

NEWS

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Belleville Church Will Appeal to Synod Rather than Disaffiliate

Instead of disaffiliating from the Christian Reformed Church, the council of Maranatha CRC in Belleville, Ontario, decided in July to appeal decisions by Classis Quinte (a regional group of churches) to Synod 2012, the annual leadership meeting of the Christian Reformed Church.

The appeal regards requests by Classis Quinte that

- the Maranatha council “apply special discipline to [Rev.] John

Visser,” deposing him from the office of minister of the Word and sacraments in the CRCNA.

- in the event that not all office-bearers comply, classis, through its classical ministry committee, suspend those members of council and be empowered to help form a new council in the Maranatha congregation.
- the Maranatha council provide honorable suspension to staff members engaged in healing

ministry at the church and allow classis to appoint an accredited team to evaluate the healing ministry.

Those requests resulted from a May 2011 meeting of classis. At a subsequent meeting in June, during which the Maranatha council was given further opportunity to present its case, the classis upheld its requests.

The leadership of Maranatha initially indicated that it intended to disaffiliate from the denomination rather than comply with the requests of classis. (See *The Banner*, August 2011.)

Classis Quinte’s requests came after an independent team assessed that Visser was guilty of breaking confidentiality and abuse of office, which are grounds for deposition in the CRC. Classis made the requests of the Maranatha council, since only a local council can apply discipline to its pastor.

In its report, which was presented to classis, the assessment team noted that the issues raised all related to Maranatha’s healing ministry. Members who have been concerned about the healing ministry had raised several issues, among them: excessive power imbalance between counselors and counsees; labeling and diagnosing, a practice in which staff members diagnose a counselee’s condition; and confidentiality—staff sharing a counselee’s personal information with council.

Dave Botting, assistant pastor of Maranatha, told *The Banner* that the church’s council is appealing the decisions because “classis is



Members of Faith Christian Fellowship CRC minister with their grills.

Grilling for God in Central California

Faith Christian Fellowship in Walnut Creek, Calif., emits an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

They use their culinary expertise to feed people in their community who are homeless, and they also cook for various non-profit events in the San Francisco Bay area.

For nearly eight years, a group of church members, including Harvey Dykstra, have gotten together almost monthly to grill chicken for the local Loaves and Fishes ministry.

“We rarely have any problems getting help from other members at church, especially men, as everybody seems to like to barbecue,” said Dykstra.

“It’s fun and enjoyable, and you get to meet people,” said Dykstra.

—Heidi Wicker

Community Gardens Promote Inclusion in Michigan

Creston Christian Reformed Church tilled new ground this summer when it turned a vacant lot and the playground of a closed school into community gardens designed to include people with disabilities.

Partnering with other churches and the local neighborhood association and a grant from the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition enabled the church to install more than 40 individual raised-bed garden plots, including eight specially designed wheelchair-accessible plots.

"One of the highlights has been the community that has developed," says Mandi Creveling, the gardens' Involving Our Neighbors volunteer coordinator. "Whenever you go out there, you get to talk to someone, creating a natural connection."

—Noah J.K. Kruis



Kevin Heys pulls weeds in a specially designed raised garden bed.

MANDI CREVELING

asking council to do something that it can't do in good conscience before God."

Botting said that the council does not believe that the assessment was fair, nor that the grounds of the motions have merit. "This goes to the heart of the ministry of this church, and council stands behind the integrity of its senior pastor, its staff, and our ministry," Botting said. "We do not believe we received a fair hearing or an opportunity to fully present our case. We are looking forward to a judicial code hearing." (The judicial code is part of the Church Order of the CRC to ensure just treatment of those involved in judgments and decisions of the church.)

—Gayla R. Postma

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Repko Popma

1913-2011

Rev. Repko Popma, age 98, at the time the oldest Christian Reformed minister and the longest-serving (71 years), passed away July 17. He was a devout and dedicated pastor to parishioners on three continents.

Popma entered the gospel ministry in Holland during World War II. During the war he became involved with the underground partisan movement in radio work and had to go into hiding, preaching under an assumed name.

Popma spent some years pastoring in Indonesia before moving to Canada in 1957. In Canada he served Christian Reformed congregations in British Columbia and Ontario.

Popma was a sympathetic listener, a diligent pastor, and a faithful preacher of the Word. He reflected the humility of his Savior. Until well into their 90s, he and his wife visited the lonely and the needy. And together they planted wonderful flower gardens.

Popma is survived by his wife, Ini, by their six children and spouses, and by 11 grandchildren.

—Louis M. Tamminga

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

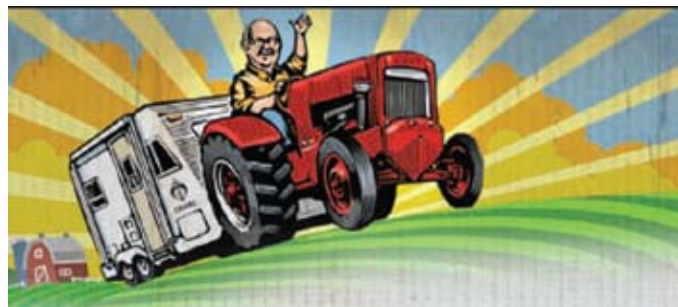
Tractor Dave Completes Shortened but Successful Ride

"Tractor Dave" Wolfsen considers his 4,125-mile (6,639 km) ride all in a day's work.

"For the layperson this looks like quite a project," Wolfsen said, "but for me it was all in a day's work. I enjoy driving the tractor. . . . It was so enjoyable—not only the occasion to meet and greet people, as well as teach people and learn things that were going on, but also seeing America itself as it is."

Wolfsen's "day's work" was actually 63 days as he traveled through 14 states, raising funds and awareness for the Foods Resource Bank (FRB) and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's Disaster Response Services (DRS).

Wolfsen initially planned to travel 10,000 miles (16,000 km) through the lower 48 states, but the hilly terrain of the East Coast



proved too much for his 1937 CO-OP tractor, with which he originally pulled a camping trailer.

After taking a two-week hiatus to regroup, Wolfsen hit the road again at a slower pace, this time pulling an empty trailer that served as a billboard to promote FRB and DRS. He also had at least one crew member with him at all times, driving a truck and pulling a trailer. As his journey concluded, Wolfsen had raised more than \$33,000.

"The highlight was the generosity that was blatantly evident with people," he said, "and the joy of having people stop and ask further questions about either one of the entities or both and ask for more information. Those are highlights because that's growth."

Wolfsen, unsure about what the future holds, will take the next several months to discuss with his family and church any further opportunities.

—Melissa Holtrop