

BY BRIAN J. WALSH

# URBAN MINISTRY

## LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO CALL HOME

**I DIDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.** What was a suburban 16-year-old doing in the downtown basement of a soup kitchen for Toronto's poorest residents? The kid wasn't looking for soup, and he certainly wasn't cruising the main drag with the intent of meeting, let alone serving, men and women who were homeless.

The date was 1969 and the place was a coffeehouse in the dingy underbelly of Yonge Street Mission. I was the kid. I found myself in this setting drinking bad

coffee and listening to some decent music. By the late 1960s, a mission that had been established to reach out to the poor and destitute of Toronto found itself in the middle of a youth culture gravitating toward the inner city, looking for sex, drugs, and rock and roll. So they decided to offer up coffee, Jesus, and folk music.

After a few months of hanging around this place I fell in love with all three, but not in that order. I am a follower of Jesus today with a love for good music and a distinct distaste for bad coffee (though I

love the good stuff) because of the way in which God worked through that urban ministry in the core of Toronto.

When we think of "urban ministry" we tend to think of food banks, shelters, after-school programs for kids who are disadvantaged, community development initiatives, and other ways to minister among our poorest neighbors in the city. All of these are essential. But Yonge Street Mission, way back in 1969, decided to throw a coffeehouse and music into the mix. This was not an initiative to reach out to the

# VIBRANT URBAN MINISTRY RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE IMAGINATION.

folks living on the street who were their primary clientele back then, but to reach another rising population in their neighborhood—wandering and lost suburban kids like me.

## From Soup Kitchen to Youth Ministry and More

At first the music was likely just an attraction—something to get kids into the space so that more decidedly evangelistic conversations could take place. But the music became more and more important. Sure, it was Peter, Paul, and Mary stuff with a Christian twist, but there was a quality and an integrity to what those Christian musicians were doing on that little stage. Eventually, as this ministry grew, other arts and other musical styles became important. Street festivals began to feature some straight-up rock and roll. The mission made art supplies available, and kids would start to paint, draw, and do sculpture.

And so a soup kitchen ministry evolved into a youth ministry (more and more characterized by street youth, not just kids hanging out downtown on the weekends), and then an arts ministry. Pretty soon they were training kids in the culinary arts and doing catering as well. Since then, this particular urban ministry has branched out into housing, social enterprises, a church, financial services, health clinics, computer training, and many other ways to seek the welfare of the city and the redemption of broken lives.

## Looking for Home

That's the way it goes in urban ministry: one thing leads to another. And it is the city itself that sets the agenda. Changing demographics, different social and economic needs, and cultural change call forth different dimensions of what it means to be the body of Christ in the city.

Without the body of Christ taking the city seriously, indeed, without the body

of Christ loving the city and committing itself to seeking the peace of the city, I don't know if I would be a follower of Jesus today. So my debt to urban ministry is, quite literally, eternal.

Truth be known, I wasn't downtown looking for sex, drugs, or even rock and roll. Something else was going on. For me, the boring sameness of high school in the suburbs met the vibrant cultural scene of the inner city and didn't stand a chance. The city sparked my imagination. There was a vitality downtown—not unrelated to a burgeoning countercultural movement—that seemed to catch the spirit of the times.

But there was something even deeper behind this cultural attraction. When it comes right down to it, I was looking for meaning, for a sense of identity and purpose. At the deepest level I was looking for a place to call home. And I found my way home in the basement of a soup kitchen in the inner city of Toronto. You see, Jesus was serving the coffee, playing the guitar, and hanging out with the kids who came in. And the more I looked, the more it became clear to me that Jesus was also to be found in the men who were homeless and the struggling moms on welfare who came to this place every day of the week. In their company, I came home to Jesus. And my discipleship over these years has never strayed too far from urban ministry.

## Jesus Is There

Almost all the people I know who are deeply involved in urban ministry tell me that they came into this ministry to bring Jesus to the city—but once they deeply entered into the city, they found out that he was already there. Jesus was already there in the alleyways with crack addicts; he was under the bridges with people who are homeless; he was walking the streets with workers in the sex trade. He was already there.

But he's also there in other ways. The architect who designs houses for folks who are homeless and people with severe disabilities looks like Jesus. The playwright who produces a powerful story of pain and redemption—there's Jesus again. The local gardener developing community gardens in the city—well, Jesus has been confused with a gardener before. The lawyer defending the rights of refugees and illegal migrants—wasn't Jesus a refugee once, the child of migrant laborers? The politician who seeks to transform the city into a place of hospitality and justice— isn't that a vision not far from the kingdom of God? The community activists or church members who step into the breach when tensions run high and things get violent— kind of looks like bearing a cross, doesn't it? The local church as a place of refuge, celebration, and spiritual identity—there's the body of Christ.

Wherever Jesus is in the city, there is urban ministry. And it seems to me that such ministry has at least five areas of focus. Let's call them ministries of justice, imagination, restoration, reconciliation, and renewal.

**Ministries of justice.** Urban ministry has no grounding unless it is a ministry of justice that reaches out to the poorest of the poor. That's where it all begins. That dingy little coffeehouse back in 1969 had its deepest integrity because that Christian community first served the needs of men and women who were homeless. Those folks had priority, and I understood that if I were to throw in my lot with Jesus, then I was signing on to a ministry to neighbors who I had quite decidedly ignored so far in my life. If there is no such street-level dimension to urban ministry, then it is likely a ministry to the urban rich that unwittingly legitimizes gentrification and the continued marginalization of people who are poor.

Any ministry rooted in the Nazareth Manifesto of Jesus in Luke 4 is a ministry »

of good news for people in poverty. Such good news in urban ministry includes political advocacy, food ministry, community development, housing, shelters, social and economic enterprises, harm reduction, aboriginal ministry, addiction rehabilitation, and much more. Blessed are the poor, Jesus said, for theirs is the kingdom of God. Urban ministry is a ministry of justice.

**Ministries of imagination.** That coffeehouse had music. And before long, the young people who frequented the place were creating art together. Not surprising, really. Many of us were looking for cultural vitality, something to spark our starved imaginations.

Culture is rooted in the imagination, and cities are at the heart of the shaping of cultural imagination—whether in

initiatives. Urban ministry is a ministry of imagination.

**Ministries of restoration.** There isn't much point to urban ministry if the city is ecologically unsustainable. Insofar as the restoration of all of creation is at the heart of the biblical story, so also does "seeking the peace of the city" require a ministry of ecological restoration. Urban ministry is a ministry of urban homemaking, and therefore it strives to make the city a place of sustainable habitation for both rich and poor. Such a ministry includes encouraging green churches, local urban gardening (including on church property), and advocacy for political policy and economic practices that foster sustainable and accessible transportation systems, waste manage-

to engage in ministries of reconciliation that bring communities together and seek the peace of the city. Through processes of restorative justice, advocacy, and community development, urban ministry is a ministry of reconciliation.

**Ministries of renewal.** The body of Christ in the city—that's what urban ministry is all about. But if the church is absent, disconnected, or preoccupied with its own survival rather than its call to mission, then there can be no vibrant urban ministry. An identity as kingdom communities is foundational to revitalizing the church in the city through church planting, church "reboots," intentional communities, and parish renewal ministries.

Ministries of justice, imagination, restoration, and reconciliation flow out of the life of renewed parishes in particular neighborhoods and are also instrumental in the renewal of those very parishes. It goes both ways. We need renewed urban churches to spawn and sustain a comprehensive vision of urban ministry, but struggling churches that enter into ministries of justice, imagination, restoration and reconciliation will experience new vibrancy. You don't just sit and wait for the Spirit to renew your church. Rather, you start living as a Spirit-led church in the midst of the city, and in so doing, you find that the Spirit is renewing your church.

I have a plaque on my wall. It reads: "Yonge Street Mission celebrates with Brian Walsh Forty Years of Christian Discipleship." It is a gift that I prize very highly. You see, I came to the city looking for home. And I found it.

God loves the city. The Word took on flesh and moved into the neighborhood. And when Jesus is in the neighborhood, people get to come home. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



**Brian J. Walsh** is a Christian Reformed campus minister at the University of Toronto. His most recent books are *Beyond Homelessness:*

*Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement* [with Steven Bouma-Prediger] (Eerdmans, 2008) and *Kicking at the Darkness: Bruce Cockburn and the Christian Imagination* (Brazos, 2011).

## I FOUND MY WAY HOME IN THE BASEMENT OF A SOUP KITCHEN IN THE INNER CITY OF TORONTO.

fashion, architecture, advertising, culinary arts, fine arts, film, drama, dance, or music. Vibrant urban ministry recognizes the importance of the imagination and is committed to both engaging in imaginative expressions of the city and shaping a Christian imagination.

Maybe that is why ministries of justice always seem to end up with an arts dimension. One urban ministry spawns a theatre group, another runs an arts ministry among street-involved youth, another invites men and women who are homeless to paint or to write out of their experiences of pain and their deepest longings and hopes.

The church also wants to enjoy, celebrate, and engage the diverse expressions of imagination at the heart of urban life through film festivals, concerts, drama, dance, and the fine arts. And so urban ministry finds itself producing public forums on faith and film during the local film festival, sponsoring various kinds of arts events, and encouraging local arts

ment, green spaces, and much more. Urban ministry finds itself an ally with local initiatives for building sustainable cities. It is a ministry of restoration.

**Ministries of reconciliation.** In biblical faith, the city is to be a place of safety and refuge, but invariably it ends up being a site of threat and exclusion. In contrast to the vision of the New Jerusalem, where all are welcome and the gates are always open, there is Babylon, where there is nothing but violence and oppression. The prophets name the violence of economic structures that leave most people living in poverty while the few enjoy the opulence of large homes and rich foods. And violence begets violence.

From the "not in my backyard" discrimination against those who are poor and vulnerable, to assaults on the kinds of social, ecological, transportation, and educational programs that make our cities vibrant, to the violence of our city streets, the city cries out for the church

# The God of Material Things

*“We put on Jesus with the flesh and bones of our race, taking him in with our mother’s milk.”*

—Father Daniel Berrigan

Bold Daniel makes me wonder whether his metaphor of mother’s milk is more than metaphor, whether by some covenantal mystery an unseen substance in my mother’s milk sent transubstantiated faith in Jesus coursing through my veins.

This I know: as soon as I could see, I saw God everywhere. He was always hanging around the house.

Never a meal but there sat God, smiling and blessing and keeping his elbows off the table. Sunday morning he was in his holy temple and all the earth (except the crying children) kept silence before him.

On endless Sunday afternoons he sat with my dad and grandpa, smoking those terrible cigars that grandpa smoked

and spelling out the mysteries of faith.

In my room at night as I read the fat children’s Bible full of pictures and stories of David, Daniel, and those other giants,

there was God holding the flashlight and reading with me under the covers,

though sometimes as I got older the batteries failed and darkness filled the room.

Years have passed, graduations, marriage, children and still, more often than not I see him hanging around.

Often he shows up after Sunday dinner, joining in with his clear tenor as we sing the songs from the old blue hymnal. »



Or I'll be teaching when suddenly something a student says  
or even—I know this sounds wrong—something that comes  
out of my own mouth sounds to me like  
God talking.

And some of the people I run into,  
these college kids with their pierced eyebrows  
and tattooed shoulders  
who want to tutor at the grade school,  
that elderly couple I saw walking down Main Street  
arm in arm and laughing to high heaven,  
the preacher who gives a sermon that's a poem,  
and my wife, just her smile for instance—  
it's got to be God zipping through all these people,  
God in their blood and bones and brains,  
dealing out hope and peace and kindness and truth and  
all those other spiritual gifts  
that aren't really any  
thing until they're some  
thing, some material  
thing, some done  
thing, some seen or heard or smelled or touched or tasted  
thing.

It's true I don't see him everywhere these days  
but still, well, like this morning,  
I was weeding the perennials,  
dew-wet in morning glory light,  
the wren singing his perky little heart out,  
and suddenly, there was God again,  
like a rabbit popping out of the strawberry patch,  
God, just for a moment,  
taking my breath away.

From David Schelhaas, *The God of Material Things* (Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt College Press, 2007): 30-31. Reprinted by permission. The book is available from Dordt College Press. [dordt.edu/publications/dordt\\_press/](http://dordt.edu/publications/dordt_press/)



**David Schelhaas taught English at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, for over 20 years.**



# FAQs

## Church

**Q** Why doesn't the CRC preach the baptism with the Holy Spirit? What is our denomination's stance on speaking in tongues?

**A** Our denomination teaches that the Spirit is God's gift, given when a person becomes part of the believing community.

This means there are not two classes of Christians—those who have received only water baptism and those who have also been baptized with the Spirit. It does not mean we can be complacent about the manifestation of the Spirit's presence in our lives. Paul calls us to "keep in step with the Spirit" and to "be filled with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25; Eph. 5:18) and warns us not to "grieve the Holy Spirit" or "quench the Spirit" (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19).

The gifts of the Spirit are also present today. Unfortunately, some have elevated the gift of tongues and give the impression that Christians are not really filled with the Spirit unless they speak in tongues. Paul, on the other hand, indicated that not all Christians will possess this gift (1 Cor. 14:39).

*Note:* You'll find a synodical study report that deals with these matters ("Neo-Pentecostalism") at [crcna.org](http://crcna.org) in the resources section under "Reports."

—George Vander Weit

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

## Relationships

**Q** Several years ago a man from our church left his wife and married a woman from our church who had also left her marriage. They left the community but now have moved back into the area. How do we relate to this couple? Does befriending them imply approval of past actions?

**A** Broken marriages are an all-too-common, painful reality—also within the church. Couples today are less willing to continue in

**What every marriage breakup has in common is that each arises from situations that are complex.**

marriages that are so dysfunctional or so sterile that breaking their vows seems preferable to keeping them.

What every marriage breakup has in common is that each arises from situations that are complex. In many cases it takes an exceptional faith and trust in God to continue to hope and struggle for healing in a marriage that, humanly speaking, is dead and should be buried.

When a divorce is past and a new marriage has been created, a new reality exists. With repentance and forgiveness, the old has passed away and the remarried couple are invited by God to be faithful in creating a new marriage that is healthy. This is not an easy task. Statistics show that second marriages break up even faster than first marriages.

So I encourage you to accept and befriend the couple you speak of without feeling the need to judge their past. You can certainly leave it to them and to our gracious God to sort out their past. Feel free to develop a relationship based on the present reality of their marriage.

—Judy Cook

*Judy Cook is a family therapist and a member of Meadowlands Fellowship CRC in Ancaster, Ontario.*

## Morality

**Q** Recently I was attempting to park my car in a crowded lot. The only two open spaces happened to be vertically adjacent to one another. A car from the next aisle pulled into one of the spots, and I prepared to pull into the other. To my chagrin, the other car rolled forward into the spot I was planning to occupy. When the driver saw me he smiled and shrugged. He could have easily backed up but clearly preferred not to. By the time I circled around to the next aisle, the other

**spot was filled. I think moralists need a category called "morally tacky" to describe behavior of this type. It is more than simple rudeness, because not all rudeness involves moral wrongdoing, but less than morally abominable. Do you buy this idea?**

**A** In the 1960s a philosophy professor named Roderick Chisholm articulated this idea by proposing a category of acts called "offences." An act of offence is morally blameworthy but falls short of violating any moral obligation. His example is lingering after finishing one's meal in a restaurant when others are known to be waiting for tables. You are under no moral obligation to vacate the table upon the completion of a meal. Yet not doing so when you can see a line of people waiting is morally blameworthy, at least to a minimal degree.

Some moralists reject this category on the grounds that a morally blameworthy act always violates duty. But this strikes me as an ethic that is far too demanding. Saying that the violation of duty is a one-size-fits-all category that includes the morally abominable and the minimally blameworthy seems mistaken.

On the other hand, Christians ought to recognize that all of the actions under discussion qualify as sins. An act that is only minimally blameworthy is still sinful behavior. The same applies to omissions. An omission that is minimally blameworthy qualifies as a sin of omission.

—Gregory Mellema

*Gregory Mellema is a professor of philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. ■*

# ADS

**Deadlines:** June issue is 5/7/2012.; July issue is 6/4/2012. Details online.

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

**To Advertise:** Place your classified ad online at [www.thebanner.org/classifieds](http://www.thebanner.org/classifieds) or email it to [classifieds@thebanner.org](mailto:classifieds@thebanner.org) or fax it to 616-224-0834. Questions? Call 616-224-0725.

## Denominational and Classical

### Call To Synod 2012

The council of Ancaster CRC, Ancaster, Ontario, calls all delegates to Synod 2012, elected by their respective classes, to meet in the Auditorium of Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, on Friday, June 8, at 8:30 a.m. All area CRC members are invited to join the delegates in worship at the synodical Service of Prayer and Praise on Sunday afternoon, June 10, 2012, at 3:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario. Rev. William C. Veenstra will deliver the message. All CRC churches across the continent are requested to remember the deliberations of synod in their intercessory prayers on Sunday, June 3, and on Sunday, June 10.

Council of Ancaster CRC, Ancaster, Ontario

### Retirement

**WESTWOOD CRC** of Kalamazoo, MI, celebrates Pastor Bill Fernhout's retirement after 42 years of service in God's kingdom at a 10 AM worship service on June 3, 2012. Friends are invited.

### Financial Aid

**FINANCIAL AID** Classis Columbia offers financial assistance to those preparing for ordained ministry in the CRCNA. Please contact Rev. Rob Toornstra, chair of CMLT for more info: [artoornstra@comcast.net](mailto:artoornstra@comcast.net) or 503-363-5159

### General

**COMPLETION OF MINISTRY:** Having served God faithfully for 76 years as a congregation, the Parchment Christian Reformed Church has begun the process of completing its ministry. Following God's call to build His Kingdom, our congregation will be sent out on Pentecost to minister to new people in new places. We bless God's name for His

faithfulness to us in the past and look forward to seeing the ways He will be faithful to us as we continue to serve Him in the places He leads us to. Our pastor, Rev. Kevin Heeres, is available to consider a call.

## Congregational Announcements

### Church's 100th Anniversary

**FIRST CHRISTIAN REF CHURCH** of Hanford, CA will celebrate 100 years of God's faithfulness on June 3, 2012. We invite all friends, former staff, and past members to attend. Please contact the church office 559-582-4423 or [hanfordcrrc@comcast.net](mailto:hanfordcrrc@comcast.net)

### Church's 75th Anniversary

**MODESTO CRC** in Modesto, CA will celebrate 75 years of God's faithfulness in 2012. We invite all past and present members, pastors and friends to join us for a dinner/program on May 18, 6pm; and for worship on May 20, 9:30am & 6pm. Tickets required for the May 18 dinner. To RSVP or more info. contact 209-523-1906 or [crcmo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:crcmo@sbcglobal.net).

### Church's 50th Anniversary

**MOUNTAINVIEW CRC** Grimsby, Ontario will celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness on Sunday, June 17, 2012. We invite all friends and former members to join us for our celebration services on Sunday, June 17 at 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Please contact the church office at 905-945-0004 or [office@mountainviewcrrc.org](mailto:office@mountainviewcrrc.org) for more information. [www.Mountainviewcrrc.org](http://www.Mountainviewcrrc.org)

**SAUGATUCK CHRISTIAN REF CHURCH** Join us on June 23 Saturday. Praise Service/Dinner 4pm. June 24 Special Sunday Service 10am. 6591 Old Allegan Rd. Saugatuck. 269-857-8191

## Announcements

**PELLA CHRISTIAN GRADE SCHOOL:** With thanksgiving, Pella Christian Grade School, Pella, Iowa, plans to celebrate its 100th Anniversary on July 6-8, 2012. You are invited to join us as we celebrate God's faithfulness! Call 641-628-2414 or check [www.pellachristian.net](http://www.pellachristian.net) for details.

## Birthdays

### 90th Birthday



**NEAL BERGHOEF** of Holland, MI celebrated his 90th birthday on April 20. His wife of 65 years, Anna, his children Jack, Henry, Hil, Ena and Joy and their spouses, his 12 grandchildren, his 9 great grandchildren rejoice at his witness to God's grace and blessings in his life.

**MARIETTE (STOEL) BREUKER** will celebrate her 90th on May 21st. in Victoria BC. We thank God for her many years and service to others and her Lord. Love from your children, grand children and great-grand children 250-744-2971 Happy Birthday!

**TED MAAS** celebrated his 90th birthday April 24. Address: 310 N. Dakota Ave. Rm 111, Corsica, SD 57328. We praise God for His years of faithfulness. Love, Your Daughters

**REV. JAMES VAN WEELDEN** and Adriana & family plan to celebrate with much thanks, his 90th birthday May 17. (30-10 Wentworth Dr., Grimsby, ON CA L3M 5G3)

### 85th Birthday

**CORNELIA ARKEMA** is celebrating her 85th birthday on May 3, 2012. Address: 402 4th St. Sully, Iowa 50251. Husband, Bernard and children, Carroll & Mairead, Dean & Gayle and Ken & Pat thank God for the blessing she is in our lives.

### 80th Birthday

**LYLA VANDENBERG** of Holland MI. will celebrate her 80th birthday this June. Friends and family are invited to an Open House on June 9 from 1-3 at Holland Heights CRC. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren give Glory and Thanks to God for her steadfast model of love for God.

## Anniversaries

### 65th Anniversary

**TERPSTRA**, Henry and Marie (Havenga), May 2; 1043 State St, Apt 1A, Fremont, MI 49412. Their children: Wayne and Miriam; Chuck and Sandy; Bruce and DeDe; Ann and Steve Yonker; Al and Jackie; along with their 15 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren, give thanks to God for His continued blessings and faithfulness. We love you, Mom and Dad!

**VANDER TUIG** Sylvester and Arlene 16346 Avenue 192 Tulare, CA 93274. 65 years of marriage, April 23, 1947. Children: (Richard) and Kathy, Craig and (Joanne) Travis, (Jay) and Beverly, Earl and (Beverly) Lanting. 14 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren. We praise and thank God for His love and faithfulness



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## 60th Anniversary

**LAMBERS** John & Jean, of 1960 Burton SE Grand Rapids, MI 49506, celebrated 60 years of marriage on April, 9. They with their children praise God for His love and faithfulness.

**WERKMAN**, Herman B. and Evelyn (Visser), May 6, 1952. #1426 11445-135 St., Edmonton, T5M 3M6. Children: Marlys & Larry Oosting, Laura (in glory), Brenda & Bill King, Henry Werkman, Melvin & Wendy Werkman, Glenn & Kate Werkman, Heather & Glenn Stiller; 12 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren. Matt. 19:6

**WILTJER** Robert J. & Theresa (Wiegiers) May 7, 9828 S. Major Ave. Oak Lawn IL 60453. Children and grandchildren Bev and Neal Stob (Nicole (Dan) Collins) Jim and Renee (Jeremiah, Heather, Ashley). Open House Sat. May 5, 1:30-4:00 PM, Calvin CRC, 101st & Central, Oak Lawn IL. Thanks be to God for His blessings through the years.

**ZWART** Peter and Anna, 15-10 Wentworth Dr. Grimsby, ON Canada L3M5G3, will celebrate on May 9. Thanking the Lord with 5 children, 14 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren.

## 50th Anniversary

**PALSROK** Dick & Lois (Hazekamp) Happy 50th Anniversary on May 12! Love, Tenda, Rod, Barb, Laura, Elise & Matthew

**VAN HEUVELEN** Clare and Dee (Van Duyn), April 24, 2012. Family: Cindee, Dani, Taylor Nowicki; Cari, Kevin, Kati, Codi, Collin Wiersema; Curt, Chris, Jessica, Lindsey Van Heuvelen. God is so good.

## Obituaries

**BLOEM** Nancy (DeBruyn), third child of Rev. & Mrs. Jacob C. & Alice DeBruyn, died in Grand Rapids on March 8, 2012 at the age of 97. She is survived by five children; twelve grandchildren; thirteen great-grandchildren. Her husband Gerald Bloem preceded her in death in 1998. Nancy was a life-long member of the Christian Reformed Church, baptized in Hull (ND), attended Ogilvie (MN) CRC, attended Sioux Falls (SD) First CRC, and, for the last 69 years, was a devoted member of Neland Avenue in Grand Rapids. She was a proud graduate of Grundy College in Iowa, and although the Depression kept her from completing her college studies, her curious nature kept her learning and reading. Nancy was a leader in the Oakdale and Sylvan Christian School PTAs and Neland's Ruth Circle. She was co-owner of Imperial Investments, a company she and Gerald ran until their retirement. She will be sorely missed.

**BOERS**, Willy (Groenewegen) 93, Ancaster, Ontario went home to be with her Lord on March 17, 2012. She was preceded in death by her husband, Leendert. Lovingly remembered by their children Art and Nancy Bowers, Ted and Jan Boers, Willie and Rick Pegelo, John and Diane Boers, Jack and Hilly Boers, Anne and John Vanderlaan. 20 grandchildren, (Steven deceased), 18 great-grandchildren. Also survived by her sister Edith (John) VanderEnde of Chatham, Ontario.

**DEKRYGER** Cornelius Henry "Case" aged 74; March 27, 2012; 15 Lakeside Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506. He is survived by his wife Jean; daughter: Kimberly (Patrick) Kinstle; granddaughters: Kelsey, Kacie, Alyssa and Lauren; and son: Dean DeKryger; brothers and sisters: Dr. Maynard DeKryger, Fran Siems, twin sister Christine (Charles) VanderSloot, Dr. Lewis (Sandy) DeKryger, Perry (Dee) DeKryger, Priscilla (Larry) Grinwis.

**FRANZ**, John P. went to be with our Lord on March 3, 2012. 1135 S. Lyman Ave. Oak Park, IL 60304. Dear son of Genevieve "Jean" Franz, and the late Henry B. Franz; Cousin and nephew of many.

**KASS**, Frank C., age 79, entered the glorious presence of his Lord and Saviour on Saturday, Sept. 24, 2011. His beloved wife Dorothy Dykstra Kass, and his dearly children, Connie Jean Kass (San Jose, CA), Carole E. Jansen (Grand Rapids, MI) mourn his passing profoundly. His grandchildren also sorely miss their grand-daddy: Brenda, Ruth and Robert Jansen. Frank was predeceased by his sister, Francis Kass Dykstra. Memorials may be sent to CRC World Missions, China @ 2850 Kalamazoo SE Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

**NABER** Warren Jay, age 68, of Cutlerville, MI, went to be with his Lord on Friday 9, 2012. He was preceded in death by his parents, John C. and Mabel Naber. Surviving are his sister, Joyce (Robert) Knapp and his brother, Roger (Joanne) Naber and several nephews and nieces.

**PASTERKAMP** Richard John, of Denver, Co. Died on March 4, 2012. Preceded in death by his wife Jessie, daughters Carol & Janice, 2 infant sons, 1 grandson. Survived by sons Dirk (Janet), Jim (Susan), 4 grandchildren. Sisters Dorothy Jeltama & Evelyn Ponstein, and many nieces and nephews.

**PAUZENGA**, Charles, age 90, March 9, 2012. He was preceded in death by his wife of 35 years, Nellie; special friend and companion, Mildred Riplo; Chuck is survived by his three daughters: Linda and William Glover, Phyllis and Dr. Robert Rood, Donna Pauzenaga; grandsons: Michael and Constantina Glover, Matthew and Melody Glover, Robert M. and Cassandra Rood, Bryan and Kari Rood, David and Lindsey Rood; great-grandchildren: Jasper Glover, Robert C. Rood, and Mackenzie Rood; sisters and brother-in-law: Ann Geers, Betty and Cliff Burgess; sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law: Tracy and Doug Vandegrift, Susie Wallin, Eva and Wally Karsjens, Sarah and John Ekema, Vivie and Jim Lovrink.

**POSTMA** Siek, 90, of Sussex, NJ 07461 went home to be with his Lord on March 9, 2012. He was preceded in death by his wife of 60 years,

Rena and 2 grandsons. He is survived by his children: Jack & Eleanor Postma, Hudsonville, MI, Grace & David DeGroot, Chesapeake, VA, Dirk & Sharon Postma, Florence, CO, Wilma & Bill Bogertman, North Haledon, NJ, Rena & Peter Bast, Sussex, NJ and Bill Postma, residing at home. Sharon Postma, Roslindale, MA, Betty & Doug McRoberts, Ottsville, PA; 23 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren.

**STEELE** Gerald W., age 75, March 18, 2012; 3559 Reeds Crossing Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He was preceded in death by his brother, Jack and his parents, Teresa and Gerald N. Steele. He is survived by his wife: Virginia; children and grandchildren: Joan and Jim Doezema (Eric, Elise, and Jared), Betsy and Scott Halstead (Tim), and Amanda Steele; brother: Dick Steele (Judy); sisters-in-law: Joanne Steele, Vange Van Huesen (Phil) and Harriet Vander Meer (Jim).

**TEN HARMSEL** Henrietta, aged 90; of Grand Rapids, MI; former Professor of English at Calvin College; March 16, 2012; She was preceded in death by her parents, nine siblings (including her dear sister and life-long companion, Johanna); nine nieces and nephews. She is survived by many nieces and nephews--Ten Harmels, Vugteveens, Meyers, and Gerritsmas--and dear colleagues and friends.

## Church Position Announcements

**PASTOR AVAILABLE** for Interim/Transitional Ministry. Dr. James C. Busscher has been serving congregations within the CRC as a Transitional Pastor for the past 8 years. His transitional ministry at the Lafayette CRC of Indiana will soon be completed. If you are looking for pastoral leadership during your time of vacancy then feel free to contact Pastor Busscher at 616-460-1811 or e-mail him at jcbusscher@gmail.com. References available.

**PASTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE** Hebron CRC, Whitby, ON seeks a pastor with the gifts to: guide and support ministry leaders, nurture the church family through pastoral visits, work together with the Deacons, encourage development of Small Groups, and preach the Word occasionally. Hebron is a faithful and active congregation of 350 located in a suburban community 50 km east of Toronto. Our mission is to make passionate disciples of Jesus Christ. A church profile and full job description are available upon request to Andy Buwalda at calling@hebroncrc.ca.

**PASTOR:** Covenant CRC is looking for a Reformed and reforming pastor to provide energetic servant leadership in Sioux Center, Iowa, a Christian college community. covenantcrc.net | covenant@mtcnet.net

**LEAD PASTOR:** Willoughby CRC is searching to grow into its calling of greater service to our community of Langley, British Columbia. We are seeking a lead pastor with strengths in preaching, leadership and relational gifts to help us in that service. The lead pastor would work in a team staffing model. Contact search@willoughbychurch.com for more information. www.willoughbychurch.com

**PASTOR:** Springdale CRC is a mid-size church thirty minutes north of Toronto, ON, in a rural area surrounded by rapidly growing communities. We are searching for a full-time pastor who follows Christ's leadership to shepherd us into the next phase of our ministry. We seek a man who has vision, diplomacy, leadership qualities, and above all, the ability to preach God's Word in a way that brings Him glory and builds up the church. We are not looking for a miracle worker, but a man who can and will work with others so that our God can work the miracles. Our new pastor will help us reach into the surrounding communities with love and concern, so that together we may proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. Please send your letter of interest or profile in confidence to springdalepst@gmail.com.

**HALF-TIME PASTOR** Neerlandia CRC in classis Alberta North is currently looking for a half time ordained pastor to work alongside our current pastor and half time youth coordinator. We are a large, active, rural church with a strong youth program. Responsibilities would include mostly visiting, some part time preaching with opportunities for teaching and outreach. A job description is available on request. Contact us at famvn@hotmail.com or call 1 780 674 6450.

**MARANATHA CRC** in Lethbridge is looking for a Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries. If you have a passion for God and Youth, and the talent and energy to bring them together, we'd love to hear from you. Send us your resume: mrcrdeth@telusplanet.net

**MUSIC CO-ORDINATOR NEEDED** Covenant Christian Reformed Church of St. Catharines, ON, is seeking to fill the position of Music Co-ordinator. In order to enhance the proclamation of God's Word and to enrich the act of worship in an integrated and unified manner the Music Co-ordinator role will provide musical leadership for the congregation in its life and worship services, nurturing musical gifts and accompanying worship through a variety of musical methodologies. A detailed role description can be provided upon request. A music degree is preferable or equivalent experience. For more details about this position or to submit your resume, please contact the Human Resource Ministry Chair, Janet deVries at janetdevries@cogeco.ca or 905.684.1105.

**YOUTH DIRECTOR:** Calvin Christian Reformed Church, a growing and caring church in Holland, MI, is seeking a part-time Youth Director. We are looking for a passionate Christ-follower; someone who can encourage and equip our Middle and High School kids to grow in their commitment to Jesus Christ and to live out their faith every day. Position requires approx. 20hrs/wk and pays \$17-20K, depending on experience and education. Please visit our website at www.calvinministries.org to view the full job description and to apply. Applications accepted until position is filled.

**STUDENT MINISTRIES COORDINATOR** - Ada CRC in Ada, MI, is seeking a student ministries coordinator who will be responsible for developing and implementing programs and ministries that reach out to the young people of Ada CRC and the community. For a full job description and contact information please visit our website, www.adacrc.org.

**PASTOR:** Faith Community CRC in Wyckoff, NJ is seeking a full-time pastor who loves to preach and is good at, enjoys the company of people of all ages and will help us walk graciously with God and our fellow human beings. We are a congregation who is gifted at helping people struggling with issues of faith and life and need a pastor who is eager to join us in this ministry. Visit us at www.faithcommunitycrc.com. Please direct inquiries and communications to Kyle Talsma, Transition Team, 96 Oakdale Court, North Haledon NJ 07508 or phone 973-427-9895 or email ktalman@verizon.net.

**PASTOR:** Covenant CRC, Barrie, ON is seeking a full time pastor who is committed to sound Biblical preaching and has a servant's heart. We are a traditional and conservative church seeking to grow spiritually and to reach out to our community. Prospective ministers should contact the search committee at barcovcrc@gmail.com

**VANDERSON** "Ted" D., age 78, March 14, 2012; 1460 Rothbury Dr. N. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49505; Surviving are his wife: Shirley (Dertien) for 56 years; his children: Mark (Beth) Vanderson, David Vanderson (Susan Vogel-Vanderson) and Mary Jo Mousseau; grandchildren: Emily (Ryan) Miersma, Sarah (Casey) McClurken, Katelyn, Claire and Anne Vanderson and Madelyn Mousseau; great-granddaughters: Sophie and Molly Miersma; brother: Robert (Char) Vanderson; sister: Betty (Frank) DeHaan; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: William (Helen) Dertien, Richard (Marilyn) Dertien.

**WIERINGA** Susan, age 94 of Grand Rapids, formerly of Willow Springs, IL and Scottsdale, AZ, entered eternity with Christ on December 17, 2011. Loving and beloved wife for 65 years of the late George Wieringa; devoted mother of Sue (Ken) Vanderlei, Cynthia (Andy) DeBoer, Kathleen (late Don) Bulthuis, Virginia Wieringa (Fred Conover), Roberta (David) Rinkema, George (Linda). Cherished by 12 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren; survived by siblings Julia (Gus) Spyskma, and John (Gen) Spiekhout and Don (Jean) Spiekhout. In life, and in death, we are the Lord's.

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### Employment

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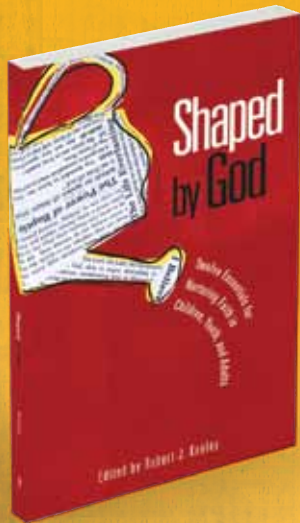
**DIR, DEVELOPMENT** Synodically approved International Theological Education Ministries (ITEM), formerly known as Christ for Russia, an organization committed to provide teachers for Reformed seminaries and schools especially in E. Europe, seeks self-funded individual called to develop a strategic fundraising network in multiple Reformed denominations in NA. Interested? Send CV to jklklinger23@att.net and frjtox@charter.net.

**NANNY** seeking a full-time position for a fun, loving, Christian family. I have many years of childcare experience, and will be finished with my degree in childcare in May. Please call (712)-441-4764

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**COTTAGE FOR RENT, HOLLAND, MI** on the upper boardwalk near Holland State Park. 5 BR-sleeps 12. \$1,350/wk, call 616-281-1922

**2 BR CONDO FOR SALE** - 2255 Radcliff Circle, SE - Calvin College area. Well maintained end unit, 3-season porch, ample natural lighting by assorted array of windows, spacious living area. Main level has full BA, KIT, DR, LR, MBR with 3/4 BA, second BR. All appliances included. 616-245-6135 or 269-795-7169

**BIG STAR LAKE:** for sale mobile home, 14x60 2 bedrooms on your own 37 ft. lot. Great beach. \$79,000.00 L/C available

**COTTAGE RENTAL** On quiet Campbell Lake near Hart, MI. 2 BR, all sports lake, kayaks, swim raft and row boat furnished. Great golf nearby. \$550 per wk. 616-844-7154. email for pictures @ eedzq2@charter.net

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

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

### Travel



**HOLIDAY IN HOLLAND** in our self-contained cabin or suite. We also offer vehicle rentals and tours. [www.chestnutlane.nl](http://www.chestnutlane.nl)

**NIAGARA FALLS** Trillium Bed & Breakfast. All Rooms on main level, all with a/c private bath. Brian & Mary 905-354-3863 or book online at [www.Trilliumbb.ca](http://www.Trilliumbb.ca)

**JOIN LONG-TIME TOUR HOSTS**, Eilof and Harriet Rusticus, September 6-17, 2012 on a vacation in Northern Europe! Beginning in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, take in the sights and scents at the Aalsmeer Flower Auction followed by picturesque Kasteel de Haar. Then embark on a seven-night cruise on Germany's Rhine and Moselle Rivers. Later, return to the Netherlands to visit Arnhem's Open-Air Museum, Floriade,

Volendam and Amsterdam. Every step of the way, the Rusticuses will be on hand to insure that you have a wonderful vacation! Arrangements by Witte Tours, 616-957-8113 or 800 GO WITTE (469-4883). <http://www.wittetravel.com/calendar-tours/waterways-germany-touch-dutch/>

### Products and Services

**ABSOLUTELY BEST PRICES** paid for religious books. Contact Credo Books, 1540 Pinnacle East SW, Wyoming, MI 49509, ph. (616) 249-9291. [gvsbooks@gmail.com](mailto:gvsbooks@gmail.com)

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**CARING FOR AGING PARENTS?** Visiting Angels offers in-home assisted living. Our caregivers will prepare meals, do light housekeeping, run errands, provide transportation to appointments, and joyful companionship. Whether you need a few hours a day or live-in care, for assisted independent living in your home anywhere in West Michigan call Trish Borgdorff at 616-243-7080 or toll free at 888-264-3580. TRIP Participant.

**TRUE BLUE CAREGIVERS** a small agency that offers experienced and affordable care to seniors in their home. We are owned by Calvin grads, who are passionate about this work. West Michigan area only. [truebluecaregivers@gmail.com](mailto:truebluecaregivers@gmail.com) or call 616-406-6819

**LIVE-IN CAREGIVER:** Couple in Seminole, FL seeking in home care and help providing daily meals. Candidate will be provided a furnished apartment w/all amenities including meals. Wage negotiable. Located next to lake. Anyone interested please call Kal @ 727-393-5974

### Miscellaneous

**FOR SALE** Church Bus, 25 passenger, 1995 Champion Sparrow Trade. Great condition, 75,000 miles, \$9900. Call Ivanrest CRC, 616-534-3114.

**ROOMMATE** Looking for Christian, male roommate to rent a furnished guest room in condo near Breton and 28th. Only \$450/mo. Full laundry privileges and amenities. Garage available. No charge for utilities or cable. Need to supply your own phone. Call Matt @ 616-949-1303

## The Banner 2012 Ad Schedule

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

Issue date	Ad deadline	Ship date
June	05/07/12	05/25/12
July	06/04/12	06/22/12
August	07/02/12	07/20/12
September	08/06/12	08/24/12
October	09/03/12	09/21/12
November	10/01/12	10/19/12
December	11/05/12	11/21/12
January	12/03/12	12/21/12

See [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org)

# SYNOD 2012

## NEWS

June 8-14  
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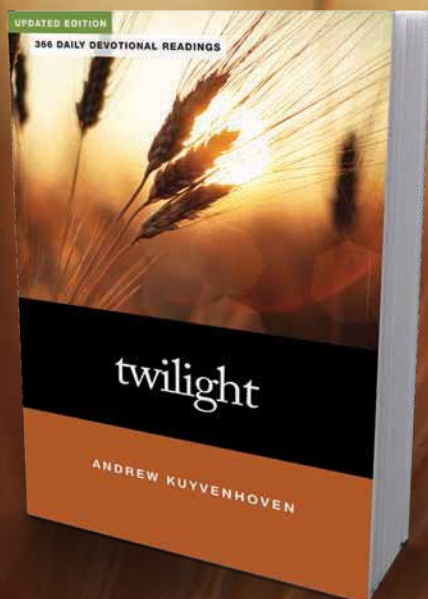
- news via email
- news via Twitter
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- Synodical reports
- info for delegates

during Synod for:

- live webcast
- committee reports
- stories
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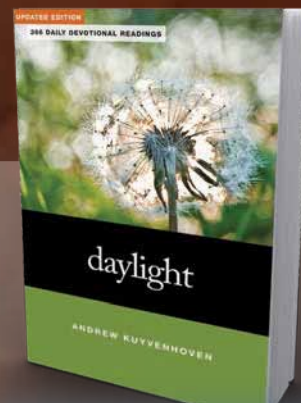


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# Punch Lines

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

**A** little boy opened the big family Bible. As he fingered the old pages, something fell out. He picked up the object and looked at it. What he saw was an old leaf that had been pressed between the pages.

"Mama, look what I found," the boy called.

"What is it?"

With astonishment, he answered, "I think it's Adam's underwear!"

—Herm Kelderman

**A** man was celebrating his 105th birthday.

"Sir," a reporter inquired, "can you explain why you've lived so long?"

"It's really quite simple," the elderly gentleman responded. "I just never argue with people."

"That's impossible," the reporter replied. "There must be something else, like diet or exercise. Just not arguing won't keep you alive for 105 years!"

For several seconds, the man stared hard at the reporter. Then he shrugged and exclaimed, "Hm—maybe you're right!"

—George Vanderweit

**M**y husband and I have the pleasure of watching our 2-year-old granddaughter a few days a week while our daughter

works. Having just learned the art of stalling, our granddaughter asked for a snack as I was carrying her upstairs for her nap.

I explained that she had just had lunch, but that after naptime I would have a snack ready for her. She crawled happily into bed. As soon as I tucked her in and kissed her cheek, she recited a new version of her standard nap- and bedtime prayer:

Now I lay me down to sleep,

I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

Thy love go with me through the night

And wake me when it's time to snack.

—Helena Van Voorst

**O**ur granddaughter, Taeya, often watches the Food Network with her mom. One day, on the way home from kindergarten, Taeya's mom asked what they'd done that day in school.

"Well, we learned a new song," Taeya replied. "It was called the B-I..."

Her brow furrowed as she thought a moment, and then said, "Oh, I know! It was the B-I-B-L-T!"

—Marion Van Driel

**A**sister of the faith departs her earthly habitation and appears before St. Peter. She asks for entry into the celestial kingdom, and Peter asks her what she did on earth.

"I was a nurse," she stated.

"That's good," Peter replied, "but what kind of nurse?"

"I was an HMO nurse," she responded.

"Mmm," Peter mused, "I'm not sure if I can let you in or not—I'll have to go and ask."

When he returned he told her, "They say you can stay—for four days."

—Bob De Moor

**M**y 6-year-old granddaughter was learning about the difference between having God or Satan in your heart during Bible time at school. One afternoon she came home and said, "Mom, I think I had Satan in my heart today."

Concerned, my daughter-in-law asked, "What happened?"

My granddaughter told her that after using the bathroom during recess, Satan told her not to wash her hands.

My daughter-in-law asked, "So what did you do?"

With a big smile she replied, "Don't worry, Mom. I washed them anyways and I used *extra* soap!"

—Joyce Zylstra

**M**y coworker told me that his 5-year-old son hadn't been listening to his parents very well lately. One night as he put the boy to bed, the two of them prayed that Jesus would help him be good the next day. The next afternoon, my coworker returned home to find that his son had been disobedient again.

He took him aside and reminded him of their prayer the night before. The boy shrugged his shoulders and said, "I know. I guess God didn't help me today."

—Kathleen Moody



"Henderson—come in here and rub my belly."

