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News. Clues. Kingdom views.

CHRISTIAN COURIER

True North strong and free? First Nations perspective on Canada's 150

Kylie Waswa

All over Canada, everyone is pulling out their party gear and red and white decorations to celebrate the 150. This huge event, however, celebrating Canada ignores all the tragedies currently happening amongst the Indigenous people. I'm not in a party mood this year, mainly because I feel this country is unsafe for First Nations people. Quite a bold statement, but it's true.

What I mean by "unsafe" is the fact that back in May, two First Nations youth were found dead in Thunder Bay, Ontario, yet there are no leads, no nothing. Tammy Keeash of North Caribou Lake First Nation and Josiah Begg of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug were found in the same river, and in both cases foul play was ruled out. Despite so many unanswered questions

about these two young people, there has been no justice, no peace. These two youth grew up in communities where they were taught how to be safe around water; it's guaranteed they knew how to swim and I can also guarantee that their deaths could have been prevented. One teen was in Thunder Bay for school and one was simply visiting his doctor. Thunder Bay is the closest place for communities in Northern Ontario to send their children for an education, yet it's such a big risk because Thunder Bay has claimed the lives of seven Indigenous teens since 2000. Too many have taken their last breath in that river.

The Canadian anthem comes to mind, especially the lines "true North strong and free" and "glorious and free." Here's another bold statement: Canada is not as "free" as I think it is. Why? Imagine this:

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What is there to celebrate for First Nations in Canada?



COVER ART CONTEST

Detail from "10,000 years and forever more" (acrylic and ink) by Lisa Stellingwerff, Victoria B.C. on the theme of growth. Send in your art before July 15!

New stage notes for Canada's role in the world

Kathy Vandergrift

On Tuesday, June 6, Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland presented "A New Foreign Policy Vision for Canada" in the House of Commons. On Wednesday Minister of Defense Harjit Singh Sajjan unveiled the long-awaited defense strategy entitled "Strong at Home, Secure in North America, and Engaged in the World." And on Friday the Minister of International Development Marie-Claude Bibeau released "Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy," a year after consultations started.

Does this add up to a new direction for Canada's role in the world? Is it catering

to U.S. demands while appearing to be independent? Or is it smoke and mirrors, a Liberal rebranding of the status quo?

There is evidence for each of these readings. Canadians who care about global issues will need to monitor the government's next steps to decide whether any of these shifts in policy make a difference in the world.

Rules-based global order

A dominant theme in the foreign policy speech is the need to maintain and strengthen the post-World War II global institutions. Threats include nations turning inward, disregard for the rules of international law, and the impacts of climate change. Canada

plans to actively engage with allies to respond to these challenges.

The first challenge is the need to incorporate the Global South, Asia and China into institutions built on models from Europe and North America. A strong focus on working through multilateral institutions – such as the United Nations, the G-20, the World Trade Organization, NATO and others – is a shift from the Harper era and different from current U.S. priorities.

A second challenge is shoring up global trade in the face of questions about who benefits and who loses. Freeland argues that the problem is not global trade but the lack of domestic policies to share the

Continued on page 2

News

True North *continued*

you're four or five years old; an RCMP officer shows up to your house saying that they're taking you away from your family, and you're not allowed to say no. You're taken away, stripped of everything that set you apart from white people; you're dressed in uniforms; your head is shaved and your identity is gone. Everything you once knew is gone. No arguments; you're not allowed to do anything about it. You aren't free.

Not much to celebrate

Everything we have, we fought for. It wasn't just given to us – OUR land, our lives and justice for the many men, women and children who have died. There are a lot of families currently fighting for justice. There are many elders still held captive by haunting memories of Residential Schools. There are even people being held captive to fear, due to the high numbers of First Nations dying.

So what is there to celebrate? I am being held back from celebrating because of the two young lives that were lost in May. I'm being held back from celebrating because of my family members who experienced Residential School. I'm being held back from celebrating because of the fear that "this might be my last." Now I don't mean

to rain on anyone's parade and say "don't celebrate," nor am I hating on Canada. I don't expect all of Canada to stop what they're doing, but what I wish for is a moment. A moment where we remember the past – the horrific past for the Indigenous people – the many lives lost in residential schools and the victims of hate crimes. We should take time to acknowledge the survivors and to fight for better conditions in First Nations communities today.

Mark 11:22 says "have faith in God." Short, sweet and simple. Through this I am keeping my faith in God, and trusting that he will guide this. When reconciliation between the First Nations of Canada and the Government is made, that will be something to celebrate. ✂



Kylie Waswa is a 16-year-old Christian from a community in Northern Ontario, currently going to school in Belleville, Ont. Her goal is to

bring awareness to the living conditions in First Nations communities and the lives of First Nations in Canada.

**New stage notes** *continued*

wealth within countries. This analysis seems inadequate to reverse the reality that market-driven, global capitalism has increased the disparity between rich and poor. The need to be globally competitive often prevents the domestic policies she sees as the solution and leaves some countries without the resources to fund them.

A third challenge is cultural conflict. "Canadian liberalism (small l) is a precious idea," said Freeland, referring to our acceptance of pluralism, diversity and multiculturalism. Canada, she asserted, can provide leadership now, building on earlier U.S. leadership as a superpower, which she endorsed. The speech does not acknowledge troubling issues such as Canadian companies who violate human rights in other countries and contribute to the transfer of wealth from poor to rich countries. This speech defends the status quo rather than pointing toward the need for reform of the global rules to be more just.

Preserving global order justifies the principled use of force, which set the stage for the release of the defense strategy.

Strong, secure and engaged

The defense strategy is the product of longer consultation and comes with a big price tag.

The core emphasizes military deterrence because of renewed "major power competition," particularly with Russia and China, without relying on U.S.

military strength. To be strong, the strategy proposes a 70 percent increase in defense spending, from \$18.9 billion in 2016-17 to \$32.7 billion by 2026-27. The size of our armed forces will increase by 3,500 to a total of 71,500 personnel and reserves by 1,500 to 30,000 persons, with 15 new battleships, 88 new fighter aircraft, and new investments in intelligence, drones and other new technologies. Most of the funds, however, will be in future budgets and could be changed.

Military threats to be addressed by the new resources include Arctic security as global warming makes it more accessible, cyber threats, threats in space and armed non-state forces such as terrorist groups.

Ironically, the causes of war named in the strategy will not be solved by military strategies: economic inequality, large numbers of unemployed young men in less stable parts of the world, migration and conflict over resources. Many analysts suggest that even current conflicts, with ISIS in the Middle East or the Taliban in Afghanistan, are not winnable by military means. Stronger links between the causes of contemporary conflicts and the means to prevent or respond to them would add credibility to the strategy.

Peace-building gets a short mention in all three documents. Conflict prevention, mediation and post-conflict reconstruction now appear in the defense strategy, and "Peace and Security" is one program area for international assistance; but there is no clear strategy or new resources to indicate serious action.

Feminist International Aid Policy

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls are the top priority in the new strategy for international development. The six program areas are so broad that anything can be made to fit. A more flexible approach to country priorities ends years of concentrating aid in fewer countries to increase effectiveness. Now the claim is that a focus on gender equality will lead to effectiveness. Resources focused specifically on gender equality will grow from two percent of the aid budget in 2015-16 to 15 percent by 2021-22, while integration of gender issues in regular programming will mean 95 percent of resources will contribute to this goal. There is no increase in the budget for international assistance.

The focus on women is justified by need and their essential role in reducing poverty. It is also a branding exercise for the Trudeau Liberals. Unfortunately, shifting priorities with each party in power and no budget increases suggest that development assistance is no longer taken seriously.

One note of innovation is the use of "repayable contributions," but that concept is not explained. The role of the



private sector will grow through the new Development Finance Institution (DFI), under Export Development Canada, with \$300 million to launch it. This is likely where trade interests and aid will converge, without public accountability.

Minister Freeland insisted this is a "made-in-Canada" policy, but my sense is that what happens outside Canada is likely to determine what is actually done. Nimbleness can be an asset in uncertain times. ✂



Kathy Vandergrift is a public policy analyst. She lives in Ottawa.

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News

Hundreds join largest KAIROS Blanket Exercise ever



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Photo essay submitted by CC reader John Joosse

1. Drum/song leader group.
2. Laying the blankets on Parliament Hill June 2, 2017. Blankets represent lands inhabited by First Nations people.
3. Arrival of the French and British “settlers.” The blanketed area slowly shrinks.
4. John Joosse, Kathleen Litchi and Yetty Joosse, Southwestern Kairos board members.
5. Final dance and prayer circle. Time to reflect on the re-telling of history.

Final project: Meet face-to-face

Natasha Steenhof

For a year-end assessment, students in a small Christian school in Northern B.C. engaged in an activity that had a significant impact on students, teachers and local aboriginal leaders. Jonathan Boone, a high school teacher at Bulkley Valley Christian School, designed a final project

where students shared their understandings of the core concepts of the curriculum and how the course had changed their attitudes towards First Nation issues and individuals. Instead of a final exam, a tradition he found restrictive, Boone wanted to create a situation in which his students would participate in meaningful dialogue.

To add to the significance of this exercise, Boone invited a panel of local First Nation individuals to participate in this conversation and to respond to what each student expressed in their presentation. Boone said that many students were worried as they wanted to honour the elders and were nervous about accidentally insulting individuals who had been directly affected by issues they had studied in class such as the Indian Act, residential schools and damaging stereotypes.

The students took the exercise extremely seriously, brainstorming and reflecting on

what they wanted to tell First Nation elders about their learning experience. Boone said that the presentations far exceeded his expectations and he wished that he had introduced the exercise years ago.

“I was moved to tears several times by students’ honesty, sorrow and anxiety,” Boone said, adding that almost every student spoke about their ignorance about events that had negatively affected First Nation peoples and confessing that they came from homes and churches where First Nation peoples were sometimes mocked. They also expressed anger and sorrow that these travesties could have taken place in Canada and expressed a desire to enact reconciliation by improving the relationship between First Nation peoples and the rest of the Canadian population.

Boone stated that the panel was incredibly positive and emotional in their response to students, thanking the participants and sharing personal anecdotes: “They wiped away tears, shared a few laughs and spoke of the need to find ways to live together as neighbours in the Bulkley Valley,” Boone said.

The experience was also rewarding for students. Nathan Steenhof, a Grade 11 student, said the activity was transformative. “Speaking directly to First Nation peoples about their experiences was intimidating but also incredibly meaningful and made what we learned seem more real.”

Boone hopes that this exercise will help with building important bridges between the First Nation community and BVCS as he would like the school to be an example of reconciliation in the larger community. Boone concludes, “The new curriculum encourages more, not less, cooperation with aboriginal communities, and our Christian faith demands it.”

Natasha Steenhof is an education student at King’s University in Edmonton, Alberta.



CC asked Jonathan Boone to contribute a guest editorial, featured on the next page.



Editorials

The evolution of soup



Angela Reitsma Bick

“Do you still like cooking?” one of my kids asked. “Even though you do it every day?”

Maybe my expression had betrayed some impatience as I banged around pulling out pots and checking for ingredients. I like cooking, but there isn’t always the time or money to make fabulous meals.

Interestingly, those two weaknesses – time and cost – have been targeted by advertisers for at least a century and a half. Let’s begin by looking at a humble can of soup. There’s probably one in your kitchen right now. Your plans for that can say a lot about the times we live in and our culture’s approach to food.

In 1869, an ice-box manufacturer and a fruit seller went into business together. Joseph Campbell, the merchant, soon bought out his partner to run Campbell Soup Company – a venture so successful that the familiar red and white cans are now sold in 120 countries.

Napoleon, allegedly, was the first person to long for portable, imperishable foodstuffs for his troops in the 1830s. And while Campbell Co. did very well during both World Wars, its target audience was not soldiers but housewives, in the front lines of feeding large families. Early cans were marketed as inexpensive and time-saving. A curly, cursive font was designed to appeal to women.

Mass canning technology was developing just as Mr. Campbell invented condensed soup (to save on shipping costs) in 1897. This pairing enabled Campbell’s to expand significantly. It also helped when the U.S. Supreme Court designated the tomato as a vegetable “for trade purposes,” further boosting sales of the popular tomato soup. (Still a favourite all these years later!)

Helps for the Hostess, the first cookbook using soup in recipes, was published by Campbell’s in 1916. Condensed soup has been a casserole staple ever since. In the U.S., an astonishing one million cans are used in preparing meals each day. Soup now ranks after only meat and spices as the most common ingredient in cooking! Campbell Soup – a product designed by two men – changed the way women make food.

Counter-narratives

But I’m happy to report that this short history of canned soup includes some rebels. Four in particular come to mind. Out of necessity, practicality or theology, these women were and are not discouraged from the act of cooking by readily-available prepared food. Take note of these lessons, once so obvious but now almost forgotten.

First, soup can be made ahead of time. Both of my grandmothers, as young mothers immigrating to Canada in the 50s, served Dutch meatball soup every Sunday. Huge pots would be made on Saturday, full of finely diced vegetables and tiny, home-made meatballs that smelled of nutmeg, pepper and onions. The soup would be set



on a back burner to heat up after church the next day.

Second, soup is not complicated. “Contemporary casserole recipes all seem to call for a can of soup,” Mennonite Doris Janzen Longacre lamented in 1976. “Will future cooks be born, live and die without knowing how to stir up a smooth white sauce? Will there finally only be three flavours – cream of mushroom, cream of chicken and cream of celery?” (*More with Less*, 117).

Her much-loved cookbook, now a kitchen classic, began as a guide for how to eat and spend 10 percent less in the “living faith” of the Mennonite tradition.

“Buy a wire whisk and break the mushroom soup cycle,” she suggests, by learning a simple white sauce recipe.

Third – and this is what Campbell’s counts on – soup is boring to make from scratch.

“Everyone wants a revolution,” Tish Harrison Warren says. “No one wants to do the dishes.”

But even boring tasks can be done in

service to our Lord. In her recent book *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, Anglican priest Warren expounds on how the “small bits of our day are profoundly meaningful because they are the site of our worship. The crucible of our formation is in the monotony of our daily routines.”

Everything in life is touched with holiness, she says, even our daily routines. Even soup.

Do I still like cooking? Even though I do it every day?

Forget about the clock and the grocery bill.

Just begin with some water and finely-diced vegetables. Look at your whisk with new admiration! Make soup from scratch for someone you love.

Because one day, as Zechariah says, “all the pots and pans in all the kitchens of Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to God-of-the-Angel-Armies” (14:20, *The Message*). ↗

Angela Reitsma Bick is editor of Christian Courier.

Christian Courier

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Our complex and beautiful country

Jonathan Boone



If you are anything like me, your list of books to read and films

to see is ever growing. It’s something of a mixed blessing that this list tends to grow even longer in the summer. While there is no shortage of engaging material out there, there are so many books and films I will probably never actually get around to enjoying! It seems every time I strike one title off my list, at least two more are added. Regrettably, there seems to be no easy

answer to this dilemma!

As I reflect on this, I am aware that it has been a long time since there were, indeed, any easy answers in life. Long gone are the childhood days when life’s choices were simple and seemingly straightforward. The complex reality of life ran through my mind as I watched an engaging film recently that I would very much like to recommend to you, even if that adds yet another title to your own never-ending lists! (So, in the spirit of Canada’s 150th celebrations, let me also apologize in advance for doing so!) You may be forgiven as well for not having heard of this film, given that it is neither a Hollywood blockbuster nor a Hollywood flop.

The film I highly recommend is *Koneline: Our Land Beautiful*, a visually stunning and powerful documentary set in a remote corner of northwestern B.C. *Koneline* is visually stunning for all the obvious reasons: panoramic landscapes, mountain ranges, glaciers, alpine meadows

and so much more. But it’s visually stunning in surprising ways as well:

who would think that slow-motion footage of the world’s largest helicopter moving a MASSIVE transmission tower into place could also be portrayed as an object of creational beauty? For these reasons alone, *Koneline* is well worth one of your summer evenings, and I am confident that you will not be disappointed.

However, the real allure of *Koneline* lies in the story it tells and its unique storytelling manner. One comes to expect narrative arc in a documentary – an omniscient voice of authority that introduces and perhaps even critiques the very perspectives it brings to the audience. Perhaps, if I am honest, I actually want a Voice of Authority to tell me how to think about complicated issues such as resource extraction. However, this voice is intentionally missing from *Koneline*, for reasons that I can only guess at, since I did not allow myself the opportunity to consult online sources prior to writing this current piece. Rather, the only voices you

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Letters/Editorial

Nouns cornering the verb market

It may have started with CBC Radio – they always seem to be coming up with “new and improved” words or new pronunciations. All of a sudden no one *gives* anything anymore; no, they *gift* it. Even *CC* has now joined the bandwagon. In the May 22 cover story, Clarence and Jennie Visser “gifted the land to Christian Stewardship Services” (“Edmonton farmer battles to protect prime land from urban sprawl”). The noun becomes the verb, and it may even be defensible from a historical standpoint.

It’s not just our teens’ fidget spinners that represent a fad; adults suddenly adopt these meaningless habits of speech just because everyone else does. As for me, I still give gifts at Christmas; I don’t gift gives . . . err, whatever. And I hope to keep giving gifts into the future.

Anne van Arragon Hutten
Kentville, N.S.

Do monks watch Netflix?

Watching Synod’s proceedings (and lack thereof) this year, I couldn’t help but

connect the debate regarding the CRC’s Office of Social Justice with what I had just read in Peter Schuurman’s piece on Rod Dreher’s new book, *The Benedict Option* (“The Ark, the Titanic and a cargo ship to Tarshish,” *CC* June 12).

Dreher claims that Christianity has lost the cultural battle and that it needs to make a retreat (aka Benedict). Many who’ve reviewed the book disagree vehemently. So do I. I believe that Jesus wants to make all things new. The only way for that to happen through the church is via humble, open and real engagement with the world, even on a blog.

Yet “we’re a confessional church” some Synod debaters said. As they spoke I heard echoes of Dreher’s cry to build an ark.

That same week of Synod I was reading Kuyper’s *To Be Near Unto God*. On one of the high-debate Synod days I read, “Doctrine cannot be sacrificed. But when it appears too one-sidedly in the foreground, there is something wrong . . . [When reformations occur] first there are bounding floods of life, and then we find drained river-beds with only some weak rill coursing through the sand. We will never know how greatly this has

impoverished the church.”

I imagined Kuyper standing at the mic at Synod saying those words.

As I write this letter I am visiting St John’s Benedictine Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota. Two nights ago I asked one of the monks if he had Netflix. A couple of my more conservative peers were shocked that I asked. When the monk responded by telling us that he’d watched the last episode of *Fargo* the previous night, we were all taken aback.

Even Benedictines, it seems, are willing to engage God’s world.

John van Sloten
Calgary, Alta.

‘Rooted and faithful to the call of Christ’

In a time when even the best media publications seem to fall into the polarization and echo chambers that plague our public discourse, I am particularly grateful for the fact that when I open each new issue of *Christian Courier*; I know I will encounter varying perspectives and viewpoints that will challenge my own in a thoughtful

and informed manner. *CC* manages to be rooted and faithful to the call of Christ on every square inch of our lives while still remaining attentive to highlighting the different and active movements of the Holy Spirit in and through the people of God. Its writers and editors engage difficult topics in ways that are gracious but bold, and leave space for healthy dialogue. Thanks for helping Christians in Canada to keep the conversations going!

Dena Nicolai
Vancouver, B.C.

Chaplain and Refugee Support Mobilizer
with the Christian Reformed Church

Vinyl Café treasure hunt

I so enjoyed the article written by Jared Siebert (“The day an entire town disappeared,” *CC* May 8). Stuart McLean was an amazing story teller and a wonderful man. The day after I found out that he had died I went to all the second-hand stores in town and have now seven of his books. One was even signed by him! I will cut out Jared’s article and glue it in one of the books.

Tineke Bosch
Abbotsford, B.C.

Our complex and beautiful country *continued*

will hear in this film are those of the very people being filmed – from Tahltan elders fearful of losing even more control of their land and culture, to mining company owners and everyone in between, including young Tahltan employees of the same mine who are happy just to put food on the table for their children. In this way, *Koneline* echoes what we already know to be true: life is complicated, and there are rarely straightforward answers to complex issues.

Muddy waters

In telling many single stories through the very voices of the individuals most affected by giant industrial resource extraction projects (in this case, the Red Chris Mine owned by Imperial Metals), director Nettie Wild refuses to allow her subjects to fit into

neat, tidy categories of ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys.’ There is no David & Goliath paradigm here, as demonstrated by the painful in-fighting among the Tahltan, the love of God’s creation confessed by a mine worker and a snow cat operator, and the striking contrast between two separate pairs of hunters – one foul-mouthed and clearly unethical, the other philosophical and contemplative. Even the apparently clean waters of how we categorize people become muddied as we watch *Koneline*. What does becomes apparent very quickly as we are introduced to the wide range of characters living and working in this region is that they may have very different visions for how to use the land, but they all clearly love it.

Don’t watch *Koneline* to simply pass the

time one summer’s evening when you tire of CBC coverage of Canada’s 150th. Nor should you watch it to find easy answers to complicated questions of creation care, stewardship, and justice. There simply are none. At least not in this corner of the world, where uncertainty remains about who owns the land, who should have access to it, and how to provide jobs where there are none. Do watch the film, however, if you are willing to question your assumptions about who or what defines progress, to see glimpses of a way of life that is largely gone from the rest of the continent, to be reminded of the painful legacy of Canada’s 150 years of colonialism on a small group of indigenous hunter-gatherers, and simply to be visually reminded of the incredible beauty of the

created order, no matter how much it is presently groaning under the weight and curse of sin. In that manner, *Koneline* ultimately reminds Christ’s followers of something very clear: we are called to be care-takers and stewards who do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly, and that there is indeed a Voice who has promised to one day liberate his very creation from its present bondage to decay. As we celebrate with Canada its 150th birthday this year, may we also have the courage to point to the One who created this land beautiful, known as *Koneline* by its first inhabitants. ✈

Jonathan Boone lives in Smithers, B.C., and teaches high school at Bulkley Valley Christian School.



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News

Synopsis of the Christian Reformed Church's Synod 2017

Marian Van Til

PALOS HEIGHTS, Illinois – If the controversial issues that have periodically confronted past Christian Reformed Church synods were missing this year, that's not to say that the week-long June gathering was strictly routine. Meeting from June 9-15 at Trinity Christian College, southwest of Chicago, Synod approved two major church-structural changes.

First, Home Missions and World Missions were combined into "one global mission agency" called Resonate Global Mission. CRC Home Missions began its work on July 2, 1879, and World Missions was founded June 18, 1888, so the two had been working as separate agencies for nearly 140 years. Nevertheless, CRC missions "can be done better by a unified agency than by two agencies divided by geography," said Revs. Moses Chung and Gary Bekker, the heads of those agencies. Synod agreed.

The second change dissolved the CRC's Board of Trustees (in effect since June 30) and replaced it with a "council of delegates" (COD). The council will take

over the work of the former board, plus the oversight of Back to God International Ministries (the church's radio/TV/Internet ministries) and Resonate. Establishing the COD required dissolving not only the previous board but the corporate boards of Home and World Missions, and revising bylaws for Back to God Ministries – twice, to comply with both U.S. and Canadian law.

The COD will operate via a governance handbook as opposed to a constitution. The new structure will not necessarily simplify denominational governance (the COD is larger than the BOT), but its set-up and functions are intended to create more direct links to the churches and their members across the continent (about 25 percent of the CRC is Canadian). The COD has 48 delegates (one from each classis, providing geographical representation across North America). In addition there are four delegates at-large: three from Canada, one from the U.S. The work of Back to God Ministries and Resonate Global Mission will be maintained by COD regular committees, and advisory committees as necessary.

Beyond church walls

Those structural changes are significant, but they did not distract synod from its other work. An issue revisited was what place the *Belhar Confession* should have in the CRC's theology and life. The Belhar originated from South Africa's Dutch Reformed Mission Church in 1986 in the wake of apartheid's collapse. In that context it calls Christians to justice and reconciliation. The CRC has long considered whether the Belhar should be added to the church's historic Reformed confessions (Heidelberg Catechism, *et al*) – or given some other status. Giving it confessional status would require office-bearers to agree with it, but critics, including some of this year's synod delegates, have said it espouses "faulty liberation theology" and makes statements too open to interpretation. Synod 2012 designated the Belhar an "ecumenical faith declaration," but that seemed unsatisfactory to many. So Synod 2017 re-designated the document a "contemporary testimony," assigning it a place alongside *Our World Belongs to God*, which was finalized by the CRC in 2008.

In other business, Synod 2017 honoured CRC chaplains (academic, hospital, military, industry) as the chaplaincy is celebrating its 75th year. Synod also approved two special dates to be commemorated in the future:



CRC co-chairs of Resonate, Joy Engelsman and Carel Geleynse.

an annual day of justice and a disability awareness week.

Synod also discussed possible ways in which the CRC and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) can further their existing sharing partnership, agreed upon in 2014 in the Pella Accord. (One result of that accord was the joint hymnal, *Lift Up Your Hearts*.) Three options were considered for the future, with synod urging the churches to discuss them: increased coordination, working together where possible; increased collaboration, which could involve initiating new ministries and programs together; or new creation, which might eventually see the CRC and RCA combining in a new denomination. ✈

Marian Van Til is a freelance writer in Youngstown, N.Y.

Notes from the Presbyterian Church in Canada's GA 2017

Amy MacLachlan

KINGSTON, Ontario – The 143rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church met in Kingston, Ont., June 4-7. The most anticipated item of business – further discussion and decision-making regarding the LGBTQ community and the church – led to little actual change, with many questions being referred back to various committees for further study.

Still, the Assembly did vote to "apologize and repent for expressions of homophobia and hypocrisy," and struck a committee that would receive stories of harm done from the LGBTQ community within the church, draft a response, consider and implement new, concrete actions to combat homophobia and report back to General Assembly within

three years.

"I think General Assembly was challenged by the call to repentance and that the commissioners rose to that challenge with difficulty," said Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand, convener of the Committee on Church Doctrine, which, in conjunction with the Life and Mission Agency Committee, has been working on questions concerning the LGBTQ community for several years.

The five recommendations that were deferred would have, according to the PCC's website, "sent a new definition of marriage and a proposal that being in a same-sex civil marriage would not be a reason to bar any person from candidacy or ordination to congregations for study and report." Several reports and studies on sexuality, doctrine and what the Bible says about same-sex relationships were sent to congregations and presbyteries for further study.

"While tension was evident at points in the meeting," said the Moderator, Rev. Peter Bush, "for the most part the conversation was respectful even as people expressed their deeply held convictions."

Time to stand up

The Assembly was diligent in highlighting current issues such as refugees and environmental concerns; it welcomed guests from various cultures and faith

traditions and incorporated other languages into each session with prayers spoken in languages other than English.

Healing and reconciliation and justice issues involving Canada's First Nations were an important conversation. Dr. Cindy Blackstock, executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, spoke about discrimination of First Nations children in Canada, saying the government must be held accountable for its failure to provide the same basic rights and services that most other children in Canada receive. She implored the church to speak up and create change, rather than wait for the government to take the lead.

"Let's show the children that we love them enough to stand up for them," she said.

Her presentation "was a highlight," Rev. Peter Bush, moderator of the 143rd Assembly, told *Christian Courier*. "Her call for Canadians to respond to the needs of Indigenous children moved the Assembly, rooted as it was in the human value that it is the responsibility of adults to care for and advocate for children."

In response, the Moderator was instructed to write to the Prime Minister of Canada urging the government to comply with the Order of the Canadian Rights Tribunal regarding discrimination against Indigenous children by the government. The moderator was later told to write the Government of Canada to inquire about their plan to provide clean and potable water in Indigenous communities. Sessions and

presbyteries were also encouraged to write to their MPs. Currently, 86 Indigenous communities have no access to clean water.

A Native Ministries endowment fund was established and individuals, congregations and presbyteries were encouraged to support it. Ten percent of the assets of dissolved congregations will now go to the Fund (to a maximum of \$400,000).

International and ecumenical guests were also present, including Alia Hogben, Executive Director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women. Her focus is empowering Muslim women, and she spoke about what it is like to be a Muslim in Canada. Hogben reminded the Assembly of what it means to be Canadian – upholding a tradition of democracy, equality and religious freedom.

Lastly, the *Presbyterian Record* – the independent magazine that served Presbyterians in Canada for more than 140 years but closed its doors at the end of 2016 – gave a final report. The *Record* asked the church to help with potential financial obligations, up to \$15,000. There were rumblings among some commissioners that an official Moment of Appreciation should have been given for the *Record's* many years of service and commitment to the church. The Communications department encouraged church members to subscribe to the new free newspaper, the *Presbyterian Connection*. ✈

Amy MacLachlan is a freelance writer in Burlington, Ont.



MAUREN PEETS, THE PRES. CHURCH OF CANADA

KAREN HUTTENGA, THE BANNER

News

Beloved CC Editor retires for third time

Angela Reitsma Bick

Bert Witvoet is stepping down this month as Contributing Editor to *Christian Courier*, marking an end to his long and vigorous adventure with this publication. It is, in fact, the third time he's retiring, and if readers had a vote it wouldn't be the last.

Witvoet began as Editor of *CC* in 1982 and wrote more than 2,500 editorials over the next 17 years. Under his leadership, the paper transitioned from being printed in Dutch to English and from focusing on immigrant issues to Canadian ones. He updated the name of *Calvinist Contact* to *Christian Courier* because, in his words, "we are not called to be exclusive in our claims to be followers of Christ." The paper's goal was, then and now, to redeem culture, not complement or oppose it.

Witvoet first retired in 1999 but was called back into service nine years later when his successor Harry der Nederlanden battled cancer and went home to be with the Lord. In 2009, two young 20-somethings



CC editorial team, 2015.

became co-editors with Witvoet as their mentor. As one of those young editors, I have been grateful for Bert's wisdom, and wit, at every turn. He scaled back involvement when I took on a full editorial position in 2010. Since then, he has written monthly and continued to give advice on the content and direction of *CC*. Frankly, it's hard to imagine *CC* without Bert's words lighting up – and lightening – its pages.

Witvoet's unique writing style will be sorely missed, especially the way he can cover a serious topic without taking it too seriously. He'll make you laugh and then stop to think. Let me illustrate with a few excerpts from a piece he wrote in the 1990s called "Peppermint Christianity."

"Critics have called the peppermint a kind of 'opium' that permits the congregation to settle back and allow the most fiery sermon to wash over them without the least bit of damage. But that accusation has been dismissed by several theologians of high repute. The latter have pointed out that the Israelites of old used to tithe mint as part of their religious obligations, providing therewith the Old Testament foundation for the New Testament eating of mint. The Pharisees were, of course, condemned for relying on this tithing of mint to the exclusion of seeking judgment (not to be confused with 'judgemint'), mercy and faith. But peppermints have never been idolized that way in the Reformed tradition, say such doctrinal stalwarts as Berkhof and Bonhoeffer.



Bert Witvoet with CC reader Lini Grol. Fun fact: Grol renewed her CC subscription for another two years at the age of 101!

"[...] Actually, the truth about the peppermint lies somewhere between the status of opium and ecstasy; somewhere between a nasty habit and a third sacrament. Scientists have come to our aid in determining the value of eating a peppermint just before the preaching of the Word.

"According to a recent news item, William Dember, a professor of psychology at the University of Cincinnati, has conducted a study of the impact of the scent of peppermint on people required to do 'sustained vigilance tasks.' What did he find? That the mere smell of peppermint increased attentiveness and concentration by 15 percent! The smell of the lily of the valley has the same effect, but that lies beyond the scope of this article. Reformed people are not known for consuming quantities of lilies of the valley.

If the mere smell of peppermints can

increase concentration, think what the smell and taste can do! It appears, then, that Reformed people have been entirely correct in maintaining the custom of eating peppermints at the beginning of the sermon. Preaching is so important to Reformed people that they will gladly make themselves look foolish in the eyes of non-peppermint Christians by sliding a little white attention stimulant into their Word-hungry mouths."

See what I mean? Inimitable prose.

Readers, find past pieces by Bert at christiancourier.ca and drop him a line at his new email address: bwitvoet@cogeco.ca.

Bert, on behalf of the writers and staff at *CC*, let me convey our heartfelt thanks for your wonderful work in the field of Reformed journalism. Please stay in touch! Please pass the peppermints! ✂

Thanks from other CC folk

Bert embodies what I take to be the ethos of *Christian Courier*. He is inquisitive, earnest, light-hearted, good-humoured and highly invested in the marriage of depth to practicality. He's also a bit contrarian, not willing to take things at face value, and it's hard to know exactly what he's going to say about a given topic – which makes him interesting. Yet he remains firmly rooted – unshakably rooted – in the Reformed worldview that determines his practical (there's that word again), down-to-earth, and hands-on faith. Bert truly has one of the best engines in the business, and his long-running humility, wisdom and thoughtfulness will be missed.

–Mike Buma, Contributing Editor

There is much I appreciate about Bert: his passionate contemporaneity – an insistence that our callings, though rooted in a cherished Christian heritage, must be worked out in our present context. His fearless readiness to declare an opinion. Combine such conviction with a willingness to re-evaluate and you have a leader who models life-long Spirit-driven learning.

Bert's faith was the pivot for his consistently positive outlook. Editorials and articles, always honest, sometimes hard-hitting, invariably circled back to hope. From 1988: "This is still the age of Pentecost. The flame has not died down throughout all the centuries." From a 1992 Thanksgiving reflection: "Underlying our pain and lamentation can run a steady current of thanks and praise."

Bert's editorial longevity attests to his commitment to his Saviour and his community. We've been blessed by his perspicuity and dedication. Sincere thanks, Bert!

–Cathy Smith, former columnist and Features Editor

Kingdom citizen

Bert is a true Renaissance Man, or should I say Reformational Person. He is a story-teller with an interest in every corner of God's good creation, embodying that "faith integrated with life" Calvinism not just in word but in his lifestyle. He marches to the beat of his own drummer and will cross uncertain boundaries with relative nonchalance. I remember him joining the liturgical dance troupe for the Sunday worship at an ICS camp conference. Not too many males signed up for that! And he enjoyed every moment of swaying in front of the congregation. He knows how to stir the pot – not recklessly or cheaply, but just enough to stimulate good conversation and maybe one or two letters to the editor.

I remember once I was claiming all patriotism as nationalistic idolatry. He corrected me, saying we make vows of loyalty to our spouses. Why not to place and society, too? That's not idolatry. It's just commitment to the common good of our country and its people. Jingoism is the more serious issue.

I appreciate, too, that he was able to let go of the paper, come back to it, let go of it, and come back again. I suspect he was mostly a great help and not the hindrance that a former lead editor could be when returning to the place of their former leadership. His stroke did not deter him that much, I suspect. He doesn't get in the way, but he'll step up when needed.

I remember just after the death of a pastor named Peter Nicholai, Bert had a dream of that same Pastor Peter in the next world. He said he saw the good reverend, somewhat pensive in the new earth. He turned to look at Bert and said somewhat wistfully, "If I could do it again, I would do it differently. I would preach more about beauty." Good dreams. Bert thought it was a good word to us.

–Peter Schuurman, Contributing Editor

Columns

Fermented Faith

Brian Bork



I'm on the third floor of the Laurier library, and it's quiet as a tomb. That's a typical thing you could say about libraries, but it's not always true of this one.

During the academic year, the place hums with energy. Some of that is the excited hum of contemplation and discovery, but most of it is because this library feels more like a bustling café or what urban planners call a "third space." It's a public meeting ground for students, laptops cracked open, smart phones at the ready, Skyping, Snapchatting and – even still – talking with each other face to face, about the weekend, about midterms, about whatever.

But that's the academic year. Now it's mid-June, and the third floor of the library is almost all mine. There's still a quiet hum, but it's from the fluorescent lights, and apart from that the only intrusion is the occasional whispered interjection of the HVAC system through the ceiling vents.

I've been joking with friends lately that books are the luxury benefit of being clergy. People in other professions that require the length of training that the clergy does often have other luxuries: lawyers and investment bankers have expense accounts they use to plump their clients on old wines and steaks thick as phonebooks. They have lavish box seats at the Air Canada Centre. Some people get a company car.

That all sounds really nice, but I think clergy have it better. And for this particular member of the clergy, to have a book allowance *and* access to an academic library, well, that's the kind of decadence I can get behind.

And so through these long days I luxuriate in this library and its literary spoils. My shoulder is strained from lugging around Simon Sebag Montifiore's stout biography



Literary spoils

of Jerusalem. On the desk in my office is the philosopher Eleanor Stump's brief *The God of the Philosophers and the God of the Bible*. On the living room table at home is Jeffrey Vandermeer's *Borne*, a bio-tech dystopian novel about the relationship between Rachel, the protagonist, and a, uh, sentient, charismatic green lump (this one is weird, though I have a hunch if it might get theological before long). In the home office upstairs is St. Gregory of Nyssa's *The Life of Moses* (theology is ever ancient), and Sarah Coakley's *The New Asceticism: Sexuality, Gender and the Quest for God* (theology is ever new). I expect this bounty to increase as the summer carries on.

Reverie

I shouldn't imply that these summer months are just a lengthy, languorous idyll spent amongst the tomes. There's plenty of work to do. Conferences to attend, a Multi-Faith Resource Team retreat to convene, a Veritas Forum to plan, coffees (iced) with students, plans for the fall term. This afternoon I'll be gathering with students at the campus pub for Fermented Faith, our pub discussion group. The questions have been intense this year: "Brian, some of my friends have been reading Nietzsche and talking about something called 'happy nihilism.' Can we talk?" "Brian, I've been reading Plotinus for a philosophy class, and now I'm wondering if I actually believe in Jesus, or just God as the ground of being." You know, the sorts of questions perfectly suited for an early 20s crisis of faith. When those questions come my way, I'm grateful for the library.

And yet, something in me resists making it all about practicality, as if the only justification for spending a day in the library is that it has some obviously useful, pragmatic application. The quiet reverie I've been experiencing here on the third floor hints at a deeper, simpler pleasure, one we might struggle to measure in a world where everything is quantified and held up to some utilitarian standard of productivity. So here's the more radical suggestion I've been playing with on this quiet morning: that it's there for the taking, this extraordinary luxury, this extravagance of what has been said and thought and written. None of it is necessary; none of it has to be. It is sheer gift, and we, of all the creatures, have been given the ability to receive it. And maybe the only needful thing is to give thanks to the giver. ✂

Brian Bork is CC's Review Editor and a CRC chaplain at the University of Waterloo and Sir Wilfrid Laurier University.



Intangible Things

Heidi Vander Slikke



As a child I constantly got into trouble for daydreaming, especially in school. Somehow imagining far-away places, picturing myself in grand adventures, or dreaming of what I would someday become as an adult were all far more appealing than conquering lists of spelling words or math questions. The problem reached new heights in Grade 7, when I happened to be seated next to the window. I couldn't help but drift away into my private world, only to be called back into reality by the teacher. Much to my embarrassment and the amusement of my peers, she was fond of saying, "Earth to Heidi. Come in Heidi. Where are you?"

Eventually she moved me to a desk near the chalkboard and away from any view of the outdoors. I'm not sure it helped much. Imagination can't be confined by interior walls. But I mastered the art of looking as if I were paying attention, even when I was off on some mental fieldtrip. Around that same age I recall having vivid, sometimes terrifying dreams at night, as well as a few incidents of sleepwalking. It seems all of this is common for early adolescence.

Some psychologists suggest that the average person spends 47 percent of the day on "mind wandering." It's a normal and necessary part of processing the stream of information, stimuli and experiences of life. Daydreaming was once frowned upon as laziness and the inability to focus, but modern researchers affirm that in moderation it's actually beneficial for creativity and problem solving.

At times in my life, especially as a young mother, I didn't have much downtime. Family life, farming, church and school commitments kept me running morning until night with few opportunities to actually assimilate what was going on. Non-stop activity sapped my strength. Random thoughts would pile up like unopened mail, eventually causing a sense of restlessness and anxiety. The remedy? Time on my own – even on some task like housework or lawn cutting – as long as I could mentally detach myself from the work and think about other things – important things, detailed things or just plain silly things.

Daydream believer

Heavenly days

These days I don't daydream like I used to. That's considered normal, too, for older adults. But I spend a fair amount of my waking thoughts on reflecting, reminiscing or ruminating. Maybe that's why I love summer. It lends itself to contemplation. Who can resist taking in a sunset or going for a walk on a warm evening? Nothing fills up my senses like the sight of dew glistening on the lawn, the sound of birds greeting a new day or the scent of freshly cut hay. When the heat of the summer sun precludes ambition, productivity yields to thoughtfulness and relaxation. Laziness itself becomes a legitimate vocation.

Now I'm daydreaming about these halcyon days ahead of me. What are my plans for July and August? I will watch the sun rise and set as often as possible, ride my bicycle and go swimming, play games on the lawn with my grandchildren, eat ice cream, watch fireworks and wander through old car shows, gaze up at the starry sky and marvel at the full moon, cover as many miles as I can on my motorbike. It's a fantasy to-do-list that I hope becomes reality.

Amid these echoes of Eden I will consider the giver of all good and perfect gifts and thank him for memory and imagination, seasons of work and rest. Surely daydreaming is part of what it means to be created in the image of God. What else could this beauty that surrounds us be, other than the product of divine musings? With every detail meticulously planned and flawlessly completed, he himself reflected at the end of each day, saying "It is good." Then came the seventh day – a Sabbath to the Lord our God.

It's when I'm "disconnected" from the present reality that I'm most aware of the presence of eternal truth. It may be an altered state of consciousness, but I dare say it's an important one.

My goals are to savour this summer, indulge in my daydreams and praise the Lord who designed them both. Sounds like time well spent to me. ✂

Heidi Vanderslikke is a freelance writer who lives with her husband on a farm in Mapleton Township, Ont.

Reviews

Some great summer reads for children

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Duck on a Tractor by Rod Dreher, David Shannon (The Blue Sky Press, 2016. Ages 4-8)

On the farm, inquisitive and adventurous Duck sometimes got wild ideas. He had ridden a bike, so why not drive the tractor? So, Duck does. At his prompting, all the animals, one by one, jump on board. Soon they hurtle through town past the diner to the amazement of all the customers. One of them, Farmer O'Dell, notices that it's his tractor transporting the barnyard crew, so he gives chase and the other customers follow.

When the tractor turns a corner and runs out of gas, the animals leap off and run back to the barnyard. A few minutes later, Farmer O'Dell and the others turn the corner and discover the stranded tractor. They all agree that they were seeing things – except for a child with a camera who knows better.

Comical, energetic illustrations of people and animals combined with amusing commentary on the animals' thoughts are sure to make this book a delightful and entertaining experience for young children.

The Artist and Me by Shane Peacock. Illustrated by Sophie Casson (Owlkids Books, 2016. Ages 5-9)

In this fictional picture book, an old man reflects on his life as a child in 1888 Arles in southern France when he and other children taunted and bullied a man with wild red hair who painted vivid canvases of flowers, streets and starry skies. Echoing the taunts of adults, the children tormented Vincent van Gogh, spreading ugliness with every hateful word and act.

Once when the boy was alone and unobserved, he had a chance to look at one of van Gogh's painting and felt a sense of curiosity and wonder. But still he joined

the public mockery of the artist who saw his mission as the pursuit of truth.

One day when the boy chased a rabbit into a wheat field, he stumbled unnoticed upon van Gogh at his easel. The boy's eyes were opened and "for an instant the world was bigger and brighter than it had ever been." When van Gogh turned and saw the boy, he offered him the painting. But, terrified, the boy fled.

Years later, the boy, now an old man, visits a Paris museum with his grandson and sees the painting – the one he had refused – being displayed. He sadly reflects on the role he played in van Gogh's suffering.

Brightly-coloured illustrations reminiscent of van Gogh's artwork offset the somber, yet hopeful message of *The Artist and Me* – namely, that van Gogh pursued his calling and mission as an artist no matter the obstacles he faced and that bullying is "a waste of time" when a person could be pursuing his or her own mission and calling.

Parachute by Danny Parker. Illustrated by Matt Ottley (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2016. Ages 4-8)

Young Toby always wears a parachute because it makes him feel safe when he climbs out of bed or off a stool, rides a bike, swings and slides on the playground equipment, or faces situations that might prove to be hazardous. From Toby's perspective, the world can be a dangerous place.

One day, Toby's cat, Henry, climbs a rope ladder to a tree house. Toby, afraid, yet summoning his courage, climbs the ladder. He places Henry in the parachute and the cat floats safely to the ground. Now, still way up in the tree house, Toby is alone and scared. But he takes one step, then another, and makes his way down the ladder.

Changed by his act of bravery, Toby

needs his parachute less and less, till one day he leaves it behind.

Young children will be able to relate to Toby's fears and triumphs in this simple tale enhanced by whimsical, vivid illustrations.

Mr. McGinty's Monarchs by Linda Vander Heyden. Illustrated by Eileen Ryan Ewen (Sleeping Bear Press, 2016. Ages 6-9)

When Mr. McGinty goes for walks with his dog, Sophie, he loves to watch the monarch butterflies. One day, he's dismayed when he sees that the milkweed plants on which the monarch butterflies had been laying their eggs had been mown down. He examines the stems and sees monarch caterpillars clinging to them.

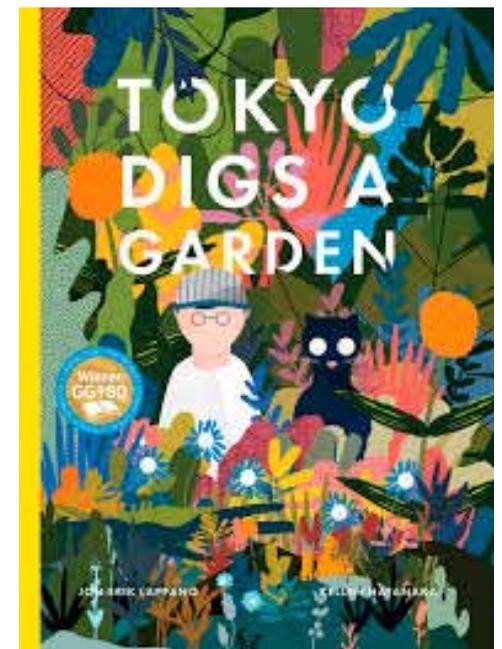
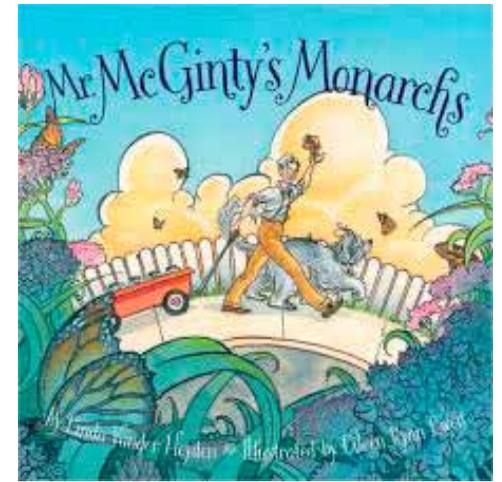
Mr. McGinty and Sophie set out on a "monarch mission." While Sophie watches the old man collect caterpillars, he tells her about monarch butterflies. Back at home, he places the caterpillars and all that they need to survive in numerous aquariums that he has purchased. Soon he is overwhelmed with the workload. But he comes up with an innovative idea and enlists the help of children at a local school.

When the monarchs have matured and are strong enough to fly, Mr. McGinty and the children release them into the early autumn sky.

Mr. McGinty's Monarchs teaches children about the life cycle of monarch butterflies, while at the same time introducing them to (fictional) children and adults who try to ensure their viability.

Tokyo Digs a Garden by Jon Erik Lappano. Illustrated by Kellen Hatanaka (Groundwood Books, 2016. Ages 3-7)

Tokyo lives in a small house wedged between a city's skyscrapers. His grandfather, who lives with Tokyo and his



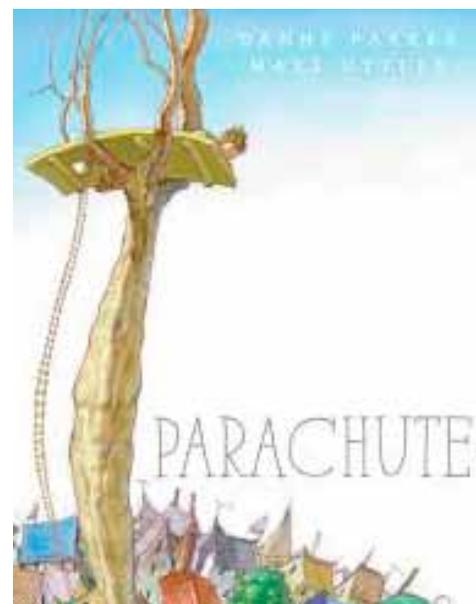
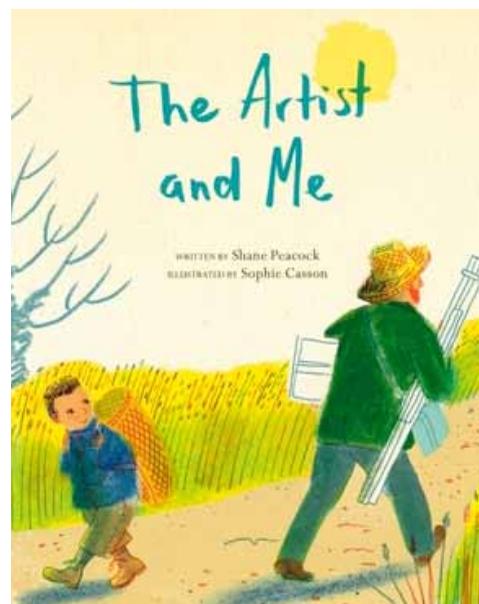
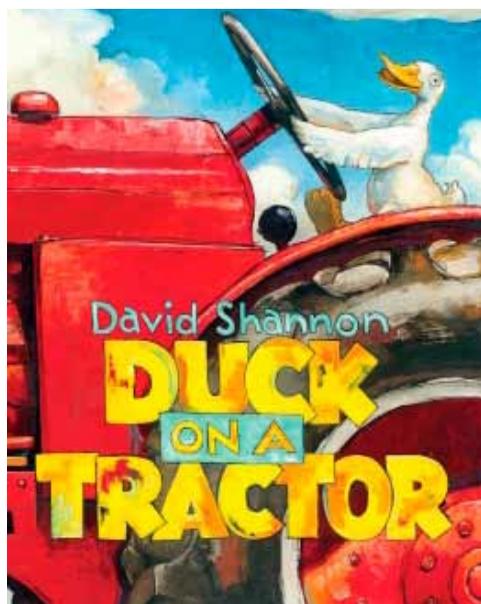
parents, has lived in the house since he was a child. At that time, no city existed, only forests, meadows, streams and wild animals.

One spring day, an old woman bikes down the city street pulling an old cart filled with dirt. She stops and hands Tokyo three seeds, then tells him to plant them. She promises that they will grow into whatever he wishes.

Tokyo does just that. And the results are both magical and majestic! Within days, the city is a garden where trees, streams, flowers and wild creatures make their home among businesses and buildings.

When Grandfather worries that the garden is much too big, Tokyo answers wisely, "I think that we will just have to get used to it."

Tokyo Digs a Garden playfully and imaginatively invites children to appreciate the environment and, perhaps, to think of ways they can take care of it.



Sonya VanderVeen Feddema is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ont.

Features



#ShesNotForSale: Shining a light on human trafficking

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema
An interview with Stephanie Jackson

On March 28, 2017, Springvale Church in Stouffville, Ontario, hosted #ShesNotForSale: a Human Trafficking Educational and Call to Action Event. 300 people from the greater York Region area attended. *Christian Courier* interviewed Stephanie Jackson, a member of Springvale Church and an organizer of the conference, to learn more.

Christian Courier: *How did God lead you and your church community to host this event?*

Stephanie Jackson: This event is part two of last year's initiative. In 2016, we focused on creating awareness that human trafficking is an issue in the York Region. It's not just an "over there" problem; it affects developed areas like Canada, Ontario, and our own backyard. Just because we live in a fairly "safe" environment, we can't turn a blind eye to this heinous and subversive issue. Especially as the church! It's an area of darkness that we felt really needed to be illuminated so justice could be done.

We, the women's ministry of Springvale, became increasingly aware of human trafficking incidents, especially those that included sexual exploitation of young girls who were the ages of our daughters and youth group girls. Our desire was to help the community, parents, grandparents, youth leaders and educators to become aware of the need for more education, prevention and action. We feel God calling us to also be a redemptive presence for those who have endured sexual exploitation – that they would know we are available to offer support and love.

As you mentioned, human trafficking can mistakenly be perceived as a

problem prevalent only in other parts of the world and not here in Canada. How widespread is human trafficking in the York Region and in the rest of Canada?

Human trafficking is an issue everywhere, even in developed and industrialized nations. All you need to do is check the internet for news stories regarding human trafficking and sexual exploitation to see the impact it has on humanity. Ninety-four percent of the cases are local, reported by RCMP in February 2016. That's scary! Also, according to research initiatives on the incidence of human trafficking in the province, Ontarians are in dire need of awareness. Here are some of the findings: 63 percent of victims trafficked in Ontario are Canadian citizens; 90 percent are female; 63 percent are between the ages of 15-24; approximately 34 percent entered exploitative trafficking via boyfriends acting as pimps; and 96 percent of victims experienced multiple forms of violence.

What circumstances lead people to become vulnerable to being trafficked for labor and sex?

Poverty still remains the biggest factor regarding human trafficking, as well as broken and dysfunctional homes where children feel abandoned and are looking to be loved and valued. When you are a 12-17 year old and you are looking to feel wanted, appreciated, known and loved (outside your family or even at all), you are vulnerable for the tactics and persuasion of a trafficker (pimp).

The perpetrator knows how to prey on this demographic. It's almost too easy to convince a young girl who hasn't determined her own self worth that she is beautiful, attractive, desired and wanted. This is the tactic of 20-something-year-old pimps. They target the girl(s), follow her patterns/habits, and know which coffee

shops, schools and malls she frequents. The pimp will accidentally "bump into" her at a common hang out and start the conversation, perhaps even offer to pay for her coffee. Then he'll strategically bump into her again at the mall, maybe this time inviting her and her friends to a party.

Once trust is established and they are "dating," he proceeds to ask her to do this "one favour, this one time" and brings her to a hotel where a "john" is waiting. Once in "the game," the trafficker will diminish the girl's worth by telling her she deserves this treatment, it's her fault, and lay the blame on her. He will threaten to expose her, which causes shame. Also, he'll get her addicted to drugs. He might even threaten her life, as well as her family's.

Have you seen people helped because of your efforts?

Not directly, but certainly indirectly. We have had teams go out on prayer walks with Rahab Ministries (rahab-ministries.org). We have been notified by agencies of girls who have been rescued who have required prayer while waiting to give their testimony in court. Also, we provide funds for partner organizations we support so they can do their work. We have also heard from a parent who attended the event with her daughter that, shortly after, her daughter's friend was approached by men who were aggressively pursuing to capture her. Because she had just attended #ShesNotForSale, she recognized what was happening. The friend was informed and was able to flee immediately.

What influence has this social justice initiative had on you personally and on your church community?

For me personally, it has utterly broken my heart. I am deeply saddened that human lives, especially the vulnerable (women

and children), can be taken for granted and used as commodities. It is despicable that a girl represents nothing more than approximately \$125,000 to a pimp. That her life and innocence can be cut short and violated so severely because of sexual sin, lust and greed! Incomprehensible. This must be abolished. Human trafficking and sexual exploitation are a severe distortion and abomination of God's intention and design for our lives. He created us from love and to be loving. Clearly, this disregard for humanity goes against this very essence.

Springvale Church is passionate about being a light in a dark world. We strive to be a redemptive presence in the community. It's our intention to let those who are vulnerable or who feel unworthy come and feel welcomed and loved without judgement.

What advice would you give to churches or other groups of people who are interested in hosting an event such as yours?

We are very open and willing to meet with churches, organizations and schools and show them how to bring the #ShesNotForSale event to their community. Please contact us through shesnotforsale.com or women@springvale.org. ➤



Sonya VanderVeen Feddema is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ont.



Stephanie Jackson attends Springvale Church in Stouffville, Ontario and is a life coach who specializes in helping women and youth discover their identity and purpose in life. As well, she is a media representative for a Christian radio station in central Ontario.

Features

Christian mentoring: Embodying the triune God

Heather van Woerden

“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.” Jn. 14:26

Christians look to the triune God as their source of wisdom and knowledge: for love, comfort and guidance. The triune God is our Father, Leader and Mentor who helps us model our walk on that of our Lord Jesus Christ. In their mercy, the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit to guide us in our endeavours to “be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love. . .” (Eph. 5:1-2).

The book of Ephesians shows Paul exemplifying the Christian role of mentor, teacher and guide. He models the actions of Jesus Christ – quoting Scripture, praying, worshipping God, teaching and living in the Spirit; and so he reaches out to mentor, in this particular case, the church in Ephesus. It has been suggested that his letter was written to a number of different communities, parts of the letter being added or taken away, as appropriate for each community. This only enforces the role of mentor, leader guide, as defined by Jesus Christ, when he sent the Spirit to the eleven disciples and ordered them to go and make disciples of all the nations (Matt. 28:19).

Christ Jesus came, died and rose again. His death on the cross created the cornerstone of the Christian faith. His resurrection enabled him to send the Spirit to the apostles, such as Paul, to whom “. . . this grace was given. . . to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God. . .” (Eph. 3:8-9). Through the Spirit’s indwelling of each apostle, and through its bestowing of the special gift of teaching, the apostles were able to spread out beyond Jerusalem, to share the Good News.

Dr. James M. Houston says, in his book *The Mentored Life: From Individualism to Personhood*, that the Father and Son blessed Paul with a particular gift of the Spirit, which enabled him to see the Law in an entirely different way, in the light of Christ. This was a gift that would enable him to preach among people whom he had formerly persecuted. God had taken the least likely of individuals and had shown his glory in him “. . . who once [was] far off [and has] been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13). This is indeed an answer to the Lord’s prayer, in which he says, “I have made you [God] known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them” (Houston, 161). And thus, Christian mentorship was born.

Fellow friends of God

Christian mentors abound for the followers of Christ. Houston describes them as “mentored by faith in the personal character of the triune God, by his Word, and by prayer, for the ultimate purpose of worship.” In addition, the triune God works through the Spirit, who is poured out on its children. They, subsequently, share the knowledge gained through the Spirit, with their fellow “friends of God.”

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul’s words are not of chastisement or legalism

go out and mentor their fellow Christians by “lead[ing] a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3). Houston states that “unlike secular mentors, we need to build our relationships on the Rock – God’s own nature and his relationships with humans.” The church of God is a family. Jesus Christ refers to himself as the groom and the church as his bride. Christians are known as God’s children and we refer to him as Father, and to our fellow Christians as our brothers and sisters. God is not just one essence either but an incomprehensible “three-in-one.”

socially to guard and guide us on our own journey of faith.” Eugene Peterson points out in *Working the Angles* that we need to be careful, when mentoring, to not take on the role of the Spirit. It is not for us to be the voice of the Spirit in someone else’s life. It is not for us to do the work for the one we are mentoring. Instead, we are to sit in “prayerful companionship, as they work it out.” This is precisely what Paul did with the church in Ephesus. While he was physically distant from them, his spirit accompanied his letter which urged them in a loving, prayerful way to “live as children of light – for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true” (Eph. 5:8-9).

If, by walking in the Spirit, we will be-



but are words of love, a love that is familiar to us who know the love of God, the Son and the Holy Spirit and are “marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward the redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13-14). Although Paul is one of the Ephesians’ mentors, in whom the Spirit is at work, Paul makes it clear that it is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for the Ephesians’ education in the Lord. Paul affirms that the gift of the Spirit has also been given to the Ephesians, which will enable *them* to be imitators of God, as beloved children and to walk in love, as Christ loved them (Eph. 5:1).

As members of the Body of Christ, empowered by Paul’s witnessing and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Ephesians are spiritually empowered in their own walk with God, and must now also

Hearing his voice

As Christians, we are called to follow Jesus Christ, accompanied by the Holy Spirit. In him, we hope to read and see the Word of God. We hope to hear the Spirit in the Scriptures. We hope to hear the Spirit in fellow Christian mentors’ words and guidance, and so “be comforted and consoled” as author Henri Nouwen says in his book *In the Name of Jesus*. As Christian spiritual directors or Christian mentors, we need to help others hear that voice of the Trinity, who is speaking to *them* out of *their* life. We need to show them that through the Holy Spirit, they can and must learn to be the person God has called them to be. Houston puts it like this: “Every saint of God is a pattern, but no saint is the pattern. That is why we all need personal attention in discipleship and mentoring to guide us to ‘build our identity’ righteously and

have in a righteous manner, it is clear that we need to take time to become quiet and listen to what the Spirit is telling us to do. How would Jesus respond in this type of situation? What plan does God have for me here? What am I being taught? And what is God trying to tell the people I am working with? ➤



Heather van Woerden is currently a student at Carey Theological College, working on her MA in Spiritual Vocation. She is the co-author (along with her young son, Salvador) of *Salvador’s Questions, a picture book about the Christian view of heaven and dying*. Her book is available at lulu.com. She also writes a *Spiritual Musings* blog at lightedpathsites.com.

Features

'Meternity' leave and our desperate need for Sabbath

Erica Schemper

When Meghann Foye's *New York Post* essay appeared last [summer], she struck book-publicity gold: a controversy gone viral surrounding the premise of her new novel, *Meternity*. In the book, a driven, thirtysomething journalist fakes a pregnancy in order to get a little time for personal reflection – a “meternity” leave. For the *Post*, Foye expanded on her belief in “a sabbatical-like break that allows women and, to a lesser degree, men to shift their focus to the part of their lives that doesn't revolve around their jobs.”

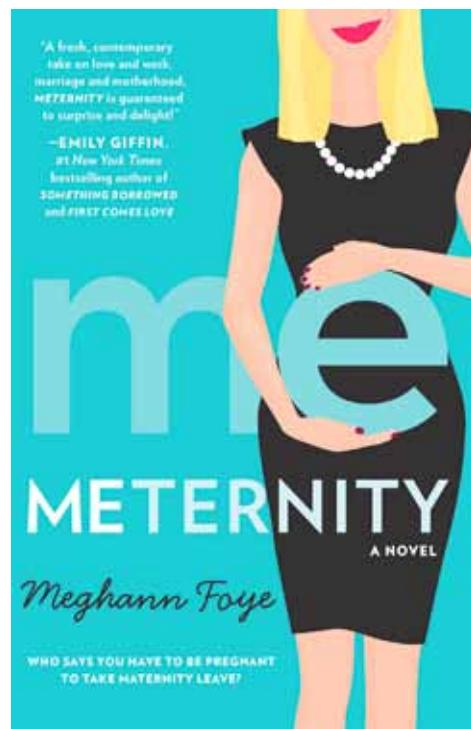
The problem here – especially for those of us who have taken an actual maternity leave – is the idea that our leave time was a break that allowed us the attention and energy to focus on anything but wiping up poop and spit-up; leaking milk or formula all over our furniture; and responding to the 24-hour needs of a small person who wakes up and wails every few hours. Not to mention the physical and medical recovery from birth. As one of my working-mom friends pointed out, after delivering an infant you may have the sensation that “my lady parts got hit by a truck.”

But amidst the frustrating (and self-defeating) debate between working women who have children and those who do not, I suspect this incident has revealed a deeper truth about the current state of work in North America: we are all tired. If those of us with privilege similar to Foye (a white woman with a college education and an established professional career) find ourselves fatigued by our work and questioning the direction of our lives, imagine the exhaustion of those at the bottom of the growing gap between rich and poor, trying to get by in a society where wages and benefits have failed to keep up with inflation.

We are all tired

When Foye suggested that what she wants is “sabbatical-like,” another clergyperson friend of mine noted that there's no “like” about it. It is, indeed, a sabbatical: a time for rest and reflection on what you've been doing and where you'd like to go. The sabbatical is an incredible employment perk still offered to some professionals (academics, ministers and even some in the corporate workplace). And it's an idea whose genesis comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

It's a mistake to talk about Sabbath with an exclusive emphasis on the spiritual and on the idea that it's a mandate only for the religiously observant. God initiates the concept at the very beginning of creation.



The collection of Sabbath and sabbatical-related regulations in Hebrew Law include provision not only for spiritual rest, but also for physical rest for people, animals and even agricultural fields, suggesting that the practice of Sabbath is meant to link spiritual and physical and to allow the entire creation to rest and recuperate.

If, as Christians, we are working to bring the whole creation, and not just our own lives, back to God's intentions, we need to be attentive to an entire society that is groaning for rest. Of course we should consider how we are making ourselves busy, overworked and exhausted. But we also need to think about how we make it difficult for others to rest. If we employ others, do we do so at a fair wage and in a way that allows our employees recuperation time? Do we demand and use services that take advantage of workers? Do we support political policies that are destroying just gains of the labor movement, such as the eight-hour work day? As the nature of work in our society changes, are we seeking new ways of working that allow everyone to work and live and rest with dignity?

Jesus did, after all, call his disciples away from their work to rest and reflect. If they took a break, surely so can we. ➤



Erica Schemper is a pastor, mother (current emphasis on the mother part) and displaced Chicagoan living in the San Francisco Bay area. She blogs at Don't flay the sheep. Both articles on this page originally appeared at thinkchristian.com.

A new Noah's ark? How about a renewed Garden of Eden



Rolf Bouma

Amid an apocalyptic July [in 2016], in which terrible events evoked the book of Revelation, it was comforting to see the book of Genesis figure in the news on at least two occasions. On July 7, the Ark Encounter in Williamstown, Ky., opened to the public. And on July 17, the Iraqi marshlands, which lie at the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers and are thought by many scholars to be the location of origin for the Garden of Eden, received designation as a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

It's a safe bet that more people heard about Ark Encounter, not least because it involved a face-to-face encounter between Ken Ham and Bill Nye, “the Science Guy.” The \$102-million project is designed to complement the Creation Museum just 40 miles down the road. The attraction stokes the visual senses with a stunningly gargantuan wooden ark meant to persuade the public that Genesis 6 through 9 is a literal story befitting an awesome God who hates evil and rewards the righteous. An ark holding every type of animal is more than possible – we've built one! If only we could float it and prove its flood-worthiness!

Not quite so stunning, at least in visual terms, are the Iraqi marshlands. Originally extending some 3,500 square miles, the marshlands are an ecological oasis in the arid geography of the Middle East. Their fertility and productivity for native plants, fishes and migratory birds speak eloquently of days three and five of the creation story. Humans don't do badly there either.

These marshlands possess their own creation-fall-redemption-restoration narrative. For millennia they served as a cornucopia at the juncture between water and land. But like most wetlands, their productivity belies their fragility. It proves dismayingly easy to disrupt

the water supply and at various times throughout history conquerors and despots have diverted water. In the 1990s, facing rebellion, Saddam Hussein drained the marshes, reducing their size to a mere 290 square miles. Now, after Hussein's fall and the breaching of dams by local authorities, approximately 40 percent of the marshlands have been restored.

Protect habitats instead

Christian sensibilities frequently turn cultural conventions on their heads, so let me suggest that the UNESCO designation of the marshlands of Iraq is a much more Biblically profound act than that of building a replica ark in northern Kentucky. If humanity's two original callings were to name the animals and to serve/keep the garden, then protecting marshlands and their myriad species is a gloriously human vocation.

As chronicled in the 2015 documentary *The Messenger*, songbirds are under survival pressure from habitat loss, especially on their migratory routes. Marshlands are key stopping points for birds that fly thousands of miles in their peregrinations. (A proper pun if there ever was one!) I wonder: of the 130 exhibits in the Ark Encounter, is there one that encourages visitors to actively support organizations such as A Rocha International (Christian) or the World Wildlife Fund (secular) in their efforts to save species and protect habitat? If the theological point of the flood narrative is to highlight God's commitment to creation, then I'd suggest we'd be serving him more faithfully by directing \$102 million to places such as those. ➤



Dr. Rolf Bouma is the Pastor for Academic Ministries at the Campus Chapel and directs the Center for Faith & Scholarship, a Christian study center, at the University of Michigan.

Columns

Joy & Grace

Sara Pot



There are times when Rachel and Janneke are sitting in their wheelchairs, and I am standing between them, I am asked what the girls understand. Sometimes I want to say, "Ask the girls." The reference to them in third person while they are present amuses and saddens me, yet I understand. How do you address my girls, particularly if they don't have direct eye gaze? As we walk through the hospital or the mall, I see a common reaction from adults – the averted eyes and pinched smile. In contrast, children typically have the stare that lasts well beyond us passing each other, feet stumbling forward while head is turned backward. The adult or child that holds my eyes or my daughters' eyes and smiles broadly is often someone pushing or using a wheelchair.

Last year, I attached a GoPro camera to Rachel's headrest for one morning. A GoPro is a small camera that attaches easily to your body or your equipment; it is often used by thrill-seekers and outdoor sports enthusiasts. Admittedly, Rachel was only headed down the street to school, but I was curious to see what she saw. I attached the camera alongside her headrest, so the angle would be the same as her eye gaze.

To be seen

It was a fun experiment. I was able to watch the reactions of her classmates and staff, as she wheeled up and into the school. I loved seeing the eye contact and smiles of her friends, and it was interesting to watch the perspective from that angle.

I had to laugh at the number of stomach shots. I mean that in the kindest way, but the camera angle reminded me of how often Rachel is given the belly button before the eyes when it comes to adults.

While acknowledging that for some children and in some cultures, eye gaze is intimidating or disrespectful, my own children do benefit from direct eye gaze. In fact, when Rachel is wheeled into her Grade 5 classroom, we wait for Rachel to meet her teacher's eye. Rachel often smiles when her eyes connect with others, so we try to support this experience by encouraging people to meet her face-to-face. Janneke has yet to develop a strong connection with her eyes, but the skill is slowly emerging.

To be acknowledged

Recently, I followed Rachel and her Grade 5 class to Fort George, a historic military structure from the War of 1812, located in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.

In arranging the class trip ahead of time, our school explained one student named Rachel would be attending in a wheelchair. When we arrived, we were given a quick

The eyes have it

introduction by the costumed staff and sent off to find our tour guide. As with many class trips and outings with Rachel, I automatically step into the role of translator, so I geared up, along with her EA, to help facilitate any of the interactions with the Fort George staff.

Within a few moments of meeting our young tour guide, I was surprised to see him address Rachel, both with eye gaze and name. Throughout our morning, he was intentional in choosing paths that would accommodate her chair, and as his eyes scanned all the faces, he also looked at Rachel. When it came time to assemble on bleachers for a weapons demonstration, he



told Rachel (not her mom or her EA) where she'd be sitting. He also considered ahead of time how certain spaces and doorways might work (or not work) for the wheelchair.

This was a powerful experience for me, and it was also noticed by the parents who came along as chaperones.

To belong

Not everyone wants to start a conversation with a stranger, yet the feeling of being seen and acknowledged lends itself to a glimpse of belonging. Connecting with someone, whether through eye gaze or head space, shows dignity and authentic engagement. In short, to be seen and acknowledged is empowering. According to my nonverbal daughters, meaningful eye gaze speaks volumes.

When the eyes say one thing and the tongue another, a practiced man relies on the language of the first.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (*Conduct of Life*)



Sara Pot lives in St. Catharines, Ont. with her handsome husband, four daughters and their golden doodle, Luna.

**Down Trouble Street**

Sandy Mayle

I'm whittling, whistling,
tapping happy feet,
kicking an old can
down Trouble Street,
lolling, loafing,
driving doubt berserk;
I'm giving God time
to work.

I've been to Throne;
my help is on the way,
so I'll just let this hammock
swing and sway;
'cause worry is one task
I'm going to shirk –
I'm giving God time
to work. >



Sandy Mayle is a freelance writer who lives with her husband, Dave, in Erie, Pa.



Sonya Oomen lives and works in Terrace, B.C. Most of her photos are taken while she is at work of the interesting things she sees along the way.



Columns

Principalities
& Powers

David Koyzis



When I began teaching 30 years ago, I had not anticipated how much I would grow to love the young people in my classes. At Notre Dame during my graduate student

years, I had been just another teaching assistant, and thus one more obstacle for the ambitious undergraduates to get past on their way to (for most of them, it seemed) law school. All of that changed when I arrived at what was still called Redeemer College in the autumn of 1987.

In the first course I taught, an introductory political science course, I made a number of missteps – nothing serious, just the ordinary kind that come with inexperience. Nevertheless, at the end of the term, when I read the student evaluations, quite a number of them generously offered this assessment: “Has potential to become an excellent professor.” This could have become a deflating experience, but instead I took heart from their words, and it became an incentive for me to improve my performance in the classroom.

The early years were, of course, filled with the normal stresses of multiple preparations of courses from the ground up. Many a beginning teacher reports that her ambition is simply to keep up with the students from day to day, and that was my

To my students: A reluctant farewell

experience as well. Nevertheless, despite all the busyness, I made time outside the classroom to be with my students and to converse with them. In the process I found that I was developing a deep love for them which lasted for three decades.

Mutual affection

Two episodes stand out for me.

Not long into my teaching career, I was sitting at a cafeteria table with several of my students. One young lady repeated to me something I had said in class as though it were gospel truth, and I was startled and somewhat alarmed at the influence I was already having on her. That night I was unable to sleep, as the words of James 3 echoed through my head: “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness.” I quickly recovered, of course, but I was beginning to comprehend the awesome responsibility that teachers carry for communicating truth to the young people in their care.

The second episode occurred after I was married and shortly after our daughter was born three months premature. Theresa had been in two successive hospitals for more than 10 weeks after her early birth. Still less than five pounds when she went home with us, she was released from hospital on the very day that Ontario’s



Golden Horseshoe was hit by a snowstorm of historic proportions. (Remember when Toronto’s mayor called on federal troops to help dig his city out?) Not knowing what to do, I phoned one of my students on campus, and he brought some of his friends over to our house. They freed our driveway in little time, and we were able to get to St. Joseph’s Hospital on schedule to bring Theresa home. This young man, now in his forties, is still a close friend.

To all of you whom I was privileged to teach over the decades, know that you have my undying affection and loyalty. I have sought above all to show you that the belief that our world belongs, not to ourselves, but to the God who has created and redeemed us has huge implications for political life and for the animating visions underpinning

it. I hope I have communicated to you a hunger for justice, especially for the most vulnerable in our society as well as for the communities that support them. My greatest prayer for you is that you will continue to be agents of God’s kingdom in this world for whom Christ died.

In the meantime, although I am unwillingly leaving my current students behind, I fully intend to maintain the friendships I have formed over the years with so many of you. Do stay in touch! ✂

After 30 years of service at Redeemer University College, David Koyzis’ (dkoyzis@gmail.com) position was terminated due to financial and curricular restructuring. He is currently seeking employment elsewhere and asks for readers’ prayers in the meantime.

Word(s) & Wonder

Roland De Vries



I thought my 12-year-old son would find it both creepy and cool, but it turns out he just finds it weird and kind of gross. In response to my question, he mimes

the action of taking a man’s heart out the chest cavity and holds it up in the air with a look of confused disgust on his face. His expression asks, simply: “Why? Why would you do that?!”

I’ve become something of a regular at St. Joseph’s Oratory in Montreal since our son (see above!) sings in Les Petits Chanteurs du Mont-Royal. This is the boys’ choir that accompanies Mass each Sunday morning at the Oratory, and his particular group sings every other weekend. On the days that I serve as a *parent-accompagnateur* I can’t help but pass by the small shrine that holds the heart of Frère André (Brother Andrew) – the shrine is just outside the choir room door.

Oh, and here’s the question I asked Reuben: “What do you think of that heart?”

For most of my life I would probably have agreed with my son’s sentiment of confused disgust, and the truth is that it still

The heart of the matter

makes me just a little queasy. Yet over past months I’ve also started to reconsider. Or more accurately, perhaps, I have found my mind and imagination brought ‘round to something approaching appreciation for that formaldehyde-immersed heart.

Alfred Bessette came from a working-class family in Montreal and as a young man held a succession of unskilled jobs due to poor health and limited education. Eventually he ended up as a doorkeeper at Collège Notre Dame, later becoming also a messenger and laundry worker there. He took his vows as a lay member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross in 1874, at the age of 28, and became known as Frère André from that day. He recently came to greater fame with his canonization in 2010 – he is now Saint André de Montréal.

His sainthood within the Roman Catholic Church owes to the care he gave to the sick, the listening ear he offered those who shared their grief with him, and the prayers he offered for them, commending them to Saint Joseph, the father of Jesus. Stories of his healing prayers began to proliferate and spread, and the visits to Frère André

increased dramatically. Skipping forward, it was Frère André who first built a small chapel in honour of St. Joseph on the side of Mount Royal, a chapel that would eventually (only after the death of Frère André) become the massive Oratory it is today.

The living Word

So how does someone raised solidly in the Reformed tradition come ‘round to an appreciation for that formaldehyde-immersed heart? Am I suggesting a recovery of relics in our churches? Am I advocating the veneration of Frère André? Or perhaps prayers to St. Joseph? Well, I don’t think so.

Rather, I think I am coming ‘round to a deeper appreciation for the ways that God encounters and blesses us through the creation itself – through the stuff of the world. By the living Word, God has brought all things into being. By the living Word, all things are held together, or sustained. It seems like it shouldn’t need saying, but somehow it does: Through prairies, rain, wine, bread, bodies, breath God meets us and blesses us and reveals himself to us. And by extension, how hard is it to imagine that through a heart, also, God might bless and meet us?

Not because that heart is somehow a magical or certain conduit to God. Not



because Jesus has left something undone that this heart can accomplish. But because that heart is a heart that pumped oxygenated blood to the mind and body and hands of a man who clearly knew what it is to love and to show compassion and to serve the God who has embraced us in Jesus Christ. That heart puts me within sight and within arms-reach of a broken and beloved human who was a saint. And with that heart I’m reminded of who I am, and of who I am called to be.

Yes, it’s both creepy and cool. Reuben and I will just have to disagree on this one. ✂

Roland De Vries (rdevries@pcmtl.ca) is Director of Pastoral Studies at The Presbyterian College, Montreal, and a Lecturer in the School of Religious Studies, McGill University.

Columns

Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman



Although it was Hitler and his henchmen who unleashed death and destruction during the Second World War, someone had to design the railways, factories, warehouses and the machinery for their war effort. An article in the *New Atlantis* titled “The Architecture of Evil” opens with the provocative statement: “Someone designed the furnaces of the Nazi death camps.” The article goes on to describe the life and work of Albert Speer, Adolf Hitler’s “chief architect,” reminding us that Hitler did not work alone. The truth is that engineers and architects designed the technology that enabled the Nazi brutality. Speer later wrote “my obsessional fixation on production and output statistics, blurred all considerations and feelings of humanity.”

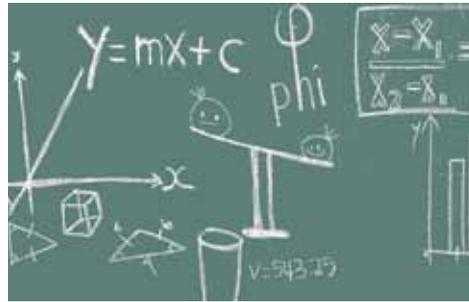
While Speer’s situation seems like a dramatic example, the truth is that all engineering work involves some moral choices and responsibility. Even programmers writing logical, mathematical code need to recognize that their creations are not neutral and unbiased. Cathy O’Neil worked as a math professor until 2007 when a lucrative opportunity arose to use her PhD in mathematics at a hedge fund. Shortly thereafter, the financial crisis occurred and O’Neil found herself pondering her work and her role as a “quantitative analyst” (or what is often referred to as a “quant”) in the finance industry. Reflecting on this, she later wrote: “The housing crisis, the collapse of major financial institutions, the rise of unemployment – all that had been aided and abetted by mathematicians wielding magic formulas.” Her disillusionment led her to participate in the “occupy Wall Street” movement and eventually write a book titled *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*.

The dark side

Technology is not neutral. Even equations and computer algorithms, which may initially appear cold and neutral, reflect the values and assumptions of the people and organizations that construct them. “Big data” sifts through vast oceans of data to find patterns that are then used to inform decisions in areas as diverse as finance, banking, hiring, marketing, policing, education and politics. While mathematical models allow decision making to be more efficient, it can hurt the poor, target predatory ads and discriminate against minorities while serving to make the rich richer.

For example, should data like ZIP codes act as a proxy for creditworthiness, for hiring decisions or for dating match-

Weapons of Math destruction



es? It’s not hard to imagine how such decisions could perpetuate a cycle of poverty. Should the data taken from current employee profiles be used to guide future hiring decisions? Such a decision could perpetuate biases reducing diversity in the workplace. Some of the consequences resulting from data and mathematical models are unintentional, but in the words of O’Neil, these mathematical models are “opinions embedded in mathematics.”

The inner working of these systems is often opaque and the verdicts accepted without question. Often times the inner assumptions and values embedded in the math are hidden over concerns of intellectual property and trade secrets. This leaves those affected without any explanation or recourse for unfair decisions which may impact them.

The fact is that all of life is religious, and that even our technical and mathematical work has moral and ethical implications. Our big data algorithms and mathematical models can be directed in ways that are more obedient or less obedient to God’s intents for his world. In fact, as more decisions are informed by number-crunching computers, we will need to make sure that justice and transparency are emphasized.

“The Architecture of Evil” not only tells the story of Albert Speer but goes on to suggest that “Today’s engineers need a more well-rounded education – one that stresses not only the analytical skills necessary to be a good engineer but also the liberal arts that are necessary . . . for young students to grow and mature as citizens with responsibilities beyond the immediate technical concerns of their work.” Our computer science and engineering schools need to attend to ethics and values if we hope to build a just society.

I would add that Christian engineers must see their technical work as a response to God, one in which even our mathematical models, computer programs and architecture need to enhance justice and show mercy as we walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). ✂

This summer, Derek Schuurman will be moving to Michigan to start a new job at Calvin College and two of his children will be getting married.

Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien



The *Song of the Lazy Farmer* provided many chuckles for rural readers in the 1950s and 1960s when I was a boy. It was a regular feature in the *Farmer’s Advocate*. It’s still a mystery who penned it – the guess was that it probably was a teacher, professor or somebody educated who wanted to keep his identity private. There was never a name or any indication of who the author was. Could it have been penned by a preacher? Maybe. The popular fictional column in *Calvinist Contact* about Dutch immigrants Arie and Katrien Dof in the 1950s entitled *Arie and Katrien in Canada* was written by a Christian Reformed minister who also remained anonymous for many years.

The *Song of the Lazy Farmer* was published in U.S. and Canadian farm papers for over 30 years. An elderly man told me he read *The Lazy Farmer* when he was a young man in the late 1920s.

This little gem from the weekly *Canadian Countryman* on June 20, 1931 promoted alfalfa hay as a crop. Alfalfa was a new crop back then and didn’t become popular in Ontario until the 1950s and 1960s when a crimping machine was developed so the juicy hay dried quicker. In 1964, Sperry New Holland developed the Haybine mower-conditioner and it was the first invention to combine cutting, conditioning (crimping) and windrowing into one machine.

“Of all them other crops of his, my neighbor says alfalfa is

The best that grows from out the soil, it pays him better for his toil



The Lazy Farmer plants alfalfa

Than any other crop that grows, he says there ain’t a cow but knows

Alfalfa hay is what she needs, she can’t make milk from straw and weeds.

Alfalfa hay is good for kine, it puts the finish on the swine,

It makes the chickens lay more eggs, the horses all kick up their legs

And prance about when they are fed alfalfa ere they go to bed.

With good alfalfa in the mow he makes a profit from each cow,

Good green alfalfa, full of leaves makes farmin’ pay, so he believes.

“I tried it once, and then I quit, because there wan’t no end to it.

I’d hardly start to plowin’ corn before the buddin’ shoots would warn

Me that there must be no delay, I’d have to start to makin’ hay.

And so I’d work away and sweat for ev’ry ton of hay I’d get.

I’d hardly git it put up when that blamed alfalfa’d grown again.

The second crop must be put by the hottest weather in July,

Another crop or two in fall I’d have to pitch, and that ain’t all,

All winter long I’d have to sit and milk my cows, from out each tit

I’d have to milk a pail or two, that’s what alfalfa made ‘em do.

I git the backache to this day when I think of alfalfa hay!”

Avoiding work

As the title implies, each segment was written from the point of view of a less than energetic farmer who preferred commenting on the passing scene, eating, fishing, hunting or just napping in the shade, to actual farm work. Ironically, his land, cows, swine, chickens and himself were all benefiting from this marvelous crop. The soil was producing many cuts of alfalfa.

Things soon changed in 1931. The Dust Bowl years started that summer and by late 1934 the Dust Bowl area extended over 97 million acres in the U.S. mid-west. Had the grassland sod not been plowed up to grow wheat, and alfalfa planted instead, the drought and dust storms would not have been so severe. Alfalfa plants have a very long tap root that takes moisture up from deep in the soil. *Song of the Lazy Farmer* doesn’t mention that great advantage of alfalfa. ✂

Meindert van der Galien grew many acres of alfalfa-timothy hay for his cattle. It is prone to winterkill – when the ground is bare in winter and spring and it freezes, which cuts the tap root.

News

There is no 'right side' of history



Clint Roberts

Over the last several years we have heard the ominous warning that some people are “on the wrong side of history” when it comes to their moral or political points of view. During U.S. President Obama’s second term, the phrase saw an increase in popularity. At the end of 2013, *New York Magazine* quantified the surge in its popularity, estimating that while in 2006 there were 524 articles making use of the phrase, the number had grown to 1,800 articles featuring it in 2013.

President Obama’s fondness for the phrase was not seen as merely coincidental to its sudden popularity. Jonah Goldberg wrote in the *New York Post* that nobody had ever wielded the phrase as much as Obama, whom he believed helped popularize its use among others on the left. Other critics argued that Obama was overusing the phrase in the form of a threat or warning to those who opposed his policies.

As a rhetorical flourish, the phrase is fairly effective in terms of its psychological or emotional influence on people. Nobody wants to be on the wrong side of history. The question is, why not? And what, for that matter, does it mean to be on the wrong side of history? And how do we know who will wind up on this presumably shameful side of history when those in the future write it?

Back to the future

Let’s consider these questions as our means of assessing the threat of being on the wrong side of history. First, what exactly does it mean? It certainly does not refer to being on the wrong side of what we now call history. For us, history is what has transpired up to now. But people today appear both to know and care less than ever before what those in our history believed. So that doesn’t explain the concern.

The “history” to which the phrase refers is, ironically enough, the future. For those in the future, these days in which we are now living will be part of their history.

Therefore the fear has to do with being on the wrong side of the future, not the past. You wouldn’t want the more enlightened people of future generations to repudiate your views, to feel ashamed of you or to laugh at your beliefs or perspectives, would you?

Another important aspect to this language of being “on the wrong side of history” is its presupposition about the trajectory of history. One of the main criticisms Jonah Goldberg levied against the phrase in his article is the way it smacks of Marxist terminology. We should be reminded of the confidence and swagger with which Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev told the capitalist West in 1960, “Whether you like it or not, history is on our side.”

Knowing what is meant by the phrase, we can rightly ask: Is this view of history’s progress accurate? More specifically, does the current progressivist worldview really represent the positive march toward a better tomorrow?

Much could be said here. I am suspicious right from the start when those who claim a prophetic vision of the future seem themselves to have so little regard for the past. I cannot resolve this juxtaposition of such slight regard for our history, on the one hand, and a claim to see clearly and care passionately about our future, on the other.

So one of my initial responses to a progressive who says that I am on the wrong side of history is to find out whether he or she knows anything about our own history. My contention is that historical ignorance and the move away from traditional religious and moral beliefs are tied together.

‘Those’ people

“History is a hill or a high point,” wrote G. K. Chesterton, “from which alone men see the town in which they are living and the age in which they live.” Just as a well-travelled person gains better perspective on his own culture, to borrow an analogy from C. S. Lewis, so a student of history gains perspective on his or her own cultural era.

By contrast, if you care so little about

history that you remain in comfortable ignorance of it, you rob yourself of the necessary vantage point from which to better assess your own society. Worse than comfortable ignorance is the simplistic condemnation of our past as a legacy of unscientific, racist, oppressive, unevolved and unenlightened barbarism that we need not bother to study in depth since we have risen above all of that.

This childish view of history is an exercise in falsely honouring ourselves simply for living in one time period over another. It is what C. S. Lewis called “chronological snobbery,” and it is an ideological poison in the waters of many colleges and universities. For people who think this way, all of history is on the “wrong side.” All of the people of history are distant strangers they tend not to trust. They’ve never gotten to know “those” people; they only know the negative rumors about them. They act like xenophobes when it comes to the generations of the past.

If you know history, you know the present. You have a cultural identity. You know how we got here. And only then are

you in a position to speak intelligently about where we are going. None of us can really know how people will think 150 years from now. In that case, why does it matter so much?

Since you cannot know the future, but you can know (at least to some extent) the past, why not gain the wisdom that is available by knowing your own cultural roots? Think of everything we take for granted. What about the fundamental guiding principles, ideas, works and achievements that form the foundation of the Western world?

The Bible, the classics, the founding of the university system, the great debates, the wars and conflicts, the best and worst examples, the heroes and villains – these are key influences. They shaped everything. The events of the past are the “prequels” of this current historical episode. You can’t understand the current episode, let alone future ones, without knowing the ones from our past. We should stop worrying about being on the “wrong side” of history while ignoring history. If instead we actually come to know and understand history, we will serve the future far better. ➤

Clint Roberts has spent many years teaching philosophy courses to graduates and undergraduates.

He’s also sometimes a preacher, coffee roaster and goat-herder. His eight-member family runs what

feels like a small farm within city limits.

He participates in a couple of fantastic podcasts called Theology Unplugged and Apologetics Unplugged.



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Obituaries



Arie Jacobus Vanderstoel

passed away at Hagersville Hospital on June 1st, 2017 at the age of 73.

Arie was for many years a principal/teacher in the independent Christian school system. On retirement he moved to Caledonia, Ont.

Arie leaves his loving wife of 47 years, Jane Booy Vanderstoel, son Maarten and his wife Hanna, and grandchildren Lyla and Evan of Fort Worth, Texas, and son Robb of Toronto. He was predeceased by his parents, Adriaan and Corrie (Sieling) Vanderstoel, and brother Henk.

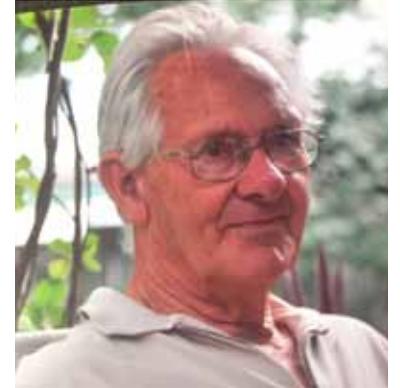
He also leaves behind siblings Therese & Bert Vandertholen, Marlies Vanderstoel, Anne-Lize Vanderstoel, Bert Vanderstoel, all of the Netherlands, and Jaap & Mirjam Vanderstoel of New Zealand, and many in-laws, nieces and nephews.

A Memorial service was held on June 24th at the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church.

Correspondence: Jane Vanderstoel
25-1 Peebles St.
Caledonia ON N3W 1J6

Be still and know that I am God.

Our loving and precious dad



Karel Kuyvenhoven

passed away on May 9, in his 89th year.

Dad was born in Naaldwijk, Westland and was happily married to Truus† (Griffioen), for almost 59 years.

Karel was a founding member of the Ontario Flower Growers Co-op and Brampton 2nd CRC. Dad served his Lord in school boards, HCH board, and on church council with integrity, compassion and faithfulness.

Dad loved music and sang in choirs, played his trumpet and enjoyed his organ.

We thank God for our dad and the rich blessing he and mom were to their six children:

- James & Nancy
- Henry & Rosy
- Margaret & Frank
- Andy & Mary
- Corry & Kaes
- Vincent & Janna

17 "Grands" and 19 "Greats".

Correspondence: Andy and Mary Kuyvenhoven
255 Arthur St.
Acton ON L7J 1M2

Anniversary

On June 25, my children

SID AND EVELYN HIELEMA

were happily married for 40 years. And those years have not been a waste of time or effort (1 Corinthians 15:59).

Well wishes can be sent to their address:

134 Bluebell Cres
Ancaster ON L9K 1E6

Thankfully, Jacob Kuntz

Event

Netherlands Bazaar

September 30th 2017 9 am to 9 pm
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Job Opportunities

Zion CRC in Oshawa, Ontario is looking for a

Pastor.

Church profile & job description available online at zioncrc.ca



First CRC in St. Thomas, Ontario is seeking to fill a 16-20 hour per week position for a

Worship Coordinator.

This position requires music proficiency and an ability to plan a variety of worship styles in a multi-generational setting within the Christian Reformed perspective of Blended Worship.

Interested candidates can visit our website at www.firstcrcstthomas.com/contact-us/positions.cfm for a more detailed job description.

A cover letter and resume can be emailed to firstcrcstthomas@gmail.com or by regular mail to 320 Elm Street, St. Thomas ON N5R 1J7

Fruitland Christian Reformed Church is seeking a part-time

Worship Coordinator

who has a passion for leading God's people in music while bringing creativity to the entire worship service. This position includes planning services, co-ordinating and empowering volunteers, while working closely with the pastor and other team members.

If you are interested in this part-time position (10-15 hours/week), and would like to know more, please contact Jean Koornneef (pjkoornneef@cogeco.ca) for a job description, and to answer questions you may have.

Full-Time Lead Pastor

Maranatha CRC in Lethbridge is looking for a lead pastor to join us in our growing community in sunny Southern Alberta.

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maranathasearchcomm@gmail.com

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Interested candidates should send a cover letter, resume, statement of faith and their philosophy of Christian education to

jessica.nicholson@tconline.ca.

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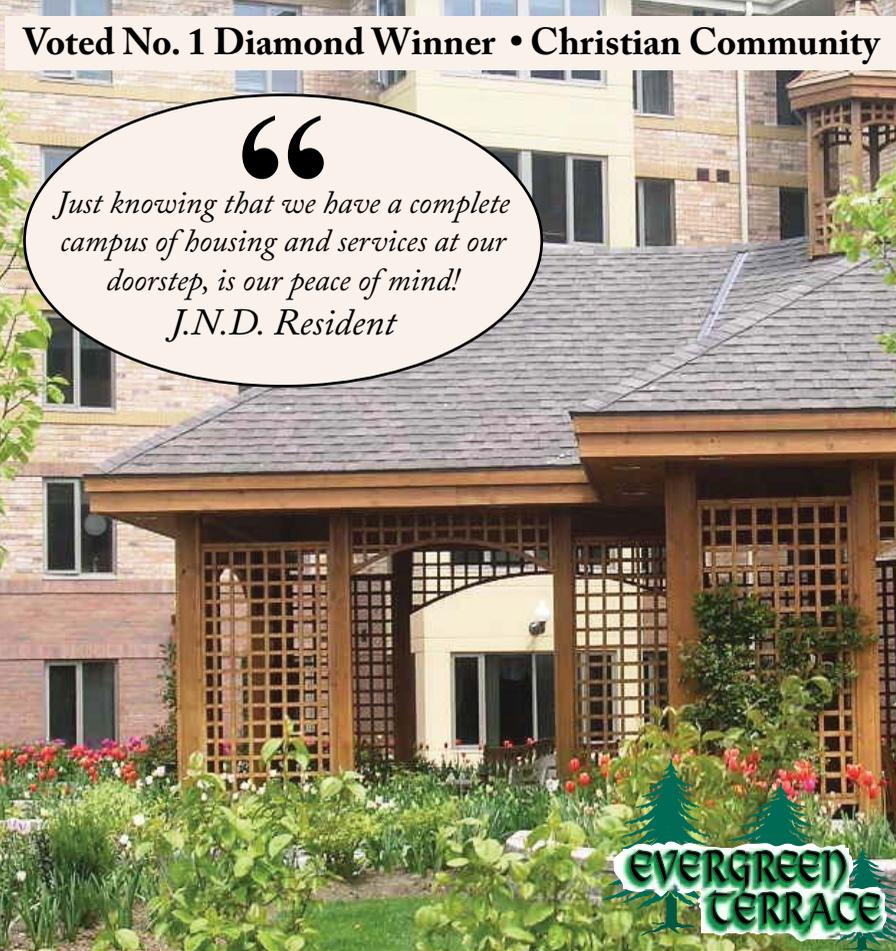
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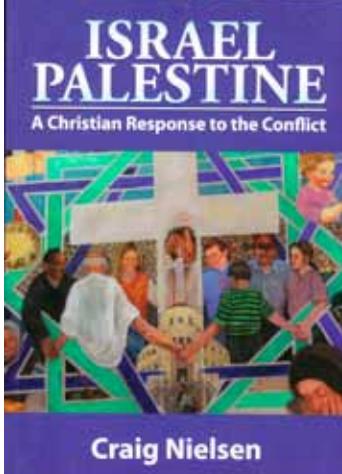
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News

CC wins seven Canadian Church Press awards

Jennifer Neutel

Christian Courier won seven awards at the annual Canadian Church Press (CCP) banquet, including five first place awards and the prestigious A.C. Forrest Memorial Award for excellence in socially conscious religious journalism.

Held June 22, 2017 at Laval University in Quebec City, a variety of Christian publications were recognized for their works published in 2016.

“I’m delighted and grateful for these awards,” says Reitsma Bick. “As an independent newspaper, *CC* receives no denominational funding and has only part-time staff. The CCP awards are a great encouragement for the work we’re doing together by God’s grace and for God’s glory.”



First Place Awards:

- A.C. Forrest Memorial Award – Angela Reitsma Bick, “The Stained-Glass Ceiling: 100 ordained women in CRC ministry today”
- Features, Newspaper – Chris Cuthill, “The Art of Worship”
- Personal Experience (circulation up to 9,999) – Jim Dekker and Jessica Dekker,



Reitsma Bick accepts Derek Schuurman's award on his behalf from Lisa Hall-Wilson, award sponsor, at the Word Awards

- “Our Family’s Unexpected Change of Direction”
- Interview – Angela Reitsma Bick, “Fear, not facts, behind climate change skepticism: An interview with Katharine Hayhoe”
- Opinion Piece – Lloyd Rang, “Disruptive Theology”
- Original Artwork, Newspaper – Lisa Smouter, “Golden Hands: A Modern Portrait”

Third Place Award:

- Media Review – Cathy Smith, “Kent Haruf – Scribe of dust and light”

The Presbyterian Record, which ceased publication at the end of 2016, also won awards, including one to author Katie Munnik for her “The Messy Table” blog, now a *CC* column.

Reitsma Bick took home the most significant honour – the A.C. Forrest Memorial Award for her article on women clergy.

“All of us who have been ordained in the last 20 years,” Rev. Mary Hulst said,

after hearing of the award, “are in ministry because we love the Lord and his church. We aren’t here to prove anything other than that.” Rev. Hulst is Calvin College’s Chaplain and the author of *A Little Handbook for Preachers*. “We also remain very grateful to all those who worked for decades so that we can be serving the church in ordained ministry. I especially want to mention the Committee for Women in the CRC, who gave us scholarships and emotional support while working for change at the classical and denominational levels. We wouldn’t be here without them.”

Editor Reitsma Bick hopes that “The Stained-glass Ceiling” helps churches think about how to better support the passionate, faithful women called to ministry and brings awareness to the challenges that female clergy still face.

The banquet was held during the 2017 Catholic Media Conference, an event which brought together members of the Canadian Church Press (CCP), the Catholic Press Association and the SIGNIS World Congress. The conference theme – Sharing Stories of Hope – provided a professional development opportunity for editors and journalists from around the world. Its highlight was a showing of the film *Silence* followed by a Q&A on faith with director Martin Scorsese.

All winning articles are free to read online at christiancourier.ca.

Jennifer Neutel is development manager at *CC* and lives in Cobourg, Ont.



CC columnists receive Word Awards for writing excellence

The 2017 Word Awards were presented June 23 in Toronto, where *Christian Courier* (*CC*) columnists Derek Schuurman and Rudy Eikelboom each received recognition for their work.

Schuurman won the Harvey/Mackey award, which celebrates “the best of Canada’s up and coming Christian journalists.” The award, given to one journalist a year, was for Schuurman’s column “Transhumanism and the incarnation.”

Eikelboom took first place in the Best Column Series category for his columns “Artificial Intelligence II” and “Artificial Intelligence III.” The shortlist of four writers included two from *CC* as well as long-time *Faith Today* columnists.

“I’m surprised and humbled,” Eikelboom said when he heard the news. “My English teachers would be in shock.”

Both Eikelboom and Schuurman have a unique gift for explaining science and technology concepts and for applying those to everyday life, *CC*’s Editor says.

The Word Awards was established by the Word Guild, a community of Christian Canadian writers, editors, speakers and publishers. Angela Reitsma Bick, *CC*’s Editor, received the highest number of nominations on this year’s shortlist.



Derek Schuurman



Rudy Eikelboom

Growing and giving: Campaign update

When this issue arrives in your mailbox, Canada will be in peak growing season – perhaps you’re enjoying food from your own garden or local farmers’ market. When it comes to charitable giving, there’s often a “summer-giving drought,” but we are hopeful *CC*’s loyal community will continue to help us grow throughout the month!

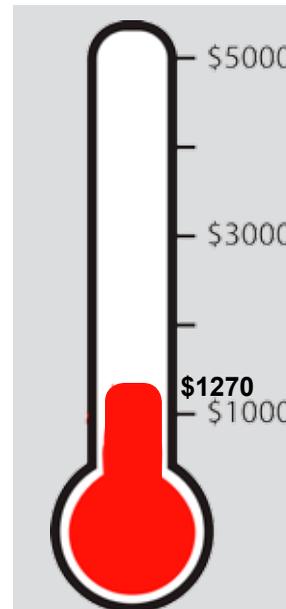
For those who have already given, we are incredibly grateful. As of the end of June, our campaign has raised about \$5,660. But the reality is that we need to reach our goal – \$25,000 – to continue and grow our redemptive journalism ministry. Every dollar helps us reach that goal.

This month you can double your impact! A faithful friend of *CC* has provided a generous \$5,000 matching grant! Turn every dollar into two dollars by giving today (and every donation \$10+ receives a tax-deductible receipt). When you give, be sure to note Matching Grant in the memo/message line. Thank you for helping us grow!



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