



CASA Connor: Creating a Living Legacy

Five years after the death of 15-year-old Connor Vanderveen, CASA Connor opened in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. CASA Connor, an earthquake-proof, two-storey building of 29,000 square feet, will provide vital care and treatment for children with disabilities and their families, free of charge. It was created as a living legacy to honor the life of Connor, who died in 2011 of complications related to Hunter Syndrome (or MPS II), a rare genetic disorder. During his life, Connor worshiped at Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church in Calgary, Alta., where his parents, Geraldine and Jerry Vanderveen, and grandparents Peter and Teena Oudman are members.

Over the years, the Oudmans wintered in Puerto Vallarta, with Teena flying home several times to care for Connor so his parents could spend more time with their other children. On a return trip to Puerto Vallarta, she said, "God gave me a vision to build a facility for the disabled [in Puerto Vallarta]. Wow, that was something. . . . This is when our difficult journey started . . . but God was always beside us and got us through those hard times."

The hard times included serious fund-raising as well as partnering with other organizations such as Pasitos de Luz, a nonprofit organization founded by mothers of children with disabilities from low-income families in the Puerto Vallarta region. Pasitos de Luz will be responsible for operat-

ing CASA Connor. The name CASA comes from the Caring Abroad Society of Alberta, which gives financial support as well as helps to raise funds.

Both the Vanderveens and Oudmans raise awareness of the need for support for children who are underserved. "We are so privileged to live in a country that provides incredible support to kids [with disabilities] and their families, and knowing that other countries don't is heartbreaking," said Connor's mother.

"The situations those children [in Puerto Vallarta] live in are so sad," added Teena Oudman. "There is nothing for them, and most of them have just a one-room house where everybody lives."

Connor's family and friends are deeply grateful to all those who have helped make CASA Connor a reality. "Our family truly feels this was a God-inspired and God-led endeavor that gives purpose to our son's life in a tangible way," said his mother.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Iowa Church Celebrates 150 Years

First Christian Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa, was the first CRC west of the Mississippi River, a fact that was noted when the church recently celebrated its 150th anniversary.

The church's weeklong celebration focused on God's faithfulness. Former pastors Jeff Sajdak and Harvey Brink led services. A service in a nearby park was led by current pastor Brad Meinders.

Celebrations also included a barbecue supper in the park with activities for all ages.

Brink, First CRC's 24th pastor, led both services on August 28. The evening service included a balcony band and a bell choir. The evening service ended with the playing of the "Hallelujah Chorus."

"I am in awe of how God faithfully maintains the church he plants," said Meinders. "He planted [this church] in a different time and culture and has her still present today for the purpose of people being transformed by Jesus so that they are leading people to him!"

—Kyle Hoogendoorn



First CRC in Pella, Iowa, celebrated 150 years.

IN MEMORIAM



Rev. Clarence John Vos

1920-2016

Patient and kind, intellectually and spiritually curious, Clarence Vos was a gifted teacher who enjoyed sharing what he knew. Vos died on July 28 in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was 95.

After serving in the U.S. Air Force during World War II, Vos graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary, earned his Masters of Theology from Westminster Theological Seminary, and his doctorate at the Free University of Amsterdam.

He served congregations in Washington, New Jersey, and Dordrecht in the Netherlands, before being appointed to the faculty of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., as a professor of religion and Old Testament. During those years, he served on many denominational committees. He retired in 1985.

After retirement, Vos and his wife, Jeanne, served 18 churches as interim pastorates.

Vos is survived by his wife of 72 years, by three children and their spouses, and by four grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first grandchild, Nick Bremmer.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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