

BANNER

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¹⁸ **Negotiating Coffee Time:
Introverts at Church**

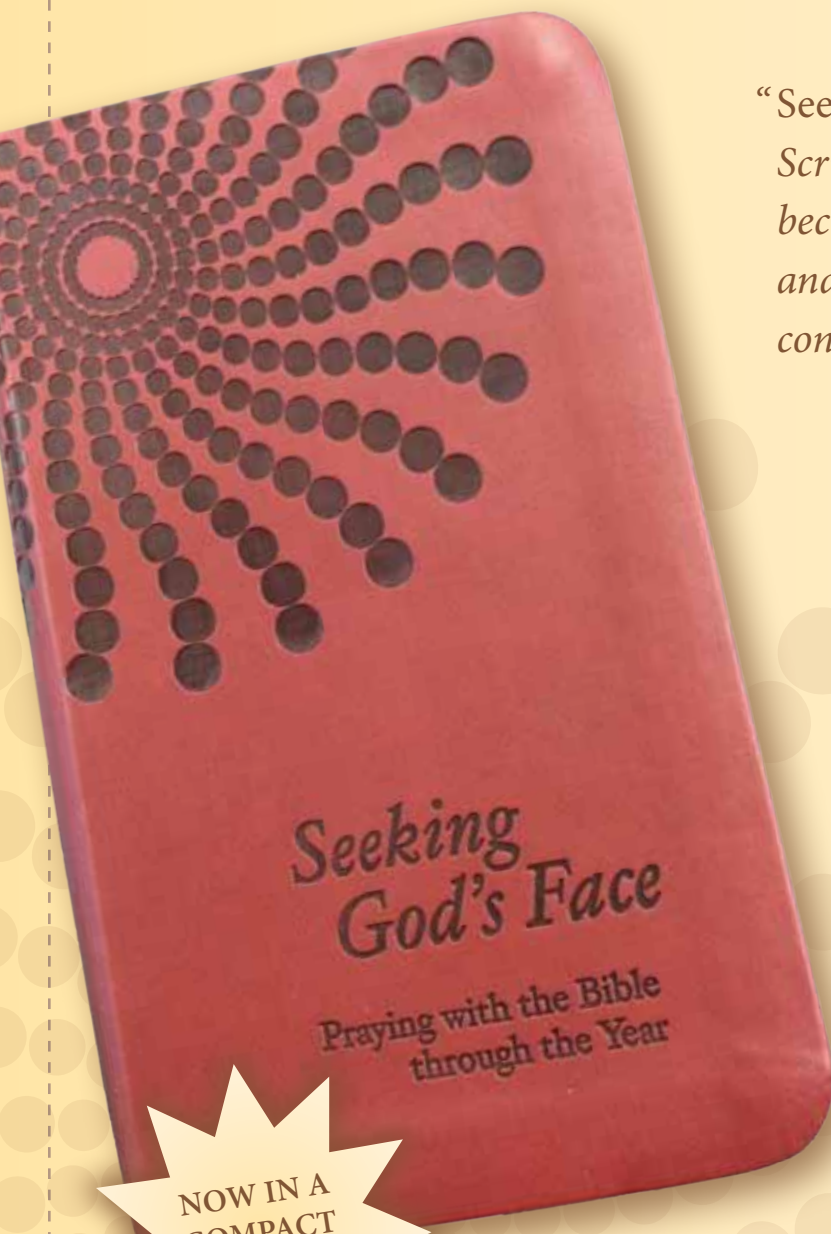
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Not Bad

WE LIVE IN HOPE. John Van Sloten's inspiring article "Heaven on Earth" (p. 32) made me ponder the other side, too—not just what the good will be like, but also what the absence of the bad will be like. Just as we already enjoy foretastes of heaven on earth in the here and now, may we also savor the joys of the absence of evil—even within ourselves? With the apostle Paul and the Heidelberg Catechism we sometimes complain how wretched we still are (Rom. 7:14-25); we still schlep the old self around with us even as we are already new creatures in Christ. For those in Christ, how total is our persisting depravity?

I know by heart a delightful little ditty by the noted Dutch comedian Fons Jansen. Jansen did a masterful job of subjecting first the Roman Catholic Church and then the Reformed churches to his good-hearted, sharp-witted humor.

The song, entitled "Drie Kleine Kettertjes" ("Three Little Heretics"), is about three folks during medieval times who ran afoul of the church. They publicly declared that they did not believe in hell. When their bishop got wind of it, he issued a scathing pastoral letter in which he sternly warned the faithful of the grave dangers of such heresy and ordered them to shun these heretics.

But the three persisted. They did not believe in hell. The pope caught wind of it and summoned them to Rome. When they got there, he promptly excommunicated them.

Still the three little heretics persisted. Things went from bad to worse. They were dragged before the civil judge. No further trace of the heretics to be found: the heretics were burned.

The three little heretics came before St. Peter. They 'fessed up that they did not believe in hell.

Peter's response? "Fie! Tarnation! No wonder you were named heretics! How could you contend that hell does not exist? . . . You just *came* from there!"

OK, so Jansen goes too far in denying a future place for folks who want nothing to do with God. But he's right too, in a way. A Reformation and a Renaissance later, have we learned all that much about ridding ourselves from godlessness in *this* life?

Do we earnestly seek the heart's pure desire?

Do we strive to be a holy people whose robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Do we seek and do justice unstained by human greed?

Do we exercise true religion à la James 1:27?

Do we relentlessly pursue true community, untarnished by prejudice, racism, and tribalism?

Do we seek true repentance—not just the coming to life of our new selves but also the (daily) putting to death of the old selves (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 33)?

Believers used to agonize over such things. They used to search out earnestly the absence of the bad because they truly found sin, especially their own, offensive.

Do our hearts still thrill when we stumble across the miracle of genuine purity and holiness?

When it comes to our living hope for heaven, absence—of evil—also makes the heart grow fonder. ■

For those in Christ, how total is our persisting depravity?



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

Bob De Moor Editor

Judy Hardy Associate Editor

Gayla R. Postma News Editor

Henry Hess Editor,
Together Doing More

Kristy Quist Tuned In Editor

Karen DeVries Copy Editor

Joyce Kane Editorial Assistant

Dean R. Heetderks Art Director

Pete Euwema Graphic Design

Frank Gutbrod Graphic Design

Contact Us

2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560

Address Changes and Subscriptions
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Classified Advertising
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Display Advertising
616-224-0729 ads@crcna.org

Editorial
616-224-0785 editorial@thebanner.org

News
613-330-3145 news@thebanner.org

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Reality Check

MY FRIEND traveled to Disney World this past winter with her family. Her nephew was just the right age to really absorb what such a vacation had to offer.

When my friend's nephew encountered some scary-looking statues while waiting in line for the "Tower of Terror" attraction, he was nervous. He grabbed his dad's hand and asked, "Those are fake, right?" His dad assured him that the statues were just statues—this really wasn't some haunted hotel or a "twilight zone." With that assurance, the boy became fearless. He thoroughly enjoyed the "Tower of Terror."

The fears that we face in our real, non-Disney-World lives are anything but fake. Sin and evil are all-too-present realities in the world. But in some sense, the prayers I offer often have something in common with my friend's nephew asking his dad, "Those are fake, right?" When I

am reminded of the larger reality of God's loving control, I can face the smaller realities of fear and evil in the world around me and within my own self.

I need to hear the words of Psalm 27: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

So I ask God, "Are you in control?" This happens at many points along my faith journey because I am genuinely not sure of the answer. The chaos I face seems so powerful that I fear it may overwhelm me. When the psalmist cries out in confidence, "Whom shall I fear?" I want to reply, "I can think of a few things."

Other times that same prayer is more of a calm request for a reminder. Then I feel my spiritual feet more firmly underneath me, and I can join my voice to the psalmist's: "Whom shall I fear?"

But most often, I'm somewhere in the middle—too hesitant to walk boldly onto the roller coaster of life without first asking, "Lord, are you my light and my salvation?" I worship with other Christians because I need to ask these

questions with the community of faith, and I need my sisters and brothers in Christ to help me remember the ways God answers my question.

The boy at Disney World could face "Terror" when he knew the greater reality: those scary statues were just plastic! Our fears are not fake, but we too can know a greater reality. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Lord, our light and salvation. Whom shall we fear? ■



Rebecca Jordan Heys is the minister of discipleship at Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Do **not fear** what may happen **tomorrow**. The **same** loving Father **who cares** for you today **will care** for you tomorrow and **every day**. Be at **peace**, then, and **put aside** all anxious thoughts and imaginings.

— ST. FRANCIS DE SALES



Getting Ready for Church

The best preparation for meeting God on Sunday was to be clean and composed in body, soul, and mind.



LONG AGO, BEFORE TELEVISION, when I was a boy, our family got ready for Sunday by taking a Saturday night bath. The routine was practiced, I think, to instill in us children that Sunday was special. The best preparation for meeting God on Sunday was to be clean and composed in body, soul, and mind. You wore your best clothes to church in those days. Sundays had a festive, happy feel, like quietly celebrating somebody's birthday or anniversary.

In the 1960s many adopted the casual habit. "They'll know we are Christians by our love"—not by how well-dressed we are. God loves long-haired hippies too, according to Billy Graham.

These days, attitudes about attending worship are quite relaxed. Pretty much anything goes in clothing and haircuts. The American shower has overtaken the European bath in the church circles I know. A shower is quicker and more efficient than sitting in your dirty bathwater.

So how do you make Sunday a special day when our culture no longer recognizes the first day of the week as "the best" but only as part of "the weekend"? If we

set apart Sunday as a "holy" day, it easily loses relevance for daily life—except as a break. And a cottage by the lake is a more attractive escape from the fast pace of work. On the other hand, if Sunday becomes indistinct from the other days of the week, a liturgical worship service with a set pattern can seem obsolete.

In the Reformation tradition of the church, expositing God's Word to build up the faithful and celebrating the eucharist is central to Sunday worship. At Sunday worship, the church is not doing evangelism but is liturgically rooting God's children and anybody present in the riches of God's Word—its warnings, its comforts, and its directives for reconciling worldly culture back to God.

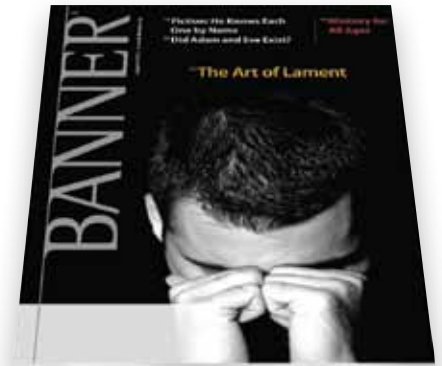
So I have a very practical proposal for making Sunday worship both special and integral to our weekday life: do not come to worship with a bathed body and a blank mind, but come primed to hear the biblical passage, *which has been declared beforehand*.

This means the pastor puts in writing at least a week ahead of time what Scripture she or he intends to preach from so that the congregation can deepen themselves in the text and the context of the passage. Then, after the requisite post-service coffee, young and old can have a free-for-all discussion of the sermon, the music chosen, and the liturgical sense of the Sunday for the coming week, under supervision of the ruling elders.

That way, God willing, every one of the congregated worshipers takes part in maturing Jesus Christ's body into a robust, biblically informed, active, daily faith. ■



Calvin Seerveld is a long-time member of Willowdale Christian Reformed Church in Toronto.



Synod 2012

Reportedly, more than a few people want the church to preach the gospel without mentioning political, economic and social issues (News, July 2012). What gospel would that be? Not the good news of Jesus. He calls his followers to relieve the suffering of the poor, the foreigners, the sick and prisoners (Matt. 25).

John Calvin ceaselessly points out that relief of human suffering is a Christian duty. The poor deserve charity even when they are "contemptible and worthless" or have "provoked you with injuries and insults." Why? Because they are made in God's image and God values them no less than he values you (*Institutes*, Vol. 3, vii).

In recent years, governments on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border have increased income inequality, enforced austerity on the backs of the poor, imprisoned more people for longer terms, and shirked necessary earth care.

Jesus says taking no notice of the marginalized earns you hell. The gospel, stripped of social justice, is not good news.

—Nick Loenen

Richmond, British Columbia

All hail to the four who came with a roar from the pews of Prince Edward Island's shore to synod's floor ("Bikers Roar to Synod," News, July 2012). We are told they are planning to do the same in key CRC

TTERS

locations. Why? Because there are no anti-pornography messages being heard from the pulpits!

—*Jake Prins*
Grand Rapids, Mich.

I read with interest the name change for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (“New Name for CRWRC Is Official,” News, July 2012). It struck me that the new name is but a shadow of the original.

Why would an organization with a highly respected history of compassionate and generous global Christian work want to remove the key word from their name and turn it into something as generic as World Renew?

No doubt some will argue that with the word “Christian” in the name, we often are prevented from assisting where an urgent need arises. But even Jesus told the disciples to shake the dust off their garments where their message was not welcome.

Would it have been so difficult to have changed the name to “Christian World Renew”? Has a nice ring to it, doesn’t it?

—*Jack Toornstra*
Edmonton, Alberta

In the article “Synod 2012: What to Watch For” (News, June 2012), I came across a statement that made me pause. It mentions the “untimely death” of Robert Heerspink, former director of Back to God Ministries International.

As Calvinists we must remember that death is never “untimely.” God appoints the time of death for each person even before we are born.

The world often describes the deaths of important leaders, actors, etc. as “untimely,” especially when they are young. We must not fall into that same word pattern. God “times” the deaths, not humans.

—*Linda Cotton*
Kent City, Mich.

Another Tower of Babel?

Bolstering the fallacy of determining scientific fact by majority vote and elevating political correctness to a par with Scripture, you convinced the delegates to Synod 2012 that global warming is an undeniable phenomenon and that it is anthropogenic (“Synod Calls Church to Take Active Role in Climate Change Issue,” News, July 2012). Now the denomination is about to expend vast quantities of time, energy, and treasure to erect a monument to this egregious example of human hubris. Your perspective is wrong.

In an article entitled “Feel-Good Environmentalism at the U.N.” in the *Wall Street Journal* of June 21, 2012, Bjorn Lomborg notes that “even an extremely ambitious climate policy—aiming to cut global carbon-dioxide emissions by 50% below 1990s levels—would entail enormous costs but save very few lives. Inexpensive policy changes, however, could virtually eliminate pollution-related deaths. . . .”

Perhaps both the U.N. elites and the denomination should heed the words of Christ in Luke 14:28, counting the cost and weighing the alternatives rather than following the example of the know-it-all of Genesis 11.

—*Peter B. Schipma*
Lockport, Ill.

Even though we agree with synod that we should be more careful in our use of the earth’s resources (“Synod Calls Church to Take Active Role in Climate Change Issue,” News, July 2012), we cannot agree with its conclusion that global warming is largely man-made. We have two strong reservations regarding the Stewardship Report that had synod reach this decision.

First, it ignored the fact that our use of these resources has clear political dimensions. Moreover, the science of

global warming and its causes has often been obscured by political maneuvering. Oddly enough, the report assumed it could deal with the science without seeing it as part of a multifaceted issue.

Second, uncertainties remain with regard to science issues, such as past global temperatures and the validity of climate models. Such models were used to support policymaking on the floor of synod, even though many have pointed to their shortcomings. These uncertainties too were ignored in the report.

—*John Ripmeester and John G. Cook*
Ottawa, Ontario

Memories from Guam

A story in the June issue (“Old Banner Photo Reunites World War II Vets,” News, June 2012) brought back memories of the time I spent in Guam. I was stationed there from April until November 1945 as the bombardier on a B-29 crew that flew many missions over Japan.

I remember receiving the *Young Calvinist* magazine every month, and it was from this magazine that I found out about the monthly Young Calvinist meetings on Guam. I believe that a CRC chaplain would fly over from Saipan once a month for these meetings. I wish I could remember the name of the chaplain.

I really enjoyed those monthly meetings, although I was not able to attend every month due to our flying schedule.

Two of the men I remember from those meetings were Paul Mulder and Jake Tripp. The picture for *The Banner* must have been taken on one of the times I missed being there.

—*Orley Van Dyke*
Holland, Mich.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

NEWS

NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

For correspondents' email addresses, see www.thebanner.org.

Gayla R. Postma News Editor
Email: gpostma@crana.org

Jeff Arnold
Classes Kalamazoo, Lake Erie
734-790-0843

Sarah J. Boonstra
Classes Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone
303-247-0697

Anita Brinkman
Classes Chatham, Huron
519-354-9126

Gregory Chandler
Classes Georgetown, Grandville
616-392-8434

Shashi DeHaan
Classes Arizona, Red Mesa
623-418-6705

Monica deRegt
Classes Hamilton, Niagara, Toronto
905-385-6697

Callie Feyen
Classes Atlantic NE, Hackensack, Hudson
240-422-1171

Janet A. Greidanus
Classes Alberta North, Alberta South,
Saskatchewan
780-484-3370

Melissa Holtrop
Classes Central Plains, Chicago South,
Northern Illinois
708-217-7197

Jonathan J. Kim
Classes Pacific Hammi
626-616-0411

Daina Kraai
Classes Muskegon, Northern Michigan
517-896-8855

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

Kate Padilla
Classes Iakota, Heartland, Northcentral Iowa
712-360-0070

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

Amy Toonstra
Classes Columbia, Pacific Northwest
503-399-9165

Susan Vanden Berg
Classes Holland, Zeeland
616-212-7281

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

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

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

Tracey Yan
Classes B.C. North-West, B.C. South-East
604-420-3030

Louis Tamminga
In Memoriam articles
616-949-4539

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Colorado Church Responds to Theater Shooting

In the aftermath of the mass shooting in a movie theater in Aurora, Colo., Eastern Hills Christian Reformed Church, also located in Aurora, responded.

Rick Feria, family life pastor at Eastern Hills, lives near the cinema. "I went to the high school where they were interviewing witnesses and where families and friends could go to get information about people who were unaccounted for," he said.

Staff members from a variety of churches were there to listen to and pray with people—not just those coming in to find out about the police, FBI staff, firefighters, and medical personnel. "It was a gut-wrenching day," said Feria.

No one in the Eastern Hills congregation was injured, but some were in the theater when the shooting took place or in one of the other theaters in the build-

ing. Some who attend the church have relatives or friends who were injured or killed.

"We will continue to be available to provide support for our people as well as a connecting place to other resources that people may need," said Feria.

—Sarah Boonstra

Everyone Belongs, Everyone Serves: Disability Concerns Celebrates 30 Years

The ways Christian Reformed congregations minister to those living with disabilities have changed dramatically since 1982, when Disability Concerns was formed to better serve congregants with mental and physical impairments, but there's still work to be done.

Attitudes and methods for being more inclusive have changed, and that's where Mark Stephenson, director of Disability Concerns, believes efforts need to keep moving forward.

Thirty years ago, Stephenson says, churches struggled to reach out to congregants with disabilities. In 1985, synod encouraged churches to become more welcoming—in their attitude, through their communication, and by making houses of worship more accessible.

Stephenson said that early on, many of those living with impairments were ignored, as pastors tended to limit themselves to disabilities they were able to see. Those with hearing or visual



Disability advocates gain additional skills for their work in churches at this conference sponsored by Disability Concerns.

impairments, mental illness, eating disorders, and the like were often overlooked.

That makes Disability Concerns' ongoing efforts even more important.

As of January, almost 90 percent of churches included barrier-free worship areas, while almost 85 percent offered main entrances accessible to wheelchairs. Hundreds of churches offer large-print bulletins for the visually impaired.

But more can be done.

Stephenson insists that some churches must better embrace Disability Concerns' philosophy of "Everybody belongs, everybody serves," allowing those who live with impairments to be able to use their gifts rather than be defined by their disabilities.

"The reality is everyone has gifts, and everyone has challenges," he said. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Jeff Arnold



Pillar Church pastors Jon Brown of the RCA and Chris DeVos of the CRC

Michigan CRC Joins RCA Too

Mending a 130-year-old rift isn't easy, but Pillar Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich., is doing just that.

Pillar Church, one of the oldest churches in the denomination, will now affiliate with both the CRC and the Reformed Church in America, in effect undoing a contentious 1882 congregational split.

Pillar's pastor, Chris DeVos, will now co-pastor with Jon Brown of the RCA. The church will implement a renewed vision in September, with a new format and new ministries.

DeVos said the church hopes to serve as a tangible example of reconciliation between the RCA and the CRC.

Brown agreed. "Most of the time we experience churches splitting, not coming back together," he said. "Being a part of this reconciliation expression is thrilling; it's huge."

Pillar is only the second Christian Reformed church to also affiliate with the RCA, the first being Maple Avenue Ministries, also in Holland.

Pillar will now pay half its ministry shares to the CRC and half to the RCA. Council members will attend the classis meetings of both denominations. Pastors will continue in the pension plans of the denomination that ordained them.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Susan Vanden Berg



The number of Christian Reformed Churches that have child safety policies in place. Sunday, September 23, is Abuse Awareness Sunday.

Senior Recycles for a Good Cause

Ann Van Harten, 86, started picking up empty bottles and cans over 17 years ago, donating the nickels and dimes she collected to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Van Harten, a member of Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church in Surrey, British Columbia, moved to a Christian retirement community next door to the church in 2001, and her recycling program gradually expanded there.

In the last 11 years, Van Harten has helped recycle about 210,000 items and collected more than \$17,600 for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. With government matching grants, this means she and her fellow seniors have raised more than \$88,000 for hunger relief programs around the world.

"I love to be doing something useful," she said. "It also means I have to get out of my comfortable chair and get some exercise!"

—Tracey Yan

Ann Van Harten recycles at Elim Village.



MARIA VAN HARTEN

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. John Looman

1932 – 2011

Rev. John ("Jack") Looman, 78, devout witness of his Lord, deeply personal in his ministry, and advocate for the disadvantaged, passed away in Grand Rapids, Mich.

After a stint in the U.S. Navy and a career in the telephone industry, Looman entered the gospel ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in 1975.

He served congregations in Michigan and Florida, retiring in 1995.

Looman is fondly remembered by those to whom he ministered. His genuine love for his Savior graced his every relationship. He had a big heart for those on the fringes of life. He and his wife, Berdena, loved pastoral visiting; the parsonage was a welcoming place where so many people experienced encouragement.

Though health concerns prompted early retirement, Looman continued in volunteer ministry, including preaching at nursing homes and visiting inmates at the Kent County Jail.

Looman is survived by Berdena, four children and their spouses, 12 grandchildren, and five 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.

NEWS

CRC Pastor Dies in Sledding Accident

David Watson, a CRC pastor, died while sledding with his four children at Mount Rainier National Park. He was 51 years old.



David Watson

According to Rod Vander Ley, retired pastor of Tacoma (Wash.) Christian Reformed Community Church, Watson broke through a snow crust and fell into the creek below. Rescuers reached him, but he died en route to the hospital.

Watson served congregations in North Carolina and Washington. At the time of his death, he was on loan to Kent Covenant Church.

Watson is survived by his wife, Jamie (Jungsoon), and four children, ages 11 to 17.

—Amy Toornstra

Conference Helps Create Safer Churches

Nancy Boelens of Holland, Mich., shared her story of 20 years of domestic abuse and the lack of support she received in her local Christian Reformed congregation. That was how the annual Safe Church conference opened.

More than 70 people from across North America came to Grand Rapids, Mich., to attend this conference for those who work in Safe Church ministry in their church or their classis (a regional group of churches).

This year's conference was open to anyone involved in Safe Church Ministries; previously such trainings were offered only for Safe Church Team chairpersons or advocates at regional training events.

"There are many places with no active Safe Church Teams or no chairperson. So this gave folks from those areas a chance to join us," said Bonnie Nicholas, director



GAULA RPOSTMA

(L-r) Anamarie Joesse, Gary Smeyers, Ary De Moor, and Carel Geleynse at the Safe Church conference.

of the denomination's Safe Church ministry.

The fact that many large classes in the denomination do not have a Safe Church Team surprised first-time conference-goer Henry Hofstra, who serves on the Classis Lake Erie Safe

Church Team. "There are several reasons why it is important for a classis to have a Safe Church Team," he said.

Besides being a hub for resources, training, and support, "The classis Safe Church Team is the body from which an Advisory Panel is drawn should an incident of officebearer misconduct arise in a local church," he said.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Daina Kraai

Edmonton Church Helps Clean Alberta's Highways

If you've always assumed that those folks in bright orange safety vests who pick up trash along the highway are inmates from a local prison, look again. In Alberta, they may very well be members of West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton.

As part of an annual province-wide highway clean-up, the Alberta government pays \$100 per kilometer (0.6 mile) to groups who clean up both sides of a highway. West End CRC volunteers cleaned approximately 20 kilometers of highway near Edmonton.

Diana Pinkster was inspired to volunteer with her four children after a recent road trip from British Columbia. "I couldn't believe all the garbage there was along the highway," she said. "It was a real eye-opener for the kids. They'll think twice now about throwing garbage out the car window."

Including the recyclable bottles and cans they found, West End CRC volunteers raised over \$2,000 for the church's building fund.

—Janet A. Greidanus



Dale, Diana, Jason, Katie, and Dustin Pinkster pick up trash.

Oldies Live Up Summer Sermon Series

You won't usually hear Don McLean's "American Pie" or The 5th Dimension's "Aquarius" during a Sunday sermon. But that's what parishioners at Searchlight Ministries, a Christian Reformed Church congregation in Jamestown, Mich., heard recently.

It was part of a seven-week series pastor Stan Drenth called "The Summer Oldies Series: Countdown to No. 1."

An enthusiast of 1960s and 1970s music, Drenth planned the series tying classic songs back to another set of "oldies"—selected chapters from the book of Psalms.

In the first sermon of the series, Drenth paired Psalm 29, a praise psalm, with "Aquarius," a song that speaks to the coming of a new age with "harmony and understanding." Drenth pointed out that many of the song's prom-



GREG CHANDLER

Stan Drenth brings oldies music to church.

ises don't come to fruition, and that true praise and honor is to God alone.

He paired Psalm 79, a lament psalm, with "American Pie," the 1972 McLean classic that laments "the day the music died." Drenth noted that it's appropriate for God's people to lament their sins and appeal for God's grace and mercy.

While some might question the use of secular music

in sermons, Drenth said such songs can be used as illustrations to help bring people back to worshiping God.

"Everything is redeemable. The devil doesn't have all the good music. It's the perspective we bring to it," Drenth said. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Greg Chandler

One Ministry, Two Wins

Through the generosity of an anonymous donor and a warehouse connection, Connections Community Christian Reformed Church in London, Ontario, is able to provide truckloads of infant and adult diapers, feminine hygiene products, toilet paper, and more to people who need them. All products are discontinued or slightly damaged and otherwise would end up in the dump unused.

"[It's a] huge truck load of products," said George Saylor, pastor of Connections. Church members may give supplies to families and neighbors in need, and the rest are distributed to local agencies, women's shelters, and group homes.

"The only thing we ask is that they do it to show the love of Jesus," Saylor said. "We estimate—a conservative estimate—that each truckload has a retail value of over \$50,000."

It also diverts what otherwise would have ended up in a local landfill. "It's one ministry, two wins," according to Saylor.

—Anita Brinkman



George Keulen

Lung Transplant Recipient Cycles for Cystic Fibrosis

George Keulen, 30, recently cycled 235 kilometers (146 miles) over two days, an accomplishment by any standard. It's even more extraordinary when you consider that just two years ago, Keulen underwent a double lung transplant.

Keulen, a member of Ladner (British Columbia) Christian Reformed Church, was born with cystic fibrosis. He said his faith in God and the prayers of his family and church gave him the hope he needed to keep going while he waited for his transplant.

Keulen put his new-found health to good use, raising \$9,000 in an annual two-day cycling event organized by Cystic Fibrosis Canada.

Keulen also participated in cycling events at the Canadian Transplant Games in Calgary, Alberta, in July before returning to his studies at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia.

—Tracey Yan



Volunteers sort and distribute paper products at Connections Community Church.



SARAH BOONSTRA

Kids at Crestview were able to create their own water rockets.

Scientists Spice Up Summer with Crazy Experiments

Five-year-old Sophie eyed the snake suspiciously. Then, summoning her courage, she held out her arms. The slender orange snake coiled around one arm while Sophie used her other hand to grip its head.

All of this was part of a “crazy science” summer program meant to encourage kids to explore science, organized by Crestview Christian Reformed Church in Boulder, Colo.

“Crazy Science’ is a reflection of our congregation,” said Art DeBruyn, senior pastor at Crestview. “We have a disproportionate number of scientists and engineers. We decided to take advantage of that.”

Kids young and old were able to hold snakes, launch water rockets, explore a homemade telephone device, and guess the mass of colored liquids that were eventually dropped from the church roof.

The passion of the scientists resulted in a lot of excitement from the kids. “This is way better than the science we do at school!” exclaimed Sydney, age 8.

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Sarah Boonstra

Teen Event Helps Restore City

Brian Polet was amazed when he and a group of teens drove into Marion, Ind.

“I hadn’t imagined how bad it was,” said Polet, who is the youth pastor at 14th Street Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. “I was struck by the urban blight. Factory after factory was shut down, parking lots were empty, roofs were caving in, yards were overgrown.”

Polet was part of the “Marion Project,” which brought 203 teens and 81 adult leaders from six states and two provinces to Indiana for five days in July to help revitalize the poverty-stricken city.

They erected two Habitat for Humanity homes, painted fences and houses, cleaned up neighborhoods, worked on landscaping, and more.

The effort was a sequel to last year’s Youth Unlimited conven-

Habitat for Humanity supervisor Ed Costello with Sarah Slotsema, 17, of Grand Rapids, Mich.



tion, called *Live It!*, which was held in Marion.

“I loved the mixture of worship and service. . . . You get to see the effects of living out your faith,” said Kayla VandenBosch, 17, of LaGrave Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Mich.

A Facebook post from the City of Marion praised the teens for

their work in Marion: “They were humble, kind, giving, and showed us the power of faith in action—not words. We were honored that this fabulous group came to Marion, and hoped they inspired our community to serve.”

Live It! 2013 will be held in Pittsburgh, Penn. [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Roxanne Van Farowe



NOAH J. K. KRUIS

Church Funds Urban Farm in Michigan

Creston Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., provided funding this summer for the New City Urban Farm to help neighborhood high school students develop job skills and learn about where food comes.

Lance Kraai, farm director and a member of Creston CRC, sees the ministry as a social enterprise: a business whose goals include social benefits in addition to profits. The farm offers employment, job skills training, and discipleship to high school students.

One of those students is Shanna Greer, 17. “I learned that I do want to go to college,” said Greer of these coaching sessions. “At first I didn’t. And now I know about how to get there.”

“It’s fun to see people get excited about food,” said Kraai. “I’ve really seen God’s hand every step of the way.” [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Noah J. K. Kruis

Shanna Greer harvests early cherry tomatoes on the New City Urban Farm.



Nearly completed greenhouse

British Columbia Church Helps Remote Community Eat Better

Volunteers from New Life Christian Reformed Church in Abbotsford, British Columbia, recently dismantled a 30-by-60-foot greenhouse frame, loaded it on a truck, transported it over 400 kilometers (250 miles) by highway, ferry, and gravel road to a remote location on the West Coast of Vancouver Island—and then rebuilt it.

The greenhouse is now part of Esperanza in Tahsis, a mission that provides housing, counseling, and crisis intervention to locals, many of them First Nations people.

In a community where a trip to the supermarket involves a five-hour round trip by boat, logging road, and winding highway, being able to grow local vegetables provides healthier options for both mission staff and guests.

New Life has been partnering with Esperanza since 2004, sending work teams there every summer, explained church member Bob Burkinshaw, who came up with the initial idea.

Mike Brouwer spearheaded the construction. "It was great to see the excitement of the people at Esperanza that would benefit from this project," he said. "Hopefully I will make it back there sometime to see the new gardens in the greenhouse and maybe share a nice meal." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Tracey Yan

Church Softball Team Goes Behind Bars

Every summer, members of Seymour Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., pack up their bats and gloves to play a double-header softball game against a team of prison inmates at Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility in Ionia, Mich.

This fun way of living out Christ's call to visit those in prison is organized by Bob Woldhuis, a member at Seymour who works as a social worker at the prison.

The Seymour team goes head-to-head for two games with the inmates' all-star team, selected from their intramural league.

"The first year was very intimidating," said Doug Nykamp, the Seymour pitcher.



Seymour CRC's softball team

"The first base line had prisoners lined up as spectators, and there were only three security guards."

The games are played by house rules, which aren't always spelled out before the game. One Seymour batter was called out because the previous batter had not properly stored his bat.

One member of the prison's team said, "Playing this game means so much to us. It gives us a chance to get out of the daily routine of prison life, if only for a night. . . . It is a little light in such a dark environment."

—Noah J. K. Kruijs

Wisconsin Church Makes Gardening Inclusive

When 17-year-old Seth Legare learned that his church's community garden wasn't accessible to gardeners with physical impairments, he decided to do something about it.

Covenant Christian Reformed Church in Appleton, Wisc., started its community garden program four years ago.

After tweaking his initial design a handful of times, Legare and his family, along with a team of about 20 volunteers, built raised boxes and laid down rubberized barn matting, making the garden usable for those using wheelchairs.

Church neighbors Clarence and Ann Thuecks, who began gardening at the church last summer, used Legare's project immediately. Clarence, who uses a wheelchair, used to accompany his wife to the space last summer, but could only watch from afar because



ANN THUECKS

Clarence Thuecks farms his plot in Covenant CRC's community garden after church member Seth Legare designed a system that made the space accessible for residents with physical impairments.

there was no way to access their plot. This year, he could join her.

"It just worked out so beautifully," garden coordinator Gail Miller said. "It's so nice to see [the Thuecks] be able to garden and feel like part of the community." [MORE ONLINE](#)

—Jeff Arnold

CHURCH WORLDWIDE

Things to Know About Religious Violence in Nigeria

Ongoing violence in Nigeria between Muslims and Christians has killed hundreds this year alone.

The Christian Reformed Church has more than a dozen personnel located in Nigeria.

Here are four things to know about the violence there:

- This is not simply a religious conflict, but a clash between Muslim nomadic herders and Christian farmers.
- The militant Islamist group Boko Haram is a menace, but its role is very local.
- Oil is flowing in Nigeria, but political and economic institutions are still weak. Authorities are not able to maneuver a great prosperity for people.
- If you're not in Nigeria, you can still do something about the crisis. Katrina Lantos Swett, chair of the U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom, calls on North Americans to contact their legislative representatives to "fund and implement programs to stop religious violence and promote religious freedom in that country."

—Religion News Service

Wheaton College Joins Suit against Contraception Mandate

Wheaton College, an evangelical school in Illinois, joined Catholic groups in a lawsuit against the U.S. Obama administration's contraception mandate, which requires most employer health insurance plans to provide birth control coverage.

—Religion News Service

In Gay Marriage Fight, Some Companies Take a Stand

(RNS) A number of high-profile business executives have come out on the issue of gay marriage. Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos is the latest to say "I do" to supporting same-sex unions. Microsoft founder Bill Gates and Ken Powell, CEO of General Mills, have both publicly supported gay marriage.



In an opposite corner is Chick-fil-A's Dan Cathy, who recently told Baptist Press that Chick-fil-A is "very much supportive of the family—the biblical definition of the family unit."

In the Baptist Press interview, Cathy said his stance against same-sex marriage "might not be popular with everyone, but, thank the Lord, we live in a country where we can share our values and operate on biblical principles."

—USA Today

For more on all these stories, please visit www.thebanner.org



Grand Rapids Christian baseball team

Michigan Boys Win State Baseball Championship

Grand Rapids (Mich.) Christian High School's boys' baseball team won the Michigan Division II state baseball championship.

Kurt Hoekstra, Dave Pluymert, Alex VandeVusse, Dave VanVliet, Joel Schipper, and Travis Kraai were all named All-Conference and All-District Players.

—Noah J. K. Kruis

Colorado Church Members Delve into their Bibles

On Sunday mornings, members of a suburban church near Denver, Colo., come with their tablets, their iPhones, and even their Bibles. They come with pens and highlighters, ready for the message. This is what church leaders have been hoping for, what they've been working on since August 2011, when they kicked off a year of Read Your Bible.

RYB is a message from God: Read Your Bible.

"We felt convicted from the Lord to really get our folks deeper into the Word," said

Mark DeNooy, missions pastor at Eastern Hills Community Christian Reformed Church in Aurora, Colo.

Eastern Hills provided tools to help people go deeper into the Word. Sunday-morning sermons dovetailed with the reading guides. Senior pastor Shawn

Sikkema put together questions for small groups to discuss the topics further, and a staff member or elder wrote a daily blog to match the daily reading guide.

"It impacted my life and my relationships," said Jonathan Miller,



The staff of Eastern Hills with a message from God: Read Your Bible.

an elder of Eastern Hills, who has recently read the Bible cover to cover. "People around me noticed it. I haven't intentionally injected anything, but when you're reading the Bible it does affect your life."

[MORE ONLINE](#)

—Sarah Boonstra

FAQs

Justice

Q Can churches work for justice without being political?

A Yes and no. It depends on what you mean by “political.” Churches can work for justice without engaging in partisan political activity such as supporting one political party, electioneering, or distributing propaganda. That part of political life is not appropriate church activity. Church members, as citizens, may or may not choose that tool to work for justice.

“Political” also means how we structure our life together as a society. In that sense, doing justice requires churches and church members to be political. God wants a just public order; so should the church. Look to Jesus, our first church leader. He publicly challenged unjust public policies and practices in his day, but he did not seek political office.

The church, as part of society, cannot avoid being part of public life. Silence is also a political choice, especially when those who suffer injustice need support to change what is harming them in the same society as the church.

In North America, churches and church members face the challenge of redeeming our politics from the excessive partisanship and political game-playing that distort its true purpose, which is doing justice for all and caring for creation.

Members need to learn the language and meaning of justice in church in order to witness about that in public life. Avoiding talk about justice in church to avoid being “political” ends with our being complicit in politics that are destroying creation, our countries, and eventually our churches. Together we need to find and support new ways and tools to seek justice in our public life.

—Kathy Vandergrift

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

Silence is also a political choice.

Faith Formation

Q I left the CRC three years ago after completing my bachelor’s degree but stay in touch with CRC family and friends. Here’s my struggle: I can’t get past the perception that the CRC faith nurturing I received had more to do with successfully fitting in with mainstream North American values than with following Jesus. Does that make any sense?

A It’s fascinating that in your long letter you also mention that your CRC pastor challenged you to read Shane Claiborne’s *The Irresistible Revolution*, a book that had a significant effect on your faith development. I’m hearing more frequently that CRC youth ministries are growing disciples who don’t feel at home in the CRC as adults. Ironic.

Here’s what saddens me: we need folks like you! Already in the first century the church struggled to discern the difference between following Jesus and following the world. That struggle takes on new colors and shapes in every generation. Your struggle is not new.

Especially in this (U.S.) election year, we are prone to become politicized in ways that leave us almost incapable of hearing Jesus when so many use his name to further their own agendas.

Here’s my plea to you: First, be counter-cultural by practicing gentleness, humility, and respect, thereby trying to create conditions that invite meaningful conversations about these issues. It’s not just “their” struggle but also yours. Second, there are many who struggle like you do; pray that you will find them and together find a home in the CRC.

—Syd Hielema

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

Outreach

Q I’ve been witnessing to a neighbor for the last couple of years. She recently made a commitment to Christ and has started going to church with me. She would like to join, but isn’t sure about having to affirm a specific set of doctrines. Her faith is simple, yet she wants a community in which to belong. Should I encourage her to attend another church?

A Thanks for a good question. It is great that you’ve been able to articulate your faith to your neighbor, and wonderful to see God drawing her in to himself. I’m glad she has begun to attend church with you—that is an important step in one’s faith development.

Your friend’s hesitation is understandable. I would encourage her to continue to attend, to study the history of the Reformed confessions, and compare these to other theological approaches. Perhaps she needs to give it some time.

Theological depth is very important, and you might share with her how that depth has resonated in your own life. You might also give her examples of churches with differing theologies or less articulated doctrines to see whether or not she thinks those would be a better fit.

The bottom line is that community is essential in the life of faith. This community can happen at work, in the neighborhood, and in many other places. There is no replacement, however, for a faith community: a gathering of brothers and sisters called into the gospel life together, who pray, worship, laugh, love, and live into the newness Christ gives us. We need more neighbors like you!

—Bryan Berghoef

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

Negotiating Coffee Time



I TEND TO FEEL GUILTY AFTER CHURCH. It's not the sermon but the coffee fellowship after the service that makes me feel uncomfortable. I usually wait on the edge of the group and try to talk to one person. If that doesn't work out, I retreat to the church library, where I'm sure to run into someone I know well or find the company of a good book. And then I feel guilty for not being more gregarious. Shouldn't it be easier for me to elbow my way into the crowd at my church and join the conversation?

According to Susan Cain's recent book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, I shouldn't feel so guilty. In fact, I probably represent the feelings of 30 to 50 percent of the population. Psychologists call us introverts.

Cain describes introversion as a "preference for environments that are not overstimulating." By contrast, an extrovert loves being in a group and finds energy in constant activity. At work, introverts tend to be slow and steady; extroverts multitask while multitasking. It is true that introverts can be shy. But they don't dislike people. Introverts prefer calm settings, a conversation with a few people, and time to reflect before speaking.

Our modern economy and individualistic culture, says Cain, have favored the Extrovert Ideal, a personality type based on the model salesman who looks you in the eye and speaks with warm confidence about a new product. That ideal in turn causes us to view the ideal leader as a charismatic person blessed with the ability to decide quickly and communicate effectively.

By contrast, introverts have accomplished some of the most creative work alone, collaborating only when they had results to share. Consider Steve Wozniak, who worked at Hewlett-Packard and was part of a computer club but invented the original Apple computer on his own. Cain also notes that quiet and calm introverts such as Rosa Parks and Gandhi developed courageous consciences that refused to budge. Reading Cain's book, I'm surprised anyone would want to be an extrovert.

My personal version of liturgical dance is limited to standing up and sitting down.

Cain also presents the conversation she had with Adam McHugh, a pastor who's written extensively on introversion in the church. Says McHugh, "The evangelical culture ties together faithfulness with extroversion. The emphasis is on community, on participation in more and more programs and events, on meeting more and more people." As a result, many introverted evangelicals—and pastors—feel a sense of shame and spiritual failure if they are not as involved, engaged, or vocal as other church members.

Thanks to its focus on doctrinal knowledge, calmly ordered worship, and behind-the-scenes committee work, the Reformed tradition has been good for introverts. But as worship styles change, are the introverts among us feeling less at home or even leaving the church? And wouldn't Reformed extroverts argue that the church still has a long way to go?

I began to wonder how I could become more involved in church life. What might help introverts and extroverts worship and serve together in the church? Here are some ideas.

1. Get Over It

Dear fellow introvert, when your stomach rolls at the thought of participating in, say, a church retreat, ask yourself whether it's because of anxiety (fear of public speaking? of "over-sharing"?) or because you judge the time would be better spent alone. You may be using your introversion as an easy excuse for non-participation in the church. The church retreat may not be your thing, but what is?

Cain's advice is helpful in this context: "Figure out what you are meant to contribute to the world and make sure you contribute it. If this requires public speaking or networking or other activities that make you uncomfortable, do them anyway." So pick something at church to be involved in, remember that the cause is more important than your hesitation, and trust in the Spirit's guidance.

2. Introverted Pastors

Ever heard a pastor who seems to preach to your very soul on the topic of Christian community, but when you stop to chat with her right after the service, she seems distant and removed? Why can't she practice what she just preached? Realize that your pastor is probably an introvert, and that the sermon required an exhausting amount of reflection and concentration. Respect that effort with some space and time: send a card, an email, or an invitation to share a coffee.

All you extroverts: realize that many introverts are very good at speaking, preaching, teaching, and writing—areas where the setting is, to quote McHugh, "controlled." Once that setting is gone, the charismatic speaker or confident writer may seem embarrassingly awkward.

3. Mentoring

What do the words "youth group activity" make you think of? A service trip, invited speakers, group discussions, or special outings? Consider that youth group may not be for every young person. Cain cautions parents against forcing introverted children

to "come out of their shells" by requiring a group activity. It's better to let quiet kids be and instead to encourage their passions, which will do a better job of giving them confidence in a large group. The same advice applies to mentoring youth group activities: mix large-scale events with small group discussions.

4. "Ambivert" Worship

I'm not a great fan of shaking hands across the pews at the beginning of a service or acting out motions for children's songs. My personal version of liturgical dance is limited to standing up and sitting down. I'm glad, however, when a service pushes me out of my introvert's worship comfort zone. In the same way, planners who favor high-energy worship exclusively should consider whether they are following the Extrovert Ideal. If so, include time for contemplation, reflection, and liturgical prayers, or blend contemporary praise songs with traditional hymns.

5. Conflict Resolution

When church members disagree, how much of the disagreement can be linked to clashing personalities rather than to conflict over theology or mission? Imagine a meeting where the extroverts speak loudly while their introvert counterparts say nothing. The introverts then go home and send off a memo about the extroverts' bossy behavior. The extroverts promptly complain that the introverts didn't say anything at the meeting. Both parties are miffed and refuse to compromise.

In other words, extroverts need to listen, and introverts need to speak up.

Whether you're an introvert or an extrovert or have never even considered those categories, we probably can all agree with Susan Cain's suggestion that we need to "find a balance between action and reflection."

Such a balance is not easy. Think of Moses, who had to encounter a burning bush to get some fire in his robes. Or Peter, who had to be told *three times* to think before he spoke. Or Jesus, who preached to huge crowds (what an extrovert!) and also left his disciples to spend forty days in the desert (what an introvert!).

So, introverts, venture boldly into that after-church coffee-drinking crowd. And extroverts, make your way to the church library now and then. ■

For More Reading

- Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, Crown, 2012.
- Adam McHugh, *Introverts in the Church: Finding Our Place in an Extroverted Culture*, IVP, 2009.



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

Peanut Butter to Potblessings: A Guide to Finding a New Church Home

I GREW UP in the Reformed Church in America. My wife grew up in the Christian Reformed Church. We thought we were destined for lifelong membership in a Reformed church—that is, until a job change brought us to the suburbs of Washington, D.C.

There were no RCA or CRC churches within reasonable driving distance of our new home—even by D.C. driving standards. One of the first decisions we faced was whether to attend a church associated with another denomination or an independent church.

Deciding we'd prefer the stability of a denominational church, we eventually visited churches representing the Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian denominations.

Researching and evaluating the beliefs and traditions of each of those churches and denominations, we found, actually helped us to learn more about ourselves and affirm our own beliefs.

Although “church shopping” has always implied to me a lack of commitment to a local church family, or an unhealthy “consumer” approach to church attendance (“This isn’t meeting *my* needs”), I’ve become more sensitive to the many legitimate reasons to visit multiple churches in search of a church home.

So what exactly were we looking for? We wanted a church that was theologically sound, that had engaging preaching and Spirit-filled worship, was in a convenient location, had a solid nursery and programs for young kids and families our age, and was working to reach people in Jesus’ name. Shouldn’t be too hard to find, we figured.

The Visits

Before moving, one of our pastors gave us some good advice. He recommended



visiting a church for three or four consecutive weeks, arriving at different times and sitting in different locations. That way you’ll be sure to meet different people and experience multiple worship services from varying perspectives. Otherwise you could easily be greeted by the only friendly greeter in the church (or perhaps the only grumpy one), sit by the only nice family in the church (or the only rude one), or hear the pastor’s only good sermon (or only his worst one). By attending on consecutive weeks, odds are you’ll be able to make a more accurate assessment.

It’s disheartening that in this day and age some churches still do not realize the importance of their website. We visited every church online before setting foot inside the building, and for a number of churches, that online visit was the only visit we made.

We immediately noticed that we felt much more comfortable on our first visit to churches whose online representation was consistent with their in-person reality. Simply maintaining a website that was consistent with the look and feel of the actual church helped make it feel more familiar to us.

In smaller churches we were easily identified as visitors. In some of these we were offered gifts—a jar of jelly, a coffee mug. Larger churches usually had a visitors’ center. Clearly the smaller churches have an advantage in identifying visitors.

Almost all churches we visited greeted us and were friendly, but only the small-to-medium-sized churches actually made an effort to learn our names, find out why we were visiting, and offer to answer any questions. Larger churches weren’t rude, but generally offered nothing more than superficial greetings.

Larger churches do afford a level of comfort on an initial visit that's hard to match, allowing us to blend in easily without feeling like we were on the spot. Oddly enough, the size that provided comfort on initial approach left us feeling unnoticed and somewhat empty upon departure. A draw for some visitors can also be a deterrent for people wanting a church family and not simply a place to attend worship.

Most churches followed up after our visit in some fashion. We provided contact information whenever requested. A couple of churches subscribed us to their email newsletters; others sent generalized snail mail. One larger church sent a welcome packet signed by the pastor. A couple of churches called. One pastor sent us a handwritten note; another called and later visited our house for a chat. One pastor and his wife even had our family over for dinner.

Lessons Learned

Here are a few of the lessons that stand out when we reflect on our experiences:

1. First impressions are important. For us, that started with the website and carried over to the first visit for churches we attended. Visitor recognition and treatment ended up being important to us.
2. Welcoming visitors doesn't stop once the visitors are seated. At one church, a woman who initially greeted us was kind enough to explain things to us during the worship service (such as the process they used for serving communion). A couple of years after that visit, I still remember the impression her help made on us.
3. Names are important. Introduce yourself to visitors and express interest in them. Simply asking someone's name

We thought we were destined for lifelong membership in a Reformed church.

will leave a more lasting impression than a noncommittal greeting.

4. For families with young children, the nursery is almost as important as the worship service. One church we visited didn't have a nursery, and all their friendliness and follow-up efforts couldn't overcome that lack. Parents need to feel safe leaving their children with complete strangers, so anything that can ease the process will not go unnoticed. Explain on your website the efforts you take to ensure a safe environment (including screening of volunteers assisting with children), and be organized when visitors arrive with their apprehensive children.
5. Worship style is important, but nothing trumps actual substance.
6. Visiting a number of churches in a neighborhood provides a sense of community. As we drove around town or met new people, those visits provided a great frame of reference for seeing the churches actively involved in the community.
7. Church announcements can sometimes hinder worship. One church we visited began each worship service with an intense time of singing and praise. After that, they immediately

launched into announcements regarding their life as a church, dashing any hope of maintaining a worshipful focus on God. One such announcement from a nurse informed the congregation of a peanut butter recall issued by the government!

8. Avoid using exclusive lingo. For several weeks, the "peanut butter" church made announcements about an upcoming "potblessing" event, about which everyone was excited. After two or three weeks, we realized it was a traditional church potluck, but not wanting to say the word "luck" in church, they had changed the name to potblessing. That single word spoke volumes to us about that particular church.

Our New Church Home

After what seemed like an eternity, we found a church to call home—a church where we clearly felt God wanted us to be. Our family has been challenged, encouraged, and discipled at this small Anglican church plant with powerful preaching and rich corporate worship.

Leaving a beloved church home is never easy, but as we've discovered, finding a new one can be a time of encouragement and spiritual growth. My hope is that the lessons my family learned will help you strengthen your connection to your home church and be an encouragement to those looking for a church family to call home. ■



Brian Pikkaart is a senior network architect with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



Bringing the Seminary to You

by Nathan Bierma and Peter Choi

Calvin Theological Seminary's new Distance M.Div. program is bringing high-quality theological education to a neighborhood near you.

Even a year ago, some of the individuals joining the first cohort of the program would have had a hard time imagining the journey they are about to embark on this fall. They include

- a student who had to leave seminary partway through because her husband's new job meant relocating to Canada;
- an associate pastor of a nondenominational mega-church who wants to

deepen his understanding of Reformed theology;

- a recent Calvin College graduate who couldn't pass up the opportunity to serve as an intern at a church in New York City;
- someone who had never heard of the Christian Reformed Church but has long felt God's leading toward theological education.

Participants in the new program are a diverse group of people with a wide range of life experiences sharing one common predicament: the right seminary was, or would have been, out of reach from where God was calling them to live and serve.

Recognizing that there are a variety of good reasons for prospective Master of Divinity students to remain where they are, CTS is bringing seminary education to students in the context of their life and ministry.

From Dream to Reality

"When I was first introduced to the distance learning option at Calvin, my heart skipped a beat," says Cari Fydirchuk, a full-time mother and active volunteer at her church who will be attending CTS from Canada this fall.

"The call from God to go into ministry has been on my heart for years, but I

never understood how it would be feasible for me to go to seminary.” For students like Cari, the distance program is helping turn seminary education from a dream into reality.

Many years in the making, the distance learning initiative has received widespread support from within the seminary community and across the denomination.

The program is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and aims to provide the same quality of education as the residential program.

Since the seminary officially announced the Distance Learning M.Div. in the spring of this year, inquiries by prospective students have poured in from across North America and all over the globe.

Grounded in the Local Church

In large part, the synergy around this program arises out of the shared mission of the seminary and the church. Theological education that is grounded in the local church will more effectively prepare ministers to touch and transform lives.

For many students preparing for ministry, getting their feet wet in the work of ministry as they receive their seminary education presents exciting opportunities.

It may be that the exegetical work a student does in a biblical course contributes to the sermon prep they’re doing during a particular week. Or reading a primary source in a church history course leads to a lesson they share with lay leaders. Or a paper they write may turn into theological reflection

on how their church can more actively engage their urban context.

In other words, much of the work a student does for seminary courses can cross over into the rhythms of day-to-day ministry.

By bringing theological education into a variety of contexts, both in and far beyond West Michigan, the distance program paves the way toward these kinds of possibilities.

Integrating Faith and Work

Distance theological education also opens up new possibilities for the integration of faith and work. For instance, a seminary student who works in the corporate world by day will have the opportunity to think deeply about how his or her Reformed worldview speaks to complex issues in the marketplace.

For Timothy Sipols, managing director at a Michigan-based public relations firm who will be joining the first distance M.Div. cohort this fall, the “potential to bridge the gap between my current professional commitments and a rigorous seminary experience” is especially appealing.

“I think it has the potential to enable a very dynamic exchange,” says Sipols of the distance program, “where my professional experience informs my training, and my training can begin to find practical application in the ‘ministry microcosm’ of my professional life.”

By taking virtual classrooms to cities and towns in other parts of North America and the world, CTS hopes that a broader conversation will emerge and

encourage more effective forms of ministry in a changing world.

Reimagining Theological Education

As the program launches, the Distance Learning team is working with faculty to reimagine and reinvigorate the teaching of their courses. The aim is to innovate »

Presidents’ Legacy

This year, Calvin Theological Seminary introduced The Presidents’ Legacy Society.

The society is an honorary group of faithful people dedicated to bearing “fruit that will last” for future generations by including Calvin Theological Seminary in their wills or estate plans or with any other planned gift.

In May, the society held an inaugural thank-you luncheon for members. Edgar Boevé shared a presentation of his artwork on the Beatitudes with about 100 Legacy Society members.

To learn more about The Presidents’ Legacy Society, please email Bob Knoor, director of development, at rknoor@calvinseminary.edu or call 616-957-6039.

Edgar Boevé presents his Beatitudes artwork at the inaugural Presidents’ Legacy Society event.



“ A key principle guiding the seminary is that students are not passive recipients of information but rather active participants in the learning process. ”

TOGETHER DOING

CALVIN THE



The Distance M.Div. program at CTS enables students to earn their degree from wherever they happen to be.

not just technologically but also pedagogically—not only adding new tools but asking new questions about teaching and learning at Calvin seminary, both in residential and distance courses.

The Church at Prayer

Calvin Theological Seminary appreciates your prayers for our people and our programs. Please pray with us

- that recent graduates are led by God to avenues of service appropriate to their gifts, whether some form of ministry or further study.
- that students engaged in summer internships serve as faithful messengers of God's Word and carry that forward into their studies.
- that God will call people into various forms of ministry and will use CTS to prepare them for faithful Christian ministry.
- with thanks to God for the healing he has given and continues to give Prof. Ron Nydam, who received a stem-cell transplant earlier this year.
- with thanks to God for the many ways in which students from around the world enliven the Christian community at CTS.

A key principle guiding the seminary is that students are not passive recipients of information but rather active participants in the learning process. Studies show that student participation and interaction is crucial to meaningful learning. This is true at any level of education, but is especially important for future leaders in churches and communities.

As a result, video presentations by professors are only one component of distance courses, along with various ways of getting students involved, including online discussions, collaborations, peer review, and video conferencing.

Harnessing Technology

New tools for online learning are helping to implement these pedagogical strategies. The seminary's new course management system, Canvas, is a completely web-based system that presents each course as a website that integrates links, videos, social media and other online learning tools.

Canvas is gaining exposure among educators as a user-friendly system that enables quality student engagement. A confusing and complicated course management system could ruin the online learning experience. By contrast, Canvas

has proven to be smooth and intuitive to use, easily integrating a variety of multimedia features. Because it is a website and not a software application, it's easy to learn to use, easing students' fears as they embark on distance learning.

The capabilities of Canvas make it a tool not just for facilitating tasks, but ultimately for contributing to students' formation for ministry—the key objective of a CTS education. As students use Canvas to communicate and collaborate, they will cultivate community, provide accountability, navigate group dynamics, and discern the wise use of technology.

Just as the apostle Paul used letters—the leading mass communication technology of his day—to nourish Christian communities, CTS sees technology as extending the reach and life together of a community of learners.

Seminary Where You Are

The central theme of this exciting new venture is that distance learning is first and foremost about serving and equipping churches to do the work of ministry. It is about bridging the distance, geographical or other, between the seminary and the churches of the CRC.

You add.
God multiplies.



New Team to Serve Seminarians

This summer, Calvin Theological Seminary welcomed Rev. Jeffrey Sajdak as its new dean of students and Ms. Sarah Chun as part-time associate dean of students.

Together, they will pastor and counsel students, administer student services, advise international students and issue immigration documents. They also will direct CTS alumni relations.

Sajdak has a B.A. from the University of Minnesota and an M.Div. and a D.Min. in spiritual formation from Bethel Theological Seminary. He grew up in a Lutheran home in Milwaukee, Wis. In the course of his theological training, he became attracted to the Reformed faith. He joined the Christian Reformed Church and spent a year studying at CTS in preparation for candidacy as a Minister of the Word.



Jeffrey Sajdak

In the past 20 years, Sajdak has served three CRC congregations in Michigan and Iowa. He and his wife, Karin, have four children.

Chun came to Grand Rapids from Korea with her parents at the age of 6. She is a Calvin College graduate and has a Master's degree in social work from Michigan State University and a decade of counseling experience with Bethany Christian Services. She hopes to support seminarians and their families with their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs.



Sarah Chun

She served in congregational ministry in CRC churches in California and New Jersey with her husband, Rev. Andy Chun, until his death in 2009. She is the mother of three children. Raised in two cultures, Chun can empathize with international and minority students in their cross-cultural challenges.

Calvin Theological Seminary is thankful for God's provision of these gifted people.

—CTS Communications

This is seminary in your context, in your neighborhood—a high-quality theological education you can receive in a coffee shop down the street from where you live. It is seminary “where you are.”

Both churches and seminaries face many challenges in our culture today. The distance program can be one way of tapping into the rich array of opportunities out there as well. ■



Peter Choi is director of the Distance Learning Program.



Nathan Bierma is an educational technologist at CTS.

Whose Book Is It?

Christians have always wanted to be known as people of the Book. Ever since we were little children, we've been singing "I stand alone on the Word of God, the B-I-B-L-E."

But there is another book to stand on. It too is authored by God. We've said that for centuries. But sometimes we have forgotten.

We know him . . . by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, since that universe is before our eyes like a beautiful book in which all creatures, great and small, are as letters to make us ponder the invisible things of God: his eternal power and his divinity . . . (Belgic Confession, Article 2).

This world is "like a beautiful book." Paul said so in Romans 1:20: "God's . . . eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. . . ."

We live and move on the pages of a book written by God to tell us about God. The world's amazing resources, its phenomenal wonders, its teeming creatures all are chapters in one of God's books pointing us toward himself.

That means we must walk carefully. We must preserve the text of Volume 1 (it was, after all, written first) as carefully and reverently as we protect the text of Volume 2. We must be as careful not to distort the pages of God's first book as we are to honor the pages of his second. We must be as hesitant to call

the first book "mine" as we are to say that about the second. We must be as attentive to all the paragraphs of Volume 1 as we are to all the verses in Volume 2.

Recently I was pumping gas into my car when a neighbor walked up to greet me. He had a handful of discarded paper and other trash. I said to him, "Cleaning up the neighborhood?" He answered, "Of course; it belongs to the King, and nothing is too good for the King."

That, I think, must be the attitude of us all. The story began when God "wrote" the book to which I refer and then told the first major characters in the story to take care of it. And it continues to this day, with God expecting each of us individually—and all of us corporately—to take care of the "beautiful book" that shows us who God is.

I have heard folks say that our primary task is to tell others about Jesus. With that I would never argue. But too

often that means they pay much more attention to Volume 2 than Volume 1.

Let's remember that Volume 1 was written not only to provide us with a comfortable environment in which to live but to remind us of its author and point others to him. Volume 1 is not only the first to be written; it is almost always the first to be read. If we do not care for it and protect it and honor it and preserve it, we distort its message and make it difficult or impossible for others to read. Such failure also shows disrespect for its author, who told us to take good care of it for him.

We care for this book the way we ought to when we let it point us and others to the author of that other book, the one that tells the even better story of the new creation. ■



“ We live and move on the pages of a book written by God to tell us about God. ”



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

Pushpa's Miracle

After she contracted leprosy, Pushpa was thrown out of her home and community in the Dogri area of northern India. As her condition became worse, she was broken in body and spirit. Three times she tried to end her life by taking poison.

Then some Christians told Pushpa about Jesus, who loved and healed lepers. They began praying for her. They also gave her a radio and introduced her to a program produced by partners of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI) in India.

As Pushpa listened, she became convinced that Jesus Christ loved her and could help her. She started praying for healing for her body and soul. After a few weeks, she says, she noticed that her sores were healing; one month after that she was completely free of leprosy. The people of her village were astonished.

Pushpa gives all the glory to the Lord. She says she is living proof of God's love and care; her healing is a miracle that only God could perform.

Pastor Sadiq Masih, the BTGMI producer in the Dogri region, had the privilege of baptizing Pushpa. As she continues to grow in faith, pray that her testimony will give her opportunities to share God's Word with the people of her village. ■

—Nancy Vander Meer, BTGMI

Pastor Sadiq Masih baptizes Pushpa.



Transforming Lives Through Books

As a tourist, you experience a contrived version of culture—but I had the chance to get to know the people of West Africa on a deeper level,” says Danielle Rowaan of London, Ontario.

Rowaan, 22, returned in July from a year in West Africa as a volunteer with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), recently renamed World Renew.

“I saw what I had learned in the classroom about international relations and global development come alive in real life,” she says. “And I can call these people my friends.”

For Rowaan, who says she is passionate about linguistics, international relations, and serving Christ, the internship was an opportunity to live out her passions as a volunteer supporting box libraries in West Africa.

A box library is exactly what it sounds like: a library in a box. They are common in countries where literacy is low and reading resources limited.

The boxes often have just one librarian or library manager, a member of the community who reads. When new books become available, the library manager alerts community members and tracks circulation to make sure the reading material is shared as broadly as possible.

During her internship, Rowaan lived and worked among the Fulani, a nomadic tribe of cattle herders. She met with library managers, took inventory, and wrote book reviews. Many of the books had been written by Fulani people living in a city.

Rowaan also worked with library managers and consultants to determine which books would be most beneficial in improving people's lives and livelihoods. Popular topics included cattle herding, agriculture, children's health, and human rights.

One highlight was helping to run a meeting for 30 library managers. All of the managers were men, as the local culture dictates that only men should learn to read or write. By the end of the workshop, however, they commented: “I guess we should help our wives learn to read.”

“It was a pretty cool moment,” says Rowaan.

“Fifteen years ago no one here was reading, and you could be ridiculed for even being interested in books,” she says. “It is a real testament to the work of World Renew that there are readers now, and people who want to learn.” ■

—Adele Konyndyk, World Renew Communications



Danielle Rowaan (center) with some Fulani friends.

How Should Easter Be Celebrated in Cambodia?

Just before Easter weekend, Christian Reformed World Missions missionary Gil Suh received a call from Pastor Savouen, a leader of a group of church leaders in Cambodia's rural Svay Rieng province. The group meets regularly to encourage and learn from one another.

"We want to learn more about 'the day that Jesus lived again,'" Savouen said.

Although these leaders understand the importance of the resurrection, the church in Cambodia is new and does not have a strong tradition of Easter. They were really asking how Easter should be celebrated in Cambodia.

Sovanna, like many of the group's participants, is a lay leader of a house church in a small village. She has minimal education and became a leader perhaps because she can read better, has leadership qualities, or grew into the role.

But she is always eager for more. Gil Suh says that when he teaches Sovanna and the other leaders, he feels like he is giving a little rice and a few fish to a hungry group. Instead of eating it all themselves, they take some back to the people in their village churches.

New Life Fellowship Church Phnom Penh Thmei is far larger and more advanced than the rural churches in Svay Rieng province, but its pastor, Sophea, faces similar challenges. His church is composed of first-generation believers, mostly young people who have come from the provinces to further their education.

Sophea has few precedents to follow. What does a Christian wedding look like, especially when the couple's parents are Buddhist? What about a funeral when family members have different views of the afterlife? What is the best way to run cell groups and Sunday school or to train Sunday school teachers?

Gil Suh coaches Pastor Sophea and other young urban church leaders as they



Cambodian church leaders receive training for their roles.

wrestle with these questions. He also trains lay leaders and new believers through workshops, retreats, and Bible studies.

Urban or rural, the church in Cambodia is in some ways similar to the New Testament church. Patterns have not yet been set. The church is vulnerable to error. There are challenges and pressures, even persecution by the community. But there is also the opportunity to do things

in a way that is both biblically faithful and uniquely Cambodian.

We are thankful that God has brought us to Cambodia through Christian Reformed World Missions to open Scripture,

encourage leaders, and walk beside our Cambodian brothers and sisters.

The temple complex of Angkor Wat casts a long shadow on Cambodia. It is on Cambodia's flag, and it dominates the land and the psyche of the Cambodian people. But God is building an even more beautiful and magnificent temple of living stones on the foundation of Christ. ■

—Joyce Suh

Gil and Joyce Suh, with David, Isaac and Mary, have been serving with Christian Reformed World Missions in Cambodia since January 2009.

A Million-Dollar Investment

Jan Koop, a Calvin College professor of mathematics and statistics, has received her fourth Improving Teacher Quality grant from the Michigan Department of Education.

To date, Koop has used grants totaling nearly \$1 million to help area teachers better understand and teach mathematics.

"I think we are making an impact," she said. "I've seen teachers who have completely turned around the way they teach mathematics, and that's a win."

The most recent grant, worth \$200,000, is being used to help two teachers from West Side Christian School and 40 teachers at William C. Abney Academy, a charter school in Grand Rapids, Mich. that serves students in kindergarten through seventh grade.

"There's almost no money for professional development anymore," Koop says, "so in order to provide teachers with anything, we have to write a grant."

Koop has worked with local teachers for more than 35 years. She says she has enjoyed seeing their attitudes about math change. She surveys teachers before the program starts to gauge how they feel about math and how they teach math, and again at the end of the 16-month grant period.

Koop says she hopes to bring life to math classrooms across West Michigan, helping teachers better understand what they are teaching so students learn not only how to arrive at the right answer, but also why those answers make sense. ■

—Calvin College Communications

You add.
God multiplies.

Mission Behind Bars

Jim Tuinstra worked for many years helping ex-offenders stay out of prison. He assumed his work would end when he retired from a faith-based social services agency in Grand Rapids, Mich.

But soon he and a friend, Rev. Richard Rienstra, talked about starting a Christian congregation in a Michigan prison.

With support from Christian Reformed Home Missions and approval from the Michigan Department of Corrections, they created Celebration Fellowship Congregation at the 1,800-inmate Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility in Ionia, Mich.

Each Monday, prisoners who are members of Celebration Fellowship gather for an hour of Bible study in groups, followed by prayer and a worship service. Like any other church, they praise God through song and prayer and celebrate communion.

The church also involves worship volunteers who are members of partner churches in the Grand Rapids area.

“We saw [that] the Spirit is moving and that the congregation was being received as a powerful tool,” says Tuinstra. “This ministry shows the love of Christ in a situation where very little love and compassion exist.”

At Celebration Fellowship, the inmates take much of the responsibility for planning and leading services. A group of inmates serves as the church’s leadership council, with roles similar to elders and deacons.

Now led by Pastor Andy Hanson, Celebration is making an impact. At this year’s Easter service, 12 inmates were baptized.

Recently, a prisoner who is a member of the ministry’s leadership team was admitted to the hospital with chest pains. While being treated, still bound at the wrists, the prisoner was able to share the gospel and lead a corrections officer and a nurse to Christ.

Celebration has been such a positive force that the Department of Corrections asked for a new ministry to be started at Handlon Correctional Facility across the street. That ministry was to launch at a service on Sept. 10. Hanson will serve as pastor while continuing to serve at Celebration. ■

—Ben Van Houten,
Christian Reformed Home Missions

Hiroshi’s Journey to Faith

Hiroshi Kojima’s baptism last May as a believer in Christ was an answer to 17 years of prayer.

In 1994, Hiroshi’s wife, Miyako, a Christian, invited him to join her for the annual summer camp sponsored by Back to God Ministries Japanese staff. Summer camp is a time for isolated believers and seekers to come together for spiritual growth and Christian fellowship. For Hiroshi, it was a time to explore his wife’s faith.

Hiroshi later commented, “The Christian faith was not familiar to me. I had few opportunities to encounter Christians. It was difficult to understand the existence of God.”

He continued to attend the annual camp because he enjoyed spending time with Christians and participating in times of worship, Bible study, and prayer.

“Each year we were thankful Hiroshi came,” says Rev. Masao Yamashita, leader of Japanese outreach for Back to God Ministries International and organizer of the summer camp. “We continued to pray that he would come to know the Lord Jesus as his Savior.”

Miyako continued to pray for her husband’s salvation. In August 2011, at the age of 79, Hiroshi committed his life to the Lord.

He was preparing for baptism when classes were suspended because the pastor was called away for family reasons. Friends and supporters prayed that Hiroshi would not be discouraged, and on May 27, Miyako and other believers celebrated as Hiroshi publicly professed his faith and was baptized.

At the time of this writing, Miyako and Hiroshi were planning to attend the August 2012 summer camp. “Thank you for your prayers for Hiroshi,” says Yamashita. “Please continue to pray that he will remain strong in the faith.” ■

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





JUST FOR KIDS

Apples to Apples

Summer is ending, and fall is quickly approaching. For many of us, that means cooler weather, heading back to school, and watching leaves turn the colors of a bright, beautiful sunset. What's your favorite thing about this new season?

Perhaps this week you have eaten one of the sweetest pleasures of the fall season—a crisp, juicy apple!

In many places around North America, fall means it's apple season. Orchards are filled with apples of different shapes and colors, ready to be harvested and eaten by hungry folks

like you and me. Even if you are not a big fan of apples, you may enjoy some of the following: apple juice, apple cider, applesauce, apple butter, apple cake, apple chips, apple pie.

(Write one of your favorite apple treats here!)

Comparing Apples to Apples

Here's a fun apple taste test. Ask an adult to take you to your local grocery store and buy at least one of the following apples (or choose different apples that are available in the store near you). Have an adult help you cut a slice from each apple. Then write down how each apple looks, feels, and tastes. After your taste test, choose a "winner"—the apple that you like the best!

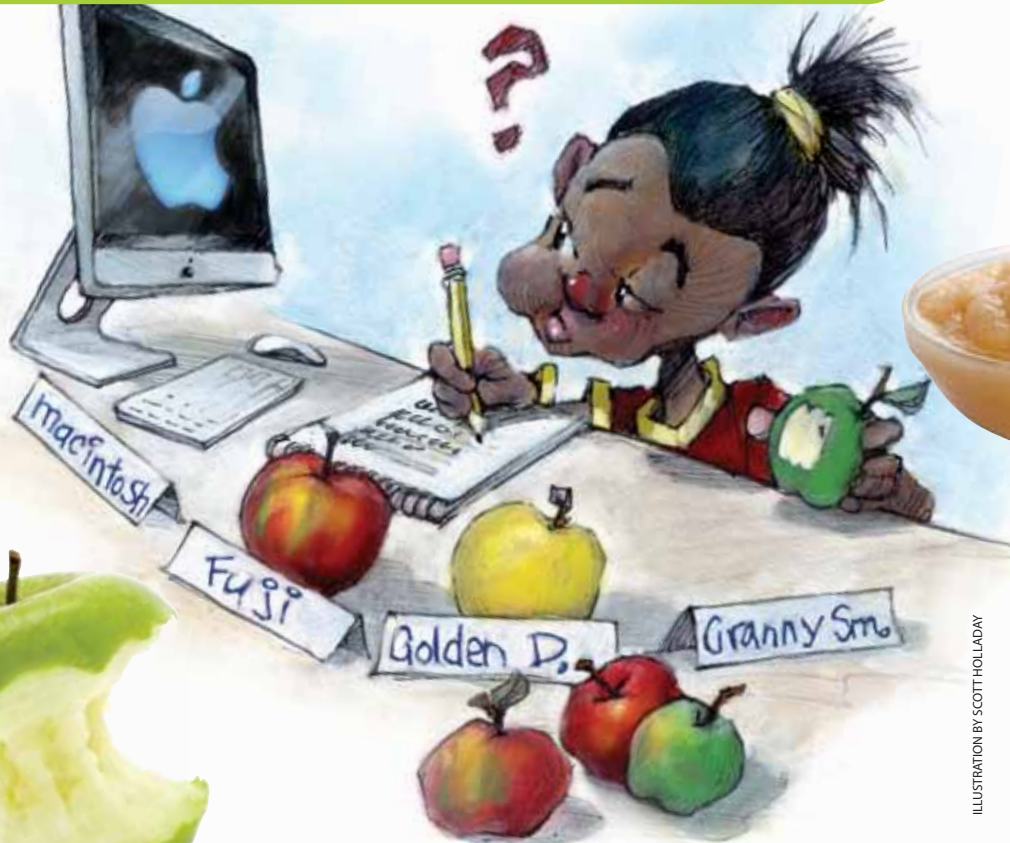


ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



	Granny Smith	Golden Delicious	Fuji	McIntosh	Other
How it looks (What color is it? Is it smooth or bumpy?)					
How it feels (Is it soft or crunchy?)					
How it tastes (Is it sweet or tart?)					

My favorite apple is _____





Going Apple Pickin'

Apple orchards contain miles of trees filled with delicious apples. Some orchards allow people to come and pick their own apples to take home.

How do you know when an apple is ripe and ready to be picked? The best way to tell if an apple is ripe is to taste it! If the apple is very sour, it is not quite ready. You can also tell if an apple is ripe by looking at the seeds. If the seeds are dark, the apple is very close to ripe. Most ripe apples easily come off of an apple tree when you pick them.

An Apple Experiment

Let's try a little apple experiment:

Take out a bag of apples and pick one apple to examine closely. Then take out a sheet of paper and a pencil, and write down what the apple looks like, using as many details as you can. Does it have a spot on one side, or a dimple on the other? Is it mostly red or yellow or green? After you have written down as much information as you can, mix the apple back in the bag with the rest of the apples. Come back after a half-hour or so, and find the apple you wrote about. I bet you'll be able to find it!

In some ways, people are a lot like apples. Though we are all humans, we come in many different shapes, sizes, and colors. God is able to tell each of us apart because he created us unique and special. You are the apple of God's eye!

Homemade Applesauce



Ask an adult to help you make your own applesauce!

What you'll need:

- A large pot
- 6-8 apples (ask an adult to help you peel and cut the apples into slices)
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ cup water or apple cider

What to do:

Combine all ingredients in a large pot and boil over medium heat for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. When the apples are very tender, remove the pot from the heat and let the apples cool. Use a potato masher or an electric mixer to mash the apples to make applesauce. Cool completely. Enjoy!



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



An Apple a Day

Have you ever heard the saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away"? It's true! Not only do apples taste great, but they are very good for you too.

Apples are packed with vitamins C, K, and B6, which help your body fight against diseases. Apples also are full of fiber. Fiber can reduce heart problems that sometimes result in heart disease and stroke. Apples also have potassium, a very important mineral that can help your heart stay healthy and strong. Be sure to eat apples with the skin, since that is where most of the healthy vitamins and minerals are found.

The Apple of God's Eye

Maybe you have heard your parents or other relatives say something like, "Sweetie, you're the apple of my eye!" I'm pretty sure they didn't mean that an apple would really grow out of their eye! Instead they were telling you how special you are, and how much they love you. God looks at you the same way. The writer of Psalm 17:8 says to God, "Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings."



IN HIS BOOK *The Timeless Way of Building*, renowned architect Christopher Alexander unwittingly depicts an architectural vision of heaven on earth. He writes, “Almost everybody feels at peace with nature: listening to the ocean waves against the shore, by a still lake, in a field of grass, on a windblown heath. One day, when we have learned the timeless way again, we shall feel the same about our towns, and we shall feel as much at peace in them as we do today walking by the ocean, or stretched out in the long grass of a meadow.”

Alexander’s prophetic vision of urban shalom is compelling, a dream we’re all made for. Had the Old Testament prophet

Isaiah read Alexander’s thesis, I’m sure he would have smiled in agreement and then whispered, “But there’s more!”

Describing God’s vision of “new heavens and a new earth” (Isa. 65:17), Isaiah saw much more than simply spatial and aesthetic harmony and the good feelings those places evoke. He envisioned a definition of peace that went beyond bricks and mortar—a shining, multicultural city filled with commerce, wealth, and prosperity; governed in perfection; overflowing with justice.

Isaiah’s vision of heaven differed from Christopher Alexander’s in that it filled a perfect city with a perfect society—a perfect society grounded in a perfect, renewed relationship with God:

Pay close attention now: I’m creating new heavens and a new earth. All the earlier troubles, chaos, and pain are things of the past, to be forgotten. Look ahead with joy. Anticipate what I’m creating: . . . They’ll build houses and move in. They’ll plant fields and eat what they grow. No more building a house that some outsider takes over, no more planting fields that some enemy confiscates, for my people will be as long-lived as trees, my chosen ones will have satisfaction in their work. They won’t work and have nothing come of it, . . . For they themselves are plantings blessed by God (65:17-23, *The Message*).

A Real Place

Build houses? Plant fields? Eat? Find satisfaction in their work? What a wonderfully earthy vision of heaven—a real place!

In his vision of heaven in the book of Revelation, the apostle John describes a huge city coming down from heaven to earth (21:1-3). Fourteen hundred miles long by fourteen hundred miles wide and fourteen hundred miles high. Talk about urban density! Picture Tolkien's great White City, Minas Tirith. By contrast, Manhattan is only 13 miles long and two-and-a-half miles wide, and not nearly as high.

John goes on to describe this holy city in very material terms: walls 200 feet thick, plus foundations, gates, streets, a river, and trees. A place where God's people "will serve him" (Rev. 22:3), a place filled with real people doing real things. "The kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it" (21:24-26).

All That's Good

In his book *When the Kings Come Marching In*, Richard Mouw makes the case that the splendor we'll bring into that city will include all that is good, true, beautiful, and right of the cultures and cultural products humanity has created. All that we've done in obedience to God's good call to be fruitful, to multiply, and to fill the earth will continue in a renewed and perfected form in heaven forever.

We'll come together to watch New World Cup soccer—humanity gathered from every tongue and tribe celebrating the flag-draped glory of the nations. We'll communally enter into the joy of competition, the delight of play, the euphoria of victory. Together we'll stand in awe of God's miraculous physiological gift of new human bodies.

On that new earth, universities will continue to flourish and grow, exploring and unpacking the nature of the universe, making new social science discoveries, coming up with new economic theories and ideas, reading and comprehending more and more of the cosmos so that we'll all have more and more with which to love and know God.

Businesses will continue to develop and bring new products to market. Better and better technologies will continue to aid human flourishing.

Artists will continue to do their thing, creating beauty and aesthetically

With legs like
10-year-olds,
we'll cycle
everywhere.

pointing us to the truth. Heaven's great city will be filled with the fruit of their labor and, beyond the sacred page of each of their created works, we'll see his face—God's face. "They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads" (Rev. 22:4).

In heaven we will wear the name of God perfectly and our image-bearing will be complete. We will be God's people, and God will dwell among us. I believe we'll know him in and through all things, everywhere, all the time, forever. We'll experience and love God as we build our houses, plant our fields, design our products, and stewardly tend and fill his new earth—*our* new earth!

"I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and

the Lamb are its temple" (Rev. 21:22). There's no need for a temple; all is holy and God is adored everywhere, through everything.

Beholding God

On that new earth, I'm pretty sure we'll finally get the idea of rest right as well. The old problem of balance between work and the rest of life will be resolved. We'll know when a good day's work is done, and we'll trust God enough to truly let go when it's time to rest. Because we'll live in perfect communion with God, we'll see times of rest for what they've always been meant to be: opportunities to behold God, to love and commune with him, to thank, worship, and bring glory to God from a place of *just being*. On that new earth, we'll know God's grace so well that those times of rest will be just as crucial as times of service and work.

We'll know and experience God perfectly when we sit by a still lake, when we stand in a field of grass or walk on a windblown heath. Our prayer will be so intimate and real that a few hours may not be enough. No longer will we feel the desire or the pressure to rush off to the next thing.

In heaven we'll be at peace. At home.

The thought of what that new world might be like fills me with awe and trembling. I imagine that every communal interaction will come with a sense of translucence. As I experience the love of another—helping me, encouraging me, making me laugh, teaching me—I'll be able to see right through that person to the God who is help, encouragement, laughter, and wisdom. And as I do the same for others—support them, play games with them, listen to them—I'll have a clear sense of the God of all support, play, and listening doing all of these good actions *through me*. I'll be co-loving with Christ, co-listening through »

him—and all of these interactions will be saturated with triune communal love.

I imagine scientists engaging in their hypothesizing with a greater faith than they've ever known. Believing that what they think might be true about some physical reality *could* be true. Believing that what they'll eventually discover will reveal yet another facet of the empirical mind of their creator God.

I can see them in their labs, falling on their knees in worship as they gain huge new insights into the nature of the ever-expanding cosmos. I imagine them feeling the euphoria of the curtain being pulled back as their minds move in sync with the world-ordering mind of Christ, as they see for the first time something Jesus has seen for eternity. And I'm guessing that after a billion years of doing research, they'll still be discovering new things about how God's universe works.

Just Right

I know God will be King of this new earth, but I'm wondering if he might also appoint some to a few sub-kingly roles to govern and lead that eternal community. Perhaps some will end up being city councilors, justly governing in a bottom-up, humble, honest, selfless, Christ-like way. Every leader will be empowered by wisdom and grace from the throne. And I imagine those heavenly leaders feeling the same "just right" feeling God must feel throughout his eternal rule every time they shape a just policy, an equitable program, or a fair and democratic law. As they govern rightly, they'll experience the good-governing heart of God.

On that new earth, our relationship with the natural world will be as it should be: all of us knowing God anew in a restored and reclaimed relationship with our ecosystem. The glory of creation will inspire the best environmental technologies and behaviors. The heavenly city will

have a perfect balance of green space and human structures. We'll be active, using our new bodies in the way they're meant to be used. With legs like 10-year-olds, we'll cycle everywhere. With eyes like children, we'll see the newness of all things every day. Every one of us will be filled with awe at the leaves that are for the healing of the nations, and we'll swim in that crystal clear river that flows from the throne of God. Innocent. Free. Pure in heart. Seeing God.

I'm sure there will be a heavenly choir there as well, our voices bringing glory to God. But I think the birds are going to play a big part in that eternal chorus too, along with investment bankers, retailers, and marketers as they keep the eternal city's economy humming. So will street sweepers, hair stylists, farmers, and manufacturers, and all that's good and beautiful in fashion, film, and music. Heaven's choir will be made up of countless diverse voices—more than we could ever imagine.

One day all good things will be perfected in the new heaven on earth. Heaven will be the reality we now live, but no longer tainted by sin. Imagine an unparalleled diversity of people, loves, gifts, passions, and cultural products all working as one—all of creation flawlessly and fully bearing the image of God.

In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul speaks of all things being made through and for Christ (Col. 1:16). I've spent the past few years pondering the deep significance of the *through* part of that phrase. What an architect! What a scientist! What an artist!

Lately I've wondered about the *for* part. I'm beginning to think that it's going to take a universe full of created matter, beings, and cultural products, all made new, to fully image and bear the power and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to fully capture, reflect, and bring

homage to our King, I believe that God's new heaven and earth will need to go on forever.

One day we'll know for sure. Until then, I'm convinced we're meant to experience heavenly foretastes of that eternal city through the work, play, love, and life God has given us right now.

"[God] has made everything beautiful in its time," says the writer of Ecclesiastes. "He has also set eternity in the human heart" (3:11). I love the connection between beauty and eternity. All that is right in our jobs, our relationships, our play, and our rest is going to be right forever. Imagine that! ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



John Van Sloten is pastor of New Hope Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, Alberta. His book *The Day Metallica Came to Church* can be ordered from Faith Alive Christian Resources (www.FaithAliveResources.org).

Abundance in a Covenant Economy

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!)

BEGINNING IN 2011 on Wall Street and spreading across North America, Occupy protests have drawn attention to rising rates of inequality in both Canada and the United States. Protesters point out the unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity between the richest 1 percent and the rest of the population, and the inherent unfairness of a system that creates such inequality.

Many Christians don't like talking about inequality. Talking about poverty is OK because God calls us to care for people who are poor. But inequality—that smacks of envy, and envy is a sin. If we have enough to meet our daily needs, then why would we care how much others have?

Maybe because humans are deeply social beings, as the Bible tells us and social science confirms. We are relational, created to live in community with God and with others. But our social nature can be for good or ill. It can inspire us to create meaningful communities in which we bear one another's burdens, inspire, and encourage each other. Or it can prompt a constant need to create hierarchies, define and distinguish ourselves as better than others, and compete with others in order to feel better about our own position.

In *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, epidemiologists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett review studies that show how insidiously hierarchies act on human well-being. In a busy bureaucracy, for example, you might think that it's the people at the top who bear most of the responsibility for important decisions and suffer the most stress and stress-related heart attacks. Instead, it's the secretaries and assistants who feel powerless and inferior and suffer the most stress.

Wilkinson's and Pickett's research shows that unequal societies suffer from more health problems, higher mortality rates, more crime, more drug abuse, more teen pregnancies, and worse educational outcomes *at every income level* when compared with a more equal society. So even those with plenty of money are worse off when they live in an unequal society.

In ancient Israel, God's laws mandated periodic redistribution of wealth to the poor and needy. This ensured that no one was permanently left behind, just as no one was allowed to accumulate wealth at the expense of others. These laws also required redistribution of the means of production—land, grain, and livestock—so that everyone had the opportunity to participate in the economy.

Every seventh year, all debts were to be forgiven and slaves were to be released with generous gifts (Deut. 15:1-18). Every 50th year was the Year of Jubilee, when land that had been sold was to be freely returned to the seller (Lev. 25:8-55), as it had been equally divided when the Israelites first entered the Promised Land.

Our modern economy is very different from that of ancient Israel, but that doesn't mean that an economy of care is out of our reach. Churches can and should be a prophetic voice for a covenant economy, one that is centered on caring for people and the earth.

Recent research on well-being suggests that what makes us happiest is being part of a community where we feel connected to one another. Accumulating wealth without limits can never make us as happy as simply getting to know our neighbors and caring for each other. In the simple act of reaching out we can find abundance. ■

Chandra Pasma works as a policy analyst in Ottawa, Ontario, where she attends Calvin Christian Reformed Church.

NEXT



What makes us happiest is being part of a community where we feel connected to one another.

“I Was in Prison ...”



“WHO ARE YOU?” WAS HIS FIRST QUESTION. I told him I was a pastor, and that his aunt, a member of my Ontario congregation, had asked me to visit him. “Why’d you come during visiting hours?” he demanded through the greasy phone. “I only get one visit a week, and now my mom can’t come this week.”

I apologized and asked if he would rather I didn’t come again. He shrugged and said it was up to me, but that clergy had visiting privileges outside of regular hours. If I came again, could I not take up his only time to see his mom?

The world beyond the scarred Plexiglas and clanging iron doors is home to too many (approximately 1 percent of Canada’s population on any given day, or around 350,000; about 0.7 percent of U.S. population, or nearly 2,300,000), and is one of the major industries globally.

Adria Libolt has penetrated that world for much of her life, beginning with tentative forays as part of her graduate research in education at the University of Michigan. Eventually she would manage several prisons for the Michigan Department of Corrections. Her book, *A Deputy Warden’s Reflections on Prison Work* (Resource Publications), is a must-read for all who wish to understand both

the purpose and perils of prisons. With firm compassion, Libolt relates her encounters with penitents and devils, with the mean-spirited and the lost, with the tough and the tender. She explains the necessity of incarceration systems even as she undermines any presumptions that they “work” or that there is a correct way to handle our social nastiness.

William Stuntz offers an incisive academic portrait of crime and punishment in his magisterial swan song, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice* (Harvard). The evangelical Christian and Harvard Law School professor, who challenged unfounded presuppositions about prosecution and punishment on all sides with grace and clarity, died last year at 52. He left an assessment that no one who cares about these things can overlook. Charting history and constitutional interpretation, Stuntz provides a few compelling nudges toward hope in what too many have experienced as the rotten underbelly of life.

For more resources about the life of prisoners and how you can get involved, see the expanded version of this article at www.thebanner.org. ■



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

Prisons are home to too many.



The Princess Academy: Palace of Stone

by Shannon Hale

reviewed by Kristy Quist

In this sequel to popular novel *The Princess Academy*, teen-aged Miri moves to the capital of Danland, where a revolution is stirring. Hale continues to develop Miri as a strong, intelligent young woman, and she manages to mix in a touch of fantasy, a lesson on ethics, and the basics of violent versus nonviolent protest. While there is a certain mystical aspect in Hale’s young adult novels, the well-developed characters, complex conflicts and strong storylines are the biggest draw. (Bloomsbury)





A Separation

reviewed by **Josh Larsen**

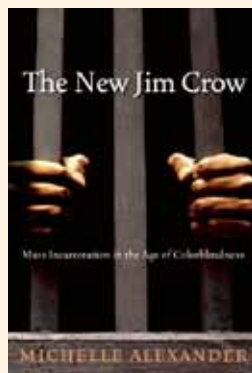
“I have a religious question.” So says an Iranian housekeeper after dialing a hotline in *A Separation*, a Foreign Language Film Oscar winner. If only it were that easy. *A Separation* traces how a couple’s divorce leads to an imperfect storm of good intentions, bad choices, selfishness and misplaced dignity, including on the part of that housekeeper. The movie

recognizes that moral clarity is never a matter of black and white, even (perhaps especially) when religion is involved. Christians can be comforted that we have a clear way to proceed when life gets knotty: with grace, the way of Christ. On DVD and Blu-ray. (Sony Classics)

The Twelve

reviewed by **Robert N. Hosack**

A new blog, The Twelve, carries the byline “Reformed. Done Daily.” It features the insights of 12 bloggers, along with occasional special guests, engaging the world on a daily basis and looking at life through a Reformed Christian lens. Think of it as incarnating the spirit of *The Reformed Journal* for a 21st-century cyberspace world. (the12.squarespace.com)



The New Jim Crow

by **Michelle Alexander**
reviewed by **Brian Bork**

In this stunning and stirring analysis, law professor Michelle Alexander argues that the “War on Drugs” has created a racial caste system in America akin to slavery and segregation. The ever-rising prison population, recent developments in drug enforcement policy, and the social and political stigma carried by people with criminal records has decimated African-American communities and reinforced unspoken racial bias in society at large. This is an extraordinary book—a vital, prophetic call for us to identify and dismantle the structures of inequality and oppression in 21st-century America. (The New Press)

THE LOWDOWN



Advent Awaits: Planning for Christmas at your church? Laura and Robert J. Keeley’s new play for children, *God With Us*, gets everyone involved in the story. (Faith Alive)



Casual Reading: Adult Rowling readers must wait no longer; September heralds the arrival of J. K. Rowling’s new novel, *The Casual Vacancy*. (Little, Brown)



Sophomore Sons: Upstart folk rockers Mumford & Sons scored big with their first album, *Sigh No More*. Their second album, *Babel*, is due out this month. (Glass Note)



Score! At www.noteflight.com, you can compose, share, collaborate on, and print your own music; lots of other options are available as well.



Musical Revival

by **Forever Jones: A Family Band**
reviewed by **Reggie Smith**

This Shreveport, La., musical group is a miracle in itself. DeWitt and Kim Jones were told they were not able to have children. Five children later, they have a family band that could be the gospel equivalent of The Jackson 5. Their latest album, *Musical Revival*, has a unique balance of musical flavors. “Hallelujah” is a giddy-up-get-your-praise-on track, while “Every Moment” downshifts into a reflective mood, causing one to think about the Lord as the source of everything. (EMI)

MORE REVIEWS ONLINE

A Cord of Three Strands

IF YOU ARE NEW TO THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH, or even a lifelong member, the variety in our congregations can make your head spin. In worship, for example, you'll find everything from robes and ritual to rock 'n' roll. So what in the world is happening in the CRCNA?

Three identifiable wings in our denomination provide a roadmap and highlight our church's uniqueness on the ecclesiastical landscape.

Grassroots

Grassroots churches place a premium on our heritage, especially the rich teachings of the Reformation. The majority of our traditional churches fall into this category, as well as the salt-of-the-earth folks in the heartland and other rural areas. The Returning Church movement hails from this wing as well.

Grassroots churches employ a traditional or blended worship style with sermons that offer solid teaching. As a rule, these churches still consult the liturgical documents in the back of the *Psalter Hymnal*. Spoken prayers are not usually read.

These members love to learn and then to share biblical truth, whether with fellow parishioners of all ages or with prisoners. Grassroots churches still draw decent crowds on Sunday nights.

The Grassroots folks care deeply about the church and hope their voice is heard at CRCNA headquarters.

High Steeples

High Steeple churches morphed from 19th-century Kuyperianism, characterized by both the broad social agenda that arrived with post-World-War-II immigrants and the pre-immigration budding of "high church" style.

This wing values faith that works for the cause of justice and champions systemic reform in society. It promotes diversity and inclusiveness and accents Reformed theology in action.

High Steeple people keep one eye on the mainline denominations for inspiration. They relish the historic liturgy and lectionary, clerical collars, and candles. Attractive to academics, the best sermons are literary masterpieces. Prayers are crafted ahead of time and then read.

Explorers

These tend to be our more evangelical, sometimes even charismatic churches. Many church planters rest in this camp, as do the increasing number of ethnically diverse congregations.

You'll find everything from robes and ritual to rock 'n' roll.

Out on the frontier, the Explorers march to the beat of their own drum with a vision for extending the borders of the church into new territories.

The pietistic or experiential vein of our tradition, grounded in the personal and missional thrust of the 17th-century Second Reformation, accounts for this wing's place in our denomination. Intentionally nonliturgical and nontraditional, Explorers' worship can be rousing and innovative. Sermons are practical, down-to-earth, somewhat emotional, and considered best when not read.

With an emphasis on saving the souls of people who are lost or marginalized, these churches treasure a personal and passionate relationship with Jesus. Some congregants may not get bent out of shape if babies are not getting baptized.

While Explorers may appear the least connected to the denomination, don't count them out. They are not indifferent, just too busy in the trenches to devote much time to denominational affairs.

Strength in Diversity

At times, these distinct forces in the church are tempted to view one another with suspicion. But we need them all.

These three tendencies make us unique on the ecclesiastical landscape and constitute our greatest strength: "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Eccles. 4:12).

Perhaps, like me, you resonate with all three. That's because they ultimately represent the three dimensions of faith: head, hand, and heart.

Despite the CRCNA's diversity, we all are cut from the same cloth. Our ecclesiastical strands make us what the church of Jesus Christ ought to be. So let's respect, trust, and listen to each other. ■

STUDY QUESTIONS ONLINE



H. David Schuringa, a Christian Reformed minister, is president of Crossroad Bible Institute, Grand Rapids, Mich.

ADS

Deadlines: Oct. issue is 9/3/2012; Nov. issue is 10/1/2012. Details online.

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

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

Denominational and Classical

Calls Accepted

PASTOR LOREN KOTMAN of the Milwood CRC in Kalamazoo, MI has accepted the call extended to him by the First CRC of Hull, IA.

Jay De Wit, Clerk

REV. ALFRED VAN DELLEN of Trinity CRC in Anchorage, AK, has accepted the call to serve the Sanborn, IA, CRC.

REV. MARK VANDE ZANDE of Noordeლოს CRC in Holland, MI, has accepted the call to serve First CRC of Orange City, IA.

REV. MARVIN LEESE, formerly the pastor of Bethel CRC in Oskaloosa, IA, has accepted a call to serve the Hospers, IA, First CRC.

Calls Declined

The Rev. Nick Overduin, Pastor of First CRC of Toronto, Canada, declined a call to serve as the pastor of Jubilee Fellowship CRC, in St. Catherines, Ontario.

Eligible for Call

We are pleased to announce that Mark Bonnes 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

Retirement

RETIREMENT "Heritage CRC of Byron Center, MI, announces the retirement of Rev. James Zinger after 6 years of faithful ministry in this congregation and 39 years total in the ministry. He served in 4 RCA congregations and one CRC congregation. He was also involved in classis leadership and has served on the Board of Trustees of Words of Hope as well as on the board of Reformed Bible College (now Kuyper College). May God continue to richly bless Jim and Marylin as they have been a blessing to others. Email congratulation notes can be sent to HeritageCRC@yahoo.com."

PEASE CRC of Pease, MN, announces the retirement of Pastor David Smit after 7 years of faithful service to our congregation and 38 years to the denomination. We praise God for Pastor Dave and his wife Marian's service to the church and pray God will continue to use their gifts in their retirement years. A farewell reception, community open house and special worship service are planned for the weekend of October 14. Friends, family and former colleagues are invited to help us celebrate. Call the church office or check our website for details: www.peasecrrc.org. May God continue to bless Pastor Dave and Marian as they have been a blessing to us and so many others. 320-369-4228

PALOS HEIGHTS CRC announces the retirement of Rev. Bryce Mensink, Minister of the Word, effective September 2, 2012. Rev. Mensink has served churches in Sacramento, Ca, Wappingers Falls, NY, Lafayette, IN, Grand Rapids, MI, Baldwin, WI, and Palos Heights, IL. We are grateful for his 39 years of service to our denomination. Rev. Bryce and his wife Jan will begin their retirement years in Palos Heights where Pastor Mensink will serve in a part-time role as Pastor of Congregational Care.

RETIREMENT With gratitude to God for Pastor Henry Admiraal's 20 years of faith-filled preaching and deep love to our congregation, the Westend CRC announces the retirement of Rev. Henry Admiraal. The congregation invites you to share this milestone at the 9:45 AM worship service on September 9, 2012.

RETIREMENT: The LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church announces the retirement of Dr. Stanley Mast, after 22 years of devoted service as our Minister of Preaching, and 41 years of ministry to the

denomination. We give thanks to God for his faithful, fruitful, and much appreciated ministry among us. May God continue to bless Stan and Sharon in their retirement. Dr. Mast will continue to serve the Christian Reformed Church as an adjunct professor of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary.

Congregational

Church's 125th Anniversary

CALVIN CRC - OAK LAWN, IL (formerly 1st Englewood, Chicago) is celebrating their 125th Anniversary with a banquet planned for October 20 at Trinity Christian College. For more information and tickets contact the church office, 9 AM- noon weekdays at 708 422-0790. A special service commemorating this anniversary event will be held Sunday morning, October 21. We encourage former members and friends of the church to join us in our milestone celebration.

Church's 100th Anniversary

LOMBARD CRC will celebrate it's 100th Anniversary with an open house and banquet on Saturday, October 13. Tickets will be necessary for the banquet. On Sunday, October 14, we are planning a special worship service at 10:00 a.m., followed by a time of fellowship. We extend an invitation to all former members and pastors to join us to we celebrate. An anniversary booklet and DVD will be available. Further information will be posted on our website: www.LombardCRC.org

SIBLEY CRC OF SIBLEY, IA will celebrate 100 years of God's faithfulness with a day long celebration on Sept. 23rd with a church service, noon meal, and a festival of music by Journey Bound of Des Moines, IA. All former pastors, members and friends are invited to attend.

Church's 60th Anniversary

RIVER PARK CRC, CALGARY formerly known as First CRC, will celebrate 60 years of God's faithfulness at a special service Sept. 30, 2012 at 10:00AM. 3818-14A St. SW.

Church's 50th Anniversary

BLYTH CRC in Ontario hopes to celebrate their 50th Anniversary the weekend of September 15 and 16. For more information, please contact 519-523-9407 or 519-347-2216. Everyone is invited. Come and celebrate with us. We thank God for his faithfulness!

COVENANT CRC, Cutlerville, MI will celebrate its 50th Anniversary with special events on the Sundays of Nov. 25 and Dec. 2, and Wednesday Nov. 28. Please check our website for details: www.covenant-crc.org, or call 616-455-5120.

PG CRC 50TH ANNIVERSARY - Prince George CRC will celebrate 50 years of God's faithfulness October 20 to 21st, 2012. We invite all friends and former members to fellowship with us. For more information, phone (250) 563-2639 or email pgcrc@hotmail.com

General

NORTH ST CRC in Zeeland, Michigan invites you to a community open house to celebrate the completion of a new addition and extensive remodel. It will be Friday, September 14 from 4-8pm and Saturday 15 from 2-4pm. Please join us in praising God from whom all blessings flow.

Birthdays

90th Birthday

DOROTHY (DEKKER) DENOUDEN, Sunset Manor, 725 Baldwin, Jenison, MI 49428 celebrates her 90th birthday on Sep 28. Her children Bev(Ben) Becksvort, Dave, Gord(Cindy), Von(Doug) Wesseldyke and 7 grandchildren thank God for His faithfulness in her life.

WILMA SLENK LEFEBRE, 500 Parkside Dr. Apt. 242, Zeeland MI, will celebrate her 90th birthday Oct 7, 2012. Her family thanks God for her life and the wonderful example she is of a God fearing mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to all of us.

Congratulations for Ministry Milestones

Rev. Greg Schuringa
10 years of service

Rev. David Schuringa
30 years of service



Synod 2010 photo
by Karen Huttenga

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RICHARD MEYER (formerly of Paterson, NJ) on Sept. 1. Thanks be to God for many years of blessings: faith, family, health, servanthood, and happiness. He and Ann live at 4737 Brentwood Ct, Holland, MI 49423.

JOHN SLAGTER will celebrate his 90th birthday, Sept. 9! A few days later, John and Eleanor will celebrate their 66th Wedding Anniversary on Sept. 12! Dad doesn't like parties but Mom LOVES cards. So please send greetings to: 2000 32nd St., Box 407, Grand Rapids, MI 49508. Their children, grand children and great grand children sing "Great is thy Faithfulness"!

MARGUERITE VANDER HEIDE celebrated her 90th birthday August 28, 2012. Her address is De Vos Center 1, Room 162, 2121 Raybrook, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546. Her children Joanne (Jerry) Terpsma, Lois, Esther (Larry) Le Febre, Ruth, Hilda (Dave) Schut, Sara (Carl) Marr, and Mary (Kirk) Ennenga, 13 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren wish her a blessed 90th birthday. We praise God for the blessing she has been to her God, her family, and her friends.

85th Birthday

SCHAAF, DOROTHY of 7444 W. 153rd St Orland Park, IL 60462 will celebrate her 85th birthday on Sept. 2nd. Her children Betty Jean, David (Maggie) & Dorie (Howard deceased) Kuiper along with her grandchildren and great grandchild thank God for granting her many years of blessings. With much love from her grateful family

Anniversaries

69th Anniversary

KALLEMEYN Earl and Harriet celebrate 69 years of marriage on July 17th, 2012. Congratulations and love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren for this wonderful blessing.

65th Anniversary

BROUWER, Jack and Ruth (Wieland), 2231 Meadowglen Dr. NE Grand Rapids, MI, 49505 will celebrate 65 years of marriage on Sept. 25, 2012. Children: Dr. Donald and Linda Sloat, Rev. Dr. Douglas and Susan Brouwer, James and Wendy Mersman. Five grandchildren. We praise and thank God for His love and faithfulness.



RUSSELL, Clayton and Marilyn (Medema) of 1835 Cross Bend St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505 celebrating 65 years of marriage on September 19. Congratulations and love from your children: Karen & Wayne Vogel, Phyllis Russell, Lisa & Greg Van Assen, Todd & Julie Russell and your 8 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

ZEILSTRA John H. and Evelyn (Wichers), 65 years of marriage, September 17, 1947; 1615 Cermak Ct. Naperville, IL 60563. Children: Barb and Jim Brouwer, Jan and Dale Holtrop, John and Jan, Bill and Karla, Mary and John Cook, Evelyn and Brad Wieringa. 17 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren. To God be the glory for His love and faithfulness.

60th Anniversary

BRANDERHORST Donald and Suzanne, Sept. 9, 1952. 15644 Riley St., Holland, MI 49424. Children: Scott and Sue Branderhorst, Joy and Jeff Groenhof, Jill and John Dykhuis; many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Praise God for his love and faithfulness!

CILLEY Bud and Ruth (Dyksterhouse) of Kalamazoo, MI will celebrate 60 years of faithful marriage September 6, 2012. Ken, Karen, Kimberly and their families praise God for his love and blessings.

GROENENDYK Howard & Effie, Cedar, IA (Sept. 4). Their 6 children and spouses, 23 grandchildren, 14 great grandchildren rejoice with them & give thanks for God's faithfulness!

KOK Rev. James & Eleanor celebrated 60 years of marriage on August 22, 2012. Their children Kathy & Jerry Heide, Cheri & Don Cady, Jim & Carol Kok, Rev. Tom & Shelly Kok, Barb & Rev. Adrian Van Giessen, Ron & Monique Kok & 18 grandchildren & 14 great grandchildren thank God for His blessings and faithfulness. Send congratulations to 4455 Harvard Ave., Denver, CO 80222

PRINS, Carl and Berdiene of Hudsonville, MI will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on Sept. 18, 2012. Their children are: Craig and Sherrie Prins (Rebecca, Clay and Jesse); Duane and Jane Prins (Anne, Abby and Scott Verkaik, and Marie); Bryan and Mary Prins (Carly and Alexis). We praise and thank God for his blessings and faithfulness.

TENBROEK Harold and Lory-2300 Raybrook Ave. #203 Grand Rapids MI 49546 celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on August 15. Congratulations from your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. We love you!

VANDER KLOK Roy & Marge, Aug 29, 4317 Muirfield Dr, W. Bradenton, FL 34210 Children: Alan & Sheryl, Mary Sue & John McNair, Steve & Ann, 11 grandchildren, 1 great-grandchild. We thank God for His blessings on their love and faithfulness.

50th Anniversary

50TH ANNIVERSARY Ailspach, Marilyn and Marcia, Sep 7th. 303 3rd Ave, Parkersburg, Iowa 50665.

CLAUSING James and Karen (Harkema) will celebrate 50 yrs of marriage on Sept 28. The family invites you to celebrate with us at an Open House on Sept 15 from 2-4:00 at Breton Terrace, GR. We thank God for 50 yrs of blessings and faithfulness. With love from your children and grandchildren.

CLOUSING James and Carolyn (Milkamp) 2041 Maplewood Circle, Highland, IN 46322 celebrated 50 years of marriage on August 3, 2012. We thank God for your love and faithfulness to Him, each other, and us. With love from your family: Mark & Cheri Lubbers (Kaitlyn, Melissa, Allyson), Chuck & Linda Zandstra (Michelle, Jonathan, Matthew), Ron, Kevin & Julie Hengeveld (Kiley, Logan, Aiden)

FRANSMAN Clarence & Dorothy (Gorter), 5312 W. 139th St. Crestwood, IL 60445, celebrated 50 years of marriage on August 15. Their family: Darlene & Tom Huisenga (Sarah, Mary, Anna); Debra Boyce & friend David Van Schouwen; Carl & Penny Fransman. We have been blessed by loving, devoted, and God-fear parents/grandparents. Thank you Dad & Mom and may God continue to bless you. We love you.

HONDERD, Ralph & Carol (Beversluis) Family: Eric & Kris Grimm (Tyler/Kelly, Laura, & Kelli), Kary Honderd, Steve & Shelly Honderd (Luke, Levi, & Malachi)

KUIKEN Martin & Berdyne (Gritter) 2737 Perry Rd, Flossmoor IL 60422 September 1st, 1962. Celebrating 50 years! Love, Kristy & Bob, Karla & Don, Shane, Josh & Courtney, Sam, Tyler, Alex, Zachary, Molly, Mickey, & Bailey. We thank God for His continuing faithfulness to our family.

Church Position Announcements

PASTOR Valley CRC is seeking a Gospel-centered pastor to shepherd our congregation. We are a thriving, community-focused church that utilizes a blended worship style. We are multi-generational, welcoming and affirming to all God's children. Our safe suburban community in Central New York (Binghamton) is stunning in all seasons, with beautiful rolling hills, trees, rivers and valleys. If you are a caring communicator and feel the call to lead our congregation in shining Christ's light in our valley, please contact Ron Crawford at ValleyPSC@stny.rr.com or visit <http://www.valleycrc.com/pastorportal.html>

MINISTER/CONGREGATIONAL LIFE Faith CRC, Elmhurst, Illinois, a Chicago suburb, seeks a pastor to administer and lead the adult ministries and pastoral care of the church, preach and lead worship regularly and support evangelism and community outreach. Please direct all inquiries to Ray Middel at 630-862-1861 or forsearchteam@gmail.com.

PASTOR OPENING AT OPCRC Orland Park Christian Reformed Church, located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago seeks an energetic, passionate pastor who will champion OPCRC's mission of reaching out with the Good News of Jesus Christ and building up people in their faith. We are seeking a pastor especially gifted in strong biblically-based preaching who will challenge the congregation spiritually and share in the leadership of staff and church ministries. This position is open due to our Pastor retiring in July of 2013. For a complete job description and to learn more about what God is doing at Orland Church, visit www.OrlandChurch.com. Resumes and questions regarding this position should be directed to pastorsearch@opcrc.org.

CHILDREN MINISTRIES Roosevelt Park Community CRC is actively seeking a part time Children Ministries Coordinator. Our church and

neighborhood is urban and diverse. Mail resumes to Alta Van Doeselaar, Roosevelt Park Community CRC, 811 Chicago Drive, Grand Rapids, MI., 49509

PASTOR Maitland River Community Church is seeking an inspiring, visionary leader who is committed to developing and empowering others. We need an effective, creative communicator of God's Word, who models compassionate love for the community and equips the congregation for outreach. Full job description at MRCC.ca. Direct inquiries and/or resumes to searchcommittee@mrcc.ca

ANCHORAGE ALASKA Trinity CRC is seeking a full time pastor. Please direct all inquiries to Ron Lindemulder at rlinak@gci.net or call 907-346-2081 or the church office 907-272-8431.

YOUTH DIRECTOR Grace Christian Reformed Church of Burke, VA is seeking a part-time YD who is spiritually committed to cultivating the relationship between our Youth and Christ and to those youth in the area. Position available Oct 1. For more information or to submit a resume contact Julie Poole at Julie.Poole@comcast.net or contact through our website: www.gracecrc.org.

PASTOR: Ellsworth CRC located in beautiful Northwest Lower Michigan is seeking a full-time pastor. We are a small town congregation with numerous outreach possibilities. We desire a pastor who is committed to sound Biblical teaching and able to interact with the youth and the community. If interested, please contact Carl Veenstra at (231) 599-2392 or email secretary@ellsworthcrc.org.

EXECUTIVE PASTOR New Life Church (a Christian Reformed Ministry) is an exciting, contemporary-styled ministry located in Abbotsford, BC. The congregation is enthusiastically engaged in the mission of

"touching lives with the transforming love of Jesus." We are seeking an experienced Executive Pastor who lives an exemplary life of integrity, is a leader of leaders, and has a keen administrative mind. This person will be expected to mentor, lead and supervise a dynamic, multi-staff team; manage church finances and operations; develop and implement, in cooperation with others, strategic plans to bring New Life's vision into fruition; and create and maintain systems for life groups, integration and diaconal ministries. Applicants must have extensive leadership experience. Complete details can be found at www.newlifecrc.ca. Please email a cover letter, statement of faith, and resume to nborg@newlifecrc.ca. Closing date is Oct. 12/12.

YOUTH PASTOR Fleetwood CRC in Surrey, British Columbia, is looking for someone to help us live out our baptismal vow to love, encourage, and support youth and to help them know and follow Christ. We are offering a full-time ordained or eligible for ordination position to a qualified candidate who has a passion for the Lord and also for building relationships with youth. The selected candidate will be responsible for the continued development of youth programs: youth group, young adults and some preaching. For a complete job description please contact the church office at info@fleetwoodcrc.org or 604-584-6244. Resumes and cover letters can be submitted via email or at 9165 - 160 Str. Surrey, BC, V4N 2B8 and directed to Youth Pastor Search Committee

MILL CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH, in the Seattle area suburb of Mill Creek, WA is receiving applications for the Senior Pastor position. Our current pastor, Eleanor Rietkerk, is retiring in early 2013. If God is calling you to a church that is committed to being outreach focused in a community of young families, please send your resume to mcccsearchteam@gmail.com. Church profile available upon request.

OLTHOF Fritz & Karen (Van Zuidam) - 919 Killarney Dyer, IN 46311- celebrate 50 years of marriage on August 18, 2012. Family: Scot & Bonnie (Lindsey, Matthew & Peter) Michelle & Greg Bouwer (Miranda, Collette, Lawton, Seth & Kade) Todd & Marla (Haleigh, Taylor & Avery) Dennis & Karen (Lily, Wesley, Silas & Mitchell) Fritz & Jennifer (Fritz, Isaac, Ella, Olivia & Elijah). Great is Thy faithfulness!

STEIGENGA Roger and Marcia (Seinen) of 2455 Sierra Dr, Zeeland MI 49464 joyously celebrated 50 years of marriage on August 16. With their children, Matt (Marybeth) Steigenga and Rachel (Mark) Westra, and 5 grandchildren, they thank God for his continued blessings. Isa. 40:31.



VANVELDEHUISEN, Dick and Kathy celebrate 50th wedding anniversary on Sept 1, 2012. Best wishes from their children Debra Ruisard (Dave), NJ, Richard (Yvonne) WVA, Paul (Tami) MD, David (Kristin) NS and 11 grandchildren. 14 Bayview Road, Brockville ON K6V 5S1, rvanveldehuisen@gmail.com.

VOSKAMP John & Janet (Triemstra) of Ebenezer CRC are blessed with 50 yrs of marital bliss Aug 31, 2012. Joined by 4 children and their spouses, 11 grandchildren, friends and family, wishing them health and thanking God for His providence. 239 Morningstar Rd Trenton Ontario K8V 5P6

Obituaries

DEGROOT Tennie (Bergsma) age 92, Grand Rapids, MI, met her Lord, joining Tom, on June 14, 2012. Children: Sheri (Don) VanDyk, Tom, Tony (Gloria), and Andrea.

FRIESEMA Elsie (Kuiper) of Racine, WI, age 91, went to be with her Lord on July 12, 2012. Preceded in death by her husband John on Oct. 2, 1986. Survived by her 3 children: Garry (Gloria) Friesema, Joan Robyn, Joyce (Neil) Hutt, 6 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Memorials may be sent to Crossroad Bible Institute, P. O. Box 900, Grand Rapids, MI, or Racine Christian School (Endowment Fund), 912 Virginia St., Racine 53405

HAGEDOORN Gertrude 99, went to be with her Lord on July 3, 2012. She is predeceased by her husband Peter. Lovingly remembered by her children, Peter and Lorraine, Harold and Dorothy, Judith and Donald Westra, Elizabeth Kolk, 13 grandchildren 30 great-grandchildren, 3 great great grandchildren

KEESSEN Alice, 100, of Indianapolis, IN, went home to be with her Lord on July 5. She is survived by daughters Jan (Gene) Jarrell and Mary (Peter) Bruinsma, brother Ben (Betty) Boxum, sister-in-law Nella Boxum, 8 grandchildren, 8 great grandchildren. Alice was preceded in death by her husband, John. Born in Kansas, Alice became a passionate and creative teacher. She taught in Iowa, South Holland, IL, and Lansing Christian School in Lansing, IL

LENGER Dewey aged 90; July 19, 2012; 3926 Pemberton Dr. S. E., Grand Rapids, MI 49508; He was preceded in death by his wife, Gertrude, and son, Thomas Dewey Lenger. He is survived by his wife: Faith; children: Shirley (Russell) Williams of Holland, Sharon Worst of Grand Rapids, Susan (Paul) Richards of East Grand Rapids, Sandra Lenger (Gary) of Grand Rapids; grandchildren: Shawn (Celia) Lenger, Jodi (Gabe) Beversluis, Jennifer Breen, Nicole (Brian) Zalewski, Kim (Brandon) Santiago, Austin Richards, Rob Richards; 9 great grandchildren; stepchildren: Steven (Thea) VanderHill, Susan (Alan) Poupore; 5 step grandchildren; 2 step great grandchildren; 2 brothers and 1 sister.

SLOT Russell Lee, aged 90; July 3, 2012; Grand Rapids, MI. Russ was preceded in death by his wife of 54 years Vivian (Wolfert). He is survived by his sister: Marian Wolfert; children: Larry Slot, Pam (Chronis) Slot, Steve and Vicki Slot, Dan and Deb Slot, Tim and Marti Slot, and Pam (Slot) and Jim DeKorne; 14 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.

SLUIS Arthur Sr., age 84, WWII U. S. Army Veteran of Palos Heights, IL went to be with his Lord on July 11, 2012. Beloved husband for 64 years to Marilyn, nee Hommes. Loving father of Lynne (Rich) Mulder, Debbie (Rick) Ballweber, Jane (Andy) Lanenga, Pat (Jim) Even, Leslie (Phil) Fazio, Art Jr. (Jan) Sluis, and Lori (Neil) Tanis. Cherished grandfather of 21. Dearest great-grandfather of 16. Fond brother of Leonard. Preceded in death by ten brothers and sisters.



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VP Academic Search Committee

Mrs. Magda Beukes, Executive Assistant to the President
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road E.
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4
vpacadsearch@redeemer.ca

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Office of Academic Affairs  
Dordt College  
498 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE  
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697  
Fax: (712) 722-6035  
E-mail: [provost@dordt.edu](mailto:provost@dordt.edu)  
Web: [www.dordt.edu/prospective\\_employees/faculty/](http://www.dordt.edu/prospective_employees/faculty/)

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The editor in chief will provide overall strategic direction for the editorial staff and for the development of resources to support faith formation and local church ministry, and will function as theological editor of Faith Alive products.

The successful candidate will have a master of divinity or theology degree or equivalent; at least eight years of broad ministry experience; extensive knowledge of the church of Jesus Christ, especially the Christian Reformed Church; a strong commitment to the Reformed faith; and proven leadership and administrative skills.

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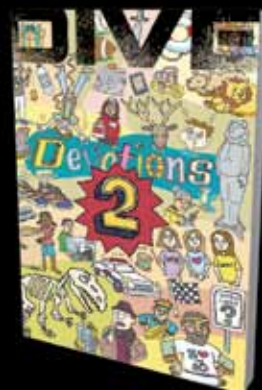
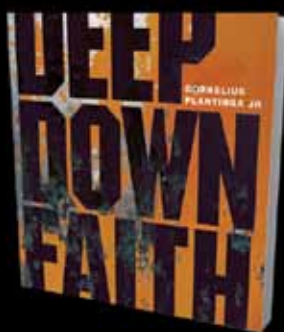
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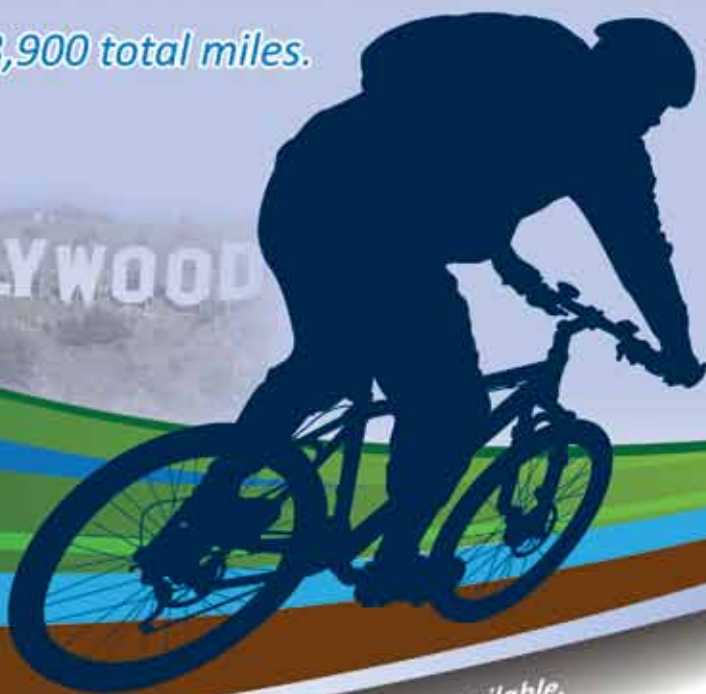


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What has made *you* smile lately? Got a joke or funny incident you'd care to share with your wider church family? Please send it to *The Banner* at 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560; or email it to [editorial@thebanner.org](mailto:editorial@thebanner.org).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

**W**hen Mrs. Jones found out she was pregnant, she shared the good news with her husband, unaware that Johnny, the youngest of her four sons, was listening. She went on to share the news with anyone who would listen.

One day when Johnny and his mother were in the supermarket, a woman asked him if he was excited about the new baby.

"Yes I am," Johnny replied, "and I know what we're going to name it too. If it's a girl, we're going to call her Christina. If it's another boy, we're going to call it Quits."

—George VanderWeit

**A**fter circling a downtown office building several times, a pastor parked his car in a spot clearly marked "No Parking." He wrote the following note and left it under the windshield wiper: "I am already late for an important meeting." Underneath he signed his name, adding as a P.S., "Forgive me my trespasses."

A couple of hours later the pastor returned to his car and found a ticket tucked underneath

the windshield wiper, along with a note: "It is my job to issue tickets, and if I don't, I will get fired." The patrolman signed his name, adding as a P.S., "Lead me not into temptation."

—Marge Ballast

**T**he large McDonald's in our neighborhood decided to hire a part-time chaplain in order to help its employees deal with the difficult issues they face in their lives. The title they chose for this position: "Arch Bishop."

—Dee VanHeuvelen

**S**potting in the Ascension Sunday bulletin: "Song: 'Angus Day' (see projection screen)."

What actually appeared on the projection screen were the words to "Agnus Dei."

—Carol Rudie

**A**s I was driving my 4-year-old triplet granddaughters home from school one day, they asked me where my mom and dad were. I told them my mom was in heaven with Jesus.

"Oh," said Olivia. "I'm going to heaven someday."

Evie and Sophie agreed that they would also be going. "But we're not going to stay there," said Olivia. "We're gonna come back."

Then they began discussing ways to return. A car, thought Evie, or maybe a truck.

Sophie said, "I'm gonna need a parachute—a pink one!"

—Lori Pylman

**A**fter breakfast one morning, my 5-year-old daughter, Tenley, was sitting on my lap. Four-year-old Carys came up and wanted to sit on my lap as well.

"Sorry," I said, "there is no room in the inn."

Pointing to the chair beside us, Tenley piped up, "But there's a little stable over there!"

—Vernanda Buwalda

**W**e were reading out of a children's story Bible. Seeing a picture of Paul with his eyes closed, our 2-year-old son exclaimed, "That man is sleeping standing up!"

"Maybe he's praying," I suggested.

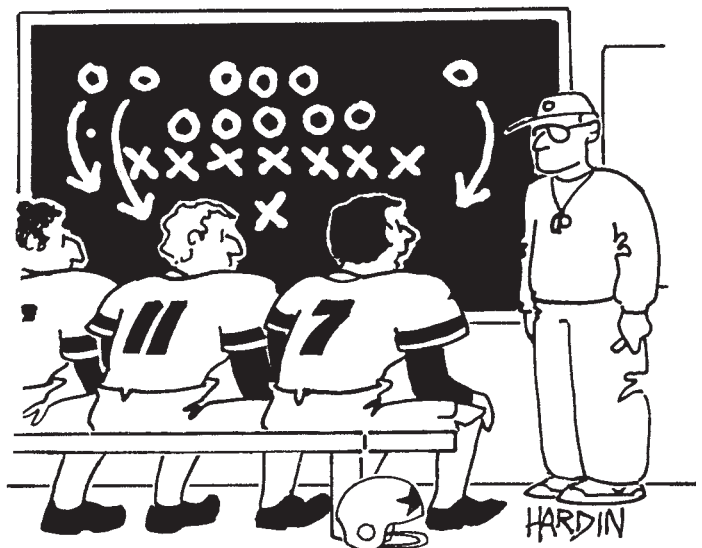
His response was prompt. "No, he's not. His hands are not folded."

—Natasha Batenburg

**O**ur 6-year-old granddaughter, Danica, was memorizing John 3:16 for Sunday school. She asked her dad what "perish" meant. Before he could answer, her 4-year-old sister replied, "That's where Barbie goes!"

It took us a second to realize she meant "Paris."

—Vick Munneke



Excuse me, Coach—but are we the Hugs or the Kisses?



# THE CHURCH IN ACTION



THROUGH FAITH-FORMING EXPERIENCES LIKE SERVE & LIVE IT, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PULLED AWAY FROM THE BUSYNESS AND TEMPTATIONS OF EVERYDAY LIFE AND BROUGHT TO A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN FOCUS ON LISTENING, WORSHIPPING AND SERVING JESUS CHRIST. IT IS OFTEN DURING THESE TIMES THAT GOD TURNS ON THE LIGHT BULB OF HIS LOVE, GRACE AND DESIRE FOR A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.

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