

# NEWS

## Trinity Christian College Student Brings Special Ed to Ethiopia

**A**t an age when many are still going to school, 22-year-old Getenet Timmermans is starting one. The school will exclusively serve students with intellectual disabilities, and it will be half a world away, in Ethiopia, where Timmermans spent the first 15 years of his life.

"God is leading me to this kind of journey," said Timmermans, a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Orphaned at a young age and adopted, along with his



**Getenet Timmermans and his good friend Bontegezet from Ethiopia, "who motivates me and encourages me to continue this project."**

younger brother Fekadu, by Steven and Barbara Timmermans in 2010, the math major at Trinity Christian College wants to serve God by giving back to his community in Ethiopia.

When it opens its doors this fall, Faith Special Education School will begin by serving 8 to 10 students who would otherwise be home full-time with a caretaker. This will also allow parents who normally stay home with their child to have an opportunity to find employment.

Timmermans hopes not only to improve the lives of students and parents but also to transform the culture, changing how people with disabilities are viewed. In Ethiopia, Timmermans said, people with disabilities are often completely isolated from the rest of the community.

When he first joined the Timmermans family and got to know

his brother Paul, who has Down syndrome, Getenet was struck by the full lives people with intellectual disabilities can live. "Paul can do anything I can do. Paul can talk about his feelings, he goes to work, he can connect with our community," he said. "In Ethiopia, [people with intellectual disabilities] don't get job opportunities or the opportunity to interact with the community."

The impetus to action came after an interim class (a class between semesters) Timmermans took two winters ago. When almost all other classes were already full, he signed up for "Beyond Suffering: A Christian View on Disability Ministry." It turned out to be a pivotal life experience.

One day in particular hit home, when the professor discussed how people with disabilities are viewed around the world. They are sometimes seen as "cursed." Of the places mentioned, Ethiopia was singled out for being the most egregious. "I was shocked," he said. And yet he knew it rang true with his experiences.

He had to do something. Eventually, that something became Faith School.

Where did he get such boldness? His life experiences taught him at a young age that he had to rely on God to provide. And he couldn't do it without support. "The people around me are always encouraging me and praying for me," he said. "It takes many people to accomplish something like this!"

—Susan Vanden Berg

### IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Herbert Aubrey Van Hoff**

1934-2016

Aubrey Van Hoff was a quiet man who never sought accolades for himself. Gifted with a quick wit, he loved to play on words. After suffering several strokes, Van Hoff was hospitalized in June, where he remained until he died on October 27. He was 81.

Van Hoff was born in Sri Lanka. After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary, he returned to Sri Lanka where he served the Dutch Reformed Church and edited *The Herald*. He also served Christian Reformed congregations in Manitoba, British Columbia, and Ontario. He retired in 2000.

Upon hearing of his passing, a pastor in Australia who was a student of Van Hoff's in the seminary in Sri Lanka, offered the following: "I can honestly say that I am who I am as a pastor, preacher, and teacher, largely because of Rev. Aubrey."

Van Hoff will be lovingly remembered by Dianne, his wife of 54 years; and by three daughters and their spouses and eight grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a son-in-law.

—Janet A. Greidanus

Further information on recently deceased ministers is available at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org).

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## Bringing the Taste of Africa to Michigan

Martha Pewee had been in the United States for about 10 years with her husband, John, and their family in Grand Rapids, Mich., when she decided to start a grocery store that would feature food products from Africa and other nations that weren't being offered at traditional supermarkets in the area.

Today, the Pewees, who are immigrants from the West African nation of Liberia, own and operate Martha's International Market on the southeast side of Grand Rapids. With the help of a business mentorship program offered through Madison Square Christian Reformed Church, the Pewees recently purchased the building they had rented for the past seven years.

Martha Pewee had operated a small food shop, or "coke shop," as it was called, in Liberia before her family moved to the U.S. in 1997. She worked as a nurse's aide for a few years before starting the market from her home. She and John would travel to Chicago and other large cities to purchase meat, fish, and vegetables. "When we'd get the stuff, she'd put it in the car and drive around to shops to sell them," John Pewee said. Often the goods were sold to braiding shops, where women of African descent go to have their hair braided.

"We started out with two [freezers in our home], then we ended up with six," Martha said. "The electric bills were high and we couldn't keep it in the basement anymore."



John and Martha Pewee

The Pewees rented their current space, running the business while also maintaining their regular jobs. They were living paycheck to paycheck, wondering how they could do this. "It was almost impossible. But with God's help, here we are today," Martha said.

The Pewees credit the help of the people she met through the mentorship program at Madison Square Church, offered through Partners Worldwide, for helping them navigate the legal challenges of purchasing the building as well as financing for the business.

"I could see through the process that God was blessing us. All these people were helping us free of charge. The lawyer we worked with told me he charged \$600 an hour, and he was giving us one hour free. He did all the paperwork for us," Martha said. "We didn't know him, but he was on our side."

Today, African natives and other immigrants travel up to

several hours to buy food, African print clothing, and fashion accessories from Martha's International Market. But just as important, Martha lends a listening ear to fellow immigrants who may be struggling with similar challenges to what she went through.

"They can relate to someone who understands them and their problems in their own language," John said.

—Greg Chandler

## IN MEMORIAM



### Rev. James Peter Vosteen

1931-2016

A man of great humility, Peter Vosteen loved to preach and to teach others to preach. He passed away on November 2 at age 85.

Vosteen studied at Philadelphia's Westminster Theological Seminary and Luther Theological Seminary. After ordination, he served in the United Presbyterian Church and went on to serve Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario, Minnesota, British Columbia, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Idaho, and Washington. He was also professor of homiletics and pastoral theology at Northwest Theological Seminary and wrote "Pastoral Preaching," a chapter in *The Preacher and Preaching* (1986).

Many will remember Vosteen riding his BMW motorcycle to church meetings and preaching assignments, showing up dressed in black leather. He enjoyed hunting and was an excellent tennis player and an award-winning photographer. He will also be remembered for the way he loved and served individuals who were in difficult circumstances.

Vosteen leaves behind his wife, Mary Sue; six stepsons and their spouses and children; as well as four children with his first wife, Winifred, who died in 1998; and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

# NEWS

## Rape Culture and Christian Colleges

**T**eaching women how to avoid being assaulted rather than focusing on perpetrators; policing the way women dress; women who report assaults not being believed; a student receiving over 40 unwanted emails a day from a guy who sits behind her in one of her classes; a student hiding out in her dorm room and skipping classes for nearly two weeks to avoid an ex-boyfriend who won't take no for an answer when she breaks up with him.

There is no single agreed-upon definition of "rape culture," but those are some of the examples of how it plays out on college campuses, including Christian colleges.

Karen Cornies, who was dean of students at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont., until December, said she's had mixed feelings about the term "rape culture" and avoids it to some extent. "At its heart, I think, is naming the ways in which we as a culture normalize sexual assault and then end up blaming the victim of the assault for the assault. Naming that is important," she said.

Her colleague Jim Vanderwoerd is a social work professor and chair of the sociology/social work department at Redeemer and has studied and written extensively on sexual violence, especially in the context of Christian colleges and universities. "There is no consensus on what rape culture is, and therefore, no accurate or reliable way to measure it on campuses."

He said rape culture is a phrase to describe a culture where violence against women—especially sexual violence—is implicitly tolerated or condoned. "The key word here is 'implicitly,'" he said, "for almost no one explicitly endorses sexual violence. The phrase is intended to reveal how the responses (or lack thereof)—particularly by those in authority—minimize, deny, downplay, rationalize, justify, or explain away the realities of sexual violence."

Some, like Howard Wilson, vice president and chief administrative officer at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, don't relate to that term at all. "We don't believe [rape culture] exists on our campus," he said. "It's just not who we are."



**Howard Wilson, vice president and chief administrative officer, Dordt College**



**Rev. Mary Hulst, chaplain, Calvin College**

With or without an agreed-upon definition, the damage is real. Both men and women are subject to sexual violence, but the vast majority of victims are women.

Vanderwoerd says rape culture also captures the inadequate ways in which college authorities respond when women disclose their unwanted sexual experiences. Too often, women who disclose are not taken seriously, are pressured to keep quiet or are implicitly or explicitly blamed, and are subjected to intrusive and repeated investigation—while the men who carried out the sexually exploitative behavior escape scrutiny or accountability.

### **Alcohol and Pornography**

Rev. Mary Hulst is the chaplain at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. She said the unique challenges present on a college campus are that young men and women live in close proximity to each other, have much less oversight than they have ever had before, are seeking out relationships, and often have easy access to alcohol.

Alcohol is certainly one cause for the kinds of behaviors described. Vanderwoerd noted that the literature shows that alcohol consumption, by both perpetrators and victims, as well

as the overall alcohol culture on college campuses, is highly related to sexual victimization. Wilson expressed a similar opinion. "What we've learned [from training] is that the vast majority of sexual assaults on campuses are connected to alcohol abuse. We don't have nearly the incidence of alcohol abuse as many other public and private institutions."

Another strong contributor is pornography. "Pornography feeds this," Hulst said. "Over 80 percent of the images in porn involve men dominating women. Statistics show that Christian young men and women are watching porn at close to the same rates as students across the world. If 85 percent of our men and 40 percent of our women are watching porn, they are being exposed to evil presentations of sexual intimacy usually involving abuse."

Cornies concurred. "I'm hearing reports like half of boys in grade nine have seen nude photos of their female classmates."

Vanderwoerd noted that on college campuses there are a wide variety of opportunities for social gatherings involving sexualized activities—usually involving drinking and increasingly fueled by porn—such as "panty raids," hazing rituals, "Pimp and Ho," or similar





**Jim Vanderwoerd, chair of the Sociology/Social Work department, Redeemer University College**

theme parties where women wear sexually provocative clothing and compete to make themselves available to men. What makes it rape culture, he said, is that these kinds of sexualized activities are seen as normal and desirable—so much so that individuals who don't participate are stigmatized.

"Any time we excuse sexually aggressive behavior because this is supposedly what is expected of boys and men, then our boys and men will continue to think that it's really not that bad," Hulst said.

### **Moral Communities**

The good news for students and supporters of Protestant Christian colleges is that the hook-up behavior so prevalent in today's society is less prevalent on Protestant Christian college campuses.

"The biggest difference is that most of the students on a Christian college campus have been exposed to the idea that sex is reserved for marriage. Many of them long to practice good sexual ethics and give the gift of sexual intimacy to their spouses. So students are more aware of the biblical ideal and long to obey it. This is great!" Hulst said.

Vanderwoerd cited research that shows there is a difference between Christian and public campuses in the prevalence of hook-up culture. There may be some merit to Christian campuses having less of that, which may decrease the impact.

"Sociologist Amy Burdette and her colleagues investigated hook-up culture on different types of campuses," Vanderwoerd said. "In their 2009 paper published in the prestigious *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, they reported that students at Protestant religious colleges were less likely to hook up compared to students at Catholic institutions or institutions with no religious affiliation. The authors suggest that with respect to casual sexual activity, conservative Protestant colleges and universities may be more effective in establishing 'moral communities.'" The paper goes on to note that a common set of lifestyle practices and policies at Protestant evangelical colleges operate to create and sustain moral communities that "contribute to a climate of sexual restraint."

## **Education and awareness are key to reducing rape culture behaviors.**

Vanderwoerd noted that evangelical Protestant campuses provide contexts in which a faith-informed ethic of "sex within guidelines" reduces the incidence of casual sex and hook-up culture, and thus protects women from the risks of sexual violence compared to secular campuses.

Wilson added that Dordt has community standards and students live within that culture. "Our students are self-selecting into a certain way of living."

### **Education and Awareness**

All agree that education and awareness are key to reducing rape culture behaviors.

Wilson said that when Dordt conducted sexual harassment prevention training, they saw close to 100 percent compliance from full-time staff and 93 percent of students

received training in sexual harassment prevention. "We don't want to be Pollyanna here. We realize we're dealing with young adults who are exploring their sexuality as part of their life, and we have programs to help them think about that and work through it. We have strong community life standards, which state that the only appropriate form of intimate contact is between man and a woman in the context of marriage. Our culture is largely set by what happens in chapel and in the classroom." Wilson said that chapel includes messages addressing sex and relationships and Dordt's dean of chapel, Aaron Baart, speaks at high schools all over the U.S. on sexuality and pornography.

Vanderwoerd noted that [social scientists] have found that certain religious indicators (such as weekly attendance, frequency of prayer, and Bible reading) are inversely related to sexual violence: that is, the more frequently you attend services, pray, or read the Bible, the lower the rates of sexual violence.

Hulst said that education needs to start long before college. "We need to start talking

about porn with our late elementary school/middle school children. First exposure is often around the age of 11. By the time they reach college, they are addicts. Every Christian high school should start support groups for students who are addicted to porn. They are deeply ashamed and don't know what to do. We can help them heal, and in so doing reframe for them what sexual intimacy is really like."

Hulst said we also need to call out those who lift up dating and marriage as the end goal for women.

Cornies has had experience of that. "I can't tell you how many times in my 21 years of student life work I've sat across from an amazing young woman—bright, talented, kind—and she has said to me that she feels like she isn't really worth anything »

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» because she doesn't have a boyfriend. It is heartbreaking."

She said that teaching the value of listening, respect, empathy, explaining to boys the value of the girls and women around them are all part of the solution. And, she added, "Let's start by not inflicting violence on boys and men and see where that takes us."

Vanderwoerd thinks that many more Christian colleges are becoming more aware, and are developing more comprehensive programs to prevent and respond to campus sexual violence (often drawing on and adapting best practices that have been developed on secular campuses over the past few decades). There is no excuse for Christian colleges to be ignorant about the reality of sexual violence, he

said. "Tragically, it does happen here too, as my research reveals. Christian colleges should have explicit policies and procedures for addressing sexual violence, including procedures and training on how to respond, and programs focused on prevention and raising awareness."

He said that the vast majority of men are not perpetrators of direct sexual violence against women. But men can be complicit in perpetuating rape culture by not informing themselves about the realities of gender-based sexual violence and thus by not speaking out against it.

## Staying Counter-Cultural

He also said that Christian colleges should not be apologetic about their commitment to the

teachings and practices of traditional Christianity regarding the appropriate parameters for sexual intimacy. While such teachings and practices are dismissed and even reviled by many in mainstream society as archaic and even oppressive, he said, we should be bold in promoting a sexual ethic that leads to the genuine flourishing that God intended for people.

Vanderwoerd added, "We must resist the pressure to cave in on these commitments in the name of diversity or inclusivity or openness. There is emerging evidence, as suggested in my research, that a commitment to traditional Christian sexual practices actually provides greater protection for women from sexual violence."

—Gayla R. Postma, Banner news editor

## More Online

If you haven't checked *thebanner.org* lately, you've missed these stories!



### Michigan Church's Recycling Ministry Begins 10th Year

At First Christian Reformed Church in Grand Haven, Mich., one person's trash is another person's opportunity to serve. The church's recycling ministry has grown with the addition of paper recycling to reclaiming scrap metal and electronics. To date, the church has recycled over 1.7 million pounds (about 771,000 kilograms) of metal and electronics and 53,000 pounds (24,000 kilograms) of paper.



### Edmonton Man Cycles in Antarctica

Hank Van Weelden, age 50, fulfilled a dream when he cycled in Antarctica in December. Even though he didn't finish the planned route, he said it does not mean it was a failed mission. "My goal was to push myself beyond my limits, to have an adventure, and to see Antarctica." Mission accomplished.



### Building Community While Building Forest Trails

Members of Heartland Christian Reformed Church in Chilliwack, B.C., helped turn the forested foothills near the church into The Chilliwack Community Forest trail, opened in May 2016.

### Sharing Life Through Stories and Pictures

The men and women labeled as "forgotten" who walk Aurora Avenue in Seattle, Wash., facing homelessness or drug addiction, were given an opportunity to share their stories of both grief and celebration. Approximately 50 people attended an "Evening of Stories" held at Aurora Commons, a neighborhood space for hospitality supported by Awake (Christian Reformed) Church in Seattle. Some expressed their story through photographs that were on display. Leanne Bre Ramsey has served as "artist in residence" at the Commons. "During the storytelling we had more in common than not," she said.



Church members from Brookfield CRC with the van purchased for the Alissa family.

## Wisconsin Family Opens Home to Syrian Refugees

As Anza D'Antonio read about people in Syria being subjected to daily bombings, ISIS brutality, and chlorine gas attacks, she wanted to do something to help. So she and her husband, Jason, and their three children opened their Brookfield, Wisc., home to Mohamad and Nesrin Alissa and their four children, a refugee family who had fled war-torn Syria.

"For us, focusing on making a difference with one family made the most sense; we have a home

seven children are in bed, we sit and study English flashcards for hours."

After living with the D'Antonio family for three months, the Alissa family secured a three-bedroom apartment four miles from the D'Antonio's home. Adjusting to life in a new country presents daily challenges. "The obstacles refugees face are many; and employment, language, and transportation felt like a Gordian Knot," said D'Antonio.

Members of Brookfield Christian Reformed Church, which the D'Antonios attend, taught the family English on a rotating basis and drove Mohamad to local ESL classes. They also helped the Alissa family purchase a van and provided numerous household items after they moved into their new apartment.

Even with the hurdles they face, Mohamad is grateful for the new life for his family in the U.S. "He is thankful for his new country. He doesn't take life in our leafy suburb for granted and has expressed repeated gratitude for the charity shown by my family, friends, and fellow parishioners," said D'Antonio.

—Amy Toornstra



The four Alissa boys visiting Chuck E Cheese for the first time.

large enough to accommodate two families on a temporary basis and the infrastructure in place that co-living required," D'Antonio said. "With 11 people under one roof, life is suddenly very different," said D'Antonio. "After the collective

### IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Adrian Van Giessen**  
1959-2016

Adrian Van Giessen was a gifted and natural leader who sought out and cultivated the potential in others. He dreamed big and invited others into his vision. A good deal of his ministry involved sending the best leaders in his congregations away to new challenges such as seminary or church planting. Van Giessen passed away on November 12 after a six-month journey with leukemia. He was 57.

After graduation from Calvin Theological Seminary, Van Giessen served congregations in British Columbia and Ontario. Until the time of his death, he was regional leader Eastern Canada for Christian Reformed Home Missions.

In a eulogy, Van Giessen's son, Eric, said it was his father's fervent insistence that God's grace is radical and transformative and infectious that invited faith into his lifeblood and into the heartbeat of their family.

Van Giessen enjoyed joking, fishing on a quiet lake before the world woke up, golfing, and relaxing in his recliner with a bag of chips and a cold beer.

Van Giessen will be lovingly remembered by his wife, Barb, and by three children and one grandson.

—Janet A. Greidanus

### IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Henry (Hank) Zwaanstra**  
1936-2016

A caring, loving, compassionate, sensitive, and committed husband, father, grandfather, and teacher, Hank Zwaanstra was passionate about the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed and Calvinist faith. A thoughtful, knowledgeable, precise, and passionate professor, he delighted in the achievements of his students who served the Lord around the globe. Zwaanstra died on November 26 after a brief illness. He was 80 years old.

Zwaanstra taught church history and historical theology at Calvin Theological Seminary from 1963-2001. During that time, he was also an advocate for the Calvin Prison Initiative and served on the Celebration Fellowship Prison Congregation steering team for a number of years. He retired in 2001.

Zwaanstra loved the outdoors. He hunted deer in northern Michigan, fished in the lakes and rivers of Idaho and Colorado, and enjoyed downhill skiing in the beautiful Colorado Rockies. He also loved to watch the birds in his backyard feeders.

Zwaanstra is survived by his wife, Claire; by three children and their spouses; and by five grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus



# NEWS



March for Life in Washington, D.C.



## Not Following Us on Facebook?

Here's some of what you are missing!

A story from *Religion News Service* about the Washington, D.C., **March for Life**.

A lovely story from *Burnabynow* about the Shebat family who fled Syria and was eventually settled in Burnaby, B.C., by the **New Westminster Christian Reformed Church**.

A humorous video of an **indoor snowball fight** involving delegates from Classis Hamilton (a regional group of Christian Reformed Churches).

A picture of **Dave De Boer**, pictured as a toddler in 1947 in *The Banner*.

**Dave De Boer in a 1947 issue of *The Banner*.**



Classis Hamilton delegates.



## IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Jack Westerhof**  
1938-2016

Jack Westerhof was a patient listener gifted with empathy, compassion, humility, and open-mindedness. He was also an optimist who believed that faith could move mountains. Among many things, he will be remembered for his thoughtful exegesis of Scripture, his pastoral work, and his dedication to the congregations he served. Westerhof died of cancer on December 27. He was 78 years old.

After graduating from Calvin Theological Seminary and the Free University in Amsterdam, Westerhof served Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario and Alberta and served in campus ministry. He retired in 2003.

In retirement Westerhof continued to work as a trained interim pastor, serving many churches in Ontario and one on Prince Edward Island. Westerhof also served on several synodical committees, wrote curriculum, and is the co-author of *Theirs Is the Kingdom*, a children's story Bible.

He read an eclectic assortment of magazines and loved literary fiction. An accomplished gardener, he also enjoyed fishing, boating, and camping. His adventures provided his family with many good stories to tell.

Westerhof is survived by Pat, his wife of 56 years; by four children and their spouses; and by eight grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## IN MEMORIAM



**Rev. Edwin Walhout**  
1926-2017

Edwin Walhout lived his entire life in service to his Lord. He spent the last day of his earthly life doing many of the things he loved. His final act was preaching a New Year's Eve sermon based on Psalm 90 at his home church, Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. He died on January 1 of a ruptured aortic aneurysm. He was 90 years old.

Walhout spent nine years teaching Bible in Christian schools and served CRC congregations in Minnesota, New York, and Massachusetts. He earned a Doctor of Ministry degree and served as the adult education editor for the Christian Reformed Church, retiring in 1989. He researched and wrote more than two dozen theology books.

Walhout was a member of the Western Michigan Theological Society. Apart from his theological pursuits, Walhout enjoyed bicycling or walking with his extended family on Saturday mornings followed by breakfast.

He is survived by his loving wife of almost 70 years, Alma; by five children; and by 12 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

## When Pastors Hurt

by Chris Meehan

A full-blown panic attack hit Rev. Rick Nanninga as he was preaching at Trinity Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alta., on New Year's Day in 1987.

Waves of vertigo washed over him, sweat broke out, and he felt like he was going to throw up. Somehow Nanninga managed to get through the sermon. He finished the service and was even able to shake everyone's hand and wish them a happy New Year.

After that, he said, he raced to his office, where he dropped to the floor and, shaking with fear, curled up in a ball. His wife, Elizabeth, found him a few minutes later and took him home.

"After that, I was totally locked up in my house for three weeks. The panic was so big that I thought I was going to die," said Nanninga, who is now pastor of Barrhaven Fellowship in Ottawa, Ont.

Looking back, Nanninga believes the stress of being a youth minister and then an interim pastor triggered the attack.

At home, Nanninga didn't answer the phone. He kept the curtains closed and ran into his bedroom when church members came over with flowers.

"I couldn't handle people. I couldn't handle noise. I thought my role in ministry was done," said Nanninga. "I felt overwhelmed and burned out."

Late last year, Nanninga told his story at a meeting of Classis Eastern Canada as part of a presentation for the new Guide for a Clergy Leave of Absence for Mental Health Reasons, a toolkit produced by the joint Disability Concerns office of the CRC and the Reformed Church in America.

"I believe this guide is a really big deal, and we did a trial run to see how it was accepted," he said. "The reaction in the room to my story was emotional. People



Nanninga sees his mental health struggles as a time where God remade him and deliverance came. He strives to be there for others who are experiencing similar pains and need assistance.



## “ Nearly one in four pastors acknowledges having struggled with mental illness. ”

could relate to the stress of being a pastor, to pushing too hard, and what that can do.”

Nanninga was part of the Mental Health Task Force established by Disability Concerns. The task force assists congregations in ministry with people with mental health issues, and the Guide for Clergy Leave was their latest project.

To create the guide, the task force put together a team that included pastors, chaplains, therapists, members of CRC Pastor Church Resources, mental health service providers, and individuals who have experienced mental illness themselves.

Their goal was to develop a free resource that would give guidance to churches and pastors facing difficult situations such as clergy burnout and mental health issues. They provided recommendations on how to coordinate between the church, the pastor, and the pastor’s health care providers, and how to make arrangements for a leave.

In addition to the guide, the team also produced PowerPoint presentations, case studies, and a leader’s guide so that someone with a willing heart could facilitate a group conversation about clergy mental health at a classis or congregational meeting.

“This is not a policy. Churches can do what they want; but we thought these resources would be helpful for churches and pastors who face a difficult situation,” said Mark Stephenson, director of CRC Disability Concerns.

Research shows that nearly one in four pastors acknowledges having struggled with mental illness. A significant number also experience burnout, an inability to keep going in their job for a variety of reasons. Often pastors endure these struggles on their own, fearing the stigma attached to personal problems and dreading what the church might think.

Nanninga played an important role in the development of the new resources, especially because of the challenges he has faced and been able to work through, said Stephenson.

“We are very thankful for Rick being part of the team,” he said. “We appreciated his transparency and his wisdom that comes from a number of years of experience in parish ministry.”

There was no formal leave of absence policy in place at the time Nanninga had the panic attack and then locked himself away at home, but the church gave him time to sort things out.

Early on, he visited a psychiatrist, who listened to his story and diagnosed him with agoraphobia, which is “a fear of being in a situation where a person can’t escape or find help if they experience a panic attack or other feelings of anxiety,” according to the Canadian Mental Health Association.

“This is a fear of crowds. In the spectrum of anxiety disorders, this is a bad one,” said Nanninga. “Before that incident on the pulpit, I had been feeling increasingly worse. I had gone to the doctor, but he never found anything.”

Thinking back, he realized that he had battled anxiety for much of his life, in school and seminary, but it really took hold when he answered the call to his first church in Edmonton.

The psychiatrist recommended facing his fears by visiting the places that scared him the most. The doctor encouraged



**Thirty years ago, Pastor Rick Nanninga (shown with his wife, Elizabeth) suffered a panic attack after giving a sermon in his church. His experience in dealing with his mental health challenges provided valuable insight into new resources for churches and pastors.**

him to stay there as the panic rose and remain until it eased.

Among the first places he went was a large mall with his daughter. “I believed I would have to stay because I was taking care of her,” he said.

As they walked through the mall, the anxiety, and with it a flood of adrenaline, kicked in. It was terrifying, but he stuck with it, praying and trying to float above the panic. Eventually the fear subsided.

He visited other places as well—a barber shop, a hockey game—and took walks around his neighborhood. »

» Within several weeks, he was standing behind the pulpit as a visiting pastor in a small church in Edmonton.

This was the real test, he said. Churches were at the top of his list of places causing fear.

As he gulped back the anxiety, he glanced in the back of the church and saw several women who had come to the service to support him and to hear him preach.

“These women were struggling with the same thing that I was. They were there because they were nervous for me. It was great; it helped,” said Nanninga.

He made it through that sermon. “I was reconnecting with the world and reclaiming these places in my life,” he said.

The road back wasn’t straight or easy, but he kept at it, finding help in surprising places as he took other positions in ministry. He recalls being called one night, when he was serving Clarkson CRC in Mississauga, Ont., to meet a man who was feeling suicidal.

They met in the laundry room of the highrise apartment where the man lived. The man told him he had become a Christian, but his panic was getting bad, keeping him from his factory job and making him feel anxious when riding the bus or going anywhere. He was at the end of his rope.

“It was an amazing thing,” said Nanninga. “I told the man, ‘I am you and you are me, and God is using this to help us both and let us know that God is in control and will see us through.’”

Over time, Nanninga went through counseling and had to deal with such things as the anxiety that arose when he had to fly in planes for church-related interviews and meetings. He especially recalls the time he and Elizabeth drove a busy freeway into Toronto to attend a March for Jesus. The anxiety caused him to turn back several times.

When they got to the church where the march began, he was unable to go through the doors. Elizabeth Nanninga



**At the forefront of church life, it can be difficult for pastors to talk about the mental health issues they face.**

went in, and he walked around the city most of the day, calling out to God for help with the pain and panic he still felt.

He returned to the church in the early evening for the concluding service and sat in the balcony as a minister spoke about how pastors were sometimes wounded by their churches and how you could see demonic forces at work in this.

When it came time to pray, Nanninga began to cry and fell on his knees. As people gathered around to pray for him, he felt as if “something very dark left me,” he said.

After that, his preaching improved, his anxiety calmed, and he took more pleasure in his pastoral work, reaching out to church members as well as others who also struggled in different ways.

One of those people was Rev. John Van Sloten, pastor of New Hope Hillside Church in Calgary, Alta. Working as a real estate developer at the time, Van Sloten was feeling lost. He recalls how meeting Nanninga changed his life and inspired him to go into ministry. That was 25 years ago.

“Rick was very much like God to me in his ceaseless capacity to listen,” said Van Sloten. “He always made time to talk. He had a huge discipling vision to come

alongside us in an incarnational way. . . . It is uncanny how many people such as myself are today in ministry because of him.”

Nanninga said that he knows how fortunate he is that God stayed close to him in his times of need and realizes that not every pastor who struggles with mental illness is able to find help and become successful in ministry.

“I am sensitive to other people’s challenges and to the need for healing in their lives,” said Nanninga. “I see my time in the wilderness as a time where God remade me and deliverance came. But I know that doesn’t happen for everyone. My hope has been that I can be there for others when they need it.”

For those who don’t have personal contact with someone like Nanninga, the Guide for Clergy Leave is another resource.

“At the CRC synod in 2014, a pastor asked me to have the Disability Concerns office address the issue of clergy mental health because he had faced the issue himself and it had not gone well,” Stephenson said. “He certainly is not the only one. I’m pleased with the way that we have been able to respond to this pastor’s request and pray that the guide and the supporting materials can help pastors and congregations not just survive a mental health crisis, but make the journey in a healthy way, with a deep understanding of God’s grace and an increasing ministry to everyone affected by mental illness.”

The guide and supporting resources can be found at [crcna.org/clergyleaveguide](http://crcna.org/clergyleaveguide). ■



**Chris Meehan** is news and media relations manager for CRC Communications and is a member of Coit Community Church.



At a walk-in center in Fort McMurray, Alta., World Renew Disaster Response Services volunteers listened to the stories of fire survivors. Those with unmet needs have been connected with appropriate services.

## Hope of Christ Shines Through the Ashes in Fort McMurray

by Kellie Scholma

**A** young mother stopped in at a World Renew walk-in center in Fort McMurray, Alta., to meet with World Renew Disaster Response Services (DRS) volunteers. Her family lost their home and all of their possessions in a wildfire last May,” said Barb Bracko, a World Renew DRS volunteer.

“They are struggling to rebuild their lives, find a new home, and deal with the emotional trauma they have experienced. They are also turning to God for strength and direction in their lives.”

Bracko and other World Renew DRS volunteers met with the young mother and many other Fort McMurray residents in October and November 2016. In May 2016, wildfires destroyed roughly 2,400 structures, including homes, and 1.5 million acres of land in Alberta.

“I met one couple who described the fire that destroyed their home and all of their belongings as a blessing because it has drawn them closer to the Lord and strengthened their trust in him. They said that God has provided everything they need since

the fire. They have faith that he will provide what they need in the future. The couple’s friends offered them their basement suite, rent-free, while they recover, and their church will be donating bedroom furniture, a sofa, and a table and chairs when they find their own place,” said Bracko. “They lost all their earthly possessions, but they have gained the ‘peace that passes all understanding’” (Phil. 4:7).

World Renew DRS volunteers meet with disaster survivors to help communities like Fort McMurray make sure that those who need help recovering are not forgotten. Determining who needs help with rebuilding is a key step in the reconstruction process and provides a foundation for World Renew and other organizations to make plans for home reconstruction, which is now underway. It is also a way that the hope of Christ shines through the ashes of people’s lives after a disaster. ■

## Walking Alongside Hungry Families

by Jonathan Self

**F**or Nangombe, a mother of five, 2016 was a very difficult year. She lives in the Mwandu District of southwestern Zambia—an area that has suffered two successive years of crop failure due to drought.

Several years ago Nangombe’s husband died, and she has been the sole provider for her children ever since. Like many people in her community, she depends on farming to survive, but this has been extremely challenging given the lack of rain.

World Renew is committed to walking alongside communities such as those in Mwandu. With funding from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, World Renew has responded by providing monthly food assistance to ensure that families have enough to eat. Since July 2015, World Renew has provided food to over 31,500 community members in Mwandu, including Nangombe.

Over the past few months rain has started to return to the Mwandu District, and World Renew has provided families with seeds to plant. With enough rain, farmers like Nangombe will be able to harvest enough food to support their families once again.

**Nangombe and her five children received monthly food assistance from World Renew to help them survive after two years of crop failure.**





## What Will I Give up for Lent?

**W**hen Lent begins on March 1, I will join other Christians in giving something up.

When we abstain from certain activities or deny ourselves certain pleasures during Lent, we join with believers across the centuries who have given up things as a form of penance. For some, penance is a sacramental rite. For others, it's a confession—a confession that involves repenting of our sins before the Lord. For still others, it's a way to spiritually fast in order to focus our attention on Christ's sacrifice for us.

Some people may look at what we seek to give up and smile. Giving up chocolate for Lent? How sweet! Giving up Facebook? Hope you have some friends left! But if missing chocolate or shutting down Facebook connects us more meaningfully to God during this season, none of us need criticize.

I've given up many things during Lent in previous years. This year's fast, however, is a bit different. To explain it, I need to back up a number of years.

As a college student, I encountered H. Richard Niebuhr's book *Christ and Culture*. In it Niebuhr explains how believers take different paths to understand faithful living in response to the culture or society in which we find ourselves.

Some believers, he said, adopt the posture of *Christ against culture*. Others embrace *Christ of culture*. Still others see *Christ above culture* or *Christ and culture in paradox*.

As a young Calvinist aware of Abraham Kuyper's assertion that every square inch belongs to God, I found *Christ transforming culture* to be a perfect fit. This approach looks for God's actions between the Kingdom "now and yet coming," in order that we may join in God's transforming work through Christ and the power of the Spirit.



While still staunchly Reformed and Kuyperian, I feel called this Lent to give up my certainty about my role in "Christ transforming culture." It's my way of saying, "I'm sorry, God, for all those times when I assumed I knew your plan and was busily at work in it but ignored others who understood your plan differently.

"I'm sorry for all the times when I voted for people or policies that I assumed would put me on your transforming side but didn't consider transformation that could happen in other ways; all the times when I put my faith in educational systems that I assumed would bring about a new generation of transformationalists who thought and acted like me."

Giving up this assumption that my own way of seeing things is right leaves me feeling a bit naked, vulnerable. It means a loss of certainty; a loss of confidence in myself. It

acknowledges an error for which I need to repent.

For these 40 days of Lent, I'm going to simply seek to be in the church, within the body of Christ. Not acting on a belief that God has called me to be part of his transformationalist troops, but to be one of many parts of Christ's body yearning to become more Christ-like.

I trust that in the coming days many of us will remain focused with phrases like *restoring God's world* or *transforming for shalom*. Some will maintain that candidate A or B, or legislation X or Y, will best accomplish God's transforming purposes. Some will be called to work toward those ends. Yet I suspect that many times there will not be unity of strategy, even among the transformationalists.

As I give up my certainty for Lent, I'll turn instead toward the Beatitudes. And maybe, just maybe, by the end of Lent I'll be able to refine my understanding of Christ and culture and be used mightily by him.

The Beatitudes end, after all, where we find ourselves on resurrection morning: *Rejoice and be glad!* ■

“This year's fast is a bit different.”



Steven Timmermans is the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

You add.  
God multiplies.

## Think Christian: All Ages Welcome

Some say *Think Christian* is a blog for young people, but Mary Remein disagrees.

“There is value for older, 60-something folks like me,” said Remein, a member of Silver Spring CRC in Maryland who retired from a job in human resources in 2014.

“*Think Christian* has made me more aware of God’s presence in places where I don’t typically look for him.”



Mary Remein joined the conversation on *Think Christian*.

*Think Christian*, an online magazine produced by ReFrame Media, the English language outreach of Back to God Ministries International, provides a community where Christians discuss how to bridge the gap between faith and culture.

“It connects me to thoughtful Christians

who seek to be faithful and Christ-like in a wide variety of settings,” said Remein.

*Think Christian* offers a starting point for conversations about current topics.

Remein recalls one opportunity when her doctor asked her about a television show. Although she doesn’t watch the show, she had read about it on *Think Christian* and was able to respond with insight.

“This led to an interesting discussion about the brokenness of the world and my source of hope—Christ,” she recalled.

“[My doctor] shared that he’s a nominal Jew, married to a Seventh Day Adventist. He had questions about some of the ‘rules’ of Christianity.”

Faith and culture affect believers no matter their ages. *Think Christian* aims to bridge the gap between the two.

“*Think Christian* is necessary and effective because we’re influenced by what we see and hear through media. It’s a challenge for Christians to sort through the mass of information and form a Christian perspective,” said Remein. ■

—by Kristen Fergus Van Stee,  
Back to God Ministries International

## New Tools Available from Faith Formation Ministries

Churches interested in finding new and creative ways to engage people of all ages and to inspire the practice of professing our faith have some new resources to turn to.

The new Intergenerational Church toolkit focuses on helping congregations cultivate a culture “in which faith is nurtured and relationships are fostered as all ages learn, serve, and worship together.”

This toolkit offers churches dozens of ideas for integrating intergenerational practices into the ministries, activities, and programs in which a church is already involved.

The new Professing Our Faith toolkit arises out of the CRC’s decision to open the Lord’s Supper to children, which means that the traditional process of making a public profession of faith before taking communion is no longer required.

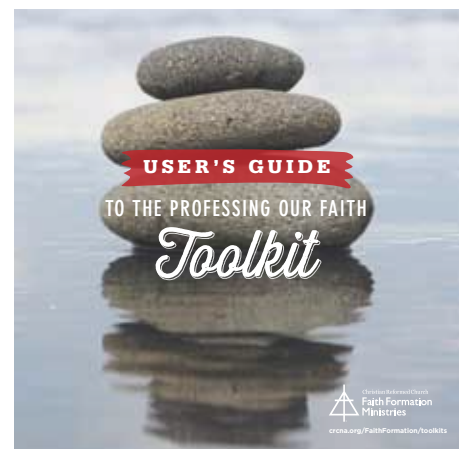
Nonetheless, making a profession of faith, and doing it in fresh and creative ways under the supervision of a congregation’s elders is still important.

“We want to help create a culture in which we feel comfortable professing our faith to one another,” said Sandy Swartzentruber, resource coordinator for Faith Formation Ministries (FFM).

FFM toolkits that were introduced earlier focused on Faith Storytelling, the Building Blocks of Faith, and Welcoming Children to the Lord’s Supper. All of these toolkits are available free at the FFM website ([crcna.org/faithformation/toolkits](http://crcna.org/faithformation/toolkits)).

“We are making these toolkits practical rather than conceptual. We want you to be able to pick these up and start to use them,” said Swartzentruber.

—by Chris Meehan, CRC Communications



### A Sign of Hope in a Hard Place

**P**astor Veronica Taveras’s heart broke as she witnessed the children in her community of Batey Bienvenido skip class so they could earn money for their family.

Many of them worked as shoe shiners or even prostitutes. If they didn’t earn enough that day, their parents would punish them.

Wanting to help, Taveras began an after-school program of sorts: preparing hot meals for the children and teaching them Bible stories along with basic reading and writing. But she still wanted to do more.

Proactive leaders like Taveras are the heart and soul of Christian Reformed World Missions’ partner ministry in the Dominican Republic—the Center for Transforming Mission (CTM).

CTM director Mario Matos helps leaders like her take the next step in improving their ministry.



Veronica (center) has a heart for ministering to children in her community.

“We invite these leaders to consider all aspects of why people in their community are poor and why they suffer,” he said.

Training events with Mario helped Taveras realize additional ways to help the children. “Veronica wanted to feed the children but quickly learned there was much more going on in their home life,” said Matos.

As she learned more about the abuse that was happening in the children’s homes, Taveras began inviting parents to classes and helped them understand the harm they were doing to their children.

“Family violence has been greatly reduced in the area since these classes started,” added Mario.

Taveras also began connecting with other leaders in the CTM network and learned more about other children’s ministries in her area. Through those connections, she was able to provide children with medical appointments, school supplies, and even scholarships.

“Veronica’s program has greatly impacted the community of Bienvenido,” said Matos. “Her love and dedication is truly a sign of hope in a hard place.” ■

—Brian Clark,

*Christian Reformed World Missions*

### Finding News Ways to Be Church

**A**n “immersion experience” at Bridge Street House of Prayer sparked visions for Eric Kas’s bivocational ministry in Grand Rapids, Mich.

During his pastoral internship, Kas accompanied the youth group from Caledonia CRC on the week-long experience that included prayer rhythms, urban neighborhood engagement, and being part of a missional community.

When he left Bridge Street, he wondered, “What would something like this look like in our neighborhood of south-east Grand Rapids?”

After graduating from Calvin Seminary in 2015, Kas went on a backpacking trip with three other men from Oakdale Park CRC. While hiking in the mountains, they began to dream about what it would be like to live as a community that emphasizes discipleship and intentional living. Kas and one of



Eric Kas (kneeling) receives prayer during his ordination service.

the men began meeting for daily morning prayer to sort through where the Lord was leading.

A major question they discerned was whether God was leading them to start a church or a community that came alongside the church—a parachurch organization.

By March 2016, they couldn’t shake the feeling that they ought to start a church.

Kas now partners with Home Missions and Oakdale Park CRC to lead what they are calling Good News Gatherings.

As a student, Kas worked on the maintenance team at the seminary. After graduation, he accepted a permanent part-time position working with facilities at Calvin Seminary.

Kas says he intentionally centered on bivocational ministry, and he is passionate about rethinking the idea of church while empowering Christians to live out God’s calling on their lives.

Having a part-time pastor enables members to be the church together as they gather in homes. “[It leads to] a shift in expectations on the ordained clergy,” said Kas. “It re-emphasizes the priesthood of all believers, and helps to sustain this new expression of church.” ■

—Emily Sajdak,

*Calvin Theological Seminary*



You add.  
God multiplies.



F Street inspires art and community.

## Creating Together

In a historic church building in downtown Lincoln, Neb., F Street Neighborhood Church is a young congregation cultivating new community and life.

Pastored by Jeff Heerspink, F Street began in 2014 with a vision for a new church in a building and neighborhood that have experienced decline and poverty but are also at the heart of the city of Lincoln.

Beyond the Sunday service, F Street is involved in the community through a farmer's market, block parties, and other events.

The church is refurbishing its small chapel to be an art studio and gallery as a way of drawing neighbors into community.

F Street has received a community engagement grant through Home Missions to help with the initial costs of purchasing art supplies; the studio will rely on volunteers from the church and community.

Jean Stryker, a classically-trained artist at F Street, will volunteer as the primary staff person. Instructors will not only be skilled artistically but will also be followers of Christ with a heart for the community.

Stryker says the studio will “bring the gifts of creativity and beauty to our challenged neighborhood.”

It will be a safe space for people to take low-cost art classes and to come for open studio work hours.

At times, the studio will also be used as a gallery for public events, giving people a chance to showcase their creations.

As Stryker pointed out, “Beauty, while not necessary to survive, is essential for the human spirit to thrive.” F Street Studio will be a place for people to thrive, to grow artistically, and to find community.

F Street was started by Northern Lighthouse Ministries, itself a church with a practice of investing in the community. ■

—by Erica Eizenga,  
Christian Reformed Home Missions

## SHORT TAKES

### Co-directors Named for Pastor Church Resources

Lis Van Harten and Cecil Van Niejenhuis have been named to serve as co-directors of Pastor Church Resources, the Christian Reformed Church office that provides resources to pastors, church staff, councils, classes, and congregations.

Meanwhile, Norm Thomasma, the current director of Pastor Church Resources (PCR), is stepping aside to serve as a senior consultant to the office as he looks toward retirement in 15 months.

“This process is designed to enhance the ministries of PCR and capitalize more strategically on the gifts, experiences, and aptitudes of the directly affected staff by moving toward a co-director approach to ministry leadership,” said Colin Watson Sr., director of ministries and administration for the CRC. ■



### CRC Church Celebrates Martin Luther King Jr.



Emmanuel Philips leads worship at Millbrook CRC.

Millbrook Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., was packed on Jan. 16 with people who came to celebrate the U.S. holiday marking the life and legacy of slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Attendees had a chance to listen to stirring music presented by well-known performer Ken Medema and to take part in prayers of lament and repentance offered by representatives of the CRC's Office of Race Relations.

“We need to lament those things that cause our hearts to weep, things on this earth that are not always how we want them to be,” said Pastor Shannon Jammal-Holleman from the Office of Race Relations. ■

—Chris Meehan,  
CRC Communications

## Ruined

by Ruth Everhart

reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



**RUTH HUIZENGA, BORN INTO A CHRISTIAN REFORMED FAMILY**, had always seen herself as a good girl—dutiful, diligent, doing what was expected of her.

In *Ruined*, Ruth shares the traumatic story of what happened to her during the fall of 1978 when she was a senior at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., living off-campus in a house with several other young women. On the evening of November 5, two armed assailants broke into the women's house while they were sleeping. They were robbed and raped at gunpoint.

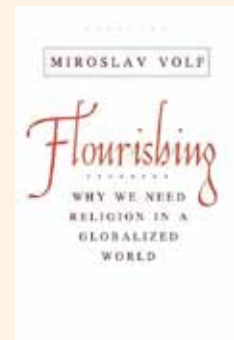
The four-hour-long attack changed Ruth's life forever. The theological worldview she had inherited from her family and church and her "good girl" perspec-

On the evening of November 5, two armed assailants broke into the women's house while they were sleeping.

tive on herself seemed inadequate to house the explosive questions that became her daily bread: "God, what did I do that you would let this happen to me?" And later, when the courts meted out justice, "What about God? What about justice? Was God responsible for that justice? Be careful. Because if He was, then wasn't He also responsible for the injustice—the crime that brought us to court?"

In the chaos, Ruth began to hear God's call to study theology and to enter the ministry. She eventually became a Presbyterian pastor and has served that denomination for more than 20 years. Throughout her memoir, she writes about how she would have counseled her younger self to understand the debilitating feelings of shame and her perception of herself as damaged goods, though in God's eyes there is no such designation.

In this emotionally compelling, achingly vulnerable, and spiritually astute memoir, Ruth Everhart invites readers not only into her pain and healing, but into a theological conversation about the intersection of the divine will and human will. (Tyndale) ■



## Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World

by Miroslav Volf  
reviewed by Kathy Vandergrift

Miroslav Volf, a leading ethicist, takes on the argument that religion creates more problems than it solves globally and should be privatized. Beyond freedom of religion for all, he provides evidence for a positive and wide-ranging role in shaping globalization. Nihilism, says Volf, is the genuine threat in the context of market-driven globalization, not other religions. Drawing on history, personal experience, and deep Christian convictions, Volf outlines a pluralistic path for religions to contribute to the flourishing of creation and reconciliation instead of violence. His is a hopeful, practical, and realistic voice in a time of growing questions about the role of religion in society. (Yale University Press)

*Note:* Kathy shared this with us by using our "Submit a Review" link at [thebanner.org](http://thebanner.org). Have you read, watched, or listened to something we should know about? You too can send in a review!



## The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross: The True Story of Why Jesus Died and Rose Again

by Carl Laferton

reviewed by Jenny deGroot



This picture book delivers on the title and more—in a few pages it tells the

grand narrative of redemption. Focusing on humanity's separation from God through sin, the story uses the temple curtain to explain how God was separated from, yet present with, his people. Jesus' death caused the curtain to tear apart, and we were invited back into God's presence. The text is simple but imaginative, and Catalina Echeverri's strong illustrations support the story. At a time when there are many cute and not-so-accurate tellings of Bible stories with a not-to-be-missed moral punch, carefully written texts like this are most welcome. Ages 5 and up. (Good Book Company)



## The Thing Itself

by Adam Roberts

reviewed by Phil Christman

Scientists in Antarctica accidentally discover a creature that exists outside of human perceptual categories such as space, time, and causation. The knowledge turns one of them into an amoral superman and the other, the only man on earth who can stop him, into a

basket case. This novel confronts some of the knottiest problems in philosophy and science without sacrificing pace or accessibility. For fans of C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy, or of John Carpenter's *The Thing*, or of brilliant books, period. (Gollancz)



## Lamentations: Simple Songs of Lament and Hope, Vol. 1

by Bifrost Arts Music

reviewed by Robert N. Hosack

Bifrost Arts Music is a group, ecumenical in focus, that mines the history of sacred music in search of lost treasures and seeks to introduce new hymnodies. In that role they produce music for church worship and make related recordings. Using co-founder Isaac Wardell's home equipment, all of the songs on *Lamentations* were recorded in varied makeshift locations. It comes across as a group of intimate friends who have gathered together to help the church learn to lament like Jesus. Available at [bifrostartsmusic.bandcamp.com](http://bifrostartsmusic.bandcamp.com), this digital album shows the beauty of independent, theologically informed, Christian worship music in a popular evangelical culture awash in contemporary Christian music. (Bifrost Arts Music)

## The Queen of Katwe

reviewed by Kristy Quist

Phiona is an intelligent Ugandan girl with a natural sense for strategy, making her perfect for chess. The fact that she lives in a slum works against her, but her coach sees her potential and pushes her, along with her teammates, to compete and win against young people with many more advantages. Chess is a way out of the plight of being a single woman in the slums, a reality that is not ignored in the film but is dealt with in a sensitive rather than sensational way. Here is a family movie that is inspiring and heartwarming without being cloying. It's full of strong, loving relationships even in the hardest of times. On disc now. (Disney)



## THE LOWDOWN



**Art Smarts:** Pastors, worship leaders, artists, and others will find lots of wisdom for using the visual arts to deepen worship and faith in Lisa J. DeBoer's book *Visual Arts in the Worshipping Church*. (Eerdmans)



**Book Battle:** Reality television about books? That's right, March 27-30 will bring the 16th *Canada Reads*, a battle of the books competition on CBC. Only in Canada, eh?



**It's Back:** *The Shack*, William P. Young's best-selling novel about a father grieving the loss of his daughter,

comes to the big screen this month. (Lionsgate)



**Family Ties:** On March 26, *Brontë* fans can learn more about their favorite trio of writers from the biopic *To Walk Invisible*, written and directed by *Happy Valley* writer/director Sally Wainwright. (PBS)

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