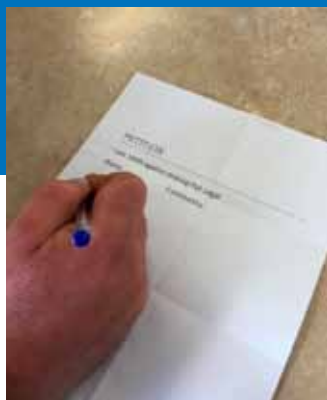


Petitioning against Pot Legalization

One islander is taking a stand against the legalization of marijuana. Mitch Reid, a member of Charlottetown (Prince Edward Island) Christian Reformed Church, has launched a petition against a proposed policy to legalize marijuana in Canada.

Reid plans to submit his petition to his Member of Parliament, Sean Casey. As he canvasses the island with a few hundred signatures already collected, Reid hopes his petition will gain support across the country.

Canada's newly elected Liberal government campaigned on a promise to remove consumption and incidental possession of marijuana from the criminal code. In December it announced plans to design a new system to legalize,



regulate, and restrict access to marijuana.

"Once it is legal, local stores will carry it, and marijuana will be easier to access," said Reid. That access, he said, will bring greater problems.

Reid is actively involved with helping those who suffer from addiction. Three years ago, he began "Take the First Step," a ministry in his church to spread a message of hope in Christ to people with addiction and to their families. Working with organizations such as Teen Challenge and Solomon's Porch and also ministering on the streets, the ministry

connects people to agencies that provide help.

"A common thread through [the stories of] those who struggled with drug addiction has been that it was marijuana that started it, and then they wanted something more," explained Reid.

Reid has experienced positive responses but also backlash to his petition. "If you speak with any 10 people, you could get 10 different opinions," he explained. "A petition creates debate instead of ignoring this issue. As a church, I think we can [lead] others to think about their opinion and talk about it."

For Reid, this petition is about providing those with firsthand experience of addiction with the space to protest. Their desire to sign confirms for him the importance of his petition. "It makes me want to work harder," he said.

—Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Paul Edward Bakker 1929-2016

For the past 20 years, Paul Bakker and his wife, Margery, spent their winters in Mesa, Ariz., where he was the unofficial "park pastor." Bakker preached his last sermon on January 10. On February 5 he died of leukemia at age 86.

After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary in 1954, Bakker served eight Christian Reformed congregations in Michigan, South Dakota, Iowa, and Minnesota.

Always quick with a joke or story, Bakker was well-liked in all of the churches he served. He also served on the Board of Trustees for Dordt College. He was a delegate to synod (the church's general assembly) eight times. After retiring in 1994, he continued to be active in preaching and pastoral visitation.

In his spare time, Bakker liked to golf and spent many evenings playing cards with friends.

Bakker is survived by Margery, by five children and their spouses, and by 14 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his grandson, Shane De Jong.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Further information on recently deceased ministers is available at thebanner.org.

Body of Rev. George Vander Weit Recovered

Two-and-a-half years after George Vander Weit went missing, his body was found about a mile from the Rochester, Mich., condo he shared with his wife, Bonnie, according to a post by his son Randy on Facebook. Vander Weit was a retired pastor in the Christian Reformed Church.

On July 5, 2013, Vander Weit disappeared shortly after being released from a mental health facility. He was considered a danger to himself. Extensive searches by police, family, and friends for months afterward turned up no leads.

Randy Vander Weit's post said that dental records confirmed that the human remains were



Rev. George Vander Weit at Synod 2010.

those of George Vander Weit. He was 70 years old at the time he went missing.

Randy requested that the family be upheld in prayer. "My mom is feeling overwhelmed with decisions she now needs to make," he wrote. "We, George's

children, are dealing with guilt for not having searched more thoroughly, considering his remains were found a mile or so from my parents' condo."

George and Bonnie were members of Han-Bit Korean CRC. Prior to retirement, Vander Weit served churches in Michigan and Ohio. He was a frequent contributor to *The Banner*.

He attended the annual synod (the CRC's annual leadership meeting) many times and was particularly well-known for his outspoken support of women serving in ecclesiastical office. *The Banner* will publish an *In Memoriam* for Vander Weit at a later date.

—Gayla R. Postma