Can Kuyper still speak?

Mike Wagenman

I still remember the year 1995 because that was when I first encountered Abraham Kuyper. In fact, amidst scores of people leaving Christian Reformed congregations, my family joined the CRC. One of the main reasons we left the Baptist church for Reformed Christianity was that in the neo-Calvinist theologians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries we discovered a way of following Jesus that comprehensively engaged all of life. Until 1995 Jesus was my saviour. But after 1995 I came to realize that when Jesus said that “all authority” had been given to him, he meant it (Matt. 28:18). Here was a non-reductionistic Christianity that grappled deeply with the world’s created goodness, its radical rebellion in sin and God’s cosmic redemptive purposes to restore all things in Christ. I was hooked.

Today I serve the denomination that introduced me to a world-engaging kind of Christian discipleship by directing a Christian study centre which takes its name from Kuyper (kuypercentre.ca). Here we seek to mentor students and faculty to “think Christianly” about every area of academic study. Our hope is that just as the Dutch Reformer sought to be a witness to Christ in every square inch of creation, a renaissance of prophetic Christian engagement of all things might take place in our day.

One of the dispatches I’d like to send from the world of campus ministry to church-land is that there are still people like me who are yearning for full-blooded Reformational Christianity. It seems that many Reformed congregations today believe they can manage a fresh expression of God’s spirit within their ministries by buying into the simplistically pre-packaged sermon series and spiritual lingo from evangelical, charismatic, non-denominational and fundamentalist ways of doing church. Ironically, many students I encounter on campus are searching for world-engaging discipleship—a kind that has more in common with the theologians of the past than the next hip preacher with a catchy personality and slick worship band. We preachers might be surprised to learn how many people today are tired of pulpit chatter and who are longing instead for a faith that deeply connects the insights of our Reformational heritage with the existential questions being asked today on street corners, in board-rooms and in university labs.

As Reformed Christians, while we don’t take church tradition as authoritative for the life of faith, buying into the simplistically pre-packaged sermon series and spiritual lingo from evangelical, charismatic, non-denominational and fundamentalist ways of doing church is a jarring statement even to me. It will also sadden some of my devoted friends and Christian sisters and brothers who have done the same, including many who have made service in the CRC their careers. It won’t ease my pain or theirs when I add that I had my priorities wrong.

That’s a jarring statement even to me. It will also sadden some of my devoted friends and Christian sisters and brothers who have done the same, including many who have made service in the CRC their careers. It won’t ease my pain or theirs when I add that my passion for God’s Kingdom was excited considerably more by Christian organizations, including Christian schools, than by the CRC. Para-church organizations taught and motivated me much more to work to make God’s will done on earth. Particularly, they better enabled me to distinguish between the typical CRC and its evangelical siblings was diminishing and that the preservation and development of a Reformed worldview depends more on Christian education than on the CRC. He...
Can Kuyper still speak? continued

today, what God has done in history can be an inspiring motivation for following Christ faithfully in our own time and place. Does someone like Kuyper have anything to offer us today? Might Kuyper’s insights in his own era propel us toward engaging our contemporaneous neighbours with the gospel in ours?

Standing before God’s face

The first, and actually most important, reminder of our Reformed forebears provide is that the God who is Trinity stands at the centre of reality. As Kuyper said in his 1898 gendered language, “The starting-point of every motive in religion is God and not Man. Man is the instrument and means, God alone is here the point, the goal of departure and the point of arrival, the fountain, from which the waters flow, and at the same time, the ocean into which they finally return” (Lectures on Calvinism, 53). The Reformed worldview does not begin with me, my comfort or my concerns. Reality – past, present and future – is God’s unique project.

“It is not God who exists for the sake of His creation; the creation exists for the sake of God” (55). And so when we stand on the front porch of our consciousness and look out at life in this beautiful and broken world, a distinctly Christian perspective begins and ends with the One who holds all things in his hands. In contrast to that, many Christian voices today claim that life is all about what we do, and that Jesus affirms us. But Kuyper says “In all religion God Himself must be the active power. He must make us religious, He must give us the religious disposition, nothing being left to us but the power to give form and expression to the deep religious sentiment which He, Himself, stirred in the depth of our heart” (55).

This isn’t meant to suggest that the God who is Trinity stands at a careless, disinterested distance from the created world, as the eighteenth century Deists claimed. While God exists at the centre of reality, in Jesus Christ he stands facing the world unwaveringly intimately. Kuyper reminds us that our covenantal God is universally present to his creation.

Church = launching pad

But let’s not forget that there’s more to the life of faith than the realm of personal spirituality or mere church attendance. Christ commissions us for kingdom work in the whole of life, not merely to cultivate warm fuzzy feelings in our hearts or to warm a pew on Sunday mornings. As shocking as it may sound to us, Kuyper says that “A religion confined to feeling . . . [is] unthinkable” for the Christian. And neither is church the obligatory goal of the Christian life. Rather, at the heart of Calvinism is the Kingdom of God so that “a religion confined to the closet, the cell, or the church, therefore, Calvin abhors” because “God is present in all life” (62). The church is a launching pad, not a holding pen. The church’s role is to equip Kingdom citizens for Kingdom work in the world, not just in the church. Christ calls us to follow him on a path of suffering love and service for a world that’s dying for renewal. Christ does not call his disciples to a life of ecstatic signs and wonders and high-flying euphoria; he sends his Spirit to us so that we might be empowered by God’s Word, discipled into maturity, strengthened in our trust that nothing can separate us from his love, and then sent into a world that needs to see and hear that another world is not only possible but being birthed into reality. There is a strong centripetal force within the church today by which committees, small groups and various other “meetings” have come to monopolize Christian life, leaving little time or energy for acts of service and witness outside the four walls of the church building or the strong social networks we have created. As Kuyper concluded his sermon, “Incarnation of God, the Life-Principle of the Church,” preached on November 10, 1867, in Utrecht: everyone must take the gift they’ve been given by God in science, labour, art, music, education or parenting, and apply those gifts to every sphere and question of life, regardless of the pain and suffering it elicits, so that the entire world might come to know Christ the Lord. Reformational Christianity sends the church into the world to be the salt and light of Christ.

I fully recognize that talk like this today is often misunderstood as embarrassing, romantic and idealistic nostalgia. Secularism was not the heart of Calvinism. And other Reformational figures of the past is not to reintroduce the past to our time in a wooden cut-and-paste fashion. Rather, as Kuyper himself said in his sermon on July 31, 1870: “Christianity detests a false conservatism that adorns itself with the name of Christianity but is devoid of its power” (Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader, 71). Rather, “it is our calling to hold fast what we have in Christ in our own time,” and to engage in “the enormous task of bringing the power of the gospel to bear” on the realities of the present (82-84). It is my hope and prayer that we might still have ears to hear those who have gone before us, rather than settling for simplistic and silly gimmicks that only entertain and sedate.

Out of concern continued

could also have made the anguished observation that as public education has become more aggressively anti-Christian, support for it among CRC members has increased and been defended. In addition, weakening practice has occurred at the same time as denominational statements of principle (e.g. the 2005 Synodical report) have been strengthened, though widely ignored. By contrast, Christian schools (particularly CSI-related schools, from Kindergarten through post-graduate) have grown immensely in terms of Reformed worldview, both in principle and in practice.

Why are we not alarmed?

Imagine our reaction if about 60 percent of CRC parents choose to send their children to Muslim “catechism” classes or day schools. We would panic. Or would we?

With slightly altered circumstances, such as cheap or free Islamic education in a future society where Islam has displaced secularism as the dominant religion, we might hear the same reasons for choosing Islamic education that Schuurman now reports for secular education:

• We need to be a witness in Islamic schools
• Bussing is better to the Islamic school
• There is some bullying in the Christian school
• No Arabic immersion in the Christian school
• Christian schools drain resources from the church
• “Irreconcilable differences” with the Christian school (presumably not with the Islamic school)
• Promoting Christian schools is divisive

Christian schools at all levels have made strides in the development of Reformed thinking (here: Trinity Western U).

• Church shouldn’t say much about something that is a matter of parental choice
• My child wants to go to the Islamic high school

Far-fetched? Maybe. But here’s the point: subtle adoption of Islamic doctrine and widespread desertion of CRC members to Islam is not what threaten the CRC. Secularism does. We are far more threatened by secularism than by our Abrahamic brothers.

Where God matters

Come on, you may say. Is secularism really such a threat? We still have freedom of religion. Isn’t secularism simply the separation of church and state? Come to think of it, isn’t secularism a pretty good expression of Abraham Kuyper’s idea of sphere sovereignty?

Well, no. One Christian scholar has defined secularism as the deep-seated commitment that God doesn’t matter in the things that matter. He could have added that it also demands the right to decide which things matter. As secularism advances, more things matter. That means God matters in fewer things. Thus far it has benevolently allowed God to matter in a few private things like personal devotion and congregating under steeples, but decidedly not in culturally formative things like politics, education, business, science and even (bi)ethics.

But isn’t that exactly what God calls idolatry? Having other gods beside him? It’s OK that God claims to be Lord, but he is going too far when he demands that there be no other lord beside him. Recently I conducted a poll among Israelis just before the confrontation between God and Baal at Mount Carmel. By a margin of 93.7 percent they declared that the Lord was still their god. Polls conducted at other peak idolatry eras in ancient Israel show similar results. They seldom abandoned God. It’s just that they also needed other gods for things that really mattered like rain, crops, social (in)justice, war and fertility. The problem was that God was just too intolerantly jealous.

Dissolving ties

Secularism too, is a jealous god. It can’t stand serious competitors. That is why, especially in Ontario where I live, secularism so desperately tries to destroy Christian education. By contrast, it should worry us that it tolerates the CRC quite politely.

Now Schuurman cites evidence that when schools cut the umbilical cord to the church, this begins a “slippery slope to ‘Christian values’ and eventually only humanistic values.” That’s true. But this situation is quite different from most
How I Met Your Mother My Saviour

_When a child is young – say around five or six years old – the questions they ask are not very challenging._

_My son used to ask me things like: “why do you put gas in the car?” and “how does electricity get into the house?” and “how does money work?”_ None of these questions stumped me – or at least not for very long – because they’re reasonable questions for a child to ask and they can be responded to with straightforward, factual answers.

_Even a recent, more complicated science question by my son (who is nine now) didn’t leave me stuck for long. He asked: “if oxygen atoms and hydrogen atoms exist in the atmosphere, and water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen, why can’t we just breathe in all the water vapour we need to survive?”_ So, I did what any modern parent in that situation would do: I stalled for time by pretending not to hear him and quickly looked up the answer on my phone.

_But not every question a child asks is factual. And not every answer is straightforward._

_On a recent trip to the video store, my son was reading the back of a DVD box and suddenly said: “Dad, I know you’re not going to want to answer this question, but what’s a ‘sex slave?’”_ Again, I did what any modern parent in that situation would do: I tried to distract him with another DVD and said: “Hey, Cam, check this one out – it’s about unicorns!”

_My son looked at me, disappointed, and said: “Dad, that’s not gonna work on me anymore.”_ At which point, of course, I complimented him on being so much smarter than he used to be and wasn’t it great how he wasn’t fooled by such obvious tricks anymore, and when did he think he got that clever, was it a recent thing or not, and did he learn it at school or from a friend, and, by the way, how was school today? (Faced with a tough question I don’t want to answer, I still have a few tricks up my sleeve. And I made a mental note to watch him more closely when he’s browsing movie titles).

Neutral?

_Most of the time, though, I actually like answering my son’s questions. I suspect most parents enjoy engaging with their kids for the same reason I do: because our children force us to re-evaluate and re-examine issues, facts and ideas we may have formed our own opinions about long ago._

_Another recent question was: “Dad – what are the differences between the political parties?”_ Now, it’s not secret that I have a political bias. I worked in politics for about a decade. I am a card-carrying, proud, Ontario Liberal. That I live in a riding that is solidly Conservative and worship in a church that is only slightly less blue than Smurf Village makes that a tough position to be in, but I accept it. And my son knows this.

_So here’s the choice I faced in that situation: do I let my bias colour my answer? Or do I answer the question as neutrally as possible and let my kid reach his own conclusions? I decided the best thing to do was answer as fairly as I could. So, I said something like this:_

“Political parties are groups of people who share an understanding of what it means to live the ‘good life.’ Conservatives believe that the good life means that people should have more of their own money in their pocket to spend as they wish, and that government should be as small as possible. New Democrats believe that people need strong social programs to get ahead, and that we do best for each other when we invest in government services we all use. Greens believe that there can’t be a good life unless we protect our environment, which is the source of all our wealth and health. And Liberals pick elements of all those positions, and believe each is a little bit important.”

_I have to say I was pretty proud of my kid when he was able to identify the weaknesses and strengths in each position. And like most smart, idealistic, sensitive kids, he decided the Greens best reflected his own beliefs. I held my tongue._

Background data

_The discussion got me to thinking, though: do we make enough of an effort as parents to answer out kids’ questions in a fair and balanced way? Are we well-enough equipped to answer really tough, metaphysical questions like “what are the differences between faiths, and how do we know ours is the right one?”_

_I can see the day coming when my son asks that question. And I don’t know how I would answer, to be honest, because my knowledge of world religions is pretty spotty, at best, and I’m far enough along in my own Christian faith that I don’t suspect it’s subjectively obvious, or that it’s one area where objectivity is not only impossible but unknowable. After all, isn’t educating children in our faith the goal of Christian parenting? And wouldn’t exposing kids to other beliefs at too early an age introduce too much uncertainty and anxiety? I’m not sure if other parents wrestle with questions like these. I do know that if my kid asked me that question now, my answer might stretch for as many seasons as the TV show “How I Met Your Mother.” (If you don’t know the show, it’s all about the failed relationships the main character, Ted, has before he meets his true love. It’s been running for seven seasons now. That’s one LONG story). But maybe that’s what I need. Maybe I could use a sermon series or a class called “How I Met My Saviour” – where one someone gives me an in-depth look at all the faiths and ideas they pursued before becoming a Christian._

_Because, as a parent, I’m reaching that stage where I no longer have all the answers – and the questions keep getting harder and harder._

_Lloyd Rang lives in Bowmanville, Ont._

Out of concern continued

_of those he alludes to. It’s not wayward schools that are cutting ties with the faithful church. Schools are begging for a good relationship with local churches. But many CRC congregations across Canada are slowly dissolving ties to Christian schools (though I am thankful that many are not). My observation over 60 years is that Christian schools at all levels have made immense strides in the development of Reformed thinking and act and discernment of spirits, while many CRC congregations are determinedly adopting more generically Christian values – not so much in doctrinal standards and policies as in practice. Loss of spiritual irrelevance, ignoring and ignorant of competing faiths and ideas they pursued before becoming a Christian._

_Such Schuurman indicates, the umbilical cord analogy soon breaks down. A 50-year-old child should be deeply connected to mother, but not with an umbilical cord. From many points of view, including the old Reformed concept of sphere-sovereignty, the church that comes to expression under a steeple should not hierarchically control the church that comes to expression in the classroom, business or artist’s studio._

_Symbiosis needed

_The CRC in Canada has mothered an astonishing number of organizational children in addition to the many educational ones: Christian Farmers Federation, Christian Stewardship Services, Christian Courier, Christian Business Federation, Citizens for Public Justice, the Centre for Public Dialogue, the Christian Labour Association, Edudeo, Cardus, the CRC Extension Fund, even retirement complexes and nursing homes, not to mention the organizations in close cooperation with other denominations. These are well beyond needing a CRC umbilical cord. CLAC, for instance, may soon have about as many members as CRC Canada, and would hardly hiccup if the CRC denomination evaporated tomorrow._

_So here’s my fear for the denomination I love: that she is slowly fading in the direction of personalistic cultural irrelevance, ignoring and ignorant of competing secular idolatry. So far, the biggest single restraint to that trend is her children, especially her educational children (see the Cardus survey). Her children (Christian organizations and schools) will, for quite some time yet, continue to support their weakening parent, the church, even as she neglects, distances herself from, and sometimes spurns them and the increasingly vibrant Reformed worldview by which they want to live. But the blessing of the symbiosis Schuurman recalls will be harder to maintain. A scarier scenario is that after the CRC has alienated her children, they begin to give up on her as she has on them. They need each other._

_Sylvan Gerritsma lives in St. Catharines, Ont. If you missed Schuurman’s original piece, you can read it on our website www.christiancourier.ca under “Frequently requested articles.”_
How math illuminates our infinite God

John Van Sloten

This is the time of year when anxious North American educators and policy makers get to do their math. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has just released its 2012 student survey results—which largely focus on a 15-year-old’s understanding of mathematics, reading and science—and the math numbers are troubling. Canada ranked 13th, while the United States placed 36th.

While the perceived loss of global prestige may be worrying, there’s a much greater cost for people of faith to consider. To become illiterate in the language of math is to lose one of our greatest tools for communing with God.

In Mathematics Through the Eyes of Faith authors Russell Howell and James Bradley note, “We encounter mathematics everywhere, making the invisible visible,” while Stanford University mathematician Keith Devlin eloquently describes the mathematical process as “making the invisible visible.” While British mathematician Ian Stewart wistfully notes, “We encounter mathematics everywhere, every day, but we hardly ever know it.”

Stewart’s comment struck a deep chord in me. While doing research for a recent sermon on mathematics, I realized how important math was for knowing God and how little I knew of the language. I began to wonder if there were things of God that only math could fully explain.

Greater than googol

The Bible can use words to describe God’s infinite nature, telling us that God’s understanding has no limit and that even the highest heaven cannot contain Him. The language of mathematics, however, can go much further in terms of showing us what the infinite really means.

A recent BBC documentary on the topic of infinity helped me understand this. The program begins by introducing some large numbers that contemporary mathematicians now use, starting “small” and then working up. A googol is the number 1 followed by 100 zeroes. A Googolplex equals $10^{\text{googol}}$. In the documentary, mathematician Peter Cameron says “a Googolplex has so many zeroes that there is not enough space in the entire observable universe just to write the number down, even if you could write each one on a single atom.”

Everything in nature bears the signature of an infinite author.

Now look for infinity in another direction. Put the number 1 over any number (1/x) and you’ll discover the infinitesimal (the infinitely small). In Mathematics Through the Eyes of Faith, Gottfried Leibniz, the co-founder of calculus, thought that “most scientific problems need infinitesimal calculus because everything in nature bears the signature of an infinite author.”

Calculus, by adding up the infinitely small, has brought more accuracy to our understanding of the nature of reality than we ever had before. We can now know with great precision the area under a complex curve and what an object in motion is actually doing. Turns out small things matter a lot.

If calculus can help us understand the reality of physical nature perhaps it can also help us understand the reality of the Maker of physical nature. Are the Holy Spirit’s invisible workings so often imperceptible because they are infinitely small? Even as math makes the invisible visible, would a study of calculus help illumine our theological take on God?

If we don’t possess even basic math skills, how will we ever be able to engage the mathematical—that is, the logical, precise, trustworthy, universal, elegant, infinite and awe-inspiring mind of God?

John Van Sloten is senior pastor of New Hope Church in Calgary, and author of The Day Metallica Came to Church. This article originally appeared online at thinkchristian.reformmedia.com, used here with permission.

What the Olympics reveal about Russia

Angela Reitsma Bick

By the time this article goes to print, the 2014 Winter Olympics will have just begun and the world’s gaze will be firmly fixed on Sochi. The smallest victories and most obscure information about Russia will make headlines.

I lived in Moscow and made many friends there between 2001 and 2002. As a people, Russians come across as welcoming as a cold snap in February— at first. But if you stick around, the thaw is remarkable. Many examples of kindness and generosity remain in my memories of that year. Here are a few other stories from my experience that give insight into the upcoming Games.

The danger

September 11 doesn’t have the same meaning abroad as it does in North America. I may be one of the only Canadians left who still haven’t seen the ubiquitous footage of the World Trade Centers collapsing. We had no TV in our concrete, Soviet-era apartment block, and internet access was seven subway stops away. The news travelled fast, of course, but it was hard to reconcile the shock of our family back home with the more blase reaction of local Muscovites. They were cynical of the recurring line, “the world will never be the same.” Russians were all too familiar with terrorism before 9/11, thanks to Chechenya rebels.

“Now the Americans know what it is like,” I heard more than one person say bleakly, which has certainly come true on this continent over the past decade.

The threat of terrorism during the Sochi games is, therefore, very real, especially given Sochi’s proximity to Chechnya—but it won’t throw the Russians into a paralyzing panic. Even we grew used to soldiers casually carrying large guns at every metro stop.

The cost

Much has already been written about the skyrocketing spending for Sochi, currently reaching $51 billion. It’s roughly five times what Vancouver paid in 2010. Isn’t every Olympic Games, however, the most expensive one we’ve ever seen, by definition? Certainly, corruption and mismanagement may be playing a role here. But in any discussion of expense, an exceptional characteristic of Russian culture must be included: namely, that it’s accessible to the average citizen. The Olympics are no exception.

Ballet, concerts, sporting events, theatre, museums—nothing is prohibitively expensive. In the Kremlin’s own theatre, and that was the foreigner rate. Russians pay even less. Similarly, Olympic tickets are dirt cheap compared to what locals normally pay, with economy seats selling for 500 rubles ($16 Cdn). Admission in Vancouver for the less-popular Winter Olympic events did start at a reasonable $25, but the opening ceremonies set spectators back between $175 and $775.

The stakes

Sochi is a big deal for Russia, since the last time the country played Olympic host was for the Summer Olympics under the Soviet flag in 1980. Vera, a student of mine, shared a startling memory from that time. During the run-up to the Games, she was told by her teachers that Russian athletes would win the gold in everything. Believing that the USSR was unbeatable was central to Soviet mentality. Not only would the other athletes lose, eight-year-old Vera was told, the ones who had to swim would be in danger of drowning—that’s how poorly they’d do compared to the Russians.

When the USSR didn’t top the podium at every event, Vera realized she’d been lied to and remembers wondering: “what else is untrue about what I’ve been told?” She had accepted the doctrine that the Soviet Union had the most freedom, the most advanced technology, the best variety of healthy food and consumer goods and had accomplished the most in space. After the Games, she thought, “Are we really better off in every way?”

This year, although presumably hopes are more realistic, national pride is no less on the line. Being in the spotlight has already forced President Putin’s hand when it comes to human rights abuses. Maybe eyes will be opened in other ways to some of the lies that his government has perpetrated.

But the biggest challenge this Olympian country will face is not bombs, bills or falling behind in the medal count.

It’s figuring out how to keep Vladimir Putin from participating in every event himself.}

Angela Reitsma Bick, Editor of CC, raises a toast to the health and safety of athletes, organizers and spectators alike: Ваши здоровье!
How much did the Dutch know?

The letter “Dutch soul-searching over wartime conduct” by John Tamming (Dec. 23, 2013) raises legitimate questions. He points to the many Dutch men called up to work in Germany who found a hiding place as proof that the Dutch were lax and negligent in providing Jews with hiding places. However, to be able to judge the validity and fairness of such a statement, one would have to establish how many Dutch men and Jews respectively wanted to go into hiding, and not all Jews did. The Jewish Councils throughout The Netherlands, with the one in Amsterdam taking the lead, advised their people not to go against German orders for fear that measures taken by the Germans against them would become even harsher. In fact, Jewish Councils throughout The Netherlands cooperated with the Germans in drawing up lists for deportation (see The Heel of the Conqueror).

Did these Councils knowingly send their own people to their deaths? That is a question to which Jacques Presser, a Dutch Jewish historian who himself survived the holocaust and wrote a two-volume history of the destruction of Dutch Jewry, does not give a conclusive answer (Ondergang; De Vervolging en Verdelging van het Nederlandse Jodendom, 1940-1945). The deportees were told that they would be going to work camps in the east, and whether or not they believed that, they also believed that if they went into hiding and were discovered, the consequences would be much more severe than if they followed deportation orders.

So, did the Dutch do enough to save the Jews from destruction? Probably not, but here too the question of what the Dutch people knew about the fate of the Jews played a role. To argue that the Dutch people were generally informed about what was happening to the Jews, and believed what they heard, is debatable when even Presser more or less gives the Jewish Councils the benefit of the doubt in this regard, nor does he accept it as a given that the Dutch populace generally knew. The Germans were very good at preventing the spread of undesirable information at a time when regular news media had ceased to exist.

Gerry Gerrits, retired from the Department of History and Classics, Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S.

Even Anne Frank knew the score

It is good of Ms. Schipper and Vanderven to engage in this discussion (“Letters,” Jan. 27, 2014). Growing up in a post-war Dutch subculture, I repeatedly heard two rather contradictory lines about the Dutch and their Jewish citizens: First, they were ignorant about Hitler’s intentions. Second, with some notable exceptions (such as the NSBers) they performed heroically in their defense. If your readers, including my two interlocutors, were not subject to either of these myths, then my original letter to CC would not strike a chord with them. However, when I read an article (“A handle on history,” Nov. 11, 2013) which again repeated the myth that the Dutch were “bewildered” or “confused” about German plans, such prompted my response.

On Oct. 9, 1942 Anne Frank wrote of her people, “We assume that most of them will be killed. The English radio speaks of gassing. Maybe that is after all the quickest method of dying.” If a 13-year-old in an attic was privy to my answers a similar accusation against Dutch people during Nazi occupation, put forward by Dutch author Ido de Haan, and wrote a two-volume history of the destruction of Dutch Jewry, does not give a conclusive answer (Ondergang; De Vervolging en Verdelging van het Nederlandse Jodendom, 1940-1945). The deportees were told that they would be going to work camps in the east, and whether or not they believed that, they also believed that if they went into hiding and were discovered, the consequences would be much more severe than if they followed deportation orders.

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In defense of the Netherlands

I was 10 years old in 1942, and I recall there was a country-wide strike [protesting] the deportation of Dutch people of Jewish faith in 1941. In fact, my own father was on strike for this cause. The strike ended suddenly. Later, as an adult in Canada, I read (according to a Jewish writer) that it was the Jewish Rabbis who advised the Jewish people not to resist, but to obey the authorities.

Furthermore, Dr. Joseph Michman of Yad Vashem (The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority) answers a similar accusation against Dutch people during Nazi occupation, put forward by Dutch author Ido de Haan, and wrote a two-volume history of the destruction of Dutch Jewry, does not give a conclusive answer (Ondergang; De Vervolging en Verdelging van het Nederlandse Jodendom, 1940-1945). The deportees were told that they would be going to work camps in the east, and whether or not they believed that, they also believed that if they went into hiding and were discovered, the consequences would be much more severe than if they followed deportation orders.

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What's Your Story? Fifth Annual Christian Courier Short Story Contest!

It: Send in your original short fiction (1000 to 3000 words) on any theme by May 1, 2014. First prize receives $100 and publication in a summer issue of Christian Courier. Please note that this contest is for fictional short stories, not essays or articles. Second prize receives a year’s subscription. All stories must be submitted to cathy@christiancourier.ca electronically. Entries over the word limit will not be considered.

It: Our readers 8 to 14 years of age can participate in the category for youth. There will be two divisions: junior (Grades 3-5) and Intermediate (Grades 6-8). Send your short stories (500-1000 words) to cathy@christiancourier.ca by May 1, 2014. Entries over the word limit will not be considered. The first-place winner in each division will win a gift certificate to Chapters valued at $50. All stories will be considered for publication in CC. Please include a photo of yourself, your mailing address and a short bio.

Jerry Stehouwer
Richmond Hill, Ont.

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Canaanite city discovered beneath later ruins in Israel

JEJUSALEM (LiveScience) – Late last year archaeologists announced that they had unearthed traces of a previously unknown ancient Canaanite city buried underneath the ruins of a later city in Israel.

The traces found include an Egyptian amulet of Amonhotep III and several pottery vessels from the Late Bronze Age unearthed at the site of Gezer. Gezer was once a major center that sat at the crossroads of trade routes between Asia and Africa, said Steven Ortiz, a co-director of the site’s excavations and a biblical scholar at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. The remains of the ancient city suggest the site was used for even longer than previously known.

The ancient city of Gezer has been an important site since the Bronze Age, said Ortiz, because it sat along the Way of the Sea, or the Via Maris, an ancient trade route that connected Egypt, Syria, Anatolia and Mesopotamia.

The city was ruled over many centuries by Canaanites, then Egyptians, then Assyrians. Biblical accounts describe an Egyptian pharaoh giving the city to King Solomon as a wedding gift after marrying his daughter. “It’s always changed hands throughout history,” Ortiz said.

The site has been excavated for a century, and most of the excavations so far date from the 10th through eighth centuries B.C. Gezer also holds some of the largest underground water tunnels of antiquity, which were likely used to keep the water supply safe during sieges.

Familiar from biblical history

Last summer, Ortiz and his colleague, Samuel Wolff, of the Israel Antiquities Authority, noticed traces of an even more ancient city from centuries before King Solomon’s time. Among the layers was a section that dated to about the 14th century B.C., containing a scarab, or beetle, amulet from King Amenhotep III, the grandfather of King Tut. They also found shards of Philistine pottery.

During that period, the ancient site was probably a Canaanite city that was under Egyptian influence. While exciting, the findings are consistent with what scholars suspected of the site, said Andrew Vaughn, a biblical scholar and executive director of the American Schools of Oriental Research, who was not involved in the study.

“It’s not surprising that a city that was of importance in the biblical kingdoms of Israel and Judah would have an older history and would have played an important political and military role prior to that time,” said Vaughn. “If you didn’t control Gezer, you didn’t control the east-west trade route.”

But once the location of that route was moved during the Roman period, the city waned in importance. It was later conquered and destroyed, but never fully rebuilt.

B.C.: ‘Accidental’ documentary examines city’s treatment of the homeless

VANCOUVER (CCNS) – Documentary filmmaker Kevin Miller premiered his new 44-minute film “The Chicken Manure Incident” at an evangelical church in Abbotsford, B.C., on January 25.

Shot in June and July 2013 at the height of the furor over the City of Abbotsford’s controversial decision to dump chicken manure on a spot frequented by the homeless, the film follows Ward Draper and Jesse Wegenast of 5&2 Ministries as they seek to hold the city of Abbotsford, the police department and the faith community to account. The ministry takes its name from Jesus’s miraculous feeding of five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish.

Miller calls his film an “accidental documentary” because he just happened to be filming a profile of 5&2 founder Ward Draper when news of the chicken manure situation broke. Operating as an immediate one-man crew, Miller then followed the story as it developed over the ensuing weeks.

The manure dump led to a class action lawsuit against the city and an internal investigation into police actions against the homeless. As it turned out, two of the leading spokespeople advocating on behalf of the homeless were the very people Miller had initially set out to profile: Ward Draper and Jesse Wegenast of the 5&2.

In addition to Draper and Wegenast, the film also features interviews with Mayor Bruce Banman, Chief Constable Bob Rich and several members of Abbotsford’s homeless community. The film’s music score is provided by Aldergrove-based band Yuca and Mr. Bennett, an independent group from the Toronto area.

“After spending the last several years traveling across North America and around the world, it was refreshing to find a gripping story right in my own back yard,” said Miller, who even converted his garage into a makeshift inter-

Frustration on all sides

He noted that two other Lower Mainland communities – Surrey and Port Coquitlam – have used similar tactics to deal with their homeless populations. “Clearly, there’s a level of frustration on all sides, and a lack of creativity when it comes to dealing with the problem of homelessness,” said Miller. “I’m hoping this film will spur some healthy discussion and creative problem-solving rather than scapegoating and name-calling.”

“I’m really hoping this film can generate not only financial capital for the 5&2 but social capital as well,” said Miller. “I think the work they’re doing is vitally important, and I feel privileged to not only highlight their efforts but to also support them financially as well.”

Miller, Draper and Wegenast were all present at the Abbotsford premiere and engaged in a post-screening “Q&A.”

“The Chicken Manure Incident” marks Miller’s second outing as a writer-director. His previous film – “Hellbound?” – played in dozens of theatres across North America last year and was recently released on Netflix and the Documentary Channel. His previous credits include the feature-
Sea-snail glands secrete a fluid that turns a specific blue, discovered on this scrap.

JERUSALEM (BCN) — The Israel Antiquities Authority has announced they have found a 2,000-year-old piece of fabric dyed with extract from the Murex Trunculus, which produced a unique color called teckhelet, meaning “blue” or “turquoise” in Hebrew.

Scientists have been able to verify only two other fabrics discovered in the last 2,000 years that contain the dye. According to a report in the Daily Mail, the gland of the sea-snail secretes a yellow fluid that, when exposed to sunlight, turns purple-blue. In Numbers 3:38 God tells Moses, “Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner.” It is that color blue that researchers say they’ve discovered on the fabric they’ve found. The Book of Chronicles implies that the veil of Solomon’s Temple was made of the same color.

Various sources report that researchers believe the fabric may have belonged to Jewish refugees escaping during the Bar-Kokhba revolt against the Romans after the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 132-135.

Calvin Seminary receives Lilly grant to help students face financial issues

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) — Calvin Theological Seminary has received a $250,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., to help the seminary develop workable approaches to financial issues its students face.

Calvin Seminary is one of 51 theological schools across the U.S. that have received grants as part of the second round of Lilly’s Theological School Initiative to Address Economic Issues Facing Future Ministers. The theological grants total $12.3 million. The Lilly initiative is aimed at encouraging seminaries to strengthen their financial and educational practices for the economic benefit of future pastors.

The Lilly Endowment is a well-known, Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation, established in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family, that gives grants in three areas: religion, education and community development. The Lilies were founders of the Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical Company.

Calvin Seminary will use the grant money to enact a three-year program that is designed to: understand its current financial situation and that of students; provide significant “financial formation” for students; provide vocational development services for students; develop new financial and scholarship resources for students whose financial needs are currently least able to be met.

“We are grateful to Lilly Endowment for this opportunity to go deep in our understanding of our particular economic challenges and then to enact sustainable programmatic solutions, under the wisdom of God’s Holy Spirit,” said Janny De Jong, chief financial and operating officer at the seminary.

Recent research indicates that student educational debt in excess of $30,000 is not uncommon for seminary graduates, and some students are graduating from seminary with loans of more than $100,000, says a Lilly press release.

“The Endowment believes that pastors are indispensable spiritual leaders and guides, and the quality of pastoral leadership is critical to the health and vitality of congregations,” said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “Financial hardships can make it difficult for pastors to lead their congregations effectively.”

Pro-life Canadians given warm welcome at frigid U.S. March for Life

WASHINGTON, D.C. (LifeSiteNews.com) — Their hands ached, not from the freezing temperatures but from giving all those high-fives for hours as the U.S. March for Life processed past the Canadian embassy where the delegation of young pro-life Canadians stood to cheer on their U.S. counterparts.

“We wanted to stand in solidarity with our pro-life U.S. neighbours,” said Alissa Golob, head of Campaign Life Coalition Youth (CLCY). Golob sees standing up for the unborn as part of living up to Canadians’ reputation for being “caring and compassionate.”

Campaign Life Coalition, organizers of Canada’s own March for Life, which takes place in May, sent a 15-member youth delegation to attend the D.C. march. The team arrived one day before the march. Golob spoke at the Law of Life Summit, an official March for Life activity, where she was joined by 30 American pro-life leaders.

“Since abortion was decriminalized in 1969, we’ve had different pieces of legislation that have been put forward by Canadian MPs throughout the years, attempting to pass some sort of law on abortion, and not one has passed,” she told participants. “We’re counting on you to overturn Roe vs. Wade. We’re counting on you to use your influence to help empower the Great White North. Big Brother may be watching you – but so are we.” That might not be as impossible as it sounds. Polls are showing that the majority of the U.S. population now favors restrictions on abortion.

Mutual admiration

That night the Canadian team was also able to take part in the vigil mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, where they joined 10,000 participants, 33 bishops, 300 priests, 60 deacons and 550 seminarians. The team was delighted to see Toronto Cardinal Thomas Collins co-celebrate the Mass.

The Canadian team had obtained a permit to display their banners at the march. They also held signs and a large Canadian flag along the route where they stood, directly in front of the Canadian Embassy. One banner the group held read: “Canadians Stand with Pro-Life America.” Another read: “Abortion is a Crime Against Humanity.” But the team may have received more support than it gave, as numerous U.S. pro-lifers who marched by thanked the Canadians for their presence and support.

“They kept singing to us the Canadian National Anthem,” CLC’s Matthew Wojciechowski said. Some of the American marchers honored the Canadians at the famous Dubliner Irish pub after the march.

Jim Hughes, CLC’s national president, who has been attending the U.S. March for Life since its beginning, said he was proud of their youth delegation for brave the freezing temperatures to support justice for the unborn.

Hughes related to some guests at the “rose dinner” how Nellie Gray, founder of the U.S. March for Life, “bugged me for years to get involved in the operation rescue.” He said that it took several years of Gray shooting down all his objections before a decision was made to begin a march in Canada. That was 17 years ago. From very humble beginnings, the Canadian march has grown to many thousands of participants annually.

Golob asserted that U.S. pro-lifers have an important lesson for Canadians wanting to end abortion. “Canadians can learn a lot from their American counterparts who are engaged in dangerous procedures and practices.”

“Canadians can learn from the incremental steps America has taken in their battle to overturn Roe vs. Wade, which is why joining forces and standing in solidarity is so important,” she said.

Golob especially liked how, this year, U.S. march organizers created a March for Life app that allowed participants to stay abreast of recent research indicates that student educational debt in excess of $30,000 is not uncommon for seminary graduates, and some students are graduating from seminary with loans of more than $100,000, says a Lilly press release.

“The Endowment believes that pastors are indispensable spiritual leaders and guides, and the quality of pastoral leadership is critical to the health and vitality of congregations,” said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “Financial hardships can make it difficult for pastors to lead their congregations effectively.”

U.S.: 87 surgical abortion clinics closed in 2013

WICHITA, Kansas (Operation Rescue/Breitbart) – According to an Operation Rescue survey, 87 surgical abortion clinics in the U.S. closed their doors last year. That was a record number of closures and brought the total number of surgical abortion clinics down 12 percent, to 582 across the U.S. The number is also a decrease of 73 percent from the all-time high, in 1981, of 2,176 such clinics.

The report states that 81 of the 87 clinics that closed in 2013 are permanently gone. The other six will still perform abortions via the sale of abortion-inducing drugs instead of surgically.

Troy Newman, president of Operation Rescue said, “These numbers show that the pro-life movement is gaining ground and that the abortion industry is collapsing — mostly due to its own negligence and greed, which has been exposed by their unwillingness and inability to comply with even the most rudimentary safety standards.”

Texas was the state with the most closures — 11 — following the passage there of an abortion law earlier in 2013. And new abortion clinic safety regulations accounted for closures in Maryland and Pennsylvania, the latter where horrific conditions and practices in Kermit Gosnell’s Philadelphia clinic came to light.

According to the survey, Planned Parenthood clinics accounted for nearly 30 percent of all active surgical abortion clinics (172 of 582) and 93 percent of all clinics that offer abortion via drugs only. Planned Parenthood’s roughly 300,000 abortions per year are responsible for about one third of all abortions performed in the United States.

Besides its regular website (operationrescue.org), Operation Rescue runs another site, AbortionDocs.org, that lists every American surgical and medication abortion clinic, as well as documenting how specific clinics engaged in dangerous procedures and practices.
It’s impossible to meet and worship together when pews and pulpits are continually broken apart and reformed into barricades.

Instead, we serve

But we’re good at defending ourselves, too. Community heals, and so we weep and rally around those who have fallen so far, pray long and eloquent prayers, profess forgiveness and move on, often when the problems have merely been covered over. We certainly don’t revisit sin – east and west being conveniently far enough for our forgetful needs – and sing the praises of a body with unified parts. And repeat the cycle when the next big one comes along.

Except for homosexuality, that is – for our gay brothers and sisters we save a special sort of judgment.

Homosexuality has become the church’s new mission field, where homosexuals are evangelized as vigorously as the unsaved. Murray talks about gay Christians, too, being singled out by an alienating sort of welcomer – with love and welcome, but always with a conditional, sidelong acceptance that ultimately highlights our differences. Gay Christians are always “them,” to the point where we actually worry about the salvation of the flawed saint worshiping next to us.

I’ve used this language too, most often with the goal of avoiding conflict and striving for unity. But it is a strange paradox when the words we think we’re using in love to bring people together create even more distinct borders within our communities.

Where it’s impossible to meet and worship when pews and pulpits are continually broken apart and reformed into barricades.

And I won’t do it any more, either.

Shift, now

We are not defined by our fallen qualities, but as children of God and created in his image. Is sin real? Yes. Are we sinful? Yes. Will we struggle to define and determine how we should respond to what may or may not be sinful in our communities? Absolutely.

But Murray’s article also reminds me that, because of Jesus, sin no longer defines who we are. That price has been paid. We are a new creation – every gay and straight one of us – and although sin is real, it must no longer determine how we relate to each other as we live out our mandate. We all serve under a banner of unmerited grace, yet our platitude and make-nice statements reveal an inability to trust that whosoever believes will not perish much less have eternal life. As though we might have some say. We don’t.

Instead, we serve. Together.

Brent lives in Hamilton, Ont. Visit brentvans.com to find out more about him.

Not every sin is a crime

Prostitution, faith and the law

In December, the Canadian Supreme Court declared several laws regulating prostitution to be unconstitutional. However, the Court also suspended its ruling and said that legislators had a year in which to reconsider the law. Parliament has the option of making prostitution safer by regulating it more carefully, but it also has the option of making the activity illegal altogether.

For Christians, it might seem clear that prostitution should be a crime. But there are a variety of different issues at play, and during this year of policy analysis we should consider the topic with care.

In Canada v Bedford the Court looked at laws that made it illegal to maintain a bawdy house, to live off the profit of prostitution or to publically communicate for the purpose of prostitution. The unanimous decision found these laws unconstitutional, because they violate the Charter of Human Rights’ protection of “life, liberty and security of person.”

Even though the statutes were designed to limit the ability of pimps to profit from exploiting others, the Court found that the statutes were overbroad in that they kept prostitutes from hiring security guards or from managing their trade in their own homes. The Court said that the laws endangered the lives of people engaged in legal activity.

As legislators at the federal and provincial levels decide how to respond, they will consider three approaches. First, prostitution can be criminalized. This is the approach found in most jurisdictions of the United States, where enforcement almost always arrests prostitutes rather than those who use the services. A second approach is to legalize and regulate prostitution. As the Supreme Court points out, however, such regulations have to be carefully crafted so that they do not make a legal activity too difficult. Third, prostitution can be decriminalized, which means that there is no law making the activity a crime but there is also no law protecting the activity or the participants.

Christians, believing that God’s authority impacts all areas of life, have to think about when and how government should regulate intimate behaviour.

First, do no harm

You could argue that because prostitution is sinful and immoral it should be against the law. However, we engage in many sinful or immoral activities without debating whether they should be illegal. For example, it is both sinful and immoral to fail to honour one’s parents or fail to love one’s children. But rather than making these activities illegal, we focus instead on criminalizing activity that results in clear harm. Physical and emotional abuse of children or parents is illegal, whereas failure to love them is not.

Christians can also choose to focus on the harm of prostitution rather than on its morality. The question then becomes one of evidence. Can prostitution be a voluntary choice made by two equals entering into a contract, or does it always harm a community?

Criminologist John Lowman explains that the Canadian sex trade includes sexual slavery, survival sale of sex by poor women or homeless teenagers with few options in life, and a more “bourgeois” trade where a greater level of consent exists. Efforts to regulate prostitution have to take into account the variety of activities and participants in the field.

During this year Canadians will hear a lot of arguments about different sorts of regulations. It is important to remember that the decisions do not have to be made in a vacuum. European countries have experimented with divergent policies on prostitution and we can learn quite a bit from their experiences.

Lend your ear

The Netherlands and Germany legalize but regulate prostitution. In both countries legislators have found that legalization resulted in not just an increase in prostitution but also an increase in poor immigrants and an increase in illegal sex trafficking. Though the health of sex trade workers got better, the violence of organized crime syndicates increased. Both countries are re-examining policies to increase safety of sex trade workers.

In Sweden prostitution is illegal, but enforcement focuses on the clients and those who manipulate or harm prostitutes. Prostitutes wanting to exit the life are given significant support. Though some argue that Sweden’s law has pushed the violence of prostitution underground, the Swedish government reports that street prostitution has been cut in half. More importantly, the number of men who say buying sex is okay has also dropped significantly.

The more I study this issue, the more I see the complex difficulty of matching a proposed law with a desired social outcome. I have concluded, though, that I think Christians should focus on the safety of the weak and the vulnerable. Let’s spend this year listening to the voices of those abused by the sex trade, learning how best to stand up for them.

Julia @stronsk@whitworth.edu has practiced law and is the Edward B. Lindaman Chair at Whitworth U (Presbyterian Church U.S.A.) in Spokane, Wash. Your feedback is always welcome.
Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Great children’s books in honour of Black History Month

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

No More! Stories and Songs of Slave Resistance
by Doreen Rappaport.
Illustrated by Shane W. Evans (Candlewick Press, 2002).

African American slaves resisted their oppressors in various ways. In this emotionally evocative book, young readers are introduced to 11 individuals – among them Frederick Douglass, Olaudah Equiano, John Scobell, William Still and Suzie King Taylor – who struggled to retain their humanity in a culture of dehumanization and degradation. Some refused the title slave in their inner lives, living with free spirits despite their chains. Others stealthily destroyed their masters’ property in order to gain some control of their lives. Still others fled north to freedom. Coded songs – African-American spirituals – surreptitiously tell of their hope for a better future.

Author Doreen Rappaport and illustrator Shane W. Evans have collaborated on two other books that focus on later periods in the African American struggle for equality: Free at Last! Stories and Songs of Emancipation (Candlewick Press, 2004) and Nobody Gonna Turn Me ‘Round: Stories and Songs of the Civil Rights Movement (Candlewick Press, 2006).

Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom
by Carole Boston Weatherford.

In her trials as a slave, Harriet Tubman turned to her Lord and Saviour for courage and strength. Author Carole Boston Weatherford’s rendering of Tubman’s role as a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad highlights and celebrates the runaway slave’s relationship to God. When Harriet turned to God in despair about her master’s plans to sell her away from her family, she prayed, “I am your child, Lord; yet Master owns me, drives me like a mule. Now he means to sell me south…” And God replied, “I set the North star in the heavens and I mean for you to be free.”

Harriet acknowledged God’s voice as he led her to flee north. She thanked him for his protection as he guided her to safe houses and hiding places in haystacks, barns and a potato hole.

When Harriet finally arrived in Philadelphia and was liberated, she discovered new challenges and sorrows as she missed her family and yearned for them and other slaves to be free. Again she followed the Lord’s leading, went to a church where she learned how to become a “conductor,” and returned south to bring many other slaves to freedom. On each trip, Harriet experienced the reality that God was making a way for her.

The book’s conclusion is especially poignant and refreshing. When “free souls sing her praises, she gives glory where it is due. ‘It wasn’t me. It was the Lord. I always trust Him to lead me and He always does.’” Harriet Tubman was one of God’s faithful servants and a character worthy of introduction to children.

Kadir Nelson’s illustrations of Harriet capture her in all her complexity – her weakness, strength, piety, fear, triumph, sorrow and joy.

In this inspiring book for young readers, the poetic text and remarkable illustrations bring to life a man whose captivity could not imprison his artistic gift or his passion to express his inner thoughts and feelings.

Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave
by Laban Carrick Hill.
Illustrated by Bryan Collier (Little, Brown and Company, 2010).

Dave was an African American slave born in the early 1800s. But more important, he was an artist who over a period of 70 years made approximately 40,000 pots.

Dave lived in a time when most slaves were forced to do field work and were kept from learning a trade. They also weren’t allowed to learn how to read and write. There is no record of how Dave overcame both obstacles, yet his functional pots, some as large as 40 gallons and decorated with his haiku-like poetry, attest to the fact that he did. His poetry ranged from the whimsical to the practical to the serious. For example, on May 3, 1862, Dave wrote on a pot, “I made this jar, all of cross If you don’t repent, you will be lost.”

This inspiring book for young readers, the poetic text and remarkable illustrations bring to life a man whose captivity could not imprison his artistic gift or his passion to express his inner thoughts and feelings.

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema (sonyavf@55hotmail.com) is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ont.
Joel and Hayley Hensen: Bringing Christ to the Congo

How old were you when you first gave your life to Jesus?

Joel: Though I was surrounded by Christianity my whole life, I didn’t truly surrender my life to God until I was 18 years old.

Hayley: I grew up in a non-Christian family and was not surrounded with Christianity like Joel was. I was surrounded by different eastern religions, spiritualism and the occult. I did not surrender my life to God until I was 22 years old.

Joel, did growing up in the CRC influence your decision to become a missionary?

Growing up in the CRC church allowed many things to take root in my life and allowed me to grow so much when I first became a Christian. It is easy to take for granted growing up in a Christian setting, but knowing Hayley and how she was brought up has made me see the blessing that it was to be surrounded by Jesus’ love.

Did someone in your family inspire you to become a pilot?

No one in my family is a pilot. But when I was 15, my grandpa was the person who initially planted the seed of becoming a missionary pilot and introduced me to the organization called M.A.F. I can’t say that I was completely sold on the idea, but I certainly thought it was cool! God was the one who later brought it all back and here we are today!

How did you meet Hayley and how did you decide to become missionaries?

I first met Hayley at the family horticultural business, ITML, in Brantford. Later I was formally introduced to her by my cousin Dave Dejong who had led her to the Lord and was discipling her. We both knew that we were called to serve the Lord in a different capacity than we were currently serving, we just didn’t know what it would look like or how we were going to make the transition. One night we talked seriously about the possibility of joining M.A.F. The next day, I received an email from M.A.F. asking if I would still like to keep my initial inquiry open from five years earlier! Needless to say, we started the application and, six months later, we were official M.A.F. missionaries!

Hayley, how did you come to love the Lord?

During my life before God, I had gotten myself into some dark places. I travelled with the wrong crowd and invested my time in things incredibly harmful to myself and those who love me. By the time I surrendered my life to Jesus, I was a drug addict and alcoholic. Looking back, I am still amazed at the mercy and grace He freely gave me. Without going too much detail (I don’t like giving too much credit to the devil), my life was destined for an early end. Jesus came into my life when I was 22 years old. I was a complete wreck and often found myself hoping that my life would end. I had tried so many times to clean myself up, but had completely given up and accepted my situation and the reality of the choices I had made. Jesus came into my life, not through a preacher or a believer, but through a full-blown miracle. People to this day cannot believe that I am the same person they used to know. Jesus completely delivered me from all drugs and alcohol instantly. He has continually been faithful to his promise to always be with me even though I may make the wrong choices. Jesus is my life because he saved my life.

Why did you pick the Congo as your destination?

We were willing to go anywhere that M.A.F. wanted to send us. We had discussed possible destinations together, and we mentioned that the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) would be a really neat place to go. Initially however, when we joined, M.A.F. wanted to send us to South Sudan as the DRC was not available. We accepted and prepared by learning about the country and the situation that was going on. As time went on, something just didn’t seem right. We took a walk to get some fresh air and discuss what we were feeling. During our walk we received a phone call from Ken Forbes (CEO of M.A.F. Canada) who asked if we would be willing to go to the DRC instead of South Sudan! God moves in interesting ways! The other reason for Africa was that Hayley has always had a heart for the people of Africa and had already been on a mission trip to Zambia.

Joel, tell us about flying the African terrain.

I haven’t actually done specific training yet for the type of flying that I will be doing in the DRC. That will come next year after we complete our French training in Quebec. All of my previous flight training as a professional pilot will prove invaluable as an M.A.F. pilot. The DRC is a large country and the terrain varies. The airstrips that we will be flying into can be very challenging as they are all unpaved – grass, gravel or mud! Very few airstrips are actually flat. Most have uphill or downhill slopes and are very short.

How did M.A.F. get started?

M.A.F. was started in the 1940s by a group of Christian WWII airmen. They saw that they could use the airplane to preach the gospel to the unreached people in remote places. The first flight was piloted by a woman named Betty Green. She flew Wycliffe Bible translators into Mexico! Years later, Nate Saint and four other missionary men, who were flying with M.A.F., were martyred by a Wadoni tribe in the Ecuadorian jungle. This thrust M.A.F. into the global spotlight. After the death of the five martyrs, their wives and families went back to the Wadoni tribe, offering forgiveness and love. The tribe, formerly unreachable, accepted Jesus as their Saviour – amazing! Since then, M.A.F. has grown significantly and now has the world’s largest private fleet of aircraft totalling almost 140 airplanes. We fly in more than 30 countries and over 3,000 destinations, more than any other airline today!

Tell us about your fundraising campaign.

Since February 2013, we have been working hard to build a team of supporters that will uphold us in prayer and support us financially as we embark on this mission for the next four years (five years including language training). We have to raise two separate funds: an outgoing fund (one-time gifts) which covers the cost of our training (aviation and non-aviation); travel to Africa, shipping costs, and any other fundraising costs; and an ongoing monthly fund of $7,200 for the next five years. We have already raised our outgoing fund ($35,000) and need only our monthly support (we’re at 74 percent and need to finish this up by March 2014).
Wybe Byslma’s mission to Chinese cavemen

Ron Rupke

Two years ago Wybe Byslma told me about his first “caveman” friend in China. “Caveman?” I asked. Wybe’s metaphor described a young man totally isolated from family and friends, shut up in his room, playing computer games and surfing the net. Wybe’s caveman acquaintance Chengwei had lived this way, not for a few days or weeks, but for several years.

How did a retired schoolteacher from Canada meet this “caveman”? Let me tell you about my friend Wybe. Born in the Netherlands, he immigrated to Canada as a teenager in the 1950s. Barely able to speak English at the time, three years later he won the highest grade point average in his high school. He was principal of a new Christian high school in Bowmanville before age 30. Later he directed group homes for teenagers. He befriended foreign students at Canadian universities. When these young people shared their personal difficulties with him, Wybe decided to pursue counselling. At 59, he enrolled in an M. Div. program at Tyndale Seminary, taking every counselling course offered there.

One of Wybe’s Chinese student friends opened a school in Shanghai, and invited him to teach English there for a summer. He accepted. Now Wybe visits China regularly. Twice he has organized speaking tours for Christian professionals whose insights he hopes will spread across China. He has exchanged contact information with more than 2,000 Chinese individuals. Five years ago, Chengwei’s name was added to his directory.

From left: Wang Shenshen, Fan Xin, Wu Hongqian, Wybe Byslma, Weng Chengwei and Ron Rupke.

Chengwei, his father and Wybe.

Loving our neighbours experientially

“The Bible tells us that we must love our neighbour as much as we love ourselves,” Wybe explained to me. “We may think we love our neighbours – but that love doesn’t mean much until our neighbours experience it. Chengwei’s love language is encouragement – with no strings attached. He needed to feel that someone believed in him and cared for him.”

Not long after Chengwei moved back into the wider world, he got a call for help. A staff member of his former church told Chengwei about a young engineering student, Hongqian, who had dropped out of university and was now holed up in his room scanning a computer screen all day. Church members had tried to visit him, but he had shut them out. In desperation Hongqian’s parents arranged to have four strong paramedics drag him out of his room and into a psychiatric hospital for ten days. After his release, Hongqian retreated to his room even more bitter than before. His parents asked their church to pray for them. The prayer leader, Fan Xin, prayed fervently, and was “given,” as she put it, the name of Chengwei. Caveman #1 passed on the name of Chengwei. Caveman #2.

Chengwei did his best to befriend Hongqian, but to no avail. Hongqian shut him out, too. Wybe decided that he had to meet this new caveman in person. On his next visit to China in 2012, he simply walked into Hongqian’s room without knocking, put his arm around the young man, and started talking and listening. Two hours later Hongqian agreed to resume his studies at an engineering school in Shanghai. Although he went back to school and worked hard, he still refused to have anything to do with his parents.

In November 2013 Wybe invited me to travel to Nepal with him to work on a mentoring program he had started there. He scheduled a two-day stopover in Shanghai before flying to Kathmandu. Hongqian’s father met us at the airport, and drove us to a downtown hotel. There we met Hongqian’s mother and the prayer leader of their church. While we were all enjoying supper at a restaurant, Chengwei joined us. He had travelled four hours by train to meet Wybe and introduced himself to me with the words, “Hello! I’m Wybe’s caveman #1.”

Wybe and Chengwei paid a surprise visit to Hongqian’s dorm room that evening; Hongqian came back with them to our hotel. Next morning Wybe told me of his plan to get the young man talking with his parents. The plan failed. As soon as Hongqian saw his parents in Wybe’s hotel room, he immediately turned his back on them and fled to my room. He explained that he felt physically ill to be in the same room with them.

I watched as Wybe asked the young caveman why he wouldn’t speak with his parents. It was quite a physical conversation, a playful wrestling match. In staccato bursts, Hongqian graphically explained his mother’s frightening discipline tactics; as a child he had literally feared for his life. There would be no meeting with the parents that day.

“Physical touch is Hongqian’s love language,” Wybe explained to me. “You’ll notice that I use it frequently with him. He enjoys the playfulness.”

Later we visited Hongqian in his dorm room and invited his roommate, Haitao, to join us as we played chess and cards at our hotel. We had lots of fun. Haitao proved to be a delightful young man, who not only spoke excellent English, but also took an interest in Wybe’s mission to help Hongqian.

Three weeks later, on our way back from Nepal, we had to spend six hours at the Shanghai airport. Wybe emailed Hongqian and Haitao to visit us there. When we arrived, Haitao greeted us warmly and explained that Hongqian was working on an assignment and wasn’t able to come. Several hours later we learned that our flight to North America had been delayed by a full day. The airline provided us with hotel rooms and meal tickets. Hongqian then agreed to join us at the hotel and we resumed the routine of meals, games and conversations that we had enjoyed three weeks earlier. Early the next morning Wybe asked Haitao to phone Hongqian’s father and invite him to meet us at the airport that afternoon. Haitao then told Hongqian about Wybe’s plan.

The power of touch

Hongqian was visibly shaken when we met his father, waiting at the airport for us that afternoon. As Hongqian, his father, and Wybe embraced, Hongqian wiped a tear from his eye. Haitao walked with us to the check-in counter, leaving Hongqian and his father alone. From a distance, we watched the two men together. Hongqian appeared wary, but did not walk away this time. The older man circled his son, first addressing him from one side, then the other. This went on for about ten minutes. Suddenly the father put his arm around his son. The anger seemed to fade from the young man’s body – his father’s touch melted him.

Hongqian’s father insisted that we sit at a table together before leaving. A waitress took a photo of us – centered on Hongqian and his father hugging each other and smiling broadly. As we boarded our plane,
Karen Blaauw is a story-teller. Her hope is to gather and share the stories of people’s lives and to preserve them for their families. “People aged 60-100, that demographic, the amount of change they have experienced, we’ll never see again in one lifetime,” she says thoughtfully. “I see this generation dying, and I have a fair bit of angst about that – I don’t want their stories dying with them. I want to record them, share them, move it forward.” To help in this mission, she and her husband have started Lifestory Legacy Films. They interview people, record their stories, and then create a film which brings together the interview, photos, documents, letters, and – if it’s available – old home video footage to present a valuable documentary of their life.

Karen’s interest in people’s lives and stories started soon after she married her husband. Born and raised in Toronto, Karen attended Ontario Bible College (now Tyndale College and Seminary), where she met Heino Blaauw, the son of Dutch immigrants. They married soon after they graduated, and Heino took a position as a youth pastor at Ebenezer Reformed Church in Stoney Creek, Ontario. This began a time of considerable adjustment for Karen. Her family life, her faith experience and her heritage were so different from what she was now experiencing. “I was swept into the life and culture of the Reformed Church by marriage,” she says, and none of it was familiar.

Not religiosity, but disciplines of the Christian life
Karen’s parents had divorced when she was 13 years old. “When I married, I didn’t understand families with different experiences and foundations. I didn’t understand stable families. I appreciated them, but I didn’t understand them.” An added complexity was her different faith experience. Karen’s father was nominally Catholic, but her family did not go to church. At 15, she became a Christian through the ministry of Young Life in Toronto. “The change [after conversion] was huge. Becoming a changed person when I was a teenager – it was a radical change. My husband’s family was a stable family; it was not the dramatic change that I’d had. It had been stable for generations; it was a different experience than I’d had, and I had to learn to appreciate it.” Because it was hard to understand the faith experience of the people in her new community, she sometimes questioned it. “The word that comes to mind,” she reflects, “is ‘confusing.’ I didn’t understand the disciplines of the Christian life. I misunderstood it as religiosity. I think what happened was that we raised a family, and my husband cultivated those disciplines in our family, and it grew our faith. It showed me that it wasn’t religiosity, it was God using those disciplines. I had thought people were trying to draw life from those tools instead of from Jesus, but drawing life from Jesus through those tools, that’s a means of growth.”

Heino and Karen lived in the Niagara area of Ontario for 15 years. After several years serving as a youth pastor and studying for the ministry, Heino was ordained, and planted a church in Grimsby, where all five of their children were born. Though “pastor’s wife” can be a daunting role, Karen was unfazed. “I had no role model. I didn’t know what a ‘pastor’s wife’ was.” This left her free to be herself without worrying about what was expected of her. “I just really began to appreciate people and their stories – different stories from mine; they struggle with different things and have conquered different things. We’re all in a work in progress.” The Blaauws now live near Chicago, Illinois, where Heino is a chaplain in a seniors’ residence and physical rehabilitation facility. She laughs: “I think today I’d make a great ‘pastor’s wife.’ I feel like I’ve learned to give, to be forgiving, to accept people for who they are. It took 25-30 years, but God matured me. I began to see that everyone has a fascinating story. I began to appreciate more the folks that God had given me in my life circle.”

This growing appreciation for people resulted in her desire to preserve people’s stories and legacies for future generations with her film business.

“With the monumental technological changes that we’ve experienced, I began to appreciate more fully the stories of senior citizens around me. Their life experiences were so far removed from that of their children and grandchildren; I got concerned they’d be lost. And on a personal note, I could see that my dad was getting older. I didn’t want his story lost to my children.”

Insight through hearing stories
These thoughts corresponded with an opportunity. “I had a hunch in my life. I hit a crossroads, and was a first-time empty-nester. I wanted to know what to invest my time in now.” Karen and her husband teamed up with a film production company they knew and trusted, with a vision of creating life documentaries: “Because kids relate very well to the screen – we’d do it through films – but we’d also have a written component for the ages. What’s written doesn’t disappear.”

They started with two pilot projects, each about an hour long: one of Karen’s dad, and another of a woman from their church. Both Karen and Heino and their subjects were delighted with the results. For Karen, a discussion with her brother confirmed the value of what she was attempting. “You’re not going to believe this,” she told him, “but Dad told me this story, and he told that story, and that story – and we got it all on film.” Her brother was nonplussed; he had never heard any of the stories. One of the stories related how their father, before he had immigrated to Canada, had participated in a race in Dublin. He was an avid runner, and it was the county championship. As he neared the finish line, he heard a familiar cough in the crowd and realized his dad had come to watch him run. He came in second, but didn’t see his dad after the race. At home, he casually asked his dad if he had been at the race. His only reply was, “You should’ve made your move sooner.” Karen’s dad never knew if that cough was intentional, a way of showing his support by his presence, or if he really simply needed to clear his throat. “But that was his way of relating to him,” says Karen. “You can get so much insight into people through hearing their stories, their experiences.”

The films capture not only the stories, but the telling – the unique mannerisms, the familiar gestures that flavour their conversations, the way they smile or look at the ceiling when they’re thinking. Passport stamps, marriage certificates, diplomas, photos of family, great storms and sports teams – gathered and labeled beforehand – are combined with the interview footage, all helping to illustrate the stories. The accompanying book is a way to keep copies of these documents in a more concrete format.

Challenges
Karen knows she faces some challenges in her work. While the children and grandchildren who will get these films relate to and enjoy the screen, the people whose lives she seeks to share were not raised with a lot of technology, and the idea of sitting in front of a camera is not only foreign but it can be uncomfortable. “Having said that,” laughs Karen, “the two people from the pilot project loved sitting in front of the camera. Maybe it was coincidence, or maybe once they got into it, it was just free-flowing, natural.”

Others don’t see the value of preserving their story. When Karen spoke with an elderly Dutch immigrant woman about the lifestory film idea, the woman humbly suggested she didn’t have a story. However, Karen knew some of the woman’s background, and told her, “Tina, picking cucumbers out of a field for a farmer the day after you arrived in Canada is a story.” Karen is eager to record these stories, for they reflect her husband’s cultural and historical legacy. “They came with nothing. They weren’t allowed to bring money. For our children’s generation, knowing their grandparents’ story helps them understand the immigrant work ethic, why they are busy from dawn til dusk, why they carry that sense of guilt if they are not being productive. I want to get people’s stories on record for their families – not necessarily for the history books, but for families.” Another challenge Karen has found is that the stories are not as likely to be valued during a person’s lifetime. Even in her own family, she has found less interest than she anticipated. “It was a real learning curve for me. I thought they’d be all over it, but my brother probably still hasn’t watched it.” Her dad is alive and well; but she predicts, “When he dies, I bet everyone will sit around that screen and watch his film together.” She pauses. “I need to convince this demographic that it’s worth it.”

While Lifestory Legacy Films is a business, for Karen and Heino, it’s also a ministry. It’s a way of bringing understanding in families, of passing on wisdom through generations. It’s a way of showing people that their lives and stories are valued. Someone very dear to Karen told her, in the midst of a difficult situation, “I’ve made a mess of my life.” “No,” Karen reassured her. “Life is a journey, and it’s a messy journey at times.” She sips her tea and reflects, “It’s fascinating how people get through the mess – but to learn how people walk through those times, and get to truth, beauty, and goodness – those three things, which are ultimately found in God – that’s fascinating. That’s why I do this work, why I care about people’s stories.”
Bylsma’s mission (continued from page 11)

Wybe remarked that our extra day in Shanghai was a gift from God: “I am so energized when he uses me like this for his glory.”

Back home in Cobourg, Wybe received an email from Hongqian’s cousin, translating a letter from his father: “We greatly appreciate God sent you to help our family, help us walk out from the shadow and see the light and hope. The afternoon of Dec. 7 was a memorable breakthrough for the relationship between Hongqian and our family. When I embraced Hongqian, I can deeply feel the love from God. It’s God who offered this opportunity to melt the ice between us and start the journey of harmony. I had a good talk with Hongqian on that day.”

Wybe says he will keep in touch with Hongqian and his family for as long as they wish. Meanwhile, Chengwei has alerted him to other young men with similar issues. Wybe has already connected with cavemen #3, #4 and #5 and has several others on his list.

Bringing Christ (continued from page 10)

How have you prepared mentally for this adventure?

This last year of fundraising and working together as a family has really been preparation in itself. It has drawn us together in many ways and taught us how to work together. The process has also taught us a lot about trusting God for our needs and seeing his faithfulness time and time again!

What is the biggest need right now in Africa?

Specifically in the DRC, corruption is really what tears the country down, caused by war and constant fighting with rebel groups. It destroys infrastructure and the economy and doesn’t allow the country to get on its feet. Tens of thousands of people die every year because of diseases and the lack of medical care, food, clean water and sanitation.

How will you meet this need?

M.A.F. works with over 1500 partner organizations around the world to “share the love of Christ through aviation and technology so that isolated people can be spiritually and physically transformed.” In the DRC, we are working with many different organizations including Doctors without Borders, World Vision, Samaritan’s Purse, Christian Blind Mission, Mennonite Central Committee, Wycliffe Bible translators and many more. All of these organizations use us to get into the remote places of the country to deliver doctors, medical supplies, pastors, teachers, Bible translators, food and anything else that they need.

Thank you for sharing your story with CC readers. May God bless your work!

To read more about Joel and Hayley and the M.A.F., to offer your support or to follow their journey, check out mafc.org/missionarypages/Hensen.

Linda Jonasson is a teacher and freelance writer from Brantford, Ont. where she and her family attend Hope CRC. She blogs at alinefromlinda.blogspot.com.

Sandy Mayle is a freelance writer who has written for Pray! Magazine, Discipleship Journal, War Cry and many other publications. Sandy and her husband, Dave, are emptynesters living in northwest Pennsylvania.
Crouch addresses the Redeemer community.

Crouch goes on to explain how distortions in power lead to idolatry and injustice. He suggests that every idol makes essentially two promises: 1) you shall be like God and 2) you shall not suffer. Idols appear to work at first, but over time they deliver less and less while demanding more and more. Ultimately, in the end, idols deliver nothing but demand everything. This becomes clear when one observes the cycle of addiction. Injustice is another outcome when power is misused, as is the case with slavery and exploitative money-lending. Both idolatry and injustice reduce image bearing.

Ancient disciplines

In an era when people have become more jaded about institutions, Crouch makes a startling claim: institutions are essential for flourishing. Institutions bring lasting flourishing that can be transmitted to our children’s children. This includes institutions like the family, but it extends to institutions like local schools, the church, Redeemer University College and print media like *Christian Courier*. But Crouch also discusses unhealthy institutions. He describes so-called “zombie institutions” that stubbornly persist, dedicated to their own flourishing without contributing to others. At their worst, institutions abuse power and perpetuate patterns of injustice and idolatry.

I appreciated how Crouch’s book ends with highlighting the importance of the spiritual disciplines. As we exercise power, the ancient spiritual disciplines of solitude, silence and fasting can help us along the way. Such practices can help tame our drive for power and shape us into the image bearers that we ought to be. In particular, I liked Crouch’s explanation of the Sabbath as helpful for both a prescription and a diagnosis. Sabbath can be a prescription for rest, to learn to trust God and lean on him. If we are unable to pull ourselves away from our work or pursuits, Sabbath can act as a good diagnosis of our spiritual condition, or even the presence of idolatry in our lives.

I saw many connections between Andy Crouch’s talk about power with certain aspects of technology. Technology is a gift of a sort of power that ought to lead to increased flourishing. Software can help businesses be more productive, communications technology can link people over great distances and robots can relieve people from jobs that are dull or dangerous. But like anything else in creation, technology can also become an idol. Like other idols, it initially promises much and appears to demand little. It even makes similar promises: we can become like God and we might not die. But eventually, a trust in technology demands more and more from us. We can begin to see this now with the automobile, a technology that initially promised mobility and autonomy that now also dictates the shape of our cities, affects our health and puts increasing pressures on the environment in the form of emissions and the pursuit of oil. What will our digital technologies demand from us in the long run? Is it possible that applying disciplines such as fasting and Sabbath to our technologies might help us wield their power more responsibly?

May we use whatever power God has given us, including our technology, in ways that lead to increased flourishing.

Derek Schuurman is a computer science professor at Redeemer University College, which recently hosted a series of lectures by author Andy Crouch.
1914 - 2014: The centenary of a troubled century

This year marks the anniversary of more than one significant event, including the 450th anniversary of the death of John Calvin. But the 100th anniversary of the beginning of what is variously called the Great War and the First World War holds special significance for many of us, because, on a personal level, it affected our own families and, on a global scale, inaugurated a protracted period of nearly unprecedented horrors that uprooted and eliminated entire populations.

After the boundless optimism of the post-Napoleonic period, in which even many Christians were caught up, the old order came crashing down in an orgy of blood-letting and hatred that would last, in some fashion, until 1989, with the opening of the Berlin Wall. Prior to 1914, my father’s family were nominal subjects of the Ottoman Sultan in Cyprus, albeit under British administration from 1878. (In fact, the first appointed British High Commissioner to Cyprus, Sir Garnet Wolseley, had commanded the expedition here in Canada to put down Louis Riel’s Red River Rebellion eight years earlier.) When Britain and Turkey became combatants at the outbreak of the Great War, Britain had to annex Cyprus outright lest its residents, including my relatives, become enemy aliens.

On my mother’s side of the family, my 19th-century ancestors were subjects of the Russian Tsar in his capacity as Grand Duke of Finland. A remote ancestor even fought for the King of Sweden against Russia’s Peter the Great three centuries ago. They came to America, probably via Halifax, Nova Scotia, for a variety of reasons, one of which was to escape conscription into the Russian-controlled military.

Royal clannishness

At the beginning of the 20th century, much of the world was presided over by an interlocking network of the descendants of Queen Victoria and Denmark’s King Christian IX. Although this made Europe appear on the surface to be a big cozy family, such blood relationships did little to curtail the increasingly intense rivalries amongst the major powers of the day.

In fact, by 1914 this grand European royal clan looked more like a dysfunctional family, with tensions bubbling furiously below the surface. It took an assassin’s bullets to bring it into the open, and by August of that fateful year Europe, and much of the world, was at war.

There is, of course, no need to recount here the history of the 20th century, whose contours are familiar enough to us. But it is worth pointing out that the outbreak of war in 1914 unleashed a decades-long chain reaction that left millions who survived two major global conflicts uprooted and exiled. Greek Orthodox Christians and Armenians were forced to leave Asia Minor after nearly two thousand years of residence. Ethnic Germans were compelled to one such migration. And my own presence at Redeemer – and even in this world – would have been impossible without these events.

The Great War played a pivotal role in two of these.

How then do we mark this tragic and momentous anniversary? By remembering. Remembering, among other things, the dangers of rampant nationalism, of recklessness, of political orders that neglect the lives of the poor and vulnerable. But also by remembering with humility that many of us might not have existed at all apart from the events unleashed by this conflict.

Platitudes are of no help at this point. We cannot, and perhaps dare not, try to fathom the mystery of evil, which has puzzled humanity down through the millennia. Yet I myself am grateful that God’s grace has come to us even in the midst of a less-than-perfect world. When next I attend our family’s church, and see the tattered century-old Union Jack mounted under glass on the wall in the entryway, I will thank God for his faithfulness and then pray that we who live today will have learnt the lessons of that terrible conflict of a century ago.

David T. Koyzis teaches politics at Redeemer University College. His next book, We Answer to Another: Authority, Office and the Image of God, is forthcoming from Pickwick Publications.

CFFO turns 60: The faith of our fathers and farming today

There was no fanfare, no public announcement, no detailed plan of action, no articulate rationale for existence and no immediate impact on the development of community life. There was only the fervency of a great need: a need to establish their work in agriculture as God’s work.

Today, the CFFO still strives to realize the founding vision of the original members. Through the steady efforts of the membership, they’re still working for family farms by developing policy options on marketing legislation, safety net design and stabilization programs. They are also making contributions in the preservation of farmland, proper land use planning and equitable taxation approaches for farming. CFFO has been at the forefront of studying and proposing environmental stewardship programs that provide benefits to society and reward farmers for their efforts.

Since 1994, membership has increased six-fold, from just over 500 in the early 1990s, thanks to the Ontario NDP government of Bob Rae and Agriculture Minister Elmer Buchanan. It was Buchanan who introduced legislation requiring farmers in Ontario to support (pay a yearly fee) to one of the province’s general farm organizations. CFFO’s modeling in the 1950s on the organizational structure of the CBTOBE meant that it had developed in Ontario as a general farm organization with a set of geographically based local associations.

CFFO qualified as a general farm organization (the other being the Ontario Federation of Agriculture) and experienced a sudden huge jump in membership and a large jump in income. No longer were CFFO members mainly Dutch Calvinists in background; more than half now came from other Christian traditions.

This year, for its 60th anniversary, CFFO is looking for farmers to donate 60 acres of land rent-free to grow crops for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to celebrate working in the community to provide food for all people. CFFO is initiating talks with Trees Ontario hoping to have the opportunity to have farmers plant 60 trees to celebrate environmental sustainability. The annual convention this year will be focused on the celebrating the contribution of CFFO and its members to Ontario Agriculture.

Meindert van der Galien is on the board of the Renfrew-Lanark Christian Farmers Association of the CFFO. Three of the six local directors have Dutch names.
**Obituaries**

**George Visser**

29 April 1931 – 02 December 2013

After a brief illness, surrounded by his loving family and friends at Bluewater Health, George Visser of Sarnia, Ontario passed away peacefully on Monday December 2, 2013. Beloved husband of Jacoba Visser (nee Krans) of 57 years. Loving father of Ellen Visser (Peter), Andrew Visser (Karen), Fiona Hein (Mark), Leonard Visser and Christy Plommer (Evan). Cherished grandfather of Nicole, Celeste, Matthew, Nathan, Nicholas, Derek, Jacoba and great-grandfather of Lillian.

After emigrating from the Netherlands, George, a mechanical engineer, founded TubeRate Co. Ltd in Sarnia. He was a generous man who savoured life, not only nature, but relationships and ideas. Family and friends were received on Friday December 6, 2013 at SMITH FUNERAL HOME, 1576 London Line, Sarnia from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. A memorial service was held at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday December 7, 2013 at Redeemer Christian Reformed Church, 5834 Blackwell Side Rd., Sarnia, Ontario. Sympathy may be expressed through donations to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank at www.foodgrainsbank.ca. Special thanks to the staff of Bluewater Health-ICU for their respect and understanding.

February 5, 1930

January 20, 2014

Stroobos, The Netherlands

Brampton, ON

Peacefully at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital the Lord called home

**Stanley (Sake) Antones**

at the age of 83.

Loving husband for 60 years of Dorothy (nee Schenk) Loving father of Liz (Palle), Anna (Henry), and Belinda (Don). Loving opa of 8 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.

Correspondence: Dorothy Antones

KT 602 - 35 Kingkold Drive

Brampton ON L7Y 5S5

**Fred Bouwers**

1933 June 30 – Jan. 24, 2014

Son, Brother, Father, Grandfather and Great-Grandfather

We are glad to announce that Fred has joined his wife Marjie in heaven. We miss him greatly but he is suffering no more.

John Bouwers – Athens, ON (Marcia Shimoda - friend, Pt. Elgin, ON) Clarence & Judy Bouwers (Van Boven) – Black Creek BC Daniel & Jordan (Osborne) Elijah Angela & Doug Menzies, Wyatt Michelle & Joel Johnson, Cadence, Janae Stephanie & Ben Raymer Alissa & Duane Zimmerman Jessica, David, Kristanna Allan & Cindy Bouwers – Calgary, AB


Donations were given to Christian schools.

Correspondence can be sent via email: johnbouwers67@hotmail.com or Box 232, Athens ON K0E 1B0

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**Classifieds**

**Obituary**

**De Liër, The Netherlands**

October 17, 1929

January 5, 2014

“...He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings, you will find refuge”

Psalm 91:4

**Joyce VanGeest (nee Hanemaayer)**

Predeceased by her beloved husband, Adrian VanGeest (1997).

Dear mother of:

Neil and Mary Jane VanGeest (Jordan, Ontario)

Arlene and Fred Bennink (Ancaster, Ontario)

Gord and Anita VanGeest (Brantford, Ontario)

Joyce and Jim Koomneef (Smithville, Ontario)

Shirley and Ger VanBaalen (Wainfleet, Ontario)

Loving Oma of 20 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren.

A service of remembrance and thanksgiving was held on January 8, 2014 at Mountview CRC in Grimsby, Ontario.

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**Anniversary**

**1959 Woodstock 2014**

The Lord has given the joy of 55 blessed years of marriage

**Hilde (Al) and Grace Slager (nee Dykstra)**

with thankfulness to God

February 13.

And gifting them with their loving family,

Patty & Karl Reyneveld, Woodstock, ON

Jonathan, Victoria, Cole, Nathan, Jordan & Isabelle Reyneveld, Woodstock, ON

 Jacob Reyneveld, Woodstock, ON

Charlene, Gerrie, Karley, Brianna, & Valerie Rood, Woodstock, ON

Derek & Amanda Reyneveld, Woodstock, ON

Peter & Diana Slager, Beachville, ON

Melissa, Shane, Wyatt & Brynn Arnold, Ripley, ON

Scott, Juli, Tyler, Justin, Abbi & Hayli Slager, Beachville, ON

Amanda, Danny & Hannah Neilson, Woodstock, ON

Stephanie, Dan & Emit Hoiting, Woodstock, ON

Harry & Tammy Slager, Innerkip, ON

Matt, Nada, & Noah Slager, New Hamburg, ON

Ashley Slager & Ian McLaren, Huntingford, ON

Marlene & Mike Bloxidge, Woodstock, ON

Tony Bloxidge, Woodstock, ON

Kevin, Melissa, Jacob, Mia and Charleigh Bloxidge, Delhi, ON

Don & Kim Slager, Woodstock, ON

Courtney, Raj & Kaydence Grewal, London, ON

Kayla & Denis Farr, Guelph, ON

Kyle Slager & Haley Stallman, Brantford, ON

Colton Slager

Christopher Slager.

Hilda MacDonald, Zurich, ON

Dylan & Sarah

Lee & Rob Wubs, Norwich, ON

Jordan, Brandon

Correspondence Address

Al and Grace Slager

400 Lakeview Dr. Woodstock ON N4T 1V3

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**June 29, 1924**

**January 8, 2014**

**Ter Aar, The Netherlands**

**Jordan Station, Ontario**

**Grace Vander Nagel (nee Grietje Van Eyk)**


Beloved mother of:

Joanne and Hank Haaksma (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Neil Vander Nagel (Spruce Grove, Alberta)

Janet and Harry Knoop (Courtright, Ontario)

Alice and Kees Verhoef (Jordan Station, Ontario)

Marlyn and Peter Leder (Spruce Grove, Alberta)

Betsy and Larry Dirksen (Jordan Station, Ontario)

Sheila and Jim Caminha (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Dedicated Oma to

Kelly, Jordan (Jennifer), Lydia (Chris), Jessica (Jonathan), David (Melissa), James, Kevin (Karen), Nicole, Jadyn (Hyunchan), Valerie (Tom), Sandria (Bob), Gord (Andrea), Darlene (JB), Clark (Courtney), Christel (Jan), Shane, Tyler.


She also leaves behind her sisters and brother in Holland:

Jany vWoordenburg, Riekie vdMik, Sientje vMiddlekoop, Fred vEyk and sisters-in-law, Maas vDorp, Diny vEyk along with numerous nieces and nephews.

Correspondence: Alice Verhoef

PO Box 281

Jordan Station ON L0R1S0

17 December, 1943

14 January, 2014

Zuidwolde

The Netherlands

California USA

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**Geertje van Arragon Bamford**

Our dear sister and friend, Geertje, passed away peacefully in her home in San Jose, California.

Her siblings:

Martin & Jenny (van Arragon) Oldengarm, Kitchener, ON

Jerry & Marianne (van Arragon) Kingma, Strathroy, ON

Gary & Gretchen van Arragon, Guelph, ON

Leo & Cathy van Arragon, Ottawa, ON

Harma (van Arragon) Badgley & Ken Laird, Trenton, ON

Wilma van Arragon & Ralph Linder, Balta, IL, USA

Wayne Collinson & Kim, Mount Brydges, ON

Mike Parker & Sue, Frankford, ON

Daniel, Tigger, Ottawa, ON

For condolences contact:

Harmina Bamford Mansur

Martin & Jenny Oldengarm

1471 Blackstone

310-20 St. George Street

San Jose CA 95118

Kitchener ON N2G 2S7

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**FRED BOWERS**

1933 June 30 – Jan. 24, 2014

Son, Brother, Father, Grandfather and Great-Grandfather

We are glad to announce that Fred has joined his wife Marjie in heaven. We miss him greatly but he is suffering no more.

John Bouwers – Athens, ON (Marcia Shimoda - friend, Pt. Elgin, ON)

Clarence & Judy Bouwers (Van Boven) – Black Creek BC

Daniel & Jordan (Osborne) Elijah

Angela & Doug Menzies, Wyatt

Michelle & Joe Johnson, Cadence, Janae

Stephanie & Ben Raymer

Alissa & Duane Zimmerman

Jessica, David, Kristanna

Allan & Cindy Bouwers – Calgary, AB

Kennan, Aric

Elsa & Eimer VanDyk – Lethbridge AB

Jeffrey & Jessica (Meinen) Riley, Lucas, Brielle, Serena (Braydon VanBuren - fiancé);

Alec

Janice & Wayne Cunningham – Shawnigan Lake BC

Rick, Marina

Lucy & Marvin Roseboom – Terrace, BC

Jacob, Karyn, Ryan, Michelle

Randall & Stacey – Sherwood Park, AB

Jaden, Rio

Mary-Anne & Jake Kraan – Ladner, BC

Janessa, Devon, Joshua

Michael & Jolly (Mathew) – Mission, BC

Julianna, Jocelyn, Mathew

“...God has said, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."”

Hebrews 13:5b

Donations were given to Christian schools.

Correspondence can be sent via email: johnbouwers67@hotmail.com or Box 232, Athens ON K0E 1B0

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**A Dutch Service will be held in the**

**Ancaster Christian Reformed Church**

**March 9 3:00 p.m.**

Rev. John Zantingh will be preaching.

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Great is Your Faithfulness! Good News CRC of London ON will be celebrating 25 years of God’s faithfulness with a special celebratory 10:30 a.m. Sunday morning service on February 23, 2014.

Former members and friends are welcome to join us as we worship, and praise the Lord together.
February 10, 2014

Classifieds

**Obituary**

1926 Marrum, Friesland 2014 Pembroke, Ontario
Friday, January 24, 2014, his Lord and Saviour called home his servant

Adam VanderVelde
Beloved husband of Anneke VanderVelde (nee Stienstra).
Dear father of Hessel VanderVelde (Audrey) Renfrew Arnold VanderVelde (Jill) Kingston
Theresa van Manen (John) Oshawa
Proud Pake and Grandpa of nine grandchildren and
Great-Pake and Great-Grandpa to six great grandchildren with two more anticipated in 2014.
Son of the late Hessel VanderVelde and Geertje VanderVelde (nee Huizenga).
Predeceased by his younger brother Stan (†2012), and elder brother Jacob (†2013).
He is survived by sisters-in-law Janintje VanderVelde, Pembroke, and Tina VanderVelde in the Netherlands; as well as two younger sisters Froukje de Boer (Jasper, †2003) and Greet Kasperink (Gerrit, †1995) in The Netherlands.

Condolences may be sent to
Anneke VanderVelde
Supplies Landing
201-222 Joseph Street
Pembroke ON K8A 8J2

**Birthday**

Ray Heeringa
of Bowmanville, Ontario will celebrate his 90th birthday on
February 12, 2014 with his wife Alma, their four children, many grandchildren, great grandchildren and great, great grandchildren. His family is thankful that God has blessed Dad, Pake with many happy and healthy years.

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John Glasbergen • 905-639-3605
jglasbergen@sympatico.ca

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**Calendar of Events**

March 9 – Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Zantingh will be preaching.
Feb 23 – Good News CRC, London 25th anniversary. See p.16
For the plays from the Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group, see p.20.

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Labourer

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The successful candidate will be hardworking, honest, self-starter, have some carpentry skills, able to drive a skid steer, and be willing to learn new skills on the construction project. Previous construction experience will be an asset. Grade 12 diploma and/or certificate/ticket in carpentry or other construction related trade is an asset.

Submit resume to Tony Gerard via email: tonyg@vanmarconstructors.com

More information on CLAC can be found at www.clac.ca.
Send all applications to hr@clac.ca.

We thank all applicants for their interest, but only candidates under consideration will be contacted.

End Date: February 21, 2014

Records & Information Manager

CLAC is seeking a highly motivated and experienced records and information manager to review and implement the organization’s records and information management practices from its head office in Mississauga, Ontario.

To be successful in this position, you will have the ability to manage CLAC’s records and the information they contain and provide guidance and expertise to your colleagues across the organization.

CLAC is one of Canada’s fastest growing national labour unions representing over 60,000 workers across a wide variety of sectors including construction, health care, manufacturing, retail, service, transportation, and mining. CLAC takes a progressive approach to labour relations that is non-adversarial and looks to develop cohesive workplace communities.

This role will be attractive to anyone who enjoys converting information to a standardized format using a document classification system. You will possess in-depth knowledge and understanding of current records management theories, principles, techniques, and standards, including electronic records management system capabilities, configuration, operation, and user access and training.

Experience

• Demonstrated experience organizing and managing records and information programs and personnel at a senior level, and expert knowledge of records and information management functions
• Able to provide expertise and input into other functional areas that affect the recorded information of the organization (e.g., reprographics, information technology, archives)
• Demonstrated ability to direct people and programs to achieve the assigned responsibilities and results
• Experience auditing organizational compliance on a regular basis and using tactical and business planning methods to achieve medium to short term results
• Minimum of four years relevant information management or business management experience that has resulted in positive and productive organizational change in the areas of records and information management
• Must be well versed in Microsoft SharePoint 2010, including records management functionality, or willing to acquire training

This position also involves some travel. CLAC offers a competitive compensation package including a comprehensive benefit and pension plan.

More information on CLAC can be found at www.clac.ca.
Send all applications to hr@clac.ca.

We thank all applicants for their interest, but only candidates under consideration will be contacted.

End Date: February 21, 2014

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CLAC is seeking a motivated and experienced Research Assistant to support the Ontario Healthcare Interest Arbitration Team from its head office in Mississauga or Cambridge, Ontario.

The successful candidate will bring experience in coordinating and managing research projects (e.g. Ontario healthcare bargaining patterns), data collection and management, statistical analysis, and reporting. In addition, the candidate will possess strong organizational as well as oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills.

CLAC offers a competitive compensation package including a comprehensive benefit and pension plan. More information on CLAC can be found at www.clac.ca

Send all applications to HR@clac.ca.

We thank all applicants for their interest, but only candidates under consideration will be contacted.

End Date: February 19, 2014

A college diploma or university degree in a relevant field is an asset

• Previous legal experience is an asset

• Strong critical thinking skills are an asset

• Experience in presenting written submissions is an asset

• Strong oral and written communication skills are essential

• Ability to observe confidentiality

• Capable of working independently and as part of a team

• Strong critical thinking skills are an asset

• Previous legal experience is an asset

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