Pastor in Guam Says Farewell After 27 Years

When Rev. Neil Culbertson left Faith Presbyterian Christian Reformed Church on the island of Guam, he was honored by the governor of Guam.

Governor Felix P. Camacho bestowed on him the Ancient Order of the Chamorri Award, which is the highest civilian honor that can be bestowed on a non-Chamorro person. “We were honored to receive that from the governor,” said Culbertson.

Culbertson spent 27 years on Guam, serving the CRC’s farthest-flung congregation. During that time, the church experienced many changes, including moving from a storefront facility to its present million-dollar complex, transitioning from a mission project to a locally supported church to the Faith Presbyterian Christian Reformed Church of today.

On an island just 30 miles long, cultivating relationships with other pastors was important, Culbertson said. “The Pacific Islander culture is generous and warmhearted,” he said.

A multicultural society with folks from all over Micronesia, Asia, China, and the Philippines, Culbertson said the island has all the same problems of addiction, broken homes, and gangs as any place in North America, but it is also a society that embraces people warmly. “This is a place where a pastor can really make a difference through and well beyond the setting of the congregation,” he said.

Culbertson is now serving Tacoma (Wash.) CRC.

—Heidi Wicker

Michigan Hip Hop Festival Draws 500

It’s not the same old song and dance for Step of Faith Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., whose recent Hip Hop Festival drew 500 guests.

This was the fifth year the congregation hosted the event. Step of Faith is a church plant supported by Sherman Street Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, along with inSpirit (Christian Reformed) Church in Byron Center, Mich., and South Grandville (Mich.) CRC.

Step of Faith’s pastor, ministry associate Stedford Sims, explained, “The whole purpose is to target teens with the gospel and also to equip young leaders in this generation.”

Sims isn’t changing his tune any time soon. He said his church plans to host the Hip Hop Festival for years to come.

For more, please see www.thebanner.org.

—Ryan Struyk

Calgary Boy Raises $4,000 for Chile

Steven Brennan, a 5-year-old from Calgary, Alberta, biked 22 kilometers (13.6 miles) to raise money for earthquake survivors in Chile.

“I have seen lots of people raise money for people in Haiti, and I got the idea that I can raise money by biking,” he said. “I want to give it to people in Chile, though, because they also had an earthquake and they also need our help.”

After speaking in his church and school, and sending information to family and friends, word spread, even reaching the Chilean embassy in British Columbia. As a result, Steven easily surpassed his original $500 goal, raising $4,000 for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee’s work in Chile.

On June 22, Steven’s best friend, Maya Taylor, joined him, and the pair biked successfully from their school to where Steven’s dad works in downtown Calgary.

“I felt kind of tired,” said Steven upon completing the trip, “but I was really excited that I made it.”

For more on Steven’s ride and information on CRWRC’s response in Chile, visit www.crwrc.org/stevenbrennan.

—Kristen Vanderberg

Beacon Light performs at the Grand Rapids, Mich., Hip Hop Festival.

The festival featured 14 local artists, free food, face painting, and more.

Most of the attendees, like Phyllis Graham, came from the community. “There is always very good entertainment,” Graham said. “I talk to people in the community and socialize.”

For more, please see www.thebanner.org.

—Ryan Struyk