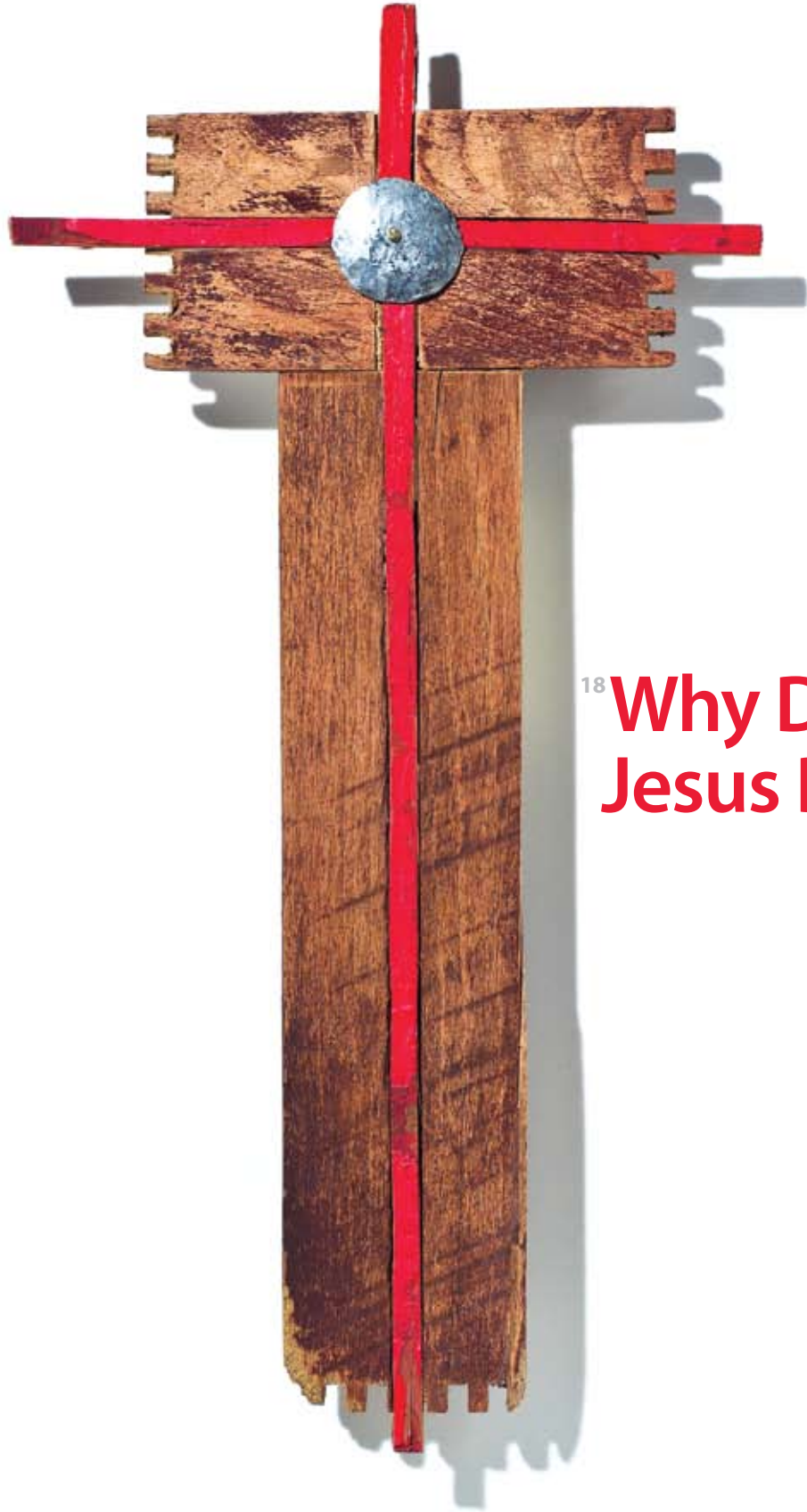


²⁰ **Practicing Resurrection
Where It Matters Most**

³⁶ **Biblical Affirmative Action**

²² **Helping
Churches
Flourish**



¹⁸ **Why Did
Jesus Die?**

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A Letter From CRWRC

Dear Christian Reformed Church Members,

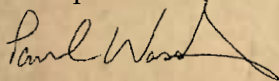
The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is considering changing its name. This is not something we've undertaken lightly. For 50 years we've responded as "CRWRC" to situations of poverty, disaster, and injustice around the world. Our name, though bulky, has served us well and garnered a global reputation for excellent programming, quality staff, and a stewardly use of funds. You might wonder why we now want to leave this name behind.

The answer lies not in the past, but in the future. As we've ministered around the world, we've come to realize that our name can have some unintended consequences. Christian Reformed pastors in North American church plants tell us that our long, denominational name doesn't connect with people coming through their church doors. Christian school principals have told us that while they'd love to support us our name is too exclusive for their multi-denominational student bodies. And as we work in a global context we find that being a "denominational relief committee" doesn't speak to our community development work, multi-denominational church partnerships, or our board governance.

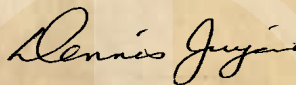
As we look to the future, we want to make sure that our name invites others to join you in supporting this ministry, and that it resonates with our partners and clearly explains the type of ministry that we are about. At the same time, our name must also continue to speak to and about the Christian Reformed Church that forms the basis of our identity. We are proud to be an agency and a diaconal ministry of the CRC, and that won't change.

The idea of a name change for CRWRC has been explored a few times in our history. In February 2011 the effort became more formalized in a strategic planning meeting of the CRWRC board of delegates.

Your partners in ministry,



Paul Wassink
President, CRWRC-US Board



Dennis Jurjens
President, CRWRC-Canada Board

We spent time in prayer and petition, asking God where he wants the organization to be in 50 years. As we began to understand that a name change might be beneficial, we and the staff of CRWRC began to explore this possibility. Several generous donors have come forward to cover all of the costs associated with the change, meaning that no donations given to CRWRC to address poverty or disaster have been re-directed for this use. As a process was put in place to test the feasibility of a name change and develop new name suggestions, each step was covered with continuing prayer for God's guidance.

The end result is a name that we think you'll come to love as much as the name "CRWRC." It is a name that speaks less to who we are (a "denominational committee") and more to what we do: that is, our mandate to renew communities and families who are living with poverty, injustice and disaster so that they too experience lives filled with resources, hope, and Shalom. The new name is rooted in our Reformed worldview and provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate how this worldview shapes the broad spectrum of our programs.

Our new name — World Renew — was unanimously approved by CRWRC's governance board. It will be presented to CRWRC's full board of delegates, the CRCNA board of trustees, and Synod in the next few months. If approved by Synod, CRWRC staff will carry out a transition strategy in which both names are used side-by-side as everyone gets used to the change. The name "CRWRC" will also be retained by the organization in order to facilitate existing planned gift designations and for other reasons. Please pray for wisdom and discernment as these decisions are weighed. Please also feel free to contact us or the CRWRC board delegate in your classis if you have concerns.

P.S. To learn more about CRWRC's name change, read responses to frequently asked questions, and see samples of what the new logo might look like, visit www.crwrc.org/name.



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Show Some Respect

I VISITED MY DAD BACK IN THE OLD COUNTRY when his cancer had already confined him to a bed in the living room and the close of his earthly journey was well in sight. His mind was sharp, and he took a morning to talk through our lives together as father and son. Mostly we laughed. But he named and asked forgiveness for the times he thought he'd failed me—and he remembered much more than I did. He wasn't a perfect dad, but he was a loving dad, which more than covered the slights he'd imagined.

He didn't want to hear about the times I'd failed him. He firmly reminded me that he was doing the dying, and I could jolly well wait my turn to deal with my own baggage.

Dad needed to be turned every two hours, so we took shifts sleeping on a cot beside his bed. One night I woke to him singing a psalm in his sleep. He must have suddenly realized where he was and that he wasn't alone because he interrupted himself mid-verse with a sharp, self-directed "Shaddap." Not another peep out of him until daybreak.

Dad had been a proud man—pride being a veneer for a deeper insecurity stemming from his early, difficult childhood. That was worrisome, given the severity of the limitations that kept him bedbound and dependent on those around him. But he surprised us by enduring all that with gratitude and grace.

After a particularly bad night, he complained that there is nothing dignified about old age. But then he caught himself and observed that dignity isn't something we have or even have a right to. It's a gift given to us by others. Those who cared for him showed him respect even when he wasn't respectable. It comforted him.

A good discovery, I think, and one that applies throughout our lives. Dignity isn't innate or earned. It is a gift that is loved into being. Every one of us needs that kind of love—to receive it and to give it.

Especially our parents, teachers, public officials, and church leaders need our respect, and it does us good to give it. Hard to do, as we are awash in media that preach self-determination, profit from attack ads, and delight in flinging all the muck they can rake.

Even though Roman civic leaders were corrupt, cruel, and contemptible, Paul exhorts the faithful, "Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13:7).

Honestly, I find it easier to pay taxes than to show respect. Showing honor means I have to get off my high horse and practice a love I don't usually feel. It's not just a sacrifice of stuff but of the soul, forcing me to give up my treasured seat in the peanut gallery of life. But when we see how our Lord—who natively possesses all dignity and deserves all honor—treats us, what else can we do but indiscriminately pay that forward? ■

Dignity is
a gift that
is loved into
being.



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Gardens and Cemeteries and Parks

Catch Your Breath is a place to pause and reflect. A place to catch a glimpse of God's presence in our everyday lives. A place where, like Jacob, we may say, "Surely God is in this place!"

Do you have a story to tell about an experience that surprised you? Made you notice the movement of God's Spirit in your life? Helped you find your way through a difficult time? Consider sharing your 500-word contemplative reflection with *The Banner* at editorial@thebanner.org. We'd love to take a look.

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, is a beautiful city of gardens and cemeteries and parks. Our youngest daughter went to college in Savannah just as *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* became popular in both book and movie versions. She had a job, for a summer, working in one of the cemeteries, where she reset gravestones and restored family monuments. Some of them had been looted and reconfigured by General Sherman's troops after his infamous Civil War "March to the Sea" from Atlanta to Savannah wasted many communities.

Sherman loved Savannah, however, and when we visited we could understand why. When platted in 1769, Savannah's

founders created four "squares" of public park space to enhance the social life of its residents. As the city grew, the squares multiplied to twenty-four, enhanced by other larger parkland areas and marvelously crafted cemeteries. Today Savannah's southern charm is enhanced by ghost stories and reported sightings in its ancient buildings and sultry public squares lined by Spanish moss-hung oaks.

John Wesley preached his first sermons in the New World in the squares of Savannah, cementing the gospel link between gardens and cemeteries and parks. Today his image, cast in bronze, stands downtown—still pointing those plagued by the fatal human disease of death to eternity. Interestingly, the story of humanity, according to the Bible, begins in a garden, ends in a park-like city, and is focused in between on a cemetery.

John's gospel brings this to our attention in a powerful manner that I linger with each Easter. John makes certain right at the beginning (note the parallels between Genesis 1 and John 1) that we see the link between God's creation of the universe as a place where humans share in the divine character and creativity, and in the recreation brought about through Jesus when our earth was darkened and dying.

On Easter morning, when Jesus completes his work of sacrificial offering and rises again, gardens and cemeteries are

central to the story. Mary laments in the garden, thinking that someone has stolen Jesus' body from the tomb. Her tear-dimmed eyes do not recognize Jesus when he appears suddenly. She supposes that he must be the gardener.

Only when Jesus calls Mary by name does she come alive from her death-induced grief. We usually think Mary got it wrong when she viewed Jesus as a gardener. But John seems to applaud her insight. Indeed, as John wants us to understand things, only in Jesus has the true Gardener returned to the garden of earth and transformed a dead cemetery into a beautiful park.

When I was first a pastor in southern Alberta, the congregation used to meet in a cemetery on Easter morning for a daybreak celebration of resurrection hope. Surrounded by the stone-carved names, we, the living, met among the dust of our parents and grandparents, and sometimes our sisters and brothers and children. But we knew that the deathly place we stood in was only a park awaiting Easter transformation—a garden expecting the return of the Gardener. ■



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



The seed of salvation
is sprouting as earth
makes ready.

—PIERRE TALEC

Food for Fuel?

LE

OPINION

Economically this might seem like a great idea.



THROUGH GOD'S GRACE, the United States and Canada have been a blessing to the larger world in producing abundant food for their citizens and for a hungry world. We have the reputation of being the breadbasket of the world.

The agriculture sector of our economy is the envy of the world. The U.S. government guarantees farmers a fair return for their work and investment by means of subsidies and support prices. This program guarantees an abundant supply of food for its citizens.

Regrettably, America has adopted a new policy called "Food for Fuel." Billions of bushels of corn have been diverted from the food supply and crushed to extract a combustible liquid (ethanol) in order to feed the thirsty gas tanks of our large vehicles.

Economically this might seem like a great idea. But every decision also has a moral and ethical dimension. How does such a decision affect "the least" among us?

The policy quickly caused waves of dismay in poverty-stricken areas of Central and South America and Mexico, and in the homes of millions of poverty-

stricken families in our own countries, as food prices spiked.

Food for Fuel not only lacks moral justification but is self-defeating. Whatever we save in fuel costs is spent on higher food and grocery costs. The policy has aroused fears that it may trigger a new round of inflation.

It also poses a high risk. In the 1930s a 10-year plague of drought and dust devastated large portions of the United States. Farms, once thriving, were put up for sale, but there were no takers. In 1988 farmers held their collective breath as once again large areas that had produced crops were parched by lack of rain. Now a swath of southern states is in the grip of a destructive drought.

Yes, it is imperative that we control fuel and energy costs and become energy independent. To begin with, America has huge reserves of untapped natural gas. The government could enforce a reasonable speed limit on our roads and highways and enact stricter policies for the manufacture of cars with better fuel economy. In addition we should expand our use of wind, solar, clean coal, and nuclear power.

Our Creator has a special concern and affinity for "the least" among us. Scripture teaches that the way we treat them is a measure of the sincerity of our faith (Matt. 25:40).

May God grant our leaders the wisdom to make fair and just decisions in every area of national life. ■

MORE ONLINE



Bernie VanderMolen is a semi-retired farmer living near DeMotte, Ind. He is a member of First Christian Reformed Church of DeMotte.



God Multiplies

Almost every Friday evening my wife and I share a takeout lake perch dinner that costs \$18.39. After dinner last week, I picked up *The Banner* and read Melissa Holtrop's article "You add. God multiplies" (News, February 2012). With a quick calculation my wife and I determined that our weekly church budget contribution for CRC ministry shares is only \$12.18. Wow! That's \$6.00 less than the cost of our takeout dinner and covers so many worthy, kingdom-building efforts across the globe. It's as if Jesus is letting us break up our few perch and helping to feed the five thousand. Thank you, Lord.

—John Rosier
Palos Heights, Ill.

Living Together

The author says "people don't expect relevant advice for their sexual lives from their church" ("Mom, We're Living Together," February 2012). But why is that the case?

Perhaps church leaders have shied away from teaching clearly that God has given commands in Scripture that are for our protection and blessing. . . . What we refuse to publicly preach will, in the space of one generation, no longer be believed

LETTERS

or practiced by those in the pews. If the theology and teaching of Scripture are not made known and held up as the standard, in short order people will get their theology and practice from the culture. And the consequences will not be pretty.

—Roy Hamel
Guelph, Ontario

Just because the culture is awash in sexual immorality doesn't mean the church has to bend and become like the culture. We have been given the light of truth. May we be bold as well as loving in holding up that light to a darkened world. Our children are counting on us.

—Frances Wassink
Palmerston, Ontario

Caring for Scientists

I would like to thank Rev. Reinders for his recent article "Caring for Our Scientists" (February 2012).

I am a scientist. I am a science teacher. I have committed the majority of my adult life to revealing to my students not only the wonder and complexity of the natural and physical world, but also the dynamic process in which we seek truth through science. I am also deeply rooted in the Reformed tradition, and the tension between my profession and my church has burdened me beyond what I can share here. It takes much more courage to walk into church, sit in a pew with my family, and be honest about who I am than it does to share my Christian faith with students in a secular school.

—Aaron Nydam
Jackson, Wyoming

Playing by the Rules

Thank you for publishing Pastor Vander Weit's article "Playing by the Rules" (February 2012).

I love Calvinism's teachings, its form of church government. However, John Calvin was not infallible. To think that somehow a congregational type of church government is antithetical to the Bible is a stretch. I am not advocating in any way the abolishing of the church council, classis, or synods. These have their place. But too much power resides in too few people. Vander Weit would restrict free speech by those who are not in favor of yet another confession—the Belhar.

—Peter J. Sluys
Kalamazoo, Mich.

Academic Freedom

Gayla Postma's article ("Academic Freedom and Confessional Integrity: A Delicate Dance," February 2012) captured well the essence of academic struggle and purpose: we need our Christian colleges to help us think through the difficult issues that confront us.

I thank God for professors who are able to summarize and clearly delineate what the issues are; they help me continue these discussions in my own community with a clearer direction. Grateful, careful listening and reading will take us much further than quickly jumping to conclusions and defending our pet theories. It's exciting to be part of the dance in the CRC.

—Klaaske deGroot-deKoning
Lacombe, Alberta

We are part of the "brothers and sisters" in the Pella area who *do* have "the time and luxury" to think.

If a scholar's work contradicts the clear teaching of the Bible, his human interpretation is wrong and should not be celebrated, as Prof. Loren Haarsma suggests doing. Psalm 119:160 declares, "Thy Word is true from the beginning."

Proverbs 3:5b says, "lean not unto thine own understanding."

—Frank and Carmen Reitsma
New Sharon, Iowa

Belhar

Regarding "Over the Line: Why We Need to Say No to the Belhar," January 2012): The narrow objection to the Belhar neglects the place of confessions in the broader Reformed world-and-life view.

The Belhar opposes a culture of Afrikaner superiority and nationalistic point of view informed by Kuyperian teachings. It provides a biblical narrative that strengthens and anchors a Reformed world-and-life view in its divine call to unify and reconcile an ethnically diverse community. Not adopting this confession endorses the painful racism and brutality that took place under a religious pretext. The Dutch Reformed Church understood and adopted the Belhar in 1986. It is time we do the same.

—Rudy Gonzalez
Moreno Valley, Calif.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

Correction

Our thanks to physicist Deb Haarsma for pointing out that the speed of light is *exactly* 299,792.458 kilometers per second ("Creation Art," March 2012). This is approximately 186,000 miles per second.

NEWS

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Board Endorses Le Roy for Calvin Presidency

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church endorsed Michael Le Roy as the nominee to become the next president of Calvin College, the Grand Rapids, Mich., school owned by the denomination.

Le Roy is currently provost and executive vice president of academic affairs at Whitworth University in Spokane, Wash., and a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Le Roy said he is drawn to the clear and coherent theology at Calvin College. He also sees challenges facing the college. "We're in a post-denominational context [where] 18-year-olds are very experiential, a-historical, and a-theological. Calvin has a lot to give those students, but has to



GAYLA R. POSTMA

Michael Le Roy

make sure it is in a language that is accessible."

Le Roy also told trustees that he values the learning that can come from the conflict inherent in the paradox of being a Christian institution of higher learning.

"It's not a fun thing, but I view conflict as the most important learning opportunity we have in community, because truth is emerging. We have the opportu-

nity to listen well, to see common ground. I'm drawn to the learning in that moment," he said.

Scott Greenway is a member of the Board of Trustees and served on the search committee. Asked if the search committee was unable to find a good candidate for the position who is Christian Reformed, he said, "We had outstanding candidates, including some who are CRC. We came down to Michael because we really felt, having listened to the broader constituency, that he really matched what we needed."

Le Roy's nomination comes from the board of Calvin College and must now be ratified by Synod 2012, the annual leadership meeting of the CRC. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Gayla R. Postma

Alberta Church Worships at Science Centre

"Scientists have irrefutably shown that Darwin wasn't quite correct ... your environment can change your genes, and these changes are heritable," read an email that came across the desk of John VanSloten, pastor of New Hope Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, Alberta.

The message came from a scientist and congregant who suggested he look at her husband's work on epigenetics. VanSloten said he read the email and immediately thought of that part of the second commandment that says, "... to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me."

The church received a grant from the John Templeton foundation for five sermons on faith and science and also to take the entire church to Calgary's new science

centre to preach the sermon on epigenetics. The congregation was then able to explore the centre on their own, free of charge.

Once at the science centre, an epigenetics researcher from the University of Calgary spent 10 minutes explaining epigenetics to the congregation, which was double the size of the regular crowd, and then VanSloten spent 25 minutes giving a theological response.

VanSloten explained the profoundness of taking the church to the science centre. "The idea of taking the community to church happening in the world of science, being there, coming alongside God's kingdom that is already there in the science centre, was preaching a lot."

—Rachel deKoning Kraay



KEN ROBEK

Rev. John VanSloten gives a theological response to the study of epigenetics.

Creekside Church ministry group headed for Haiti.



Mission Trip to Haiti Includes People Who Are Homeless

Creekside Christian Reformed Church in Boulder, Colo., recently sent 13 people on a mission trip to Haiti. But this wasn't your normal church group, said Adie Johnson, copastor of the church.

The group included two people who are homeless, two who were formerly homeless, and a woman who is visually impaired.

In the process Johnson and her team recognized something: "In the U.S., you could say 'these guys are homeless, these people are housed,' that kind of thing. When you're in Haiti, we're all just North Americans. We were on equal ground. It was beautiful. Everybody had a voice. Everybody's work was valuable."

Dwarf, one of the team members currently without a home, learned something else in Haiti. "There was rubble around them, and all you see is people getting up and doing everything with smiles on their faces," he said. "With what little they had the joy was coming out of them. They were happy." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Sarah Boonstra

Loose Change Brings Change

Members of The River Christian Reformed Church in Douglas, Mass., are collecting their loose change to bring about change.

The church has raised \$4,000 in the past two years for Africa Inland Mission, which helps provide clean water in Africa.

To draw attention to the project, Danielle Kelly, a friend of the church and a student at the Art Institute of Boston, created a painting showing water running through hands. The painting is mounted above a table where water bottles are used to collect the change.

Lois and Mark Shaw, who work for the mission in Kenya, said, "Water continues to be the real source of everything we do. Jesus was right when he called himself the living water. . . . Giving a cup of cold water in his name is a real gift—especially if you have walked



BRUCE DYKSTRA

A painting by Danielle Kelly.

a long, hot way to the river, carried the water home, built a fire with sticks you gathered, boiled the water, and let it cool in your hut."

—Calvin Hulstein

Connecticut Church Finds Marrow Donor

When the treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma was not helping Keith Lapenta, doctors began looking for a bone marrow match among his relatives but didn't find one.

So Lapenta's wife, Heidi, organized a donor drive at their church,

Avery Street Christian Reformed Church in South Windsor, Conn.

On a snowy January Saturday, many people showed up at the church to get swabbed, bring food, or just to support the family. By day's end, 77 new donors had registered, and over \$11,000 was raised to support the program.

The Lapentas said they felt "truly blessed and moved by so many people willing to help."

In the end, there were three close matches for Keith Lapenta, so when the time comes for a transplant, he will have a donor.

—Calvin Hulstein

Keith, Stephanie, and Heidi Lapenta at the donor drive.



CALVIN HULSTEIN



Board Approves Priorities for Centre for Public Dialogue

The Board of Trustees of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) approved the plan of the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue to focus its work on justice for refugees and indigenous Canadians.

The Centre, formerly known as the Committee for Contact with the Government, is the body charged with communicating with the Canadian government on behalf of the CRC.

The Centre received approval from the board to take peace-building in Afghanistan off its priority list.

Under its new plan, the Centre will focus on justice for vulnerable refugee populations. The other priority will be research and advocacy regarding education in indigenous communities. The Centre will collaborate with the CRC's Canadian Aboriginal Ministry Committee.

The board also asked that the Centre consider balancing its direct contact with Canadian officials with assisting churches and church members in developing their own capacity to engage government officials on important issues.

Trustee Kathy Vandergrift raised the issue, citing both the changing political context in Canada and the need to enhance ownership of the Centre's work among CRC members.

She acknowledged that it may involve broadening the range of issues the Centre is involved with, including issues local to specific provinces.

—Gayla R. Postma

CRWRC Seeks Approval to Change Name

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), the relief and development agency of the Christian Reformed Church, is asking Synod 2012 to allow it to change its name to World Renew.

CRWRC asked the denomination's Board of Trustees to endorse the motion at its February board meeting, but the board delayed making a decision until its next meeting in May.

In its rationale for the proposed new name, CRWRC said, "A new name is needed that does not limit the perception of the organization as much as the current name."



Sheila Holmes asked, "Is the new name a way of gently moving away from the CRC as you pursue more capacity to get funding?"

Andrew Ryskamp, director of CRWRC-US, responded, "We would be crazy to move away from our base. The reality is that we have grown into a broader context already. . . . We're an agency of the CRC and will continue to represent ourselves as an agency of the CRC."

Bob Lyzenga was in favor of the change. "I'm at a church right

now where 80 percent are brand new to the denomination. I see something positive about having a shorter, easier name."

Bill Veenstra was opposed. "I have no objection to Christian Reformed World Renew. I have no trouble with the cross [in the logo], but this is clearly disassociated with the brand of CRC—why not add [the] triangle to it, saying symbolically, 'this is where our roots lie?' I sense an increasing detachment from the institution of the CRC."

In addition to the logo, the new name comes with the tagline "Living justice, loving mercy, serving Christ," which, Ryskamp explained, represents the Christian context that informs the work of CRWRC. But that would not be part of the legal name in the bylaws and could be changed at any time, which concerned some trustees.

Scott Greenway, who initially spoke in favor of the name change, said, "If the tagline can be moved in and out, that's a significant thing for me."

In the end, the board ran out of time and decided to delay making a decision about endorsing the name change until it meets again.

With or without the board's endorsement, it is synod (the annual leadership meeting of the CRC) that makes a final decision.

For more, please visit crwrc.org.
—Gayla R. Postma



Charlottetown teens enjoy a weekend of snow activities and educational forums as part of a multi-denominational youth rally.

Prince Edward Island Churches Host Youth Rally: Arctic Survivor Edition

The youth of Charlottetown (Prince Edward Island) Christian Reformed Church joined young people from several other churches in their area for a weekend full of winter activities and inspirational forums.

The REVERB Youth Rally: Arctic Survivor Edition included sled racing and "sumo" games in the snow as well as teaching sessions, including one on social media led by Charlottetown CRC.

Albert and Susanne Huizing led the social media forum, covering the negative and positive impact of today's technology. They asked questions such as "How do we build credibility as Christians?" and "How do we use social media in the framework of glorifying God, caring for his world, and expanding his kingdom?"

Seventy-five youth and leaders attended the rally, representing six denominations. [MORE ONLINE](#)
—Brenda Visser

Schaap Presents Final Reading as Dordt Prof

Colleagues, students, alumni, and friends gathered at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, on February 19 to hear James Schaap give his final reading as a Dordt professor.

Schaap, storyteller of the CRC community, will be retiring from teaching at the end of this school year.

Schaap said his defining moment as a writer came from reading *The Secret Place* by Frederick Manfred. Set in Doon, Iowa, the story centers on an era of the CRC Schaap was just young enough to remember.

"That was new to me . . . that you could just be somebody with

an ordinary life and write about that—that I got from Manfred."

Schaap might be best known in the CRC community for his book *A Family Album: The Unfinished Story of the Christian Reformed Church*, which was subsequently produced for the stage and recorded on DVD.

Schaap recently published *Rehoboth: A Place for Us*, which tells the stories of twelve families whose lives were affected by Rehoboth Christian School in New Mexico, which was run by the CRC.

Retiring is a big change, but Schaap has no worries. "I have at



James Schaap

least a half-dozen projects that I'd like to do," he said.

Schaap attends Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Sioux Center. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Kate Padilla

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. John W. Jongsma

1932–2011

Rev. John William Jongsma, 79, faithful preacher of the Word, with a big pastoral heart for the lonely, the elderly, and the needy, died in Hamilton, Ontario, following a brief bout with cancer.

Jongsma graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1961, and subsequently served churches in Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario. He retired in 1997.

Jongsma will be remembered as a humble, faithful pastor, unassuming in his ministerial role. He embodied the gospel he preached. He loved the denomination of which he was a loyal and well-informed member, but his heart was in the pastoral ministry. He was appreciated for faithfully visiting members, especially the elderly, the sick, and shut-ins, and the less fortunate.

During his retirement years, Jongsma was a regular volunteer for Meals on Wheels, delivering dinners to the elderly. He also served several congregations without pastors on an interim basis.

Jongsma is survived by his wife, Marie, four children and their spouses, ten grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Louis M. Tamminga

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

Selling Homes to Christians in West Michigan

Last fall, Ben Worth purchased his first home in the McLaughlin neighborhood of Muskegon, Mich.

This was not just any home. The home was rehabilitated and sold to Worth by Community enCompass, a Christian Community Development organization in downtown Muskegon supported by several Christian Reformed congregations.

Worth's purchase is part of a new Strategic Neighbor Initiative to encourage people of faith to relocate and invest in the McLaughlin neighborhood, where two-thirds of the properties are vacant or rentals.

"The main draw for me to live in the neighborhood is the opportunity to live the kingdom of God," said Worth. "Finding that is like finding a treasure in a field. You sell everything you own to buy that field."

"Any time there is a homeowner who is committed to the neighborhood, that's a strategic neighbor," said Sarah Rinsema-Sy-benga, executive director of Community enCompass and member of Bethany CRC.

—Daina Kraai



Rev. Dave Sieplinga, right, at the house Ben Worth purchased from Community enCompass.

NEWS

Steve Kabetu Appointed as Canada Director for World Missions



Steve Kabetu

Christian Reformed World Missions has named Steve Kabetu as its Canada director.

The position is a new one, replacing the director of CRWM for North America, a position held by Al Karsten, who retired in 2011.

While the role will be fairly similar to the previous one, it has more strategic concentration on Canadian churches in terms of geography and communicating the vision to local congregations.

For the last six years Kabetu has worked for the Christian Reformed Race Relations office in Canada.

Growing up in Kenya, Kabetu understands the effect of missions globally. His grandfather Stephano Kabetu was involved in translating the Bible into their indigenous language in a culturally effective way.

Kabetu said, "I look forward to helping congregations really understand how critical it is to support the work of our missionaries overseas as they undertake, on our behalf, the fulfillment of the Great Commission."

—Monica deRegt

Jobs Program Supports People Seeking Work

Unemployment is often filled with disappointment and discouragement, but for those within reach of the Self-Help Jobs Program, Laura VandeWerken provides education and encouragement.

In her role as a job search coach, Vande Werken helps clients explore career options while providing tools from skills assessments to résumé and cover letter training. She provides the free service from an office at Faith Christian Reformed Church in Tinley Park, Ill.

"Sometimes it's just reminding people to stop saying, 'What if?' God will

provide every day," Vande Werken said. "People are very comforted by that, even if they are not strong believers."

While donations are accepted, the program's main source of funding is Classis Chicago South, a regional group of churches.

Mark Timmer, pastor of Faith CRC, said, "Laura's work fills a big need. . . Her work helps the church to show the heart of a compassionate God; people inside and outside the church need to see that." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Melissa Holtrop



MELISSA HOLTROP

Mark Timmer and Laura Vande Werken discuss positive feedback from the recent seminar held at Tinley Park Library.

Faith Alive Experiences Financial Crunch

Facing large deficits and lower than expected sales of its new curriculum, Faith Alive Christian Resources, the publishing ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, is making changes in an effort to remain financially sustainable.

For years, Sunday school curriculum has been at the core of Faith Alive, which serves 30 different denominations.

But a struggling U.S. economy, increased competition, and a decline in loyalties to Sunday school education have created a difficult marketplace.

Mark Rice, director of Faith Alive, said it is a trend he has seen ever since coming on board at Faith Alive three years ago.

Efforts to increase curriculum sales include offering churches up to 20 percent off some purchases, including the new *Dwell* curriculum, and hiring a sales representative who will talk with churches about Faith Alive's products.

Faith Alive will also seek an increase in ministry share funding. Ministry shares are offerings received from local churches that support denomination-wide ministries.

The importance churches place on curriculum from a Reformed perspective has decreased, Rice said. But that is not to say it is unimportant.

Indeed, CRC executive director Joel Boot recently posted an open letter to pastors on the Network noting that Faith Alive's curriculums follow a well-planned scope and sequence to ensure children are taught the whole redemption story with the focus on what God has done for us, rather than lessons that use Bible stories to teach moral values.

"We're confident at this point that the plans we have in place, with God's help, will lead us into a bright future," Rice said.

—Melissa Holtrop

Washington Church Supports Cloth Diapering

Members of Summitview Christian Reformed Church in Yakima, Washington, don't throw away old T-shirts. They make them into cloth diapers.



COLLEY RASMUSSEN

The church is partnering with a new nonprofit organization called Cutie Bondonie to provide cloth diapers for low-income families and educate the public about this alternative way to diaper their babies.

Suzanne Voldman, founder of Cutie Bondonie, who attends Summitview CRC said, "Our purpose is getting diapers to people who need them. There is no government assistance for diapers. Families spend sixty to one hundred dollars a month on disposable diapers."

Summitview CRC makes cloth diapers for families that need them.

Cutie Bondonie provides diaper kits containing cloth diapers made from T-shirts, diaper covers, cloth wipes, and diaper cream to moms with low income.

Andy DeKorte, pastor of the church, said, "We knew this was something we could support... everyone has old T-shirts in their closets and dressers, and even old towels and flannel blankets."

Summitview CRC members and neighbors will also participate in a "diaper derby" later this year, helping make diapers and assembling the kits.

—Amy Toornstra

Greg Scheer demonstrates African drumming techniques.



DANNA KRAAI

Worship Symposium Celebrates 25 Years

The Calvin Symposium on Worship celebrated its 25th anniversary this year with an event that drew 1,800 people from 330 countries around the world.

The three-day symposium in Grand Rapids, Mich., was organized by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the Center for Excellence in Preaching at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

It wasn't always so grand. It began in 1988 as a half-day event with 30 to 40 attendees, mostly pastors and worship leaders.

What hasn't changed is its broad content, which this year included workshops such as the Power of Story by Mark Charles, a Navajo man, and the use of African and Latin American hand percussion in worship.

This year also included over 200 high school and college students at a seminar on Planning and Leading Worship in High School Chapels.

Fewer than half of attendees are Christian Reformed, making it one of the most ecumenical events sponsored by a CRC ministry.

The symposium has also given rise to similar events in Asia, Central America, and Europe, all of which are linked to the Calvin event, the most recent of which involved 600 people in Hong Kong, including 150 people from mainland China.

"We are so grateful for 25 years of worshipping God and learning together with people from all over North America, and now also from around the world," said Kathy Smith, associate director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. "It is our prayer that Symposium will continue to be a catalyst for learning and growth in the worship lives of many people and congregations."

—Daina Kraai

Homeless for a Night

Sixty-five young people and their leaders braved cold winds and snow, sleeping in cardboard boxes in the parking lot of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Cambridge, Ontario, to raise awareness of homelessness and donations for a local food bank.

Youth from Maranatha and other local churches built shelters from cardboard and packing tape, and then moved into them for the night.

Mercedes Aldridge, 17, said, "It would be really hard [to do this every night]—we've already had difficulties—it can be cold, rainy. Already our hands are cold, and it's pretty nice out! I hope we can help people realize it's not exciting, it's not fun for people who have to live like this."

Through the event, now in its third year, organizers Curtis DeGraaf and Dina Zomer hope to make a difference in the lives of both participants and people in the city who are homeless or hungry.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Anita Brinkman



Several local media outlets covered the event, which raised awareness of homelessness.

ANITA BRINKMAN



Jenna Brooks gets ready to shoot a free throw.

Basketball with a Difference in New Jersey

Upward Basketball emphasizes healthy competition, skill building, and fun—there's no room for a "win at all costs" mentality.

The program in Wyckoff, N.J., is sponsored by four churches, including Faith Community Christian Reformed Church.

Coaches teach faith in God and respect for authority in every situation and promise equal playing time to all. Each game opens with prayer, and at half-time there are short inspirational talks on topics such as respecting fellow players, listening for God's call in your life, or giving your worries to God.

The program started seven years ago and now has 320 participants from grades 1-6.

The Brooks family—Patrick, Amy, Andrew, and Jenna—members of Faith Community, has been involved for a number of years. Andrew, 12, graduated from the program and now referees games.

Jenna, 10, said, "The coaches are nice, I make new friends, and we have fun during each game."

—Calvin Hulstein

"There's an App for That . . . in the Bible"

Over 1,100 worshipers from eight churches in the Hamilton, Mich., area—including three Christian Reformed congregations—gathered on February 19 for a combined worship service concluding a six-week joint sermon series.

The series, "There's an App for That . . . in the Bible," focused on the power of God's Word to transform lives and included such weekly themes as "trials and suffering" and "forgiveness."

Pastors from Overisel CRC, Hamilton CRC, East Saugatuck CRC, and five other churches from three denominations preached on each week's joint theme and Bible passage. In week three, the pastors participated in a pulpit exchange, each preaching at one of the other churches.

To prepare for the series, the pastors met every other week throughout the fall. "It's been really terrific working together," said John Byker, pastor of Hamilton CRC. "The highlight for all of us is our final morning worship and communion together."



COURTESY OF THE HOLLAND SENTINEL

Members from eight churches worshipping together.

"This has fostered understanding, increased levels of trust and appreciation for each other," said Kirk Vander Molen, who coordinated the series. "A stronger, unified church internally will lead to a stronger, unified witness out in the community." [MORE ONLINE](#) —Susan Vanden Berg

Texas Missional Communities Draw Young Adults

While the declining attendance of young people is a hot topic in church circles, one church in Spring, Texas, is experiencing increased attendance of young adults. Church leaders credit this to being a missional community.

New Life Christian Reformed Church recently formed a group of young adults for the distinct purpose of reaching unchurched young adults in the area. They meet for Bible study at least twice a month and often hang out or do service projects during the other weeks of the month.

A number of new Christians are becoming involved with the group. "We've really focused on relationship building. I think that's what got them in the door," reflected Robyn Bajema, the group's leader.

"A lot of people have a stigma of church people because they think they're different. The big thing with missional communities is not 'You come to us,' but rather, 'We'll come to you,'" said Bajema. "People are more likely to come to your home than they are to come to your church."

—Sarah Boonstra



Young adults from New Life CRC helped provide a wedding for one of the group members.

Write for *The Banner*!

The Banner is seeking two news writers, one in British Columbia and one in the U.S. Atlantic Northeast. 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. Email expressions of interest to news editor Gayla Postma at gpostma@crcna.org. Please include a resume or letter outlining your news writing experience and some recent samples of your work.

FAQs

Outreach

Q Does all the recent talk of the world ending offer good opportunities for evangelism?

A My sense is that Christians would do well to steer clear of end-times hysteria. It's much better to focus on the biblical hope that our God is the God of history, and that such things are in his hands.

Our call is to be faithful stewards, using the gifts and resources God has given us to further the kingdom and give God glory. To the extent that we do that, and care for this world as if it is our only world (trusting that God is going to renew it rather than destroy it), we can find much common ground that allows us to work alongside those of other or no beliefs, while still being faithful to our God on the day Christ comes again. In all likelihood, our faithfulness will prompt natural opportunities to share the hope that we have.

—Bryan Berghoef

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

Justice

Q I hear a lot about social justice in church circles, but that language is not used in the Bible. Does it mean the same as the words used for justice in the Bible?

A The Bible is clear that God loves justice, hates injustice, and calls us to do justice. But it does not include a dictionary definition. The term is interpreted in different ways by different people in different contexts.

For some, justice calls up images of laws, courts, police, and jails. The Bible clearly speaks of more than laws and correctional justice. Others might say that justice is about fairness, but then disagree about what is fair. When I feel wronged, I am fairly sure what is fair. When others make claims against me, I am less sure.

I'm beginning to regret that I was baptized as a baby and want to be baptized again.

In the Bible, justice is rooted in the teaching that every person is created, valued, and loved by God. Every person deserves to live with dignity, respect, and room to live out God's calling. We do justice when we treat people that way and create a society that treats people that way. That notion is captured in the term *social justice*. Details of what it means in any situation require further deliberation.

Some Reformed voices prefer the concept of *public justice* to describe what the Bible intends. The Christian Reformed Church has also endorsed the concept of *restorative justice*, which focuses on making broken relationships right again.

Many avoid the word *justice* altogether, preferring to simply talk about love. But love without justice is not biblical love. So we can't avoid the call to do justice.

What is clear is that we need deeper discussion about what our biblical calling to do justice really means for us in the 21st century.

—Kathy Vandergrift

Kathy Vandergrift teaches public ethics to university students and advocates for the rights of children.

Faith Formation

Q I've often gone with high school friends to a megachurch, and I've seen adult baptisms there (my friend was dunked a month ago). It seems so special. I'm beginning to regret that I was baptized as a baby, and I want to be baptized again. Should I? My dad doesn't think I should, but my mom doesn't seem to care either way.

A You're not alone in your confusion and in your desire to experience something special. It doesn't seem fair that because you

were baptized as a baby, you have no conscious memory of the event.

But desiring special spiritual experiences is not a reason to reject infant baptism. Here are two thoughts to ponder:

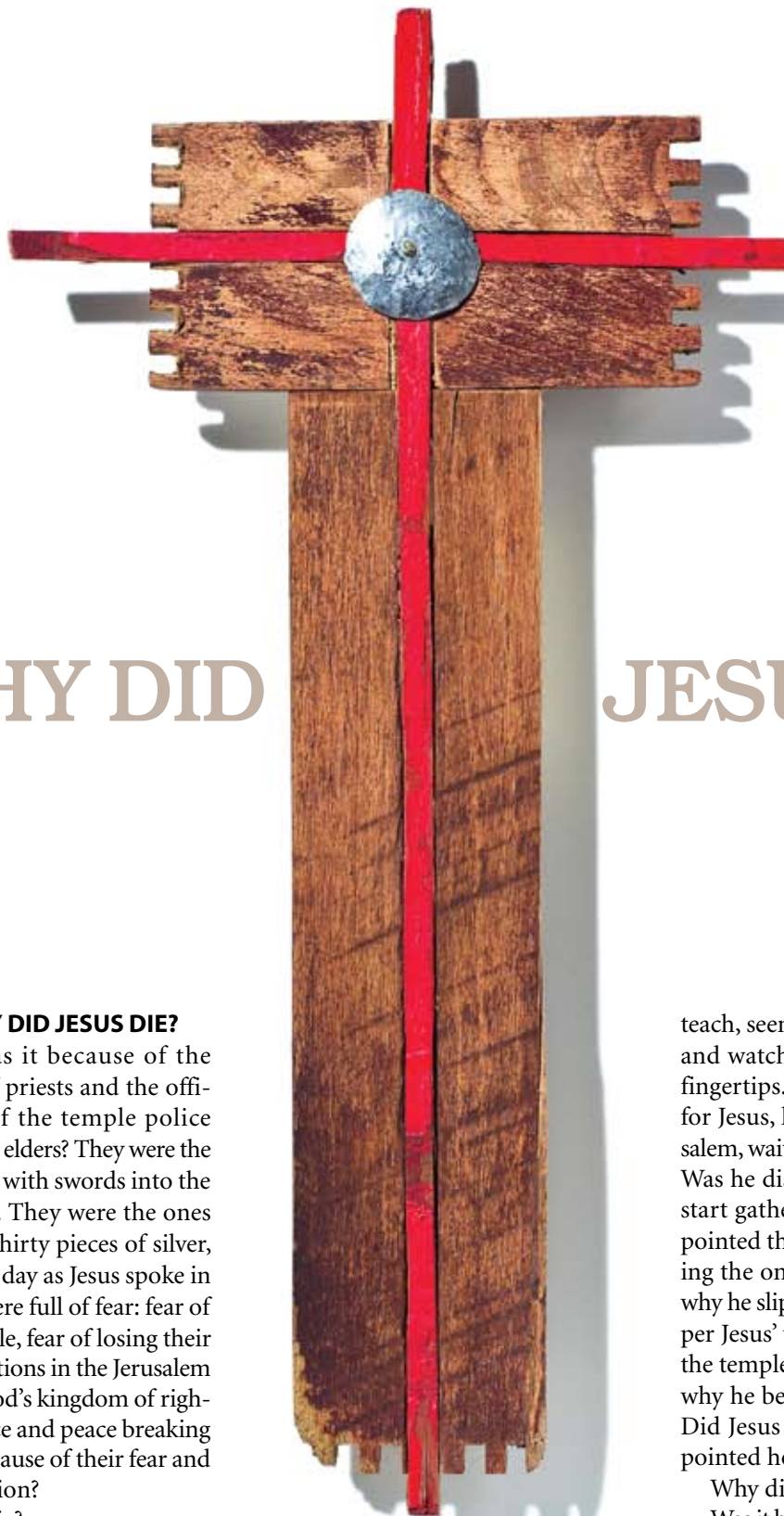
We practice infant baptism because our covenant God makes the first move, and we respond to him. Infant baptism is our way of thanking God for making the first move in the life of his precious child. When the child is able to understand God's great grace, we invite her to respond by making profession of faith.

Even so, we can enrich the experience. Having an annual "remember your baptism" service would help us to re-experience what happened when we were too young to remember. We could also use water to affirm our baptism when we make profession of faith. In the April 2011 *Banner* (check thebanner.org) I described my own struggles with infant baptism and imagined what a "remember your baptism" worship service might be like. We can strengthen our experience of baptism without also changing our theology and practice.

I wish I could take you to a coffee shop and discuss this for an hour. Is there a pastor or other spiritual leader you could meet with instead?

—Syd Hielema

Syd Hielema is professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, and a member of the CRC's Synodical Faith Formation Study Committee. ■



WHY DID

JESUS DIE?

WHY DID JESUS DIE? Was it because of the chief priests and the officers of the temple police and the elders? They were the ones who came out with swords into the dark of the garden. They were the ones who provided the thirty pieces of silver, who plotted day by day as Jesus spoke in the temple. They were full of fear: fear of a revolt by the people, fear of losing their own privileged positions in the Jerusalem hierarchy, fear of God's kingdom of righteousness and justice and peace breaking in. Did Jesus die because of their fear and jealousy and ambition?

Why did Jesus die?

Was it because of Judas, the keeper of the money, who had followed Jesus almost from the beginning? Judas had heard him

teach, seen him bring healing and hope, and watched forgiveness flow from his fingertips. Judas had been full of hopes for Jesus, keyed up on the walk to Jerusalem, waiting for the revolution to come. Was he disappointed that Jesus did not start gathering an army? Was he disappointed that this great leader was ignoring the only sure path to power? Is that why he slipped away in the night to whisper Jesus' whereabouts to the officers of the temple for 30 pieces of silver? Is that why he betrayed his master with a kiss? Did Jesus die because of Judas's disappointed hopes?

Why did Jesus die?

Was it because of the soldiers who were in charge of him overnight? They blindfolded him and beat him, saying, "Prophecy! Tell us who hit you!" Was it their glee

DID JESUS DIE BECAUSE WE SHOUTED “CRUCIFY HIM, CRUCIFY HIM!”? DID JESUS DIE BECAUSE OF US?

in having someone new to torture that carried Jesus through the night? When he arrived before the assembly of elders in the morning, he was no longer the Jewish teacher from Nazareth but a prisoner—bruised and bloody, beaten up and tortured. Did Jesus die because of the soldiers’ joy in violence?

Why did Jesus die?

Was it because of Herod? Herod had wanted to meet Jesus for a long time. Herod had hoped to see a miracle or two, perhaps even be forgiven. Herod, whose father had murdered all the boys Jesus’ age in Bethlehem, now hoped that the one who got away would entertain him. Herod, who had beheaded John the Baptist for the sake of a dance, now wished for John’s cousin to perform for him. But Jesus did nothing. Said nothing. Is that why Herod’s soldiers put the robe on him, punched him a few more times, shouted their insults in his face? Did they hope to provoke him to some sign, some wonder? Did Jesus die because he would not do signs and wonders for the king?

Why did Jesus die?

Was it because of Pilate? Pilate had ruled the Jews for a few years. He knew that at the feast of Passover, rebellious feelings ran high as Jerusalem filled with Jews from far and wide hoping for a new exodus and a new Moses.

Though Pilate could find no grounds for Jesus’ death, he became increasingly afraid of the violent crowd. Pilate had all the power and control—and no power and control. And so he had Jesus beaten and handed him over. Did Jesus die because Pilate was afraid of a revolt?

Why did Jesus die?

Was it because of the assembly of elders, both chief priest and scribes, who tried him that morning? Was it because they didn’t believe he was the Son of Man? Was it because they didn’t believe he was the Son of God? Did they think that when he said he was the Son of God that he was claiming to be the king? Or the Messiah? Or both?

They were the ones who brought him before Pilate and accused him of treason, of refusing to pay taxes to Rome. They were the ones who said that Jesus had called himself a king and who insisted that they had no king but Caesar. They were the ones who demanded that Jesus be crucified, no matter how many times Pilate tried to release him. Did Jesus die because of the hatred of the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes?

Why did Jesus die?

Was it because of the crowds? The people he had healed, the people he had forgiven? The people he had freed from demons, the people he had fed? The ones who had listened to his stories, the ones with whom he had eaten? The people who wanted to make Jesus king waved palms as he approached Jerusalem. Had they drawn too much attention to him at the start?

Later, when they saw him, beaten up and tortured, it was the crowd who shouted, “Crucify him, crucify him!” It was the crowd who called for the release of Barabbas. Who cared if he had murdered someone? At least he knew how to resist the Romans! Did Jesus die because the crowd wanted him to be a different kind of king?

Why did Jesus die?

Was it because of us? Was it because of the way we share in this story? Was it because we share the fear and jealousy and ambition of the chief priests and the officers of the temple police? Was it because we share the disappointed hopes of Judas when it comes to the plan of God? Was it because we take joy in the violence the soldiers demonstrated? Did Jesus die because, like Herod, we favor entertainment over justice? Or did he die because, like Pilate, we prefer to keep the peace rather than do what we know to be right?

Did Jesus die because of our hatred? Because we too want a different kind of king to rule over this world? Did Jesus die because we shouted “Crucify him, crucify him!”? Did Jesus die because of us?

Why did Jesus die?

Was it because of God? God, who made a covenant with a sinful and broken world. God, who promised that someday blessing would come to all people through the offspring of Abraham. God, who refused to give up on people, coming in love again and again to woo them back to himself. God, whose heart had broken over the sin and brokenness and despair that filled the creation.

God knew there was no way his wayward people could ever bring about healing and wholeness on their own. He knew there was no way they could get rid of the evil in their midst; he knew there was just one way: to offer himself up in love. Did Jesus die because of the love of God?

Why did Jesus die?

Maybe Jesus died because of it all: the hatred, the jealousy, the disappointment, the fear, the love of violence and entertainment. Because of us all: soldiers, rulers, elders, disciples, followers, mothers, fathers, children—sinners all.

But most of all, Jesus died because of God’s deep, deep love for the world—a love so deep that he gave his life to bring peace to us and to all creation.

Why did Jesus die?

Because of love. Because of love. ■



Sylvia C. Keesmaat teaches biblical studies at the Toronto School of Theology. She is a member of Lindsay (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church.



Practicing **Resurrection** Where It Matters Most

UNLIKE CHRISTMAS, our culture doesn't seem to care much about Easter. There's only so much retailers can do with chocolate eggs and bunnies, although the fashion industry does count on significant interest in new dresses for women and girls. But when was the last time you saw an empty tomb display in somebody's front yard? Everyone knows when Christmas is, but we have to check our calendars to find out when Easter falls each year.

In the church, though, it's a different story. Preachers, worship coordinators, choir directors, praise teams, visual arts committees, and Sunday school kids are all gearing up. For many churches, Easter is *the* event of the year. More than any other Sunday of the year, it's the time when guests, former members, occasional attenders, and prodigal sons and daughters show up in church. There's pressure to sustain the Alleluia momentum as long as possible.

Believe me, I know. This will be my 34th Easter as a pastor.

So we get the word out as effectively as we know how. A large display ad in the local paper. Invitation cards to pass out

to friends, neighbors, coworkers, or classmates. Easter egg hunts on the front lawn of the church.

I'm on board with the Alleluia extravagance. The resurrection of Jesus is, after all, at the heart of the good news. The fact that Christ was raised from the dead was the ultimate game-changer for a world gripped by the power of death—not just death as life's last move, but in the biblical sense of a pervasive power that drags life down. Of course we should embellish our celebration of Easter!

Perhaps all of Holy Week will be inspiring and exhilarating, culminating with an Easter morning service that sends chills up our spines. And maybe we'll wonder how we might capture that excitement all year long. What if every Sunday could rouse us like Easter does?

But then on Monday morning we'll get up and go back to the daily grind. Perhaps the glow will carry over for a day or two. But all too soon we'll find ourselves submerged by the mundane and the utterly unglamorous, with Easter fading out of sight in the rearview mirror.

This raises a critically important question. Where is our greatest Easter impact? The amount of time, energy, creativity, and imagination we invest in planning and conducting Easter Sunday worship services seems to indicate that they are our most effective witness. How better to “get the word out” than to fill the pews on Easter Sunday? If these services can’t stir people and open their eyes and hearts to the power of the resurrection, what can?

The truth is that, for a growing number of our neighbors, it doesn’t matter *how* grand our Easter worship is, how polished our sermons, how inspiring our praise teams. That’s because they aren’t coming to church—period. They are far too immersed in the Final Four or the opening of the baseball season or enjoying Spring Break on a Gulf Shore beach.

So what’s the most effective way to leverage our influence and “get the word out” to these neighbors? It’s by practicing resurrection in our daily work.

Think about it. For most adult Christ-followers in North America, work is the primary arena for practicing discipleship and displaying a Christian witness. Assuming a career of 40

- *We practice resurrection in the diligence and competence we bring to our daily work.* The average American worker wastes more than two hours a day, which adds up to \$759 billion a year in lost productivity. Web surfing and workplace socializing are the main culprits. Absenteeism and lateness cost the U.S. and Canadian economies more than \$100 billion each year! As those who share in God’s new creation, we live by a kingdom ethic. We bring diligence and competence to our work, and in so doing we help restore our workplaces to what God intends them to be.
- *We practice resurrection in the way we influence the workplace environment.* Approximately half of all workers in North America are unhappy with their jobs. While there are a variety of reasons for this, one of the major factors is unhappiness with the workplace environment. Consider the devastating impact of such widespread unhappiness: growing cynicism and frustration, eroding self-confidence, and the effect these have on spouses, families, and friends. What a strategic calling we have to give our work environment a new creation shape! Whatever our position, we can cultivate

It doesn’t matter how grand our Easter worship is, how polished our sermons, how inspiring our praise teams.

years and an average work-week of 50 hours, we spend more than 100,000 hours in the workplace! By comparison, even the most active church member devotes only about 5,000 hours to church activity over that same 40-year period.

Let that sink in. For every hour we are called to follow Jesus in church activity, we are called to follow him for more than 20 hours in our occupations as trash collectors, corporate CEOs, small-business owners, assembly line workers, middle managers, farmers, truck drivers, teachers, accountants, baristas, homemakers, students, or volunteers.

There simply is no other arena where we have as great an opportunity to witness to the transforming power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than in our workplaces.

This is the gloriously good news of Easter: God raised Jesus from the grave on the third day. By baptism we share not only in Christ’s death but in his resurrection. In him we are raised to new life—the very thing our baptism signifies (Rom. 6:4).

Christ’s resurrection signals the beginning of God’s new creation: “The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Cor 5:17). Which means we not only live new lives by the power of the resurrection, but we also participate in God’s new creation by the power of the resurrection.

New world. Renewal of creation. Restoration of creation. New era of recovery. All of these phrases capture the transforming consequences of Easter. All point to our strategic calling and opportunity to point people to the meaning of the resurrection in our daily lives.

So what might this look like in our daily work?

conditions that convey to our fellow workers that they are known and that their work is valued. By practicing resurrection in our workplaces, we witness to the transforming power of Easter.

- *We practice resurrection in the values we espouse.* For many, the workplace is an environment of temptation, disrespect, abuse, selfishness, manipulation, dishonesty, unbridled competition, and vindictiveness. By the power of the resurrection, we have “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24). We practice resurrection in our workplaces when we exhibit values like integrity, modesty, humility, service, and purity, becoming light and salt in places that are often dark and decaying.

Let me say it again: there is no area of life where we can leverage the transforming, game-changing, life-renewing power of the resurrection with such practical impact as in our daily work—whether that work takes place at home, in an office, or elsewhere. It would be wonderful if all our neighbors would join us in church for our fabulous resurrection celebrations. But they won’t. Instead, we display the transforming resurrection power of Easter every time we do the work we’re called to do.

That’s practicing resurrection where it matters most. ■



Ken Baker is a pastor at Third CRC of Kalamazoo and the author of *What Do I Do With My Life? Serving God through Work* (Faith Alive). The expression “practicing resurrection” comes from Eugene Peterson’s book of the same title.

A Ministry of Encouragement

by Chris Meehan

Moses Chung, director of Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM), recalls a day many years ago when a disheveled-looking man walked into the office of his church in California.

The man was obviously upset, so Chung asked him to sit down and simply listened to him vent. When the man finished, he looked at Chung and admitted that he had walked into the church hoping to get some money. But he had realized that what he really wanted was to talk to someone who would listen.

The Power of Listening

Chung, who also served as a pastor at a large church in Korea before being chosen to lead CRHM, says that listening to people and paying attention, trying to discern what they need, has always been an important aspect of his ministry.

“Even though we are all sinners and need the grace of God every day, every human being is a glorious creation of

God, and we need to pay attention to them,” he says.

In recent months, Chung has spent a good deal of time visiting with and listening to a wide range of Christian Reformed congregations, CRHM supporters, and others across North America, trying to understand what churches need.

Some of what Chung learned has been disturbing. He had a good idea before he started the visits that some churches were in trouble, he says. But now he understands that many congregations are in crisis as they—like churches in many other North American denominations—struggle to respond to the complex challenges of a globalized world.

Anxiety and Confusion

Chung says that a sizeable portion of CRC congregations and their leaders feel deep anxiety and confusion about the future and are wondering how they will be able



to survive in this new time of challenges and change.

Many churches, Chung says, have an aging membership. Meanwhile, young people and young families are leaving or not joining. Sometimes this has resulted in congregations closing their doors.

He also learned that churches are perplexed and unsure of how to best use rapid technological advances for ministry. Social changes such as the growth of pluralistic and often anti-Christian movements have taken their toll as well, calling the Christian faith into question.

“It is sobering to think of what is happening to churches in North America,” Chung says. “We no longer have as much of a voice or impact on society at large.”

The CRC and its agencies are also in a time of great transition, he adds. CRHM, as well as others, must find ways to work in a “church and mission context” that is



Moses Chung

Born: Incheon, South Korea

Family: wife, Eunae, and children Alvin and Jewel

Education: Calvin College, 1993; Calvin Theological Seminary, M.Div. 1999

Churches Served:

Minister of discipleship, First CRC, Bellflower, Calif., 1999-2003

Associate pastor, New Life Community Church (RCA), Artesia, Calif., 2003-2007

Executive pastor, Sooyoungro Presbyterian Church, Busan Korea, 2007-2011

Passion: “To see God’s Spirit move in all hearts and lives, young and old.” ■

You add.
God multiplies.

“We want to help churches flourish in God’s mission to reach and bless our neighborhoods.”

much different today than it was 20 or 30 years ago.

“We are in a new world, where our traditional ways of being and doing church with a European, monoethnic denominational church background raises some hard questions about our identity and what we are to do as an agency,” says Chung.

Responding to Hard Questions

Based on what he has learned, Chung is in the process of crafting a mission that seriously considers and responds to the hard questions about identity and ministry.

He is convinced, he says, that this should not be a time of despair but of hope. He acknowledges the distress churches are experiencing, but Home Missions is also looking at the challenges as “abundant opportunities.”

Creative prayer-led programs and actions will allow CRHM to continue living out its mandate to “lead the CRC in its task of bringing the gospel to the people of North America, drawing them into fellowship with Christ and his church.”

Seeking God’s Will

As part of its strategy, CRHM will be emphasizing the ministry of prayer by encouraging and helping agency leaders and others to develop their own lives of meaningful prayer and to join others in prayer to discern God’s will.

“Discern is the key word,” says Chung. “Discerning God’s will for us by seeking his face in prayer is a key for Home Missions and the denomination. We need to pray because we want to listen, because it is not about what we want to do, but what God wants to do in and through us.”



In the next several months, Home Missions plans to explore creative ways of approaching church planting and campus ministries—ministries for which the agency is well known. It also will continue its work in the areas of prayer, leadership development, Coffee Break programs, and discipleship, as well as through grants to partner ministries.

In addition, says Chung, CRHM will invest energy in developing pastors who encourage people in their congregations to participate in God’s mission for North America right in their own communities.

“We want to help churches flourish in God’s mission to reach and bless our neighborhoods.”

He says CRHM will provide resources and coaches to help pastors and churches recognize their great potential and will

help them to use their potential to grow and expand their ministries.

“I believe the CRC has been blessed richly with so many buried treasures—congregations are filled with people deeply dedicated and devoted to the causes of Christ’s kingdom,” Chung says.

CRC members across North America are, among other things, helping the homeless, educating inner-city children and recent immigrants, serving and encouraging people who are poor, and providing disaster relief.

But there is much more to be done.

Cultivating Movements

In a broad sense, CRHM is developing the vision of being an agent of prayer and encouragement for all CRC congregations and institutions in North America.

“We need to tap into and follow the movement of what God is doing,” says Chung.

“We need to take the posture of coming alongside churches (and institutions), whether they are new or older, of listening to them and helping to reawaken people to the large God we profess.

“I believe that we have the chance to help catalyze and cultivate the movements of God in our church and to play a role in bringing the kingdom of God alive on this earth.” ■



Chris Meehan is news and media relations manager for CRC Communications.

Campus Pastor Explores ‘Big Questions’

There’s a reason why Sam Lee is passionate about reaching young people with the gospel.

“I came to faith in Christ when I was a student at Dalhousie University,” Lee says. “Just like it was for me, university is a time when most students ask a lot of big questions about life, about God.”

Lee has turned his passion into a profession, leading a new part-time Home Missions-supported campus ministry at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Richmond, B.C. The university has more than 20,000 students.

The campus ministry started when Lee was leading a small group for young people at The Tapestry, a church plant in



Campus pastor Sam Lee

Richmond started with help from Home Missions.

As campus pastor, he’s working to connect the church and campus, as well as to open students’ minds to Christ. Sometimes both of those goals align. “I started a spiritual discussion group called ‘The Wisdom of Each Other,’ which attracted a good crowd of people from different faiths,” he says. “Afterward, a Chinese Buddhist student said he’d be interested in attending a church to meet more young people! So I invited him to The Tapestry.”

While that student hasn’t yet come to The Tapestry, he has shown up to the discussion group again. “It’s all about building relationships,” says Lee. ■

Home Missions at a Glance

- Serves 1,080 churches
- Through the CRC and individual supporters, provides grant funding to 120+ ministries in the U.S. and Canada
- Includes seven regional teams and four ethnic leaders and advisers
- Connects with 47 classes through regional, ethnic, and goal specialist leaders
- Currently provides financial assistance to 80 new churches
- Supports 34 campus ministries
- Provides Leadership Development Networks and pastor/ministry team clusters
- Active in 500 Christian Reformed churches and nearly 400 churches from other denominations through Coffee Break and other Home Missions-supported small group ministries ■

From Darkness to Light

The corner of 8th Street and Butler was a dark place for Anthony, a Philadelphia man in his mid-60s. It’s where the former drug addict spent many years dealing drugs. “The drug capital of the world,” he calls it.

But God’s light also fills that corner. Nearby is 8th Street Community Church, a Home Missions-supported ministry where Anthony met Jesus. Now, Anthony prays every day. “I’m blessed to wake up every morning,” he says. “God is truly good.”

8th Street Community Church is one of a cluster of eight new churches



Anthony is a member of 8th Street Community Church.

spawned by an established church, Spirit and Truth Fellowship.

Pastor Andy Kim is one example of dozens of new leaders called to live among people who

are poor and marginalized in this urban pocket of North Philadelphia.

This is where, every day, they can meet people like Anthony. ■

You add.
God multiplies.



Rev. Nathan Visker

Coaching Congregational Leaders

To help his church reach out better to the local community, Rev. Nathan Visker, pastor of Ferrysburg Community Christian Reformed Church in Spring Lake, Mich., didn't have to look far.

Visker turned to the Home Missions Great Lakes regional team, which uses coaching to help ministry leaders discern God's call for their ministry.

The Great Lakes team connected Visker with a coach, Rev. Jeff Boersma from nearby Muskegon. Boersma worked with Visker to identify and strengthen some of the church's missional ministries. Visker was able to focus more on the church's letter-writing ministry to prisoners, a meals program for local residents, and congregational prayer and discernment.

"Meeting with my coach helped me gain clarity around the role I play in my church. More importantly, it helped me identify next steps and tasks that needed to be achieved," says Visker. "Although I could have done some of this on my own, I know I wouldn't have. I found the perspective, encouragement, and accountability I needed to get me going again." ■

Home Missions Ministry Teams



- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 Western Canada
<i>Martin Contant</i> | 4 Great Lakes
<i>Ben Becksvoort</i> | 7 West Coast
<i>Arlan VandenBos</i> |
| 2 Eastern Canada
<i>Adrian Van Giessen</i> | 5 Central US
<i>Peter Kelder</i> | Ethnic Leaders
<i>Stanley Jim</i> |
| 3 Eastern US
<i>Drew Angus</i> | 6 West Central US
<i>Jerry Holleman</i> | <i>Tong Park</i> |
| | | <i>Bob Price</i> |
| | | <i>Javier Torres</i> |

For complete information on Home Missions' regional, ethnic, and other leaders, go to www.crhm.org.

SOMETHING 2 SHARE

We all have something to share, something that is filled with hope, with life. It's the gospel of Jesus. But we have to be willing to share the gospel message personally and directly in our neighborhoods in North America and communities worldwide.

This spring, Home Missions and World Missions are once again partnering to help churches celebrate the period from Easter to Pentecost (Sunday, April 8, through Sunday, May 27).

The agencies have developed the following free resources for churches around the theme "Something 2 Share":

- Easter bulletins and inserts for Home Missions and Pentecost bulletins and inserts for World Missions (all materials available in English, Korean, and Spanish)
- DVD with two videos (one from Home Missions and one from World Missions)
- Poster
- Children's bulletin masters
- Bulletin announcements

To watch an inspiring video and find out more, visit www.crcna.org/something2share. ■

—Ben Van Houten

The Christ Folks

Hoi *christiano*i—that’s what they were called. Somebody just dreamed up the name. No one knows for sure whether it was meant as a compliment or an insult.

The anonymous citizen of Antioch who first mouthed those syllables either meant to refer to believers as those annoying folks who behaved so much like Jesus that you could call them “Jesus people.” Or he or she meant to say, with a real sense of admiration, “Those are the folks who behave so much like Jesus that you understand Jesus better just by being around them.”

Whether it was said in contempt or as a compliment, I suggest that this was the moment when the church first confronted the challenge of “home missions.”

It happened in Antioch, the third-largest city in the Roman Empire, home of the first largely Gentile church, the one from which three of Paul’s missionary journeys were launched. The gospel grabbed such a hold on folks there that their neighbors began to call them “Christ’s people”: “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” (Acts 11:26).

It’s happening in cities across our continent today. People just like the members of that church in Antioch are so in love with the Christ who gave his life for them that they not only represent him in the world—they represent him *to* the world. They not only speak his words, they reenact them. They not only accept his compassion, they share it. They not only know his commission (Matt. 28:16-20), they obey it. And wherever that happens there are churches where folks are rightly labeled “Christ’s people.”

In a world where any distance can be traveled in hours and communication is almost instant with almost anyone almost anywhere, there are still places we call home. In those places, we are called to follow and act like Jesus, to be “Christ-people.” What a challenge! What a privilege! What a responsibility!

“The gospel grabbed such a hold on folks in Antioch that their neighbors began to call them ‘Christ’s people.’”



The agency we familiarly call Home Missions is not only designed for but devoted to making that happen. Read these pages to see how and where, and pray that God will not only bless the current efforts but future ones as well.

Pray that we will be so held by Jesus that others will want to be also. Pray that we, Christ’s people everywhere in North America, will so act and speak like him that those around us will take note not only that we have been with Jesus but that they are with Jesus when they are with us.

In April (16-18) the entire Christian Reformed denomination—pastors, parishioners, prayer coordinators, and denominational leaders and functionaries—are invited by the Korean Council, with the encouragement and assistance of Home Missions, to gather in Los Angeles to pray.

This will be a prayer summit sponsored by the Korean Council as a gift to the Christian Reformed Church (and ultimately a gift to God) in gratitude for the Christlike way our Korean brothers and sisters have been treated by the CRC.

It is a historic first. Never before have we all been invited to get on our knees together in one place. From all quarters of our denomination, we will gather to bow and ask God to make us truly “the Christ-people.” If you cannot join in person, you can join on your knees wherever you are, in many locations by simulcast, or even after the fact by watching portions of the event on DVD.

With the afterglow of Easter resurrection burning in our hearts and the anticipation of Pentecost power urging us on, we will together ask God to renew us and revive us. We will pray that God will make possible what happened so dramatically in Antioch—right where we live and worship and pray and learn and work. We will pray that what happened first in Antioch will be repeated across North America and around the world, wherever there is a believer who calls that place home.

Will you, with me, ask God to help us pray—both that we will be “the Christ-people” today and that God will graciously answer that prayer? ■



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

You add.
God multiplies.

BTGMI's Lucille, a character on *Kids Corner*.

Questions Kids Ask Lucille

When 10-year-old Alisha's friend was spreading rumors about her, Alisha wrote to ask advice from Lucille, her radio friend from *Kids Corner*, a media ministry of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI).

With financial support from the Christian Reformed Church's Ministry Shares program, ReFrame Media, the English outreach of BTGMI, produces the weekly *Kids Corner* audio program. It also makes web space available so kids like Alisha can get answers to their questions.

Lucille—with help from *Kids Corner* producer Barb Brouwer—suggested to Alisha that she first pray and talk to her mother about the problem and then tell her friend how spreading rumors made her feel.

A few weeks later Alisha reported: "You got me and my friend to be friends again. Thank you."

Besides being a character on *Kids Corner*, Lucille also hosts a web program called "What's Bothering You?"

Young people listen to *Kids Corner* on the website *KidsCorner.net* and then ask questions, explains Brouwer. "We



regularly get questions for Lucille and other characters on the program to answer."

Responses are given in one-minute audio spots. "Kids go to a special page on our website (*lizradio.net*) to hear the answers to their questions," says Brouwer.

Friendship is a frequent topic.

"Sometimes my friends do stuff without inviting me, and I feel left out," wrote one young listener. Another wrote, "How can I make a new friend?" Still another, "How can I tell my friend not to talk on her cell phone the whole time we are together?"

Family relationships are also an issue: "My little brother is bugging me; what can I do?" and "My cousin is a tattletale about things that aren't even true. How can I get her to stop?"

Answering these questions is important, Brouwer says. At the same time, "We love the opportunity to address their questions on spiritual topics: What's heaven like; is there stuff to do?" "Can you tell me how to pray?" "My sister says she doesn't know if she believes in Jesus. What do I say to her?" "What's so special about the Bible?" "How can I tell my friends about Jesus?" ■

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

Prof Wins Award for Exemplary Teaching

Calvin College professor of chemistry Larry Louters is the recipient of the school's 2012 Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching—the highest honor Calvin bestows on a faculty member.

"Larry has been the lead faculty member in our department to build the biochemistry program," said chemistry professor Roger De Kock. "He just gets things done."

Louters grew up in the small town of Hollandale in southern Minnesota near the Iowa border. He attended and played basketball at Dordt



Larry Louters performs a fiery experiment.

College (his coach was Calvin kinesiology professor emeritus Jim Timmer), where he still holds the single-season record with 12.9 rebounds per game during the 1970-71 season.

He graduated with a bachelor of science degree in chemistry and went on to earn a master's degree in

organic chemistry from the University of Minnesota in 1974 and a Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of Iowa in 1984.

He started teaching at Calvin in 1984 on a two-year contract. Midway through Louters's first semester, one of his colleagues was diagnosed with cancer and was

unable to continue teaching. Louters filled in and, following the death of his colleague, was selected from a field of candidates for the position.

"I think what I really like about teaching is the puzzle of figuring out where the students [are] and helping them to understand," he said.

"When students come into my office and we sit down with a pen and paper to figure something out—that's a fun thing to me."

Louters is also a researcher. His current work, focusing on a protein involved in the transport of glucose into cells, could have implications for cancer and diabetes research. ■

—Myrna Anderson,
Calvin Communications

Finding God in the Deep Oceans

Michael Williams says he experienced the grace of God in a powerful and intense way while serving on a United States Navy submarine.

Patrolling underwater and filled with this amazing experience of grace, Williams says he felt and followed a calling from God to spend long hours studying the Bible.

Now a professor of Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS), Williams recalls the significance of the time he spent learning about Jesus in the recesses of the ocean in a new book titled *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture*.

Published by Zondervan, the book reflects the journey of understanding that Williams began on the submarine. He leads readers on a tour through each book of the Bible, in part showing how stories, prophecies, events, and personalities in the Old Testament all point to the coming of Christ and the salvation he brought.

Williams wrote the book not simply as a scholarly endeavor but as a resource to help Bible teachers, ministry leaders, Bible study groups, students, and others to better comprehend what he has come to see as the majestic, God-driven flow of biblical history.

Meanwhile, Dean B. Deppe, professor of New Testament at CTS, has also written a book with a biblical theme: *All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry into the*

Bible. The book is published by Eerdmans.

Deppe served several Christian Reformed congregations as pastor and has also taught in a variety of settings, including in Classis Red Mesa in New Mexico, Asian Theological Seminary in the Philippines, and now at CTS.

Deppe's book focuses on eight different methods biblical scholars use—from analyzing literary, grammatical, and

structural elements to investigating historical and cultural backgrounds to exploring the history of interpretation.

He explains each approach in a user-friendly way, using examples from Old and New Testament texts. Every chapter concludes with practical, text-based questions for study and discussion. ■

—Calvin Theological Seminary Communications

Elsie's Quest

Elsie Vander Weit was born with cerebral palsy more than 60 years ago in the Netherlands.

While the condition causes involuntary muscle movement and imposes physical limitations, it has played a role in building her relationship with God and inspired her to serve as a long-time advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).

Her story and those of three other CRC members are included in the new book *Amazing Gifts: Stories of Faith, Disability, and Inclusion*. Published by the Alban Institute, the book by religion writer Mark Pinsky recounts the stories of people such as Elsie whose faith has helped them deal with their disabilities.

In the book, Vander Weit describes what it meant to be the daughter of loving, committed parents who brought her up in the CRC. "I'm thankful I had the kind of parents I did," she says. "They treated me normally."

Her parents were Dutch immigrants who arrived in the U.S. with a strong faith in God and \$200 in their pockets. They settled in northern New Jersey.

Vander Weit says her upbringing helped to shape the great love she has for God and sustained her through times of physical and emotional difficulties.

She also speaks of how, as she grew up, she dreamed of being able to attend college and go on to seminary. But at that time those opportunities weren't available to her.

With the help of the CRC's ministry shares program, the Office of Disability Concerns has helped Vander Weit to fulfill her dream of becoming involved in ministry—in her case, advocating to include persons with disabilities into the church.

"I'm thankful for how the Lord has provided direction for me in my life," she says. ■

—Chris Meehan, CRC Communications

Elsie Vander Weit



You add.
C... ..

Children at the local market.



Saper Vedere: 'Knowing How to See'

Jose Armas grew up in a crime-infested neighborhood in one of Guatemala City's most notorious zones.

Although Armas could have left the community, he chose to stay.

As part of a gathering of leaders involved in the Christian Reformed World Missions supported "Strategy of Transformation" network, Armas recently spoke of how he has been able to see beyond difficult situations and, by following the Spirit of God, help bring about healing and hope.

He told how seeing hungry children in his neighborhood stirred him to action. By seeing what *could be* rather than what *was*, he envisioned feeding

hungry kids by going to a local market every week and igniting generosity in the hearts of fellow Guatemalans who worked there.

Initially, market vendors laughed at Armas for asking them to donate fruits and vegetables to poor children they had never met.

However, after a few months, their hearts changed. Armas now fills a pickup truck and a trailer with donated supplies every week for 400 children.

How did this come about? It is all connected to *Saper Vedere*.

Leonard Sweet, in his book *Summoned to Lead*, described an ad campaign called "Leonardo da Vinci: The Art of Seeing." It centered on *Saper Vedere*, da

Vinci's belief in the significance of "knowing how to see."

To da Vinci, seeing was a hard-to-describe, even mystical process that enables artists to not simply paint what they see, but also to have the vision for what they paint.

With *Saper Vedere* in mind, Christian Reformed World Missions seeks to work in Guatemala City, encouraging leaders to see their city as a living, breathing, ever-growing library of wisdom that func-

tions in real time and is accessible to those who are willing to learn.

As leaders like Armas teach, it is important to see beyond the deficits in hard places and celebrate community and neighborhood assets, which are the result of the Spirit already at work—the Spirit who is way ahead of us, working without our help. ■

—Joel Van Dyke,
Christian Reformed
World Missions

Stove Project Saves Trees in Senegal

A group of brightly attired women is busy preparing an afternoon meal in the village of Mborurokh Cissé.

This scene, played out daily across Africa, is taking on a new look in rural Senegal thanks to the efforts of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) to encourage cooking with Jambaar stoves.

Use of the stoves is one way CRWRC and its local partner, the Beer-Sheba project, a faith-based environmental advocacy organization, is addressing Senegal's severe "degradation of natural resources."

"Wood is so difficult to purchase in Senegal; that



A woman in the village of Mborurokh Cissé uses a Jambaar stove.

stove has really helped the women in my family," said Mor Cissé, village chief and new owner of a Jambaar cooking stove.

Traditionally women in Senegal cook on open fires of wood or charcoal. Because the fire is not contained, much of the heat is lost during cooking. Additional wood or charcoal must be added often.

This wood was once plentiful, but the forests of Senegal have been severely depleted, creating many environmental problems and causing the cost of wood to soar.

The metal Jambaar stoves are lined with a thick layer of clay, saving fuel by generating more heat and retaining it

much longer than open-fire cooking methods.

"Without the stove, we were putting wood into the fire from all sides," Cissé said. "Now it only takes two little sticks to do the same amount of cooking."

Since each stove costs as much as \$18 USD, putting it out of reach for many families, CRWRC and Beer-Sheba have encouraged the formation of savings groups.

Members contribute about \$1.11 each month to an account, enabling the group to purchase one stove per month until all the members have a stove. ■

—David Snyder, freelance
writer for CRWRC

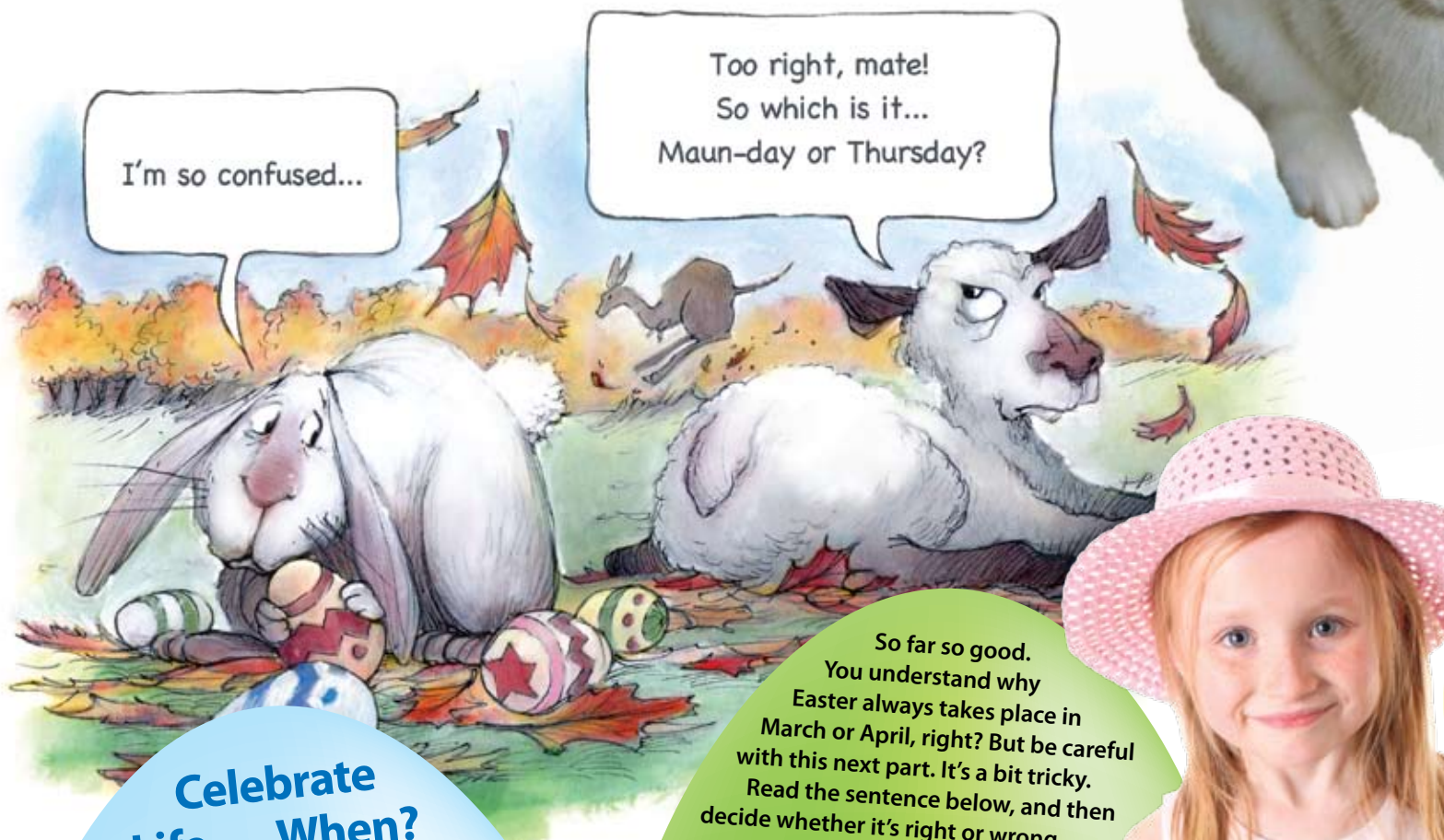
Celebrate New Life . . . Forever!

Grab a pencil and open your Bible before you read these pages—you'll need them in a minute. Then think about this: What's special about Sunday, April 3, A.D. 33? Here's a big hint: We're soon going to celebrate what happened on that day.

Got it? Of course! Sunday, April 3, A.D. 33, was the very first Easter. (There's some argument about that among calendar experts, but we'll go with that date.) So on April 3 you can say, "On this exact date, almost two thousand

years ago, Jesus walked out of his tomb."

Before the first Easter, many people celebrated the new life of springtime. Now we celebrate new life . . . forever!



Celebrate Life . . . When?

Why do we always celebrate Easter in March or April? Look up the Bible passages and fill in the blanks.

1. Jesus was in Jerusalem to celebrate _____ (Mark 14:1).
2. _____ (same word as previous blank) was always held on the _____ month (Exodus 12:2) of the Jewish year. That month is now called Nissan.
3. On Jewish calendars, Nissan always occurs during the months we call March and/or April. So Easter always occurs in _____ and/or _____.

So far so good. You understand why Easter always takes place in March or April, right? But be careful with this next part. It's a bit tricky. Read the sentence below, and then decide whether it's right or wrong.

Easter always takes place in spring.

- right
 wrong

If you checked "wrong"—you're right! The first Easter occurred during springtime in Israel. Easter occurs during spring in North America, Europe, and all northern countries (those that are north of the equator).

But southern countries (south of the equator) have opposite seasons. March and April are fall months in Australia, New Zealand, and most of Africa. So Easter there is always during autumn.

In March and/or April, only half of the world celebrates the new life of springtime. But the whole world can celebrate the new life forever of Easter!



Bunnies, Chicks, and Eggs?

For centuries, many people who live in northern countries have used bunnies, chicks, and eggs as symbols of Easter. They are reminders of the new life that pops up during spring. That's why bunnies, chicks, and eggs are good symbols of new life. Christians adopted these symbols for Easter but added a deeper meaning. We say that bunnies, chicks, and eggs remind us of new life forever . . . eternal life. But what about a lamb instead of bunnies, chicks, and eggs? Read on.

The Paschal Lamb

Some European people use a lamb as an Easter symbol.

Paschal comes from the word Passover. So the lamb symbol at Easter isn't just any lamb. It's the Passover Lamb, Jesus! That symbol comes straight from the Bible. Look up these Bible passages and fill in the blanks:

1. Go at once and . . . slaughter the _____ on . . . the _____ . . . put some of the _____ . . . and he doorframe. The Lord . . . will see the _____ . . . and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and _____ . (Exodus 12:21-23)
 2. "Look, the _____ of _____, who takes away the _____ of the _____!" (John 1:29)
 3. For Christ, our _____, who was _____, to receive (1 Corinthians 5:7)
 4. "Worthy is the _____, who was _____, to receive power . . . and honor and glory and praise!" (Revelation 5:12)
- The lamb is really a Good Friday symbol, not an Easter symbol. But we can't celebrate Easter before Good Friday. The paschal lamb is a symbol for the whole story. We don't really need a symbol for Easter. We have the real, living Jesus!

No Easter?

No major religion—except Christianity—believes that its leader rose from the dead. So all other religions follow a leader who is dead and buried. Only Christians follow a leader who lives. Only Christians celebrate Easter.

And if Christ has not been _____, your faith has been _____. (1 Corinthians 15:17) But Christ has indeed _____ from the _____, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:20)

What's "Maundy"?

You've heard of **Maundy Thursday**, right? On the first Maundy Thursday, Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples and then washed their feet. But what does *Maundy* mean? Why is it called *Maundy Thursday*?

Take a minute to read **John 13:34**. Write at least the first five words of the verse on this line:

_____.

You wrote those words in English, didn't you? If you lived many, many years ago, you probably would have written them in Latin. That's because some of the very first Bibles were written in Latin. People understood Latin back then.

In Latin, verse 34 begins *Mandatum novum*, which means "A new command."

Look at that word *mandatum* for a minute. You can see how *mandatum* could change to *maundatum* over hundreds of years. In English the word is shortened to *Maundy* instead of *Mandatum Day*. Even though the word changed a bit, it still stands for "command."

What we call it isn't all that important, but the new command is. What is that command? Fill in the blanks here:

A new command I give you: _____ one another. As I have _____ you, so you must _____ one another. (John 13:34)



Joanne De Jonge is a freelance writer and a former U.S. National Park Ranger. She attends West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.



Wordfest

TUNED IN

DO YOU REMEMBER WALKING through the gates of a fair when you were a child? The smells of elephant ears and corn dogs, the calls of barkers and jaunty music, the swirling lights and snapping flags pulled your eager self in every direction at once.

That's the effect Calvin College's biennial Festival of Faith and Writing has on lovers of the written word. So many delights, so little time!

At the 2012 Festival, Calvin's own Gary Schmidt will set the celebration in motion Thursday at noon after an opening chapel. A 2011 National Book Award finalist for *Okay for Now*, Schmidt is as masterful a storyteller in person as he is in print. That event sends festivalgoers out to sample concurrent offerings spread over a field wide in both literary and spiritual dimensions.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, a film nominated for two Oscars this year, was first a book. Author Jonathan Safran Foer will deliver Thursday evening's keynote address.

Much beloved for her novel *Gilead*, Marilynne Robinson comes with a new book, the title of which might describe every attendee: *When I Was a Child, I Read Books*. She'll speak at Friday evening's keynote and other concurrent sessions.

On all three days of the festival, Calvin Theatre Company will present Walt Wangerin's fabled *Book of the Dun Cow*, adapted for the stage, with Wangerin available for discussion.

Seventeen more writers of fiction will be talking about their art. Then there are the poets, among them the winsome Li-Young Lee and festival *grande dame* Luci Shaw.

Memoir readers and writers should run to hear Mark Richard talk about his *House of Prayer No. 2*. According to *The New York Times*, the opening pages of this wild ride of a conversion story are "Genesis-like."

Other sessions present writers on spirituality such as Shane Claiborne in Saturday morning's keynote. There will be graphic novelists and screenwriters, nature writers and journalists, children's book authors and illustrators. Essayists too, like that Roman candle of a writer Brian Doyle.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie closes the festival with a keynote on Saturday night. Her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, tells the bittersweet coming-of-age story of a Nigerian girl.

After which we'll all stagger for the gates, exhausted and sated, wishing there had been time for more. ■

Festival of Faith and Writing, April 19-21, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. Keynote sessions are open to the public. Website: festival.calvin.edu.



Gayle Boss is a freelance writer living in Grand Rapids, Mich., where she is a member of Monroe Community Church.



I Have a Dream (It Feels Like Home)

by **The City Harmonic**
reviewed by **Paul Delger**

Canadian Christian band The City Harmonic offers listeners themes such as love, dependence on God, and the hope of heaven with its first full-length project, *I Have a Dream (It Feels Like Home)*. The song "Manifesto," a declaration of the Christian faith, helped the band land the 2011 "Modern Worship Song of the Year" and "Recorded Song of the Year" awards at the Gospel Music of Canada Association's Covenant Awards. The entire project draws listeners in with challenging and comforting lyrics and an inviting pop sound. (Kingsway)



A Good and Perfect Gift: Faith, Expectations, and a Little Girl Named Penny

by Amy Julia Becker
reviewed by Sandy Swartzentruber



The birth of Becker's daughter Penny was joyous, but it also set off a seesawing barrage of emotions. Becker worried that people wouldn't see past the label of Penny's Down syndrome, but she also feared that she wouldn't know how to love her own daughter. She was angered by insulting comments from well-meaning friends and surprised by her own biases and prejudices.

Teetering between faith and doubt, sorrow and joy, frustration and hope, Becker's memoir of Penny's first two years paints a true-life picture of the complexities of faithfully parenting a child with Down Syndrome.

Note: Becker will be a presenter at the Festival of Faith and Writing. (Bethany House)



A Creature I Don't Know

by Laura Marling
reviewed by Allison Backous

Songwriter Laura Marling has been on an interesting spiritual trajectory—her first releases offered lyrics that didn't simply profess atheism but portrayed God as someone to reject. Her latest album, *A Creature I Don't Know*, seems to profess something different. Something has shifted: "And I knew my name, oh I knew my road," she sings, "And still I'm low / Oh lord, am I low." Marling is a pilgrim worth tracking, even praying for, as she seeks new ground in her fruitful work. (Ribbon)

The Mighty Miss Malone

by Christopher Paul Curtis
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Twelve-year-old Deza belongs to a loving family experiencing hard times during the Great Depression. When her father leaves home, presumably to find work, Deza and her family set out to find him. Although what Deza discovers about her father is different from what she had imagined, she is able to embrace the future with hope. In this thought-provoking, humorous juvenile novel, the author accomplishes one of his stated goals: to have Deza "serve as a voice" for the millions of American children trapped in poverty today. (Wendy Lamb Books)



THE LOWDOWN

Enriching: *Unlocking the Treasure* by Bev Roozeboom is a five-week, five-day-a-week Bible study for mothers of children with special needs. For individual or group use. (WestBow Press)

Worship Songs: *Psalms for All Seasons* offers all 150 psalms in many worship forms, including psalms for singing, reading, and praying. (CICW/Faith Alive/Brazos)

Winner: Grammy-winning gospel singer Marvin Sapp's newest album, *I Win*, includes "My Testimony," the song he wrote about losing his wife to cancer. (Verity)

Strong or Silent? Meryl Streep's Margaret Thatcher in *The Iron Lady* (Weinstein), and/or the silent age of movies in *The Artist* (Weinstein)? Take your pick; both are out on DVD and Blu-ray.

The 100 Best Affordable Vacations

by Jane Wooldridge and Larry Bleiberg
reviewed by Sandy Swartzentruber

Tired of the same old vacation spots? Here are one hundred great reasons to strike out in new directions. With this book as your guide you can track gray wolves in central Idaho, seek out the Midwest's best pie, test your sleuthing skills at a Sherlock Holmes weekend in New Jersey, "collect" lighthouses in Nova Scotia, and do 96 other things guaranteed to make lasting memories. These creative, economical ideas were chosen with people of a wide variety of ages, interests, and abilities in mind. (National Geographic)



How Do I Connect? Tips from Teens

I WATCHED A BABY BOY squirm under the waters of baptism. The congregation promised to love, pray for, and train him in the way of God. Many will live out their vows as Sunday school teachers, choir directors, or prayer warriors as he grows. But one day this baby will become a teen—and just when he may need support the most, the adults in the congregation may pull back. They'll say things like, "How can I connect with a teen?" "What will we talk about?" "Teenagers don't want to hear what I have to say."

Adults sometimes think teens live in a different world—and in some ways it's true. Their daily lives, responsibilities, and identities are unique. If you feel that way, remember that you were once a teen—however long ago—and that teens have hopes, fears, hurts, and feelings just like everyone else. Just like you.

As I began working with the high school group at my church, I wanted to connect with them but I wasn't sure how. For answers, I went straight to the source: the high schoolers themselves. Their insights were simple and profound, resulting in some easy-to-remember do's and don't's:

DO: Own your identity. Teens need to respect you if you want a relationship. So be true to your own identity in Christ. Don't try to act like a teen to win their favor. They're not looking for another teenage friend; they're looking for godly adults to emulate.

DO: Care deeply. Teens have an uncanny ability to see through anything fake. So show genuine concern. Care deeply about them as individuals, sloughing off stereotypes and listening to their stories. They'll be more open to dialogue and friendship.

DO: Ask specific questions and really listen to the answers. Questions like "How's school?" solicit general answers that typically stay on the surface. Ask more specific questions that invite teens



Teens are not looking for another teenage friend; they're looking for godly adults to emulate.

to share their lives—and take the time to listen.

DO: Find common ground. Common interests and activities foster friendship and camaraderie. Find similar interests and discuss or do those things together.

DO: Be open. Relationships need to go both ways. As you ask questions, be sure to share your own life too, otherwise they'll feel like they're being quizzed. They can't respect you if they don't know you.

DON'T: Try too hard. This goes hand-in-hand with owning your identity. If you try to act the way you assume teens act, they will not want to talk with you. If you aren't naturally funny, don't try to be. You may text them, but BTW, don't use texting language in your speech!

DON'T: Treat them like little children. Teens are in limbo between childhood and adulthood. As they find their place in the present, they're eagerly awaiting the future, always looking forward to the next year or the next step of maturity. As they grow up they want to be treated like adults.

DON'T: Try to fix their problems. If teens confide in you, they probably trust you and value your opinion. Be tactful when dispensing advice. Practice the steps of listening and gaining respect *before* instructing. If you try to change them before you know them, your advice will fall on deaf ears.

Teens do want meaningful relationships with adults other than their parents. They recognize the encouragement, accountability, and advice such relationships can offer.

One young person I spoke to put it beautifully: "It should not be thought of as an adult/teenager relationship. It should just be a friendship."

So strike up a new friendship. It may change a teen's life—and possibly your own. ■



Stephanie Brooks is a member of Sherman Street CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich. She would like to thank the high schoolers from

Sherman Street for their valuable input. You know who you are, and you rock!

Relearning the Language of Justice

In your 20s or 30s? We want to hear what's on your mind as it relates to living out your faith in today's world. Please send manuscripts (600 words) to editorial@thebanner.org. (And, no, you don't have to be ordained!)

"I DON'T KNOW what to think anymore," she said, "but I want to know how I should pray. What should my response be as a Christian?"

A young parishioner had found her way into my office while I was working on my Easter sermon. I was preparing to preach about our invitation from the risen Jesus to see the world with resurrection eyes.

She, however, did not have resurrection on her mind. She was thinking about health care. A few days earlier, President Obama and the U.S. Congress had passed a health care reform bill—and she was worried. She'd heard a lot of people talking, a lot of hate and fear expressed on both sides of the debate. This church member wasn't sure who to believe or what her faith might have to do with it all.

This is how many of us feel when it comes to issues of justice. We know we should care. We get that the issues are complex, but we just don't know how to answer the perennial question "What Would Jesus Do?" in the midst of "Obamacare," undocumented workers, the Manhattan Declaration, or climate change.

It's not the job of pastors to tell people what side of a debate they should be on. But we can and should be providing people with language that helps them speak to these issues. What language do we have?

"We need words," I told my friend at the Office of Social Justice. Pastors, leaders, and struggling church members all need words to help us speak about justice. I believe that issues of justice, unity, and peace feel taboo in many churches today—in spite of their

centrality in Scripture—because they have become unfamiliar themes in our vocabulary for talking about God.

Pastors need to help congregations relearn the lost lexicon of justice. We need to speak the words of our deep-rooted assurance in Christ: The risen Lord we serve cares about peace in Israel and Palestine. He cares about health care for the poorest of citizens. He cares about justice.

Maybe if we were able to root these words in the reality of resurrection, they wouldn't seem so unrelated to difficult issues like health care. Resurrection talk about health care wouldn't be about how big or small you like your government. It would be about how deeply you care about the coming of God's kingdom here and now—the kingdom initiated by Jesus' resurrection, which changes everything, even our politics.

Sometimes we'll have the words to help people like my young parishioner. Other times we won't. When that happens, don't forget the encouragement Paul gives in his letter to the Romans. When *we* don't have words, the Holy Spirit groans for us. When we wonder how to pray about issues that are divisive, contentious, and complex; when we're struggling to use our resurrection eyes in the face of the baldly political, our groans are enough. And we can invite our congregations to groan along with us.

Maybe the most powerful witness the church can have in this politically divisive age is to give voice to this reality: Things aren't all right. The kingdom is still breaking in. We just have to speak the words when we have them, and model the groan when we don't. ■

Ryan Boes is pastor of family and youth at Ann Arbor (Mich.) Christian Reformed Church.

NEXT



Resurrection talk about health care wouldn't be about how big or small you like your government.

IS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BIBLICAL?

I USED TO SEE affirmative action as tokenism at best and reverse discrimination at worst—until I studied Acts 6:1-7. There I saw the New Testament church practicing what was, in many ways, a form of affirmative action. Now I see the principle behind affirmative action as a tool to address injustice. Like any tool, it can be used or abused.

I was a victim of a legalistic form of affirmative action in my youth. Back in Malaysia, where I was born and raised, university admissions were based on strict ethnic quotas. The quotas were rigidly enforced—to the point that admission standards were compromised. Many of my Malay high school classmates got into university with lower grades while I, a

Chinese student, failed to gain admission with higher grades. That was how I ended up in Canada as an international student back in 1989. It cost my shopkeeper dad dearly to send me to Canada, where, as a foreigner, I paid twice the tuition of a Canadian student.

Recently the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) adopted a goal of filling at least 25 percent of its top-level leadership positions with ethnic minorities in an effort to move the denomination continually toward reflecting the North American demographic. (See *Banner* news report, April 2011.) There were objections and complaints from people within the denomination who saw this as an affirmative action policy and, hence, as reverse discrimination. Some ethnic minorities in the CRC called this goal tokenism.

Because of my past experiences, I would probably have felt the same way, if not for Acts 6.

Apostolic Affirmative Action?

In Acts 6, cultural tensions arose in the early church when “the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food” (Acts 6:1, TNIV). We’re not told why this neglect occurred. But it was more than poor logistics, as that would not have consistently singled out one group over another. Injustice was occurring.

Who were these Hellenistic Jews? They were likely born and raised in foreign countries across the Roman Empire and influenced by Greco-Roman culture—hence, Hellenistic. But because being



The focus is not filling up ethnic numbers but transforming organizational culture.

buried in the land of Israel was considered virtuous, many Hellenistic Jews would relocate there to spend their last days in Israel. Often the men would die first, leaving a disproportionate number of Hellenist widows in Jerusalem. These Hellenists and their widows were, in modern terms, immigrants to Jerusalem, and they formed a cultural subgroup within the Jewish community. So the early Jerusalem church included both native Hebraic and immigrant Hellenist Jews.

Even though these two groups were ethnically Jewish, their cultural backgrounds were different enough in the broader Jerusalem context that they likely worshiped in separate synagogues. Acts 6:9 mentions that Stephen was opposed by those who belonged to the Synagogue of the Freedmen—Jews who were descended from former Roman slaves. Since synagogues were segregated according to class or groups back then, the apostles could have chosen the practical option of segregating the Hellenist and Hebraic groups.

Instead, the apostles recruited new leaders to supervise the entire food distribution system. Amazingly, the Christian community intentionally chose seven Hellenist men to do this work (v. 5). All seven—from the famous soon-to-be-martyred Stephen to Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch (in other words, a Gentile)—had Greek names, identifying them as belonging to or, at the very least, identifiable with, the offended cultural minority. (See also P.J. Achtemeier, J.B. Green & M.M. Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology*, Eerdmans, 2001, p. 254; and Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, IVP, 1993 p. 338.) Doesn't this look suspiciously like an "affirmative action" program?

Furthermore, these men were given charge not only of distributing food to their Hellenist widows but of distributing food to *all* the widows—Hellenist and Hebraic. The whole system of food distribution was handed over to the offended

minority's leadership! This wasn't simply a top-down decision but one that "pleased the whole group" (v. 5). It displayed the majority's spirit of love and willingness to hand power to the immigrant minority.

This turned out to be a good development. Almost as an understatement, Luke observes that "the word of God spread. The number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (v. 7). Even the priests, the guardians of the Jewish religion, were impressed! The apostles' bold move to address injustice helped spread the gospel and grew the church.

A Case History for Today

So how do we summarize the lesson of Acts 6? In this early case history of cultural tensions between an established majority group and an immigrant minority subgroup within the early church, we see the apostles choosing the path of change. Instead of maintaining the status quo, they chose to integrate the subgroup into the structure of the church. They chose to create a new leadership structure and empower the immigrant subgroup's ability to exercise their gifts and leadership.

I believe the good principle behind affirmative action's all-too-often distorted practices is this: intentional change in the makeup of personnel or leadership is a legitimate means of addressing social injustice in an organization or commu-

nity. Since there is biblical precedent, we cannot simply dismiss this principle. The CRC's new policy of diversity in leadership follows the spirit of the New Testament church. But to prevent such policies from distorting into either reverse discrimination or tokenism, I humbly offer the following guidelines:

- The intention should be to address systemic injustice—removing barriers and changing organizational culture—not to pander to political correctness or lobby groups.
- The 25 percent goal should not be treated as either a legalistic quota or a rigid cap. Our focus is not filling up ethnic numbers, but transforming organizational culture.
- The candidates must be unquestionably qualified, just as the seven in Acts 6 were "known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (v. 3). We need to discern the Spirit's leading and calling, even as we act with integrity and open ourselves to thinking "outside the box."
- These leaders must be fully empowered to succeed, just as the seven were not simply symbolic tokens but were entrusted with the entire food distribution system. The entire denomination and organizational structure must support their leadership.
- Suggestions to consider expanding the ethnicity diversity goal to include gender and disability should be taken seriously, in keeping with the spirit of the principle.

I pray that the CRC's new diversity policy will help the denomination to become a more diverse, growing community, and that it will enhance our ability to participate fully in God's mission. ■

[STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE](#)



Shiao Chong is a Christian Reformed chaplain for York University, Mississauga, Ontario.

A Cry from the Heart

WHAT'S REALLY ON MY HEART? Questions, questions, and more questions. . . .

Is the church redeemed, saved, sanctified, and set apart for such a time as this?

Is it willing to use its voice as an instrument of confession—a way to recognize, repent, apologize to God for its shortcomings?

The Belhar. Is it a supplement? Is it fundamental to our faith?

Is it a pathway to profound self-examination?

Does it help us determine if the church lives by the faith it proclaims?

Our faith in Jesus Christ?

This is who we are.

This is what we believe.

This is what we intend to do.

And so we confess . . . that we might act justly

that we might love mercy

that we might walk humbly with God.

The Belhar. A call for the voice of the Christian church.

Stand up, Queen!

Let your voice be heard with clarity!

What does it mean for the church to confess?

That we live a life of witness in word and deed—a living sacrifice?

Has God set for us a special time and place to remind us of our purpose?

Perhaps the Belhar is a confession to correct error.

Perhaps it calls us to listen through ecclesial confusion and social uncertainty.

Perhaps this really is a confessional situation!

Perhaps God is asking us to listen and to speak a word *new* to our thinking.

The Belhar. Will it clarify what we already know to be true?

Have we made up our minds theologically and ethically?

Are we looking for a confession to ratify our position
our authority

our point of view?

Step up, O faithful hearers!

Perhaps the Word confronts us from outside ourselves
into a new future—

a future against the pattern of the world

“The greatest spiritual crisis comes when a person has to move a little farther on in his faith than the beliefs he has already accepted.”

—Oswald Chambers

against false teaching

against the church's own sinfulness.

The Belhar. Is race the overwhelming question?

Do disparities between whites and nonwhites continue?

Should the church provide a spiritual product that makes people feel better about God, about themselves?

Can we learn to be culturally inclusive . . . are we willing?

What does the Belhar call the church to confess?

That we listen to God through diverse social backgrounds.

That we confess that the God of Israel is the God who speaks to us still.

That we resist reduction of faith to a mere feeling of comfort.

The God we serve is all-powerful, almighty, supreme, majestic.

The God we serve created us for himself and each other.

The Belhar. Should it stand alongside our three sister voices?

Have we studied it?

If adopted, will we use it?

As a Black and Reformed servant of Jesus Christ, I am empowered.

I am waiting for my church

to move toward change.

How many hearts have changed? How many more *will* change?

Are you one of the stubborn, unwilling, fearful ones?

I wonder where lies your faith in the One who gave his life
so that
we could all at least try, together.

The Belhar. If adopted, will it speak to our time and place?
Will it challenge us with a Word of God beyond ourselves,
not just a Word we already know to be true?

Will it help us counter false teaching about unity, justice, and
reconciliation?

Does it convict us of sin in order to free us?

Where are all my brothers and sisters from other cultures?

Have we assimilated so much until we are not sure how to
articulate a cry from the heart?

Will we be intellectual enough? Theological enough?

We need to keep our jobs, you know.

What finally matters is not whether the church adopts the
Belhar,

but whether we allow it to interrogate us
desegregate us,
change us. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



Angela Taylor Perry is pastor of reconciliation at
Faith Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich.

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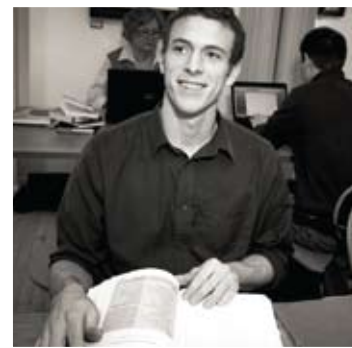
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CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Denominational and Classical

General

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER (U. S.) In May 1988 the President of the United States signed into law a bill establishing the first Thursday of May as a National Day of Prayer. This year the National Day of Prayer falls on Thursday, May 3. The synod of the CRC has urged churches in the United States "to observe faithfully any national day of prayer which the United States President publicizes to the nation" (Acts of Synod 1969). "Our churches must be open to our congregations and our fellow countrymen on such occasions, when God in his providence leads those in civil authority to call our citizenry to pray. We must pray for and with our country" (Acts of Synod 1958). Joel R. Boot Executive Director

50 YEARS IN MINISTRY Rev. Michael DeVries celebrates 50 yrs of ministry in the CRC on April 22, 2012. Friends and past congregations are invited to attend the 9:30 a.m. worship service at Third CRC, Zeeland, MI.

Available for Call

PHOENIX CRC recommends for call the Rev. Stephen Steenstra, who has been on loan as minister of pastoral care to the West Valley Christian Fellowship for the past two years. Rev Steenstra has done an excellent job in his position with West Valley but now desires to resume a full preaching ministry. He may be contacted at 623-933-0721 or gsteenstra@netscape.com.

Calls Accepted

BLYTHEFIELD CRC, in Rockford, Michigan is pleased to announce that Pastor Darrin Compagner has accepted our call.

MATTHEW EENIGENBURG has accepted the call extended to him by the Celebration Community Church of Muskegon, MI. He was ordained into ministry on February 19, 2012.

Rev. Michael Koetje, Stated Clerk, Classis Muskegon

Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that **GLENN ADAMS** has now completed his academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Joel R. Boot, executive director

We are pleased to announce that **THYRA VANKEEKEN** has now completed her academic requirements and is eligible for call as a candidate for the ministry of the Word. Rev. Joel R. Boot, executive director

Financial Aid

CLASSIS ILLIANA'S STUDENT FUND is currently accepting applications for financial assistance for the 2012-2013 school year from Illiana students. If you will be a seminary student or college student at least a Junior level with a final goal of full-time ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church, we encourage you to request an application from Rev. John Kostelyk at hammondcrc@sbcglobal.net 219-844-3331

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 or 503-363-5159

Congregational Announcements

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.

Church's 150th Anniversary

FIRST CRC OF ZEELAND MI will celebrate 150 years of God's faithfulness April 1. Friends and former members are invited to worship with us throughout April. Reservation deadline for the April 28 dinner is April 13. For information contact the church at 616.772.2866, office@firstzeeland.org or visit us at www.firstzeeland.org

Church's 100th Anniversary

CALVIN CRC of McBain, MI will celebrate 100 years of God's faithfulness with a dinner on Sat., June 16 (please RSVP by June 1), and a worship service on Sun., June 17, 2012. We invite all friends and former members to join us. For more information and to RSVP, please contact Tammy Clark at 231-839-3029 or email: tamarack61@yahoo.com

HANCOCK CRC of Hancock, Minnesota invites all friends, former pastors, and past members to attend our weekend celebration on July 6-8. There will be special programs on Friday evening at 7:00 PM, Saturday morning at 10:00 AM followed by a Potluck dinner, and on Sunday we will have our worship celebration. Please contact the church office at (320)392-5223 or hancockcrc@gmail.com.

INWOOD CRC of Inwood, Iowa will celebrate 100 years of God's faithfulness on April 21 - 22, 2012. We invite all friends and former members to join us for fellowship on April 21 at 6:30 p.m. and a worship service on April 22 at 9:30 a.m. Please contact the church office at 712-753-4467 or inwdccroff@alliancecom.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.

Church's 50th Anniversary

GRACE CRC, WELLAND ON will celebrate its 50th Anniversary - praise God for His faithfulness. We invite all friends, former members and past staff to celebrate with us. We will be having a Lasagne Dinner on Saturday May 5 and a Worship Celebration on Sunday May 6, 2012 at 10:00 am. Please contact us at mieuwold@becon.org for more information.

Announcements

ICS LETHBRIDGE 50TH ANN. IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS, of Lethbridge, Alberta, will celebrate 50 years of God's goodness on June 8-9, 2012. We invite all former staff, students and supporters of our schools to join us that weekend. For more information, please call the business office at (403) 327-4233 or visit our website at www.immanuelchristian.org

WINTER CHURCH SERVICES in Mesa, AZ. Please join us for our Sunday Worship Service at Maranatha Comm. CRC in Mesa, AZ. We are a winter church and our services start the 1st Sunday in December through the 2nd Sunday in April. For more information contact, Rev. Gary Hutt @ 509-499-4561.

Birthdays

101st Birthday



LUVERAN JANE (MANNI) NEWHOF 4320 Kalamazoo Ave. SE #201, Kentwood, MI 49508. Will celebrate her birthday on April 19. We praise God for granting us such a beautiful Christian role model.

100th Birthday

BERNIE KOOPS will celebrate his 100th birthday this April. Friends, former students & colleagues are invited to join Bernie and his family for an open house on Sunday, April 22 from 2-5 PM at Appledorn Village Dining Room (630 Hastings Ave, Holland, MI, 49423) or send greetings to him at the same address. We, his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, give glory and thanks to God for Bernie's steadfast model of love for God and service to others across his century of grace.

AGNES (HANENBURG) VANDER POL born April 2, 1912 residing at Edgebrook Care Center, 505 Trosky Rd. W. Edgerton, MN 56128. Her children, Nelson and Joan, Mike and Gladi, Vern and Mina, Paul and Lila Clapp, Will, Warren and Pat, 19 grandchildren and 46 great-grandchildren praise God for her 100 years. Psalm 90.

95th Birthday



ANTOINETTE ERFFMEYER celebrated her 95th birthday March 25, 2012. Her children Philip (Trudy), Russell (Judy), Dr. Marilyn (Dr. Bill), Harold (Nancy), Rev. Gerald (Carol), and Paul (Barb) along with her 19 grandchildren and spouses and 37 great-grandchildren praise God for the years she has influenced our lives. Happy Birthday, Mom! Antoinette resides at 725 Baldwin, Apt 3012, Jenison, MI 49428.

90th Birthday

BEN BOXUM of Meadow Greens Retirement Community, 301 Homestead Boulevard, Lynden, WA, 98264, will celebrate 90 years on April 22. Ben's wife Betty, their 4 children and spouses, (Marlo and Viv Covey, Steve and Carolyn Boxum, Greg and Von Geleynse, Dave and Peggy Boxum), 12 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren praise God for the constant blessing he is in their lives. "Great is thy faithfulness!"

HENRIETTA (PLUTSCHOUW) LANING celebrated her 90th Birthday on March 12. Address: 1700 Robbins Rd. Lot 250, Grand Haven, Michigan 49417. To God be the glory! Children: Karen (Robert) VanderZee and Darrell G. Laning. Two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. We love you!

JEANETTE MAE MEYER of Arte', 11415 N. 114th St., Scottsdale, AZ 85259, will be 90 on March 18th, 2012. Happy Birthday from your children: Tom, Steve, Diane, Jack and Mike Meyer: grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We thank God for her many years.

FRAN SCHRIPSEMA, 979 Andover Ct. SE Kentwood, MI 49508 on April 4. Husband Herm, children, grand and great-grandchildren wish you a Blessed 90th Birthday!

RALPH TERBEEK April 13th. 6981 Edgeview, Byron Center MI 49315. Happy Birthday from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We love you! Prov 17:6

GRACE (STOB) VAN DELLEN, 34 Glencoe Ct. Naperville, IL 60565, will celebrate her 90th birthday on 4/21/12. Love and congratulations from her family—daughters Ellen(Dan) Dec, Gloria and Lori, grandchildren Matt Dec, Kristin (Scott)Shell and Alison Dec, great-grandson Nate Shell. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

GERTRUDE VEENEMAN of Coopersville along with her family thank God for His faithfulness! Happy Birthday April 27. We love you, Mom, Grandma and Great Grandma!



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SCE is a program to support and strengthen
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by God to transform lives and communities.

Church Position Announcements

FULL TIME PASTOR Phoenix CRC, Phoenix, AZ. We are a growing congregation located in a central Phoenix neighborhood. We desire an experienced pastor who is committed to passionate preaching and able to work with all age groups as well as the neighborhood community. If interested, contact Andy Keizer, search@phoenixcrrc.org, 623-875-5871, website: www.phoenixcrrc.org

PASTOR: Lafayette, IN CRC is looking for an experienced church-planter type of pastor to lead us in our plan to relocate our ministry to a new site in our growing community. If you have the gifts to lead in this exciting ministry venture while serving as senior pastor of a loving, caring congregation, please respond by sending your ministry profile to: Lafayette Christian Reformed Church, 1200 Tippecanoe St., Lafayette, IN 47904 or mail to: secretary@lafayettecrrc.org Our Search Team Chairman is Norbert Fisher at (765)447-4659.

YOUTH MINISTER: South Bend CRC (IN) is taking applications now for a position opening in June. For an application or information on our sustainable youth ministry, email office@sbcrc.org

YOUTH PASTOR Moline CRC in Moline, MI. is seeking a part-time Youth Ministries Director to organize and conduct meaningful spiritual/relational programs for our youth starting August 2012. For more info visit www.molinecrrc.org, call Pastor Ouwinga at 616-877-4218, or email us at molinecrrc@gmail.com. The deadline for applications is April 13, 2012.

YOUTH DIRECTOR OPENING: Shalom CRC, Sioux Falls, SD. A growing Youth Ministry program is seeking a dynamic full time Youth Director. This person must display a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ to nurture this passion in each young person. The Youth Director needs to exhibit a vibrant leadership in the church that enhances the worship, outreach, and fellowship of each young person attending and will provide accessible authentic support for families with youth. Qualifications: A four year college degree in Youth Ministry or related field. Three or more years of experience working with youth in some capacity. Required to believe in and teach the doctrines and core values of the Reformed theology. If interested please submit your resume to: adminassistant@shalomcrrc.org.

LEAD PASTOR: Faith Reformed Church, a well-established congregation in beautiful Traverse City, MI. is seeking an experienced lead pastor. FRC is in prayer for a pastor who is committed to strong Biblical preaching, possesses a humble servant's heart and who will champion FRC's mission: "To Know Christ and to Make Him Known". The successful candidate will be dedicated to discipleship and the spiritual growth of new believers as well as existing members of our congregation. For more information, please contact the search committee at patr@faithreformedchurchctc.org.

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

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR Dearborn Christian Fellowship is seeking a half-time CM Director. DCF is a growing, multi-generational CRC with a heart for helping people find Christ. If interested, please send resume to Pastor Dan Jongsma at djongsma@sbcglobal.net.

FIRST CRC, THUNDER BAY, ON is seeking a full time pastor who is committed to sound biblical preaching and able to interact with the youth as well as our surrounding community. Help us to achieve the next step in our spiritual development and refocus our mission in our own congregation and to our neighbours. Please send inquiries to chairman@frcrtbay.ca

WASHINGTON, DC CRC: Seeking a full-time pastor. We are a diverse, urban congregation looking for an effective preacher and pastor who can lead us to grow spiritually, engage our youth, and expand into our neighborhood. For information, please contact search@dccc.org

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

MORRISON CRC is seeking a interim pastor for 6-12 months. We would like someone to help us fulfill our mission statement: Equipping lives to mirror Christ through Loving, Caring, and Sharing. Contact Dave Schaver at daveschaver@hotmail.com.

PASTOR - Bethel Community Church in Edmonton, Alberta, a diverse church family committed to being a healing presence in our community, is seeking a pastor with leadership gifts who will equip and encourage us to fully develop our missional potential; someone with a strong personal relationship with Christ who is led by the Holy Spirit and showing evidence of living and leading missionally. The position includes leadership within a team (multiple staff) environment, shared preaching, teaching and some pastoral duties. For information about Bethel Church, a church and ministry profile please check our website at www.discoverbethel.com, contact Ivan Mast at 780.449.6278 or direct your inquiry to the callingteam@discoverbethel.com. Will you pray about this, as we are here at Bethel?

DIRECTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP Ivanrest Church, Grandville MI, is seeking an individual to partner with ministry staff in cultivating and enhancing a vibrant faith formation process. Candidates should demonstrate skill in development and leadership of small groups, Bible studies, fellowship events, leadership development, welcome and encouragement of new members, and assisting in the development and support of a ministry vision. Individuals should be able to empower and lead a gifted volunteer base. Candidates should be persons whose commitment to Christ is demonstrated in their devotion to inspire others to worship, serve and grow in faith. Applicants must have a bachelor's degree and/or prior experience. Applications will be accepted through March 31. For a complete job description and to learn more about what God is doing at Ivanrest Church, visit www.ivanrestcrrc.org. Resumes and questions regarding this position should be directed to applications@ivanrestcrrc.org.

FIRST CUTLERVILLE CRC in Byron Center, MI is seeking a full-time Pastor, an ordained minister of the Word with a M. Div. degree. Please direct all inquiries and communications to: Mark Wassink, Search Committee, 6617 Crossing Dr. SE, Ste. 102, Grand Rapids, MI 49508, phone @ (616) 455-0868 or e-mail to searchcommittee@firstcutlervillecrrc.org

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.

DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP and Creative Arts - full time position at Orland Park CRC in the Chicago suburbs. Join our team in directing and leading worship in both blended and contemporary style services at our 1350 member church. Job description at OrlandChurch.com.

YOUTH DIRECTOR Second Bryon CRC is seeking a part time individual to provide support for our youth ministries. You can request a job description at office@secondcrrc.org.

WANTED YOUTH PASTOR/DIRECTOR Overisel CRC is looking for a part-time youth pastor/director to work with both middle and high school aged young adults. Located near Holland just south of Zeeland. Please send resume and contact info to Jeremiah at jervelderman@yahoo.com.

WORSHIP DIRECTOR Milwood CRC, located in Kalamazoo, Michigan, has an immediate opening for a part-time Worship Director, responsible for developing the worship ministries of the church. This dynamic individual will lead the planning of weekly and holiday services, and organize musicians and other worship leaders. For further information, please contact Patti Landstra (milwoodsearch@gmail.com)

80th Birthday

CLARA BOOI of R. R. 4 Grand Valley, Ontario, celebrates her 80th birthday on April 10, 2012. Happy birthday love your husband, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Great is Thy Faithfulness!

JOHN GRASSMID of Delton, MI celebrated his 80th birthday in March. His wife, 4 children and spouses, 17 grand-children and spouses and 2 great grandsons are grateful to God for so many blessings.

LEONA (FABER) NOTEBOOM will celebrate 80 years of God's faithfulness on April 12, at 321 Central Ave. S. E., in Orange City, Iowa. Her family praises God for the blessing she is in our lives.

Anniversaries

70th Anniversary

DEBOEF, William and Martha (Rozenboom) April 14, 1942 marked the day Bill and Martha stood before God and witnesses to draw a line in the sand. The standing stone that has been erected points to God's faithfulness through the generations which include 12 children, 41 grandchildren and 72 great-grandchildren. Joshua 24:15. Cards may be sent to their home at 216 Maple St., Pella, IA 50219.

JONKER, Jerry and Delia of Holland, MI will celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on April 16, 2012. Your love and faithfulness to God, each other and your family is a blessing to all of us. With love from your family: Jim & Jan Jonker, Robert & Nancy Jonker, 10 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren.

65th Anniversary

65TH ANNIVERSARY Kok, Ed and Jeanne, 1450 E. Fulton St., Apt. 418, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 will celebrate 65 years of marriage on April 22, 2012, D.V. They and their family gives thanks to God for His continued blessings and faithfulness.

60th Anniversary

VANDERZWAAG, Hemke & Grace celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on April 27, 2012 in Vernon BC. 7 children, 19 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, extended family & friends rejoice with you.

50th Anniversary

HOFFMAN Roy and Billie (Hoeks) 13850 E. Marina Dr. #609, Aurora, CO 80014 will celebrate 50 years of marriage on April 6. A summer celebration is being planned.

Obituaries



ANDRIESEN, Klaas, age 88 of Manhattan, MT, went to be with his Lord on Feb. 13, 2012, surrounded by his family singing the familiar hymns that he loved. He is survived by his wife, Jerita, daughters Myra (Bernie) Westra, Connie (Ron) Dyk, Barbara (Rick) Schemper, Claudia (Dan) Holler. 7 grandchildren and their husbands and 20 great-grandchildren.

BAKER, Gertrude (Heerema) 91, of Westminster, MD, went to sing eternal praises to the Lord on Jan. 24, 2012. She was preceded in death by her husband Robert "Bob" Baker in 2007. Surviving are son Terry and daughters Marilyn Halstead and Ellen Whiting and their spouses, 7 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. We miss you Mom, Grandma and Beppe.

BRUINOOG Roberta J, nee Spoelhof, age 83, of Prospect Park, NJ, on Jan. 23, 2012. Beloved wife of the late Benjamin A. Bruinooge. Devoted mother of Arthur (Barbara), David (Kathleen) and John (Judy). Loving grandmother of 7 and great-grandmother of 3. Dear Sister of John Spoelhof. Pre-deceased by her sister Carolyn Veldkamp and brother Charles Spoelhof.

DE VRIES, Mrs. Linda, died on September 3, 2011. She is survived by her husband Rev. Albert De Vries, 4 children; Albert James De Vries Jr. (Brenda), Sarah Van Leeuwen (Ian), Anthony Jay De Vries (Sherri), Mina Postma (Shayne); 13 grandchildren, one sister, Joyce Folkertsma, brothers and sisters in law. "She just went home."



DYKSHOORN John, age 87 of Abbotsford, BC on January 16, 2012. Predeceased by his wife Johanna, nee Hartman and son Douglas. Survived by son Allan (Joyce), daughters Lorraine, Esther (John) de Wolde, 6 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren, sister Christina Hillman, sister in laws, Corena Dykshoorn, Joyce Hartman

GROEN Wendlena; 89, Ripon, CA, joined her Lord and Savior February 18, 2012. Preceded in death by Henry, her husband of 57 years, and daughter Cheryl Haan. Survived by her children William, Sandra (Joe) Magers, Ronald (Christine); son-in-law Steve Haan (Nancy); grandchildren Andrea (Ryan) Imel, Cynthia (Tommy) Castle, Chad Groen, Anthony Groen, Kyle Groen; sister Gertrude (Willis) De Boer; brother Rev. Jake Hekman; sisters-in-law Gertrude Hekman, Hattie Hansum, Sharon Groen.

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.

LOBBES, Alvin Christian, June 4, 1929 - January 31, 2012; 2111 Raybrook S. E., Unit 2008, Grand Rapids, MI 49546; He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Marilyn (Dykwell); daughters: Mary (Dave) Bardolph and Carol Lobbes; son: Rick (Kristy); 4 grandchildren.

MONSMA, John aged 69 from pulmonary fibrosis, of Ojai, CA and Salmon Arm, B. C. went to be with his Lord & Savior on Jan. 19, 2012. Beloved husband of 48 yrs, Mary, children: son Bradley J. Monsma and Amiko Matsuo, of Camarillo, CA, daughter Sharida L. Spyskma and husband Randy. Grandchildren: Caleb J. Spyskma and Bethany L. Spyskma, all of Salmon Arm, B. C. Also, brother Bud and sister-in-law Claudia Monsma.

POORTINGA Ailene nee Breen, 85, Jan 28, 2012. Survived by husband, Peter, children: Judy (David) Sterling, Jim (Linda) Poortinga, Laurie (Jim) Munneke, and Rick (Michele) Poortinga, 11 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren

RIENSTRA, Thys, age 81, of Saylorburg, PA. went to be with our Lord on February 25, 2012. Thys leaves his loving wife Ruth (Faber); children Ruth Ann and Lawrence Spalink, Donald Rienstra, and Jan and Paul Wassink; grandchildren Benjamin and Christy Spalink (great-grandson Elijah), Jonathan and Annaliese Spalink, Daniel and Angenette Spalink, Jolena Spalink, Amy and Jason Flietstra (great-grandson Gavin), and Jeffrey Wassink; sister-in-law Jeanette Beversluis; nieces and nephews.

SCHUTT, Thelma Catherine (LaFleur), February 27, 2012. 2160 Teal Ct. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546. She is survived by her husband: Dr. Paul G. Schutt, of 53 years; daughters: Deb (Jeff) Youngsma and Cindi (Jim) Hoekstra; son: David (Heather) Schutt; 6 grandchildren; sister: Norma (Rev. Jim) Osterhouse; sisters-in-law: Marge (Dr. Mel) Mulder and Gen (Jim) Tuinstra.

VANDER MEY, Homer John, aged 87; January 30, 2012; 2105 Raybrook S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546. He was preceded in death by his parents, John and Effie Vander Mey. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Joanne; children: James and Teresa Vander Mey of Mt. Pleasant, MI, Carol and Kenneth Mulder of Grand Rapids; Randall and Dana Vander Mey of Santa Barbara, CA; Daniel and Ellen Vander Mey of Grand Rapids; 13 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law: John Moes, Marcia and George Anema, Lydia and Bernard Doktor, Sylvia and Gene Van Zee, and Flossie and Jan Bolhuis.

VAN HOF Ruth, age 92, of Grand Rapids, MI went to be with her Lord on January 30, 2012. Preceded in death by her husband, Chester and son, Thomas. Lovingly remembered by her children, Charles (Gloria) Van Hof, Janis (David) Versluis, Mary Van Hof, eight grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

VEURINK, Howard, age 79, 8190 Winding Dr Byron Center, MI 49315. Went home to be with his Lord, January 13, 2012. He was preceded in death by daughter Valerie and Vicky. Survived by wife of 58 years Barbara (Holtz). Sons Tim (Pat) Tom (Linda) and daughter Tammy (Greg) 7 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

WEIDENAAR Marian peacefully passed away on Wednesday, February 1, 2012 at 80 years old. She was a lifelong resident of Chicago, Illinois. Marian was the beloved daughter of the late Effie and Raymond Weidenaar. She was preceded in death by her brother, Raymond John Weidenaar. She is survived by many relatives and friends. She was loved by many and will be missed by all. She will be remembered for her strong Christian faith, generosity, courage and faithfulness to family. Marian was retired as an executive secretary at the 1st National Bank in downtown Chicago. She was a member of Grace Community Christian Reformed Church in Oak Lawn, IL. The family gives special thanks to the wonderful staff at the Holland Home in South Holland, Illinois, and to the kind and tender care given to her by her caregivers, Iris and Dorothy.

WIERENGA Melvin (Mel), age 78, of Byron Center, MI, was called to his heavenly home on January 13, 2012. He is survived by his loving wife of 58 years, Ruth (Bergakker), and his children Dan and Peg Wierenga (Whitensville MA), Sue and Gary Pipping (Wyoming MI), Joel and Jan Wierenga (Langhorne PA), Dave and Linda Wierenga (Traverse City MI), Kris and Nate VanderStelt (Grand Rapids MI), 13 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren

WIERSUM, Theresa Anna, aged 100; February 27, 2012; She was preceded in death by her first husband, William Meyers, her second husband, Carl Wiersum, parents, Henry and Anna Schut, son, William R. Meyers, siblings and their spouses, Albertha (Cornelius) DeVries, Gladys (John) Essenburg, Herbert (Martha) Schut. She is survived by her children: Carl Lee (Fern) Wiersum and Paul F. Meyers; grandchildren: Brian (Amy) Wiersum, Carla (Robert) Schaaf, Kevin (Amber) Wiersum, Krista (Ernie) Selvig; 10 great-grandchildren; sister: Florence (William) Post.

Condolences

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY is expressed to Pastor Dave, Lori, Ross and Sara Heilman in the sudden death of their daughter & sister, Tina, age 24, on Feb. 11, 2012. May the healing gifts of time and the timeless love of God carry them gently through this loss.

Employment

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

DRIVERS NEEDED: Local greenhouse looking for semi & straight truck drivers with current CDL and Medical Card for spring season. Competitive wages paid. Please contact Amy at 616-875-7211 for more information.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: JUSTICE FOR ALL is seeking a qualified applicant for the position of Executive Director. The Board of JUSTICE FOR ALL seeks a visionary leader, who is grounded in a Reformed world and life view and is a humble and self-effacing leader who understands and embodies the ideals of holistic transformational development. The Executive Director should model, teach, and implement the Biblical admonition to seek justice and reconciliation via a relational model. Learn more about JFA at www.jfa-nwiowa.org All inquiries should be in writing and directed to Willis Alberda. JFA • 1335 Valley Drive • Rock Valley, IA 51247 (or) email at jfainfo@jfa-nwiowa.org

HOUSEKEEPING POSITION DESIRED Dependable Christian woman looking for housekeeping employment in Holland, MI. Mornings preferred. Call Albie at 616-396-6901.

K & D CLEANING GALS: We are looking for homes to clean. We will treat your home as well as we do our own. Please call 616-366-7099 or call 616-914-3799.

LIVE-IN HOUSE-MANAGER needed for active, disabled man. Private room, bd. + salary in SE Grand Rapids. One year commitment essential. Job description: rottcc@iserv.net

STUDENT MINISTRIES DIRECTOR 1st CRC in Byron Center, MI is seeking a full time director. For more information please contact Rusty Darter, Search Team, 2450 85th St, Byron Center, MI 49315 or email rdarter@gmail.com. Visit our website at firstbyroncrc.org for information about our church.

Volunteers

COOPERSTOWN, NY B & B Calv. alum ministry seeks painters, gardeners, handy people for 1860s home with 8 bds/6ba. May & June before opening (& thru Fall as available) in exchg for free stay (or rent /no work) while enjoying lake, museums - Baseball Hall of Fame, shops, and country life! 315-415-8400

VOLUNTEERS Mississippi Christian Family Services - Rolling Fork, MS needs year around volunteers to work in the thrift store and/or light maintenance. A/C apts provided on campus. Pleasant and rewarding work. Desire minimum of two weeks. For more details call Larry Faber at 616-257-4489 or e-mail at lefaber@att.net checkout facebook

Real Estate: Sales and Rentals

LA QUINTA, CA VACATION HOME Monthly rental located on golf course. 3 bed/ 3 1/2 bath home w/casita, pool & jacuzzi. No pets. Photos available. Rates vary: 6000/mo winter, 4500/mo summer. 858-229-2642

FOR RENT Copper Mt Colorado Condo, sleeps 6. Summer Special (May-October) 7 nights \$395 + tax. Email:doand@mho.net or VRBO.com (VRBO#12559)

FT MEADE, FL For sale: 14x48 Mobil Home 2 BR 1 Bath, Furnished, Appl., Wash/Dryer, AC, Cov. Carport, Shed, \$185 Lot Rent/Trash, \$15,000 (616) 902-0294.

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

BRADENTON, FL For sale, Gulf Lakes - 55+ manufactured home. 2b, 2b, sunroom - launi - covered car port, furnished. 941-755-7606

KISSIMME HOME FOR RENT New, 6 bedroom, 4 bath, fully furnished home with private pool, 3 miles from Disney. www.floridavacahome.com. 708-372-2586

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

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

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

SOUTHERN MICHIGAN CONDO Weekly rentals now or Summer of 2012. South Haven, Michigan. Pool and private beach. Sleeps 8, 2 1/2 baths, professionally decorated, wireless service and flatscreen TVs. Call Phil @ 269 344-8303

BURT LAKE COTTAGE Northern MI Rental- Burt Lake 4 BR 3 bath, sleeps 12 Boating, fishing, skiing, fall colors, Inland Waterway. Summer weeks available. BLCottage@comcast.net 734-904-2660

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

HOME FOR RENT 3 bedroom, 1 1/2 bath, finished basement, A/C. Just blocks away from Calvin College. 616-536-2149

HOLLAND, MI Nice 1 bedroom guest house located across the street from the south shore of Lake Macatawa., \$400 wk \$85 nt www.hollandplace.com 616.335.8766

LAKEFRONT LOG HOME 2 bdr, sleeps 6-8, 30 min N of GR. Incl. Boat w/ trolling motor, 2 Kayaks, swim raft w/ diving board. Sandy swimming. \$750/wk. shawnboomstra@hotmail.com or 616-583-0407

BIG STAR LAKE ~ Cottage for rent in North Bay Shores. \$800 wk. veltema1@sbcglobal.net or call 616-662-9659. Great beach area, large fire pit, boat slip. 2 bedroom sleeps 6.

6 BDRM LAKE MICHIGAN HOUSE: 400 ft. private beach & woods; 1 hour from Grand Rapids. View: www.greatlakehouse.com; Email: rental@greatlakehouse.com

LAKE MICHIGAN COTTAGE located in Edgewood Beach Assoc, 4 miles north of Holland State Park. Cute 2 BDR/1BA with large screened porch and outside deck. Accommodates 4 adults or 2 adults and 3 children. Beautiful large private shared beach 2 minute walk away. Available select weeks for 2012 season @ \$700/week. 517 372 6871 or bbelman@acd.net



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NEW LOG COTTAGE FOR RENT 2 level, 4 bedroom log cottage. Baldwin, MI. Reed Lake. Huge porch, beautiful wooded view. Private dock, small beach, rowboat, canoe, paddle boat. \$750/week. 904-284-0097 or wrkarsen@sbcglobal.net for brochure.

REAL ESTATE Holland, MI. For Sale Cottage/Home 3bd 2.5 bath w/ utl. & gar. 2 yrs old, view Lk Mac, walking dis. to Ottawa Beach, Big Red. Call 616-283-1767

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Disability Concerns began 30 years ago. Will you help us celebrate our birthday?

Please tell us a story about your church and people who have disabilities:

- How your church ministered well to someone affected by disability
- Ways your church has been blessed by opening your facilities and/or ministries to people who have disabilities
- A support group for people with mental illnesses or for parents of children with disabilities
- Or . . .

We'll put some stories into a special edition of our newsletter, *Breaking Barriers*, in October. Others will go on our website.

Send your stories to disabilityconcerns@crcna.org by August 1.



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

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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.

Miscellaneous

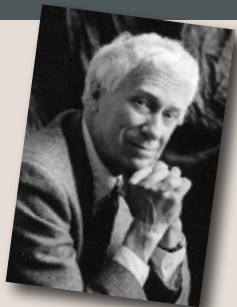
FOR SALE Church Bus, 25 passenger, 1995 Champion Sparrow Trade. Great condition, 75,000 miles, \$9900. Call Ivanrest CRC, 616-534-3114.

BIRTH INQUIRY I am trying to find my child born in the summer months of 1953 in the Fernwood area of Chicago, IL. All I know about the mother is her first name~ Henrietta or Henniferita and that she spoke no English, was Dutch and lived with an adult female and male. Contact searching4billyschild@gmail.com

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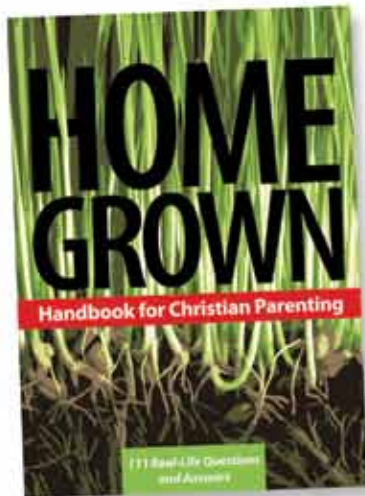
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MISSIONAL NEWS

A Stronger CRC

Can you get a free Ministry Associates Certificate in 12 months?

“What do you mean FREE?” Richard asked me. “I mean free. No money.” I answered. I was beginning to wonder if he was going to get it.

“I don’t get it,” he replied. “Why would you do that?” “Simple.” I answered. I figured I better keep it simple for him, “we want strong leaders in the CRC, right?”

“But other schools charge over \$8,000 for their ministry associates certificates.”

“Yes, but we don’t want people to enter debt so they can serve the kingdom of God . . . Why don’t you think about it and call me back?”

Two hours later

I get a call. It was Richard again, “Alright, so it’s free. But how do they take classes while they are working? Isn’t that impossible?”

“That’s why we have it online. If they have Internet access, they have access to our school. And they can access it on their own schedule.”

“So who pays all the programmers and

professors and staff?” He asked. “Donors.” “Really?” “Yes, but we need more.” I answered.

New Ministry Associate School

Think about it. Christian Leaders Institute has more than 2,500 active students. My approach is simple: International and Domestic.

We must not only empower Christian Leaders around the world. We must also strengthen the CRC denomination.

So I created a Ministry Associate School within Christian Leaders Institute. Now it is possible for a CRC member to receive a Ministry Associates Certificate in 12 months for free.

Your Opportunity

Call me, Henry Reyenga, directly at 815-314-0007 or visit www.clicrc.org to learn more and donate to Christian Leaders Institute.



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. Thanks!

Our son Zackary, five, was chatting with our pastor about singing in church.

Zackary: We're going to be singing in church on the 29th.

Pastor: That's great! Where will you be singing?

Zackary: Up there (pointing to the front of the church).

Pastor: I'll be here to listen to you and the choir.

Zackary: You're always here. You're the janitor!

—Tara and Eric Dekryger

Naomi was saying her bedtime prayers, going through a long list of thank-yous: "Thank you for the nice snow, thank you that my friend could come over to play..."

Suddenly she paused and said, "Just a minute, Lord. I have a hair in my mouth!"

—Laura Bartleson

While working at a customer's home, the talk turned to holiday plans. I explained that we were going to visit our daughter, who is studying linguistics and exegesis in British Columbia.

"Linguistics I've heard of," she said, "but what is exegesis?"

I told her it was learning how to interpret the Bible.

"Oh, exe-Jesus!" she said. "I thought it was a Latin term!"

—Wilbur Oudman

In a hurry to get his eight-year-old grandson to school on time, the grandfather turned right on red at an intersection that prohibits such turns.

"Oops," he said. "I think I just made an illegal turn."

"That's okay, Grandpa," replied the boy. "The police car right behind us did the same thing!"

—George Vander Weit

This year New Year's Day fell on a Sunday. Our four-year-old tried some leftover *oliebollen* (Dutch doughnuts). She loved them. The following Sunday she

asked, "Mom, can I have some more of that holy-bollen?"

—Angela Bick

The theme for our mealtime devotions one evening was the commandments given to the Israelites, and we were talking about unclean foods. I asked my children if they could name some of the animals that were forbidden to eat. Justin, who was five at the time, correctly identified camels. Quite surprised, I asked if he knew why.

Without missing a beat he exclaimed, "Because they're too lumpy!"

—Greg Luth

At the Christmas Day service at a church in our commu-

nity, the minister emphasized that the angels did not sing on the night Jesus was born. After the sermon, we stood up to sing a carol. It was "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

—Wilma Rypstra

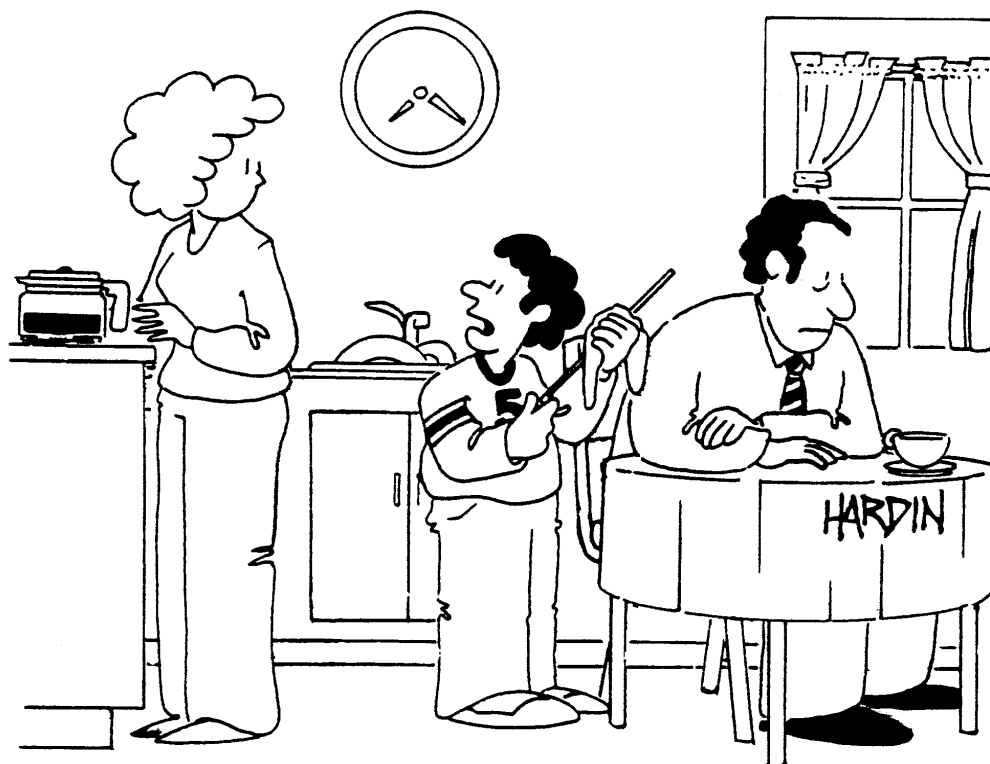
While caring for my 22-month-old granddaughter one day, I scooped her up and said, "It's time for your nap."

She immediately responded, "This I know."

I wondered where on earth a child just learning to talk would pick up such a grown-up expression.

Then, delighted, it dawned on me. Nap time with grandma meant I would sing with her. And I always began our quiet time together with "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know!"

—Elaine Wassink



"Better bring the pot back over here, Mom — Dad's still down a few cups."



+ *You add.*



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