IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Michael (Mike) Reitsma
1944-2017

Pastor, visionary, church planter, leader, and mentor, Michael Reitsma had a huge heart for both God and people. Diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease at age 48, Reitsma was able to serve in ministry for another 10 years before retiring. Reitsma died on May 12 at the age of 73.

Reitsma served Christian Reformed congregations in Minnesota, California, and Alberta.

“What I remember most about Mike,” said a pastor colleague, “is his earnest and unrelenting embodiment of the Christian mission. His vision for the city of Calgary led to his leadership of a city-wide ministerial association. Even as Mike’s body was betraying him in his last months, he still talked vision.”

Another pastor and close friend said, “Mike had a capacity to spot potential leaders and had a passion to raise up future leaders. He helped catalyze church planting in Calgary.”

Reitsma excelled at basketball and completed several marathons. He enjoyed fishing and hunting with friends and family.

Reitsma is survived by Ruth, his wife of 51 years; four children and their spouses; and 13 grandchildren.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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

Rev. Michael DeVries
1935 - 2017

Michael De Vries was passionate about proclaiming Jesus as the boundary-breaking, socially transforming Savior and Lord. Ecumenically minded and forward thinking, he embraced change.

His pastoral care was filled with humanity. Tender and gentle, he could sit with people in their darkest hour. De Vries, who battled cancer for 28 years, died on May 27 at the age of 81.

After seminary, De Vries earned a Master’s degree at Westminster Theological Seminary and received his “doctorandus” degree (doctorate) from the Free University of Amsterdam.

De Vries served congregations in British Columbia, Ontario, California, and Michigan. He also participated on several CRC denominational committees and was twice the president of synod, the annual leadership meeting of the CRC. He co-authored a book in 2015 entitled Pillar Church in the Van Raalte Era.

De Vries loved reading and called the bookstore his “candy store.” He had a great sense of humor.

Left to mourn his death are Patricia, whom De Vries married in 2007; three children and their spouses; four stepdaughters; 15 grandchildren; and 5 great-grandchildren. De Vries was pre-deceased in 2005 by Marianne, his wife of 45 years.

—Janet A. Greidanus

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

Iowa Church Celebrates 150 Years

Wellsburg (Iowa) Christian Reformed Church celebrated its 150th anniversary on July 8 and 9 with the theme “God is faithful through all generations.” The celebration on Saturday included a reflection on the church’s history, songs shared by the choir and musical group Broken Cross, and words from former pastors on their memories of the church.

On Sunday, the celebration continued in worship services. Steven Timmermans, executive director of the CRC, gave a message on Psalm 100. Former interim pastor Rev. Dan Brouwer gave a message from passages found in 1 Peter, “God’s Will: Our Focus for the Future.”

An anniversary booklet commemorating the music and mission of Wellsburg CRC over 150 years was also published. Various members of the congregation wrote about how God used them in his mission and how he worked through their projects throughout the years.

Mildred Griffin, a member of the church and part of the committee for the anniversary celebration who helped to write the 150-year booklet, said only God could have carried the congregation through its beginnings to now. “There is only one word or phrase—God’s faithfulness,” Griffin said. “When the denomination was 10 years old, the first minister chose . . . to become affiliated with [the CRC]. We are only the second church west of the Mississippi, and sermons were preached in Dutch to a German congregation. God has been faithful 150 years.”

—Kyle Hoogendoorn