John Calvin and the Caliphate

Understanding Islam
What is contemporary political Islam? At its worst, ISIS. In Syria, the violence between Islamic, mixed-rebel and government forces has forced four million people to flee the country, triggering the worst refugee crisis since WWII. Here in Canada, this crisis has become an election issue because a photo of three-year-old Alan Kurdi’s drowned body made the Syrian refugees’ desperation painfully real to the rest of the world. But this civil war is older than Alan Kurdi. What is the history behind those headlines? What role does Islam play? What hope does Syria have for peaceful rule?

Christian Courier has published many articles on Islam – from news stories on the atrocities committed by radical Muslims to feature pieces on Islamic beliefs as well as practical articles on ministering to the Muslim next door.

History offers another angle for understanding modern political Islam, as Robert J. Joustra, assistant professor of International Studies at Redeemer University College, explains here. Why do Muslims hate Western “secularism,” and why does that sound familiar? What does the Reformation have to do with the Arab Spring? This article connects some of those dots.

A version of this article originally appeared in Capital Commentary, a weekly current affairs publication of the Center for Public Justice. – Ed.

Robert J. Joustra
When it comes to political Islam, received wisdom contains much which is apocryphal, or at least wildly inaccurate. The term itself has spawned a cottage industry, with the twitterati locked in perpetual cyber-spats, and the talking heads battling over who is blowing up what and why. The challenge of “orientalism” always lives large, especially in popular Western analogies, (Islam needs a Reformation, Islam needs a Pope), and the polar to-and-fro has made the whole conversation a mess.

As analogies to Western history go, however, John Owen has just written one of the more convincing, certainly provoking, entries in the catalogue.

In Confronting Political Islam: Six Lessons from the West’s Past, Owen makes two general claims: (1) understanding political Islam at all means understanding secularism, and (2) understanding the Islamist-secularist struggle means understanding how that same “secular age” came about in the history of the Western world. It is, admittedly, a little counter intuitive to start a study of political Islam with radical Calvinists, as Owen puts it, but the basic point is one which Scott Thomas in The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations also makes: “the problem of applying the modern concept of religion to the study of many societies in central Europe, central Asia and most of the non-Western world is that they have still not entirely made, or are struggling not to make, this transition to a modern concept of religion” (Thomas, 27). In other words, to understand contemporary political Islam, the content of Charles Taylor’s A Secular Age rears its head again: we need to know why people are so incensed by the globalization of the Westphalian state system and its attendant political theology. Why is there such strong backlash against the “secular” organization of life and society? Unhappily, if there is a term that is used more promiscuously than

‘Vote to end poverty’
Examining the anti-poverty policies of Canada’s federal parties

Darlene O’Leary
“We all know people who are struggling, lots of single parents,” Marius Curteanu of Whitehorse told CBC news during a Vote to End Poverty rally in September. “It’s pretty hard to make it for lots of young people, older people and seniors. We all know cases and friends who are struggling to make it day to day.”

The federal election campaign is underway, and the stakes are high for Canadians. Many of us are weighing how the federal parties represent those issues we care about most. At Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), we see this federal election as an opportunity for public engagement on key issues of importance.

As Christians, we are called to care for our neighbours, particularly the most vulnerable ones. Public justice calls us to consider the complex and systemic root causes of poverty, and recognize that the actions of our federal government have concrete implications for low-income Canadians.

A national anti-poverty plan

Since 2009, CPJ has partnered with Canada Without Poverty on Dignity for All – the campaign for a poverty-free Canada. The campaign calls for federal action on poverty. This past February, Dignity for All released its model National Anti-Poverty Plan for Canada.

Continued on page 2

MS bike tour raises over a quarter million

Going through the garbage in Vancouver’s downtown Eastside, Canada’s “poorest postal code.”
John Calvin and the Caliphate continued

political Islam, it is “the secular.” To even speak of a “secular” organization of society is about as useful as speaking of a political Islamic organization of society. Even ideal types don’t agree, and history is never filled with ideal types anyway. This is probably the best reason that Owen’s book does the heavy comparative historical work of finding out how European society struggled to make—or not to make—this kind of political-theological consensus; a mysterious, bloody, bizarre history that rivals in violence and outright fanaticism the worst of what political Islam has to offer.

Lessons from history

Most of Owen’s “Lessons” emerge from a historical comparison: what we might (he’s careful here) expect from political Islam given the way these problems got worked out in the West.

Lesson #1: Don’t sell Islamism short. This is more than just the usual deconstruction of the secularization thesis; it’s also a healthy check on the premature enthusiasm that pundits show for signs of Western secularity in dominantly Islamic states. The story of secular progress is so deeply embedded in our idea of history that we presume that once societies attain some form of it, or start to show signs of it (think the Arab Spring), they are on an inevitable path to the secular society. We might say one step forward, two steps backward, is a real and common thing in history, but to even assign the forward and backward is to presume people are trying to get exactly where we are. A lot of people aren’t. Political Islam is dynamic and flexible. “One powerful lesson of history,” writes Owen, “is that ideologies are typically underestimated by their enemies and by outsiders” (43). Political Islam is not Soviet communism, and we shouldn’t expect it simply to break and fade away.

Lesson #2: Ideologies are (usually) not monolithic, which is part of the reason the “contest” between the secular and political Islam is so unclear. Both respond to each other dynamically, and both therefore emerge as hybrid versions nearly as different from each other as from each’s variations.

A critical distinction here exists between moderate political-Islam and radical political-Islam, but it is often badly understood. The difference is not, as Owen argues, between liberal and radical political Islam, which is different entirely. Moderate political Islam eschews violence as a method for achieving the Islamic society, while militant or radicals do not. But the difference, according to Owen, is in the method, not the end goal. “Militants and jihadists are Islamists in a hurry. Moderates are Islamists willing to wait and compromise along the way” (14). Neither is it lost on Owen that much of the violence of political Islam is suffered by Muslims, not by the secular West. Apository close to home can feel like a betrayal more acute than a rival religious politics an ocean (or two) away, just as reformism within the ranks can be more dangerous than challenge from outside of them. Continued on page 16

‘Vote to end poverty’ continued

We have called on all federal parties to support the development and implementation of a comprehensive national anti-poverty plan that addresses income security, homelessness, health, food insecurity, childcare and jobs.

With those categories in mind, what commitments have the main federal parties made to address poverty in Canada? Here are a few things we know at this point. We hope to hear more as the campaign moves forward.

Tory tax benefits

Just prior to the election, the Conservatives followed through on their promise to increase the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) to $160 a month for children under age six, up from $100, with the addition of a new monthly benefit of $60 for children age six to 17. While this may be a welcome deposit for those families struggling to cover costs, CPJ has challenged the UCCB as a taxable benefit that will not do much to address actual child care costs and does not distribute benefits according to need.

However, the Conservatives’ Workers Income Tax Benefit, created in 2007, is a positive federal refundable tax credit that boosts the earned incomes of eligible low-income working individuals and families.

NDP’s childcare plan

The NDP has stated its commitment to continued support for a federal poverty reduction strategy and a federal housing strategy. The NDP has introduced legislation for both in the past through Bill C-233, An Act to Eliminate Poverty in Canada and Bill C-473, A key piece of the NDP election platform is the creation of a $15 dollar/day national child care program and one million affordable child care spaces across Canada. Early child care and education is an essential support, in particular to female-led, single parent and newcomer households. It also improves social and educational outcomes for children.

The NDP commitment to maintain the expanded UCCB, however, is not the best approach to supporting families in need. An increase to the National Child Benefit would go much further in helping low-income families.

In addition, the NDP have committed to an increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) for seniors. Along with improved supports for seniors, it’s important to provide supports for recent immigrants, Indigenous Canadians and others who are disproportionately affected by poverty.

Similar to the Liberals, the NDP focus on “middle class” Canadians during this election campaign has taken an important focus away from those most affected by poverty.

Middle class focus for Liberals

The Liberals have stated that they are “strongly committed to a poverty reduction plan for Canada.” However, they have not outlined a plan that specifically addresses poverty or offered a timeline for its implementation.

Liberals have introduced a fairness for the Middle Class plan that would involve cancelling income splitting and tax breaks and benefits for high income Canadians; increasing the Canada Child Tax Credit and the National Child Benefit Supplementary

The Green’s livable income

The Green Party also announced its commitment to a Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI) which would involve plans for social housing, along with housing for seniors and First Nations, and affordable market housing.

The Green Party has committed to introducing a Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI). According to the Green Party, the GLI could eliminate poverty by providing an income base that no Canadian would fall below, while providing incentives for increased employment. CPJ supports the introduction of a GLI as an income security policy, with consideration to the different approaches this kind of policy could take. One of those considerations is that the GLI annual rate be at a “livable” level. Given the complexity of poverty, a national anti-poverty plan with measurable goals and timelines offers an important comprehensive response.

The tools are there

Canadians should consider the call for public justice this election because all Canadians are impacted by poverty. Our neighbours’ struggles are our struggles. The federal government has the tools and responsibility to play a central role in ending poverty in Canada. During this federal election, let’s put our faith into action and work for a more just Canada, where dignity for all people is achieved.

Darlene O’Leary is the new Socio-Economic Policy Analyst leading CPJ’s anti-poverty work. For more information, go to cpj.ca/election2015.

Questions for your MP

- Will you pass legislation to implement a comprehensive national anti-poverty plan?
- Will you reverse tax credits that largely benefit the wealthy (i.e. UCCB and income splitting) in order to invest in programs that assist vulnerable Canadians (i.e. CCTB/NCBSS)?
- What steps will you take to reduce the growth of precarious employment in Canada?
- Will you invest at least $2 billion per year in new money towards affordable housing?
News

Loved ones in Syria

C. Green

(Names have been changed.)

Every morning, Maria stands outside the front door of the house she shares with her oldest daughter’s family and scatters bread crumbs for the early birds in search of a meal. As her feathered friends gather on the front lawn, Maria whispers the same prayer: God, be with my daughters in Syria. Bring them to me soon.

“We have no idea how hard it is for a mother to be separated from her children who are living in a country at war,” my friend, Reem, tells me over a hot cup of Turkish coffee on her front stoop. Reem emigrated from Syria with her husband and three children 10 years ago. Their process was straightforward. They filled out their forms and paid their fees and after five years they were allowed to enter Canada.

More recently Reem began the process of bringing her mother Maria and two sisters from Canada, but the war has complicated things. “They allowed my mother to come without any problems because she had stayed with me in the past on a visitor’s visa before the fighting began. But even though the forms have been filed and the fees have been paid, there’s no word of my siblings being allowed to come.”

I asked Reem why her sisters and their families hadn’t joined the throng exiting her country every day. “Why would they do that? Their homes are still standing. They still have jobs. Their children go to school.” I was surprised by her answer. I was under the impression that Syria was an inhospitable country as of late. “Not true. There are areas of Syria that haven’t yet been ruined. My friends just spent the day at the beach last week. Here, I’ll show you pictures.”

So what is the threat? “There is no law in Syria anymore. No government. Everyone does what he wants. If you leave your house, you do it at your own risk.” Reem hands me her phone to show me photos of a man and a young boy. “This is my friend’s husband and son. They were walking down a street when someone came up to them, cut off their heads and sliced their bodies into pieces,” she says matter-of-factly, her heart calloused by years of bad news.

I asked why. “Who knows?”

Steadfast

I asked Reem why she thinks the process is taking so much longer for her sisters. “The wealthy have their money and the poor have their pity,” she opines, “but my sisters are neither rich nor poor. They’ve done everything they’re required to do to come to Canada legally but I’m afraid they are not the ones who will be helped now.” Who then? “Those who have the attention of social media,” she says. My friend has never been one to mince words. But don’t judge her too harshly. She is tired, and afraid. But she’s quick to assure me that she was not for her faith in God, she would have given up long ago. My friend and her family are Christians. It is her faith, she says, that has kept her steadfast, even when it seems darkness will prevail.

I asked Reem what her sisters think about all of this. “The war has been going on for five years. They told me that if God has kept them alive this long, he will let them live another year so they can come to Canada, but even though the forms have been filed and the fees have been paid, there’s no word of my siblings being allowed to come.”

Maria comes out to where Reem and I are talking and hands me a cookie. Shukran, thank you, I tell her.

“My mom told me that the birds eat what they need and leave the remaining crumbs for the other birds, so all the birds get fed.”

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matt. 6:26).

Maria knows that her daughters are more valuable than the birds she feeds each morning. She will hold onto the hope that one day she will scatter bread crumbs with all her daughters safely by her side.

C. Green: I’m a Steeltown girl who would always rather be sailing. I enjoy dining with friends who can’t speak English while eating exotic dishes with names I can’t pronounce. I love sharing stories, because everyone has a story. And if given a choice, I will always opt for the road less travelled by.
Almost too good to be true

Bert Witvoet

I recently attended a funeral service somewhere in Ontario. The deceased man had suffered from Alzheimer’s and had gradually sunk deeper into his own restricted reality as the years went by. His marriage, earnestly begun under the sun of hope and friendship, had collapsed. Who could understand and who dared judge the couple? As far as we knew they were both positive and caring individuals. But, even in spite of having befriended them, we did not know about the stress and suffering that eventually crept into their family life. Sometimes one has to stand aside and watch the unraveling of a relationship that cracks from within.

My friend’s wife was at his funeral. I could see that the service was hard on her. But she persisted and no doubt benefited from the genuine words of comfort offered to her and others. After the service we were given an opportunity to offer words of encouragement and comfort to the family.

As I approached my friend’s wife to offer my sympathies, she, instead, immediately offered her apologies to me for how our working relationship had soured years ago. I was floored by her sincere and frank admission. I had not expected this outcome and felt a wave of grace flow between us. I had not come to the funeral to be justified. I had in a way set this whole episode aside years ago, but to have her openly seek reconciliation at this mournful event was for me an unexpected experience of love.

One more unfolding

The following morning, it being Sunday, Alice and I prepared to go to church here in St. Catharines. I still felt a strong sense of peace inside me after what I had experienced at my friend’s funeral the day before. It felt good to be going to church with that sense of fullness.

As Alice and I parked our car on the church parking lot, we saw a somewhat middle-aged man and younger woman walking from their car to the front entrance of our church. Alice and I immediately recognized the man, although he was not a member of a Reformed community. He was someone who years ago had come to our church asking us to help him deal with a very painful separation. His wife had accused him of sexually molesting his daughters, and he was devastated by what he considered to be false accusations. His wife left him, taking their three daughters with her. Our friend spent the following years seeking counsel and professing his innocence. He eventually shifted his focus to helping people in Cuba. He would try to visit that country every year and decided to help out a few families he got to know by sending out money on a regular basis. Until a change took place this April. It happened that one of his daughters started looking for him and decided to visit him. She was about 30 by this time. She had kept a diary of herself and her family for years, and I prepared to go to church here in St. Catharines.

Our friend explained in tears to some of us at Jubilee that getting one of his daughters back and spending time with her after the first visit totally restored their relationship. He had even taken her to Cuba to meet his new friends there. And on this Sunday morning, after the service, he wanted his daughter to meet some of our church members who had helped and trusted him throughout the years. When we heard his wonderful story, we rejoiced with him and his daughter, hugging them with tears in our eyes.

Wow! As I recount these two stories, I can still hardly absorb the unfolding of these events. Within the span of 24 hours, God had revealed to me that his love does ultimately triumph. I still have to pinch myself from time to time to believe it. I’m glad it was not three unprintings of the past in a row. I probably would not have dared to write this editorial had God lifted his curtain one more time!

Fear not?

Henry Baron

“Oh, but I did fear the terror of night.

It was wartime in Holland, and our family was hiding someone the Germans were hunting – a Dutch police officer who secretly had been in charge of Allied weapon drops. A knocking on the windows in the dead of night would stop my heart. But terror is not limited to the night.

The day came when Germans went from house to house. We watched them come, my hero and I. A boy of ten, I shook with terror when I saw this commander in underground resistance pull his gun. Suddenly we heard shouts and shots, and we saw the hired man led away. They thought they had their man; no one searched our house that day.

But my heart still palpitates when I think of what could have happened (and often did): my hero killed, Germans too, consequently Dad, and the farm burned down to the ground.

Not fear the flying arrows, not fear the stalking pestilence? For years those biblical promises sound hollow to me. Not fear the evils of a Holocaust, starvation, epidemics, accidents that can take the life of an only child, an incurable cancer diagnosis, a future with Alzheimer’s? God couldn’t be serious, I thought.

For we all know, don’t we, that there’s no horror from which we are exempt? But there is. I had not understood what God was really saying. I had not understood how Psalm 118 could confidently exclaim: “The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

I knew and know they can do unspeakably horrible things. They can take young women and rape them in the name of their god. They can unleash Sarin, the invisible poison that makes one choke to death within minutes.

They can brutalize; they can maim; they can burn; they can hang; they can starve; they can destroy everything that was ever held dear in a human heart.

Refuge

So what had I not understood?

God did not say we would never go through valleys of death. He did not say that we wouldn’t have enemies who would be out to kill us, that we would not suffer fires and droughts and floods and pestilence and bullets and strokes and heart attacks and cancer and dementia.

He did say that he would always be with us. And I began to understand that the promise refers to who God is and not to who I am – vulnerable and afraid.

He knows I am, and that’s why he keeps telling me who he is: one whom I can cling to like a scared child clings to his daddy when disaster strikes. Like David clung when he was afraid: “The Lord is with me. . . . When I am afraid, I will trust in you . . . in you my soul takes refuge.”

Then Matthew enlarges my understanding when he reminds me of the words of our Lord to his disciples, and to all of us: “Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul.” And I say, Yes, Lord, let me remember that the God who made me, the God who loves me, is the God who saves me. He is the Lord who places his right hand on me and says: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One.”

That’s who God is.

But he knows I am one of those with little faith who will still be afraid. Then I will cling to his promise: “I am with you.”

Yes, he will be with me, as he was with Joseph, David, Stephen, Paul, Bonhoeffer, Corrie ten Boom and with all who have faith that no evil can touch the soul that is covered with his feathers, that is sheltered under his wings. And that surely will dissolve my fear – and yours.

Henry Baron is a retired professor of English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. He and his wife Ruth are members of Neland Christian Reformed Church.
Letters

The book of Acts, continued

Nice article on Omar Khadr! (“The Kings University and Omar Khadr: Heeding Christ’s call to visit the prisoner,” July 27). I had heard his name mentioned in the local news, but had no idea who he was or that we (the Christian community in Edmonton) had this investment in his life and education through Kings.

Freed from the need to judge others

When I saw the full page article “An open letter to my gay brothers and sisters” by Ben deRegt (August 10, 2015), I was pleased and hopeful that this would be a letter of understanding and support to those he is addressing. When I had read the letter, three times, this hope was shattered.

I will not argue with deRegt’s use of Scripture; theologians and others have already argued these points for decades in more than one Christian denomination. However, I must respond in some way.

My reading of Jesus’ teaching is that he encourages us to do all we must do rather than what we must not do. His focus is overwhelmingly positive and is grounded in his gospel of love (Mk 12: 30, 31). All our activities and relationships are to be governed by these words.

The other point is that of judgement (Matt. 7:1). A friend once commented to me during a discussion on gay marriage that she was thankful she “did not have to judge someone’s decision,” although we may express differing views and opinions. Henri Nouwen, in his book Here and Now – Living in the Spirit, discusses the “burden of judgement;” I happened to read that section just a few days after deRegt’s open letter. Nouwen’s words viscerally struck me and I share some of these words with you:

“Imagine having no need at all to judge anybody. Imagine having no desire to decide whether someone is a good or bad person. Imagine being completely free from the feeling that you have to make up your mind about the morality of someone’s behaviour. . . . Can we free ourselves from the need to judge others? Yes, by claiming for ourselves the truth that we are the beloved daughters and sons of God” (p. 79, 81).

My reading of deRegt’s open letter is that it speaks less of love and more of judgement. I have learned from homosexuals in my own circle of family and friends that what each one of them desperately needs is my loving understanding and support. It is this which will carry them, Christian or not, one day at a time, through the most difficult, not of their own choosing, life’s journey. It is up to each one of us how, with God’s guidance, we walk with them.

Ebeline Zee-Hawtin
Edmonton, AB

Christian Courier

U.S. Mail: Christian Courier (USPS 518-090)
Second-class postage paid at Lewiston NY
Publications Mail agreement no. 40009999

Canada Mail: Canada and USA
British Columbia (ISSN 1192-3415) Published second and fourth Mondays of the month.

Address all correspondence to: Christian Courier, Box 110
Lewiston NY 14092

Advertise: display and classified advertising: Tuesday, 9 a.m. (13 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site www.christiancourier.ca for more details.

Phone: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838
e-mail: Advertising: adv@christiancourier.ca
Subscriptions: subscriptions@christiancourier.ca

CC welcomes new columnist and new designer

Join me in welcoming two new people to Christian Courier’s pages: Kathy Vandergrift as a monthly columnist and Kathryn de Ruijter as a member of our layout staff. We thank everyone who faithfully writes, edits, proofreads, designs, finds advertisers, updates our website and social media, picks up from the printers and mails out this paper. May it bring glory to God. – Ed.

New column: Second thoughts

Kathy Vandergrift

“From a young age I looked for ways of being Christian that were bigger than the familiar circle of home, church and school in the southwest Minnesota farming community where I grew up. That search involved many questions, doubts and fears as I tested my deeply-rooted values in the spirit of the 1960s. I am a product of Reformed heritage and I sometimes question it. Personal experience of abuse developed my antenna for sensing when reality is not what it appears to be on the surface and for justice issues affecting children. Biblical texts that remind us that justice for the least powerful is God’s measure for success became a touchstone for my life journey.

“I was attracted to Canada right after college, became a Canadian citizen as soon as I could, and began to search for practical ways to live out God’s calling in wider society, as well as being a mother, active church member and Christian school volunteer. That led me to a variety of roles that responded to needs rather than a typical career path. When I write about social issues, I draw on my experience in local government as chief-of-staff for a big city mayor and national government policy advisor roles; many years of advocacy work in both faith-based and general public interest groups in Canada; an international perspective, which I gained through leading global advocacy initiatives for children with World Vision Canada, and from working directly with families in need. A few years ago I took time to pursue a Master’s Degree in Public Ethics as a way to reflect more deeply on the link between core values and social change. That will be a common thread as I explore with you a range of current issues that benefit from a second thought – and third and fourth insights from you as well.”

Turn to page 8 for Kathy’s first column.

Graphic designer

Kathryn de Ruijter

Kathryn de Ruijter joins the Christian Courier layout team from Hamilton, Ont. She and her husband live there with their spunky, adorable son, Gideon. While currently on maternity leave, she has spent the past five years working at a local think tank designing publications, research reports and a myriad of other projects. Kathryn holds a B.A. (Sociology) from Calvin College and has completed course work in graphic design at Humber College. She loves margins and typography, baking (and sharing the results), hand lettering and good books (including some newly discovered children’s literature). She sees layout and design as a way to extend hospitality and looks forward to making CC’s columns and features both welcoming and accessible to CC’s readers.

The book of Acts, continued

This kind of story reminds me that the book of Acts is still being written, with many ripples yet to come.

Rev. Ron Klimp
Director of Chaplaincy & Care Ministry
Christian Reformed Church
Grand Rapids, Mich.
Jerusalem: Unique 2,000-year-old temple podium puzzles archaeologists

JERUSALEM (BCN) – An intriguing find consisting of a large pyramid-shaped podium constructed of large ashlars stones has been uncovered in an archaeological excavation conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority.

The excavation is located in the Jerusalem Walls National Park in the City of David, site of ancient Jerusalem. It is being carried out in cooperation with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the City of David Foundation.

The structure, situated alongside the 2,000-year-old Second Temple stepped street, which allowed people to move from the Pool of Siloam to the Temple, stood atop the Temple Mount. The street, a section of which was excavated in the past, is remarkably well preserved and is built of enormous stone slabs. The street most likely runs above the drainage channel from the same Second Temple period, discovered a number of years ago, which carried rainwater out of the city.

The podium – or staircase – was constructed sometime in the fourth decade of the first century AD, say the archaeologists.

Dozens of whole pottery vessels, stone vessels and glassware were found at the foot of the pyramid-shaped stone structure.

According to archaeologists Nahshon Szanton and Dr. Joe Uziel, who direct the excavation on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, “The structure exposed is a kind of monumental podium that attracted the public’s attention when walking on the city’s main street.

They continued, ‘It would be very interesting to know what was said there 2,000 years ago. Were messages announced here on behalf of the government? Perhaps news or gossip, or admonitions and street preaching. Unfortunately, we do not know.’” They explained that “Bliss and Dickie, two British archaeologists who discovered a small portion of this structure about 100 years ago, mistakenly thought these were steps that led into a house that was destroyed. They would certainly be excited if they could come back today and see it completely revealed.”

Answers one day?

It is known from rabbinic sources there were “stones” that were used for public purposes during the Second Temple period. For example, one source cites the “auction block” in connection with this street: “[A master] will not set up a market stand and put them [slaves] on the auction block.”

In the Mishnah and Talmud the “Stone of Claims” is mentioned as a place that existed in Jerusalem during the Second Temple period. “Our rabbis taught: There was a Stone of Claims in Jerusalem. Whoever lost an article repaired thither, and whoever found an article did likewise. The latter stood and proclaimed, and the former submitted his identification marks and received it back. And in reference to this we learnt: Go forth and see whether the Stone of Claims is covered.”

According to Szanton and Uziel, “Given the lack of a clear archaeological parallel to the stepped-structure, the purpose of the staircase remains a mystery. It is certainly possible the rabbinical sources provide valuable information about structures such as this, although for the time being there is no definitive proof.”

Toronto: United Church still mulling over what to do with atheist minister

Marian Van Til, with files from TCP, HuffingtonPost, ChristianWeek, National Post

TORONTO – A minister in the United Church of Canada who is a vocal atheist is still waiting to hear if she has a future in the UCC. Greta Vosper, 57, head pastor of West Hill United Church in Toronto, has filed appeals after a ruling made in May by Nora Sanders, general secretary for the UCC General Council.

“In my opinion, a person who is not suitable for ministry in the United Church cannot be ‘effective’ as United Church ministry personnel,” wrote Sanders at that time.

“I understand the Conference has made no decision yet to pursue this process or to take any other action in response to the concerns that are before it. My prayers will be with the Conference throughout its deliberations, and with the ordained minister and all others involved in this matter.”

In response, Vosper said she “appealed two things: the ruling by the General Secretary and the motion to review which was made by the Toronto Conference sub-Executive Committee.” Her arguments had an extended submission deadline of Sept. 18. The deadline was met and the case is continued.

Vosper announced publicly in 2001 that she is an atheist. She admits that the UCC is “probably the most progressive Christian denomination in the world” and wants it to be “more welcoming of atheism.” Therefore she sees no problem with remaining in the UCC as an ordained minister.

“After I spontaneously preached a sermon in which I completely deconstructed the idea of a god named God, rather than fire me, the congregation chose to step out on an unmarked path,” she says in the “About” section of her website. That’s only partially true: 100 of the 150 members of her church left subsequent to her preaching that “sermon.” Nevertheless, her website continues, “With them, I’ve laboured, lamented, lost and loved. It’s hard road but a worthy one with no finish line in sight. Let’s walk this road together. I promise you’ll be inspired.”

‘It’s mythology’

Meanwhile, Vosper – whose interpretation of ecclesiastical-theological history raises eyebrows with orthodox experts in those fields, told the National Post that her views “hearken to Christianity’s beginnings, before the focus shifted from how one lived to doctrinal belief in God, Jesus and the Bible.” She also asserted, “Is the Bible really the Word of God? Was Jesus a person? It’s mythology. We build a faith tradition ally the Word of God? Was Jesus a person? It’s mythology. We build a faith tradition according to the situation. Gerry Caines wrote, “Unbelievable, literally! This comes as no surprise as the United Church of Canada has continually watered-down their beliefs for years in an attempt to appeal to the masses.”

Jim Carney asked rhetorically, “Atheism is the next natural step for the United Church, isn’t it?” A reader calling himself only “Nick” concluded, “How could they claim to be shocked that one Continued on page 7
CRC director reflects on his experiences, church’s mission, in Uganda

Chris Meehan

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan (CRCNA) – The executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America was changed by being in Uganda last month, even as the church heads has been changed by its ongoing ministry there.

Dr. Steven Timmermans says that meeting Barbara Nadunga was among the many high points of his recent trip to Uganda for the Theological Education in Africa Conference (TEA 2015). Nadunga, principal of a church-linked Christian school in Entebbe, Uganda, attended Timmermans’ workshop on church, worship and disabilities. She had polio as a child and the after-effects challenge her ability to walk.

“As a member of my class, Barbara Nadunga provided great insight along the way,” said Timmermans, whose workshop was one of 16 at the conference in Kampala. “She spoke of challenges she has had to overcome, and focused on Psalm 139 – one of the passages I used in devotions as class began – as the turning point in her life. She said she, too, was ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’ as it says in the Psalm.”

The theme of the conference was “Worship, the Church and Theological Education in Africa.” About 300 delegates from 250 African churches attended TEA 2015 for worship, prayer and leadership training. “I was very impressed by the conference. I came away with many experiences and a strong sense of the CRC’s ministry in Africa,” said Timmermans.

Overall, the conference drew delegates from 17 countries and four continents. More than 50 denominations were on hand and 20 theological institutions attended, said Rev. Mwasa Kitavi, chair of the conference and regional director for East and South Africa for Christian Reformed World Missions, which sponsored TEA 2015.

Kitavi said CRCNA institutions were well represented, including Calvin College, Calvin Seminary, the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship, Timothy Leadership Institute, World Renew and World Missions. Several of the workshop facilitators, such as Timmermans, were from the CRC. “We had a full week of worship, fellowship, learning, unlearning and relearning,” said Kitavi. “Indeed God used all of us for his glory. One delegate sums up the entire conference this way: ‘One topic of worship was addressed from different angles yet in a unified manner, all of the speakers spoke in symphony.’” Timmermans said he appreciated the chance to contribute to that symphony of voices.

‘Already on fire’

In his workshop Timmermans discussed the theological and psychological foundations underlying what it means to be created in God’s image. He also discussed ways in which disability is treated in Scripture, and how important it is to include persons with disabilities in worship. He said he wasn’t surprised by learning from people in his class that society, including churches, still tends to shun those who have disabilities. But at the same time, he was pleased to discover that people in communities across Africa are “starting to understand that things need to change and more and more are including those who may have been forgotten in the past.”

In fact, he said, he received an email after TEA 2015 from Rev. Martin M. Wanjala, a pastor and General Secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in Eastern Africa, who said he found the workshop helpful and inspiring. “I am putting in practice what you taught us on disability during the TEA. I have two cases of disability in the church. Pray with me that I become of help to them as I lead them to God,” he wrote. While teaching the workshop and meeting people such as Barbara Nadunga and Wanjala were highlights of his trip to Africa, Timmermans said he also had the chance to meet with representatives from several other denominations, and with CRWM missionaries and World Renew workers in a small community north of Soroti in North Uganda. He learned of how the CRC has been involved in ministry and community development for years among people who have been displaced by war and persecution. He told of sitting for some three hours in a thatched-roofed building as the people from the community told stories and many offered thanks, through an interpreter.

World Renew has been in the area since the early 1980s, doing community development, and CRWM has been there for the last few years working in theological education and leadership formation. “I heard person after person saying that we had been there at the right time, teaching and partnering with them,” Timmermans said. “I was impressed and deeply moved by what they had to say.”

Reflecting on his trip and experiences, Timmermans says he came away convinced that the focus of Christian missions has changed for the CRC in Africa. “It is not about us bringing the Gospel to the people and church in East Africa,” he said. “I saw that the people there are already on fire to spread the message and have the Spirit and commitment to do that.”

The role the CRC can play and is already playing is to help equip members of the church in Africa to minister even better, from the pulpit to the community, which is what the TEA 2015 conference and other efforts he saw in the field are all about.

“I was able to see the fruit of what the CRC has been doing,” he said. “I was able to see how the church is growing in Africa. It was exciting to see how the CRC has been able to come alongside leaders who are taking on the mantle of leadership so they can thrive in ministry.”

Pakistan: Christian leader urges West to open doors for persecuted Pakistani Christians

Marian Van Til, with files from DPG

LAHORE (DPG) – The president of the Pakistan Christian Congress has urged the leaders of the European Union, Britain, many European countries, the U.S., Canada and Australia to open their doors to persecuted Pakistani Christians – from Pakistan and from neighbouring countries to which they have already fled.

Dr. Nazir S. Bhatti has written to all those leaders asking accommodation for Pakistani Christians who are seeking asylum, reports the news website, Christians in Pakistan. Bhatti’s plea came after the recent announcement from the UK that they would take in Syrian refugees, while Germany is already welcoming thousands of refugees from Syria.

In Europe, Bhatti petitioned the leaders of the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Romania, Hungary, Sweden, Norway and Denmark to give refuge to Pakistani Christian asylum seekers by allowing them easy entry in their countries.

“Thousands of Pakistani Christians and asylum seekers are not economic immigrants but persecuted Christians who are not rich, [who cannot] pay huge amounts to human traffickers to reach shores of Europe,” Bhatti wrote. “Pakistani Christian asylum seekers are suffering in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and other South Eastern Asian countries and waiting for years on their cases [before the] UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), without any shelter provided by UNHCR, IRC (International Rescue Committee) and other international non-governmental organizations,” Bhatti said. In the meantime, the refugees’ children also have no access to education.

In the last five years the situation for Christians in Pakistan has become increasingly dire. Only two percent of the population are Christian; the rest are Muslims, and the existing blasphemy laws were written to favour the majority.

Apart from blasphemy charges leveled, hundreds of Christians were killed in 2013 alone via suicide bombs, attacks on churches and burnings, shootings and beatings and other torture of individuals and families. Thus, the great need for safe haven in other countries for Pakistanis who flee such persecution, as Nazir Bhatti’s letter points out.

United Church still mulling continued

of their adherents openly confesses to not believing in the faith itself.

For a long time now the UCC has taken its cues and marching orders from secular progressives and not the Scriptures. Most of their allies in their Social Gospel struggles hate the church and blame it and Christi-
Debate what really matters – thoughtfully

Can we revive the lost art of debate?

Trayvon Martin. Christians who understand the connection between core beliefs and daily headlines can play a significant role by focusing on sustainable change in our culture.

Christians witness

The same trends within Christian communities replace reasoned discussion with polite avoidance of sensitive issues, closing ranks in an unhealthy tribalism that excludes anyone who thinks differently than those in power, or polarization that erodes the unity so essential for effective public witness in our current context. The nature of the debate on same-sex marriage at the 2015 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, for example, was not the best public witness. How we engage challenging issues may be as important as the outcome for our public witness, especially for the next generation.

What I hope to do through this column in Christian Courier is to encourage well-informed, thoughtful discussion of public issues that matter for the witness of Christianity today. Sometimes that will mean questioning our commonly held assumptions or looking at evidence that may require us to change previously held positions. It may mean considering a different perspective that deepens our understanding of an issue. Sometimes I will draw attention to important issues for Christians that are not receiving enough public attention.

Under a general theme of “Second thoughts” I hope to contribute to deeper engagement with contemporary social and cultural issues within the Reformed branch of Christianity in Canada. In keeping with that goal, I welcome dialogue and suggestions from Christian Courier readers for topics to explore or sources of alternative views that are credible, provocative and relevant for Christians to consider.

Kathy Vandergrift (kathyvandergrift@rogers.com), a public policy analyst, brings experience in government, social justice work and a Master’s Degree in Public Ethics to her reflections on current issues.

Peace feet

Prepare your feet!

Gonna walk all over you, ” singer Nancy Sinatra tells us. Boots are also made for stomping and kicking. Spikes are made for winning. Sandals are for cool comfort, and high heels might be for fashionable distinction. Shoes are for running or walking. What would feet fitted with “peace shoes” look like?

Beautiful feet

Many commentators have noted that Paul may be focusing on the feet as a reference to Isaiah 52:7: “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” Paul quotes this passage in Romans 10:15, highlighting the importance of the Christian proclamation. This should control the wielding of the sword of the Spirit. The word of God is beautiful “peace,” good news, salvation.

Peacefare

Listen to the metaphors behind words we sometimes use in the Christian message, such as “fighting,” “defeating” and “winning.” Christians name our enemies and then attack. I even question the phrase “spiritual warfare,” because “warfare” is the main word people hear and picture. Paul presents this reality, but with peace in the middle. What does “peacefare” look like? Why is this not even a word? Earlier in Ephesians Paul gives us a picture of this peace. (See also Isaiah’s earlier picture in chapter 11.)

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit (Eph. 2:14-18 NIV).

This is peace with God and each other. This is the peace that unites humanity, stops name calling, alienation and dehumanization. This peace tears down walls of division and hostility.

Peace feet

September 21 is International Peace Day. Prepare your feet! “Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace (6:15).” Feet that do not kick. Feet that have been washed by the humble Christ. Feet that stand on holy ground.

Dr. Wolthuis, a Christian Reformed pastor, is the Director of Geneva Campus Ministry at the University of Iowa.

Columns

Second Thoughts

Kathy Vandergrift

At this point in the federal election I feel like a spectator at a traveling circus with a vote for the best act at the end of the show. I wish I could feel like a citizen engaged in shaping our society. Campaign sales pitches encourage me to think more about what will benefit me personally than what will serve the common good or create a more just society for everyone. When political power is won by appealing to the self-interest of specific groups of voters in each riding, what gets lost is thoughtful debate on the wide range of societal issues that will shape our future as a nation.

Many observers lament the reality that political spin and marketing messages have largely replaced careful analysis of issues and options in our public discourse. Some, such as well-known public philosopher Mark Kingwell, suggest that the public is no longer interested in well-informed, rational discussion. I would suggest that thoughtful deliberation is a lost but necessary art that should be revived. It is more important than ever for nation-building, cultural development and effective Christian witness. It is especially important for Christians with a Reformed heritage who want their values to be taken seriously in the public square but are not necessarily comfortable with a fundamentalist, black-and-white moralism as a mode of engagement in society. Rather than lament the lost art of debate, I see opportunity for Christians to contribute in each of the following areas by rejecting the posture of a spectator and engaging in thoughtful deliberation from coffee table discussions to the public arena.

Nation-building

In Canada, extreme political partisanship threatens good public policy formation. Party positions are given priority over careful analysis and thoughtful debate. The current assumption that tax cuts create jobs, for example, is extremely simplistic; even economists who lean toward low taxes are raising questions about the economic impact of narrowly targeted cuts designed to woo certain groups of voters. Full cost-benefit analyses, including environmental impacts, are essential to assess all economic policy options. Avoiding public discussion of contentious issues such as end-of-life care fosters unhelpful polarization instead of finding common ground and accommodation between various perspectives. Careful analysis and open, well-informed discussion of options and impacts are needed in every area of public life.

In today’s globalized society most issues are complex and interrelated, requiring broad discussion to avoid unintended consequences of poorly developed policy options.

Cultural issues

In a celebrity-focused culture, sensational issues command public attention, particularly if someone famous is involved. The recent death of Cecil the Lion, for example, became a cause célèbre, while other equally important issues receive no attention. Even social justice advocacy groups are forced to campaign on narrow, attention-grabbing issues rather than deeper causes that take longer to explain. The biggest problem is that public interest is not sustained long enough to make necessary systemic changes. Reducing racism, for example, requires persistent and systemic action well beyond protests over individual, high-profile cases, such as the deaths of Tina Fontaine or Trayvon Martin. Christians who understand the connection between core beliefs and daily headlines can play a significant role by focusing on sustainable change in our culture.

Can we revive the lost art of debate?

Kathy Vandergrift (kathyvandergrift@rogers.com), a public policy analyst, brings experience in government, social justice work and a Master’s Degree in Public Ethics to her reflections on current issues.

In August I guided a group of international students to the Iowa State Fair where we walked and talked. As I turned one corner in the midway, I was shot by a three-year-old as she sat on her father’s shoulders. It was a toy gun, but she aimed at me and the red light on the gun’s tip flashed. I was glad none of the students saw this, or I would have said, “Welcome to America.”

The next day I gave a sermon on Ephesians 6:10-20, the armour of God. This is not a favourite passage of mine. Later I looked up my sermon from 1991 and saw that even then I struggled with the metaphor. I mentioned a parent who purchased the “full armour of God” from a local Christian bookstore. Their child proceeded to terrorize the neighbourhood, striking other children with the sword of the Spirit.

Terror

We live in a time of terror, or at least this is what the news media tells us repeatedly. The fear of violence has led the U.S. to incarcerate more people than ever before. Fear seems to lead to an approach of shoot first, ask questions later. Fear prods us to build bigger walls and drop better bombs.

This is not new. History is often the account of wars written by the victors. The Old Testament has troubling accounts of war. At times God commands war and uses it for his purposes. Is this the way it is supposed to be, or is this God working with the mess of broken humanity? God has the right to war against evil, but how does he ultimately do it? Not by fighting back but by unmasking its ugliness on the cross.

Peace shoes

If we return to the armour of God metaphor, notice the peace shoes. The shoes are not fully pictured. They are not named the “Roman military boots” or “spiked sandal.” In the midst of this military metaphor out jumps the word “peace.”

Boots are made for walking, and “one of these days these boots are...” Paul quotes this passage in Romans 10:15, highlighting the importance of the Christian proclamation. This should control the wielding of the sword of the Spirit. The word of God is beautiful “peace,” good news, salvation.

Peacefeet

Listen to the metaphors behind words we sometimes use in the Christian message, such as “fighting,” “defeating” and “winning.” Christians name our enemies and then attack. I even question the phrase “spiritual warfare,” because “warfare” is the main word people hear and picture. Paul presents this reality, but with peace in the middle. What does “peacefare” look like? Why is this not even a word? Earlier in Ephesians Paul gives us a picture of this peace. (See also Isaiah’s earlier picture in chapter 11.)

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit (Eph. 2:14-18 NIV).

This is peace with God and each other. This is the peace that unites humanity, stops name calling, alienation and dehumanization. This peace tears down walls of division and hostility.

Peace feet

September 21 is International Peace Day. Prepare your feet! “Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace (6:15).” Feet that do not kick. Feet that have been washed by the humble Christ. Feet that stand on holy ground.

Dr. Wolthuis, a Christian Reformed pastor, is the Director of Geneva Campus Ministry at the University of Iowa.
Manic, zany, *Cosmicomics*: Italo Calvino revisited

Philip Christman

As with many English majors, my intellectual life was blighted early by a crude little theory, out-of-date even when I first encountered it, that children’s intellects fall naturally into two sorts: the math/science kid and the art/literature kid. The worst result of this doctrine is to turn a kid’s first, unavoidable difficulties with math into insurmountable obstacles, the roots of which sit inoperably deep in the brain. But it also makes a mess out of literary history. Discoveries in the hard sciences both result from and shape the intellectual and spiritual currents that writers respond to. James Clerk Maxwell showed us that invisible fields, as much as visible bodies, could wield force, at around the time that Henry James invented an entire literary language for the description of intangible influences. It was also a good period for ghost stories. These things aren’t just coincidence.

In the second half of the 20th century, as people realized that they were living in Kurt Godel’s world—the world where no system can be both complete and consistent—experimental writers abandoned the old dream of James Joyce and Ezra Pound, of writing the book that would “complete” literature. Some of these writers began to speak, in crabby tones, of literature’s “exhaustion” rather than its end, but the writers who made up the OULIPO group had a brighter idea: let’s acknowledge that literature is not one system, they argued, but a potential infinity of systems with arbitrary starting points. So they wrote novels in which the letter e never appears, or in which it is the only vowel. They made stories based on math problems. Give me new starting points, they scoffed at the old dream of James Joyce and Ezra Pound, of writing the book that would “complete” literature. Some of these writers began to speak, in crabby tones, of literature’s “exhaustion” rather than its end, but the writers who made up the OULIPO group had a brighter idea: let’s acknowledge that literature is not one system, they argued, but a potential infinity of systems with arbitrary starting points. So they wrote novels in which the letter e never appears, or in which it is the only vowel. They made stories based on math problems. Give me new starting points, they seemed to say, and I’ll give you a new literature.

Italo Calvino (1923-85) didn’t formally join OULIPO until 1968, but he was a spiritual fellow traveller from early on. His books typically begin by committing to an insane, fable-like premise (a viscous wound in battle and becomes two warring people; a child discovers that he prefers life up a tree), then work out the implications of that premise with rigour and fidelity. The series of stories collectively known as *Cosmicomics* works, at first, in a similar way. The early stories begin with a brief summary of 20th century scientific discovery, and then a primordial being named Qfwfq—sometimes a fish, sometimes a dinosaur, sometimes hardly a determinable thing at all—takes up the narration, describing what it was like before the moon first separated from the earth (“Moon-milk was very thick, like a kind of cream cheese”), or when the nebula nearest our sun began to condense into separate planets (“I’m playing: ‘Playing? With what?’ ‘With a thing.’ You understand? It was the first time”). Imagine an universe so new that no human could live there, then anthropomorphize it till it’s almost cuddly: that’s Calvino’s method. The miracle of the *Cosmicomics* is that his manic, richly visual descriptions turn out to be adequate to the impossible scenarios that that method creates. So, for example, we have no trouble following him into that second-most-unimaginable of conditions, the pre-Big Bang universe, when everything coinered at one infinitesimal point:

“Just with the people I’ve already named we would have been overcrowded; but you have to add all the stuff we had to keep piled up in there: all the material that was to serve afterwards to form the universe, now dismantled and concentrated in such a way that you weren’t able to tell what was later to become part of astronomy . . . from what was assigned to geography. . . . And on top of that, we were always bumping against the Z’z’u family’s household goods: camp beds, mattresses, baskets . . . .”

These Z’z’zus, he somehow manages to convince us, were “immigrants,” even though the word had no meaning: “This was mere unfounded prejudice—that seems obvious to me—because neither before nor after existed, nor any place to immigrate from, but there were those who insisted that the concept of ‘immigrant’ could be understood in the abstract, outside of space and time.” There are indeed; just listen to America’s white invaders on Fox News, scoffing at its brown invaders (whose invasion began before ours did). Calvino’s knack for tiny, right observations never forfeits him, even in pre-spacetime.

The *Cosmicomics* sequence has ever but slenderly been available in North America up to now, scattered across various collections. Several never appeared in English translation here. A new volume, *The Complete Cosmicomics*, gathers the entire series, and if you like experimental literature, or science, or for that matter humour or intelligence or zaniness in any form, you’ll want this book. Some readers hold the later *Cosmicomics* in disdain, perhaps because the first 23 stories had the good luck to be translated by the brilliant William Weaver. Anyway, I don’t detect any real falling-off, though Calvino grows less punctilious in his devotion to the method and constraints of the early stories, and Qfwfq gradually disappears. One of the cleverest and loveliest, “The Other Eurydice,” comes late in the sequence. In any case, though, *Complete Cosmicomics* is not a book to bolt through, story by story; it’s to be read around in and savoured without system, whether you’re a math person, a science person or just a person.

What's at stake in the war on drugs

Brian Bork

Here’s a list of things I thought to be true before I read Johann Hari’s chronicle of the beginning (and end?) of the global war on drugs: many narcotics have such powerful effects on the brain that addiction is almost certain. Drugs have gotten stronger over the years because people are always seeking the higher high. Narcotics have always been prohibited. The “war on drugs” was started because of a genuine concern for the welfare of people, vulnerable as they are to the temptations that narcotics offer. That same war on drugs may get messy at times, but it’s ultimately for the good of our society.

I’m not convinced of any of these things anymore. It seems the difference between myth and conventional wisdom isn’t always so clear; at least there’s one of the things I thought to be true.

I’m left with after reading Hari’s book. So much of the way we manage and enforce the prohibition of narcotics just seems like sensible policy. But, as Hari writes in the introduction, “Drugs are not what we think they are. Drug addiction is not what we have been told it is. The drug war is not what our politicians have sold it as for one hundred years and counting.”

This is the thesis that Hari chases through the book, which is a blend of history and travelogue, written in anamped-up journalistic argot, veering at times from the lurid to the prescient. It’s empathetic, yet occasionally feels a bit superficial, too. Hari, formerly a journalist for The Independent in London, begins his reconstruction of the drug war in early 20th century America, telling of the rise of Harry Anslinger, a head of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics. Anslinger blended the American fears of “racial minorities, of intoxication, of losing control,” into the modern prohibition of narcotics, not only in the United States, but across the globe. The New York gangster Arnold Rothstein figures alongside him too, as the paradigmatic example of the drug lord who thrives during prohibition. Other drug lords, hustlers, cops, bereaved mothers, policy wonks and political gadflies follow in their wake, as Hari travels around the globe, seeking to understand the nature of the drug war in Mexico, America, the UK and the European countries that have found success in decriminalization efforts.

His findings are counterintuitive and compelling: Brain chemistry plays a part in addictions, but mental health, community and other markers of healthy social adaptation matter tremendously, too (as such, it makes much more sense to fund mental health treatment programs than to do fund prisons). The deleterious effects of opiate addiction has less to do with the drug itself than what it’s faced with. Drugs get stronger when they’re prohibited—during the alcohol prohibition in the 20s, the national taste switched from beer to whiskey, for the simple reason that smugglers chose to deal more concentrated varieties of booze, which maximized profits. Efforts at decriminalization in the Netherlands, Portugal and Colorado have led to slightly higher drug use per capita, but plummeting rates of addiction, overdoses and drug crime.

This is the sort of book that puts Christians in a weird spot. We’ve not been famous for advocating the legalization or decriminalization of narcotics, because we’re not the sort of people who tend to advocate a libertine use of intoxicants. (Though many of us do imbibe, and there’s a few smokers among us too, legal substances, which means no one gets shot on street corners over Bud Light, and tobacco excres don’t tunnel out of jail cells). Hari doesn’t sound much like many of a libertine, either. He’s not advocating for the legalization of drug laws because he thinks many people ought to cultivate a cocaine habit on the weekends. Instead, he’s out to show that the prohibition of narcotics is far more destructive to our society than the narcotic use itself. It’s created a massive prison-industrial complex, it has enriched monsters and their syndicates, and has laid tremendous shame and stigma on people who’ve struggled to cultivate a cocaine habit on the weekends. Instead, he’s out to show that the prohibition of narcotics is far more destructive to our society than the narcotic use itself. It’s created a massive prison-industrial complex, it has enriched monsters and their syndicates, and has laid tremendous shame and stigma on people who’ve struggled to cultivate a cocaine habit on the weekends. Instead, he’s out to show that the prohibition of narcotics is far more destructive to our society than the narcotic use itself. It’s created a massive prison-industrial complex, it has enriched monsters and their syndicates, and has laid tremendous shame and stigma on people who’ve struggled to cultivate a cocaine habit on the weekends. Instead, he’s out to show that the prohibition of narcotics is far more destructive to our society than the narcotic use itself. It’s created a massive prison-industrial complex, it has enriched monsters and their syndicates, and has laid tremendous shame and stigma on people who’ve struggled to cultivate a cocaine habit on the weekends. Instead, he’s out to show that the prohibition of narcotics is far more destructive to our society than the narcotic use itself. It’s created a massive prison-industrial complex, it has enriched monsters and their syndicates, and has laid tremendous shame and stigma on people who’ve struggled to cultivate a cocaine habit on the weekends. Instead, he’s out to show that the prohibition of narcotics is far more destructive to our society than the narcotic use itself.
Features

Modesty is not a dress code

Lisa Hall-Wilson

What is biblical modesty? Some Christians reduce modesty to a list of don’ts—a black list of too short, too low cut, too tight. No yoga pants! Society teaches girls to use their bodies to get attention, to dress like bait on a hook and go fishing. And as wrong as that is, are dress codes the solution? Does this pendulum have no middle ground?

The topic of biblical modesty predictably comes up every spring as winter parkas hit the floor, and every fall as girls enter school hallways. “Women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works” (1 Tim. 2:9-10 ESV).

Women should adorn themselves…with good works. What does that look like, exactly? The Greek translation for respectable apparel is “long robes.” Is that what Paul’s intent here is? Should we all be dressing like the ancient Greeks? Clearly the Bible is not prescriptive on this issue.

A modest attitude

Modesty is about behaviour and attitude more than dress; it’s about pride and humility—and the modest woman continually puts all her focus on God, and serving God, instead of on clothing or attracting attention.

Do men need to be modest? Yes, and I’m pointing at the guy who’s boasting about his athletic achievements or how many days a week he spends in the gym.

I have two teenage daughters—my musician (16) and my athlete (14). My musician has no issue with her youth group dress codes, though she is fond of shorts that would likely be considered too short. My athlete is a competitive cheerleader. Not the pom-pom waving, chase-the-football-team cheerleader, but the double back-handspring back-layout, train-three-days-a-week, wins national championships kind of elite cheerleader.

Cheerleaders are not known for their modesty, partly because the roots of the sport are in field-side look-at-me antics. Outside the gym, my athlete daughter dresses for comfort and freedom of movement. She prefers yoga pants, sweat pants and skinny jeans (because she doesn’t have to pull them up constantly or wear a restrictive belt—her logic). She chooses clothing based on comfort, not how her behind looks or whether the boys stare. She’s more modest (in her behaviour and motives) than some girls who dress more conservatively.

Manners and context

Bestselling Christian author Michael Hyatt wrote in a blog post about biblical modesty: “If people look at any part of your body before looking at your face, it is probably not modest.”

Really? That’s just about having good manners, not necessarily a reflection of how a girl is dressed. A guy can lust over a woman in a parka if he chooses to.

We need to teach our teens that different social contexts require different clothing. It’s inappropriate to show up for church on Sunday in a bathing suit—a one piece or a bikini. Equally, it would be inappropriate to wear a dirty t-shirt and ripped jeans to a job interview.

As a curvy woman, I struggle to find clothing that’s appropriate for my office. I can be the same dress size as another woman and wear exactly the same top, and it will fit her well but show way too much cleavage on me. I am sensitive to the fact that in this particular social context, I must choose clothes with higher necklines and so on.

Is attractiveness sinful?

Telling girls to cover up so their brothers in Christ don’t lust over them is perhaps the worst reason given to promote biblical modesty. At 21, I struggled as a new bride to understand how my body was no longer evil; how overnight my natural curves no longer lured men down a slippery path to eternal hell. I insisted the lights stay off; was I even allowed to feel pleasure from this?

The message that’s often internalized by teens and young women is that their bodies are sinful if men find them attractive; that they are less important than men; that a guy’s purity is the girl’s responsibility. It allows guys to blame shift for their desires and actions, and it teaches both sexes that sexual temptation is only a male issue. Where is the room for a woman to simply be pretty, or even beautiful?

We give teens a bad rap here, but how many women, of all ages, have critically asked a mirror how that pair of jeans makes them look? How many men and women dress with an eye to displaying a particular brand name or wear expensive accessories so others think better of them? How many are immodest with their nutrition and fitness routines? It’s OK to want to look nice and to take care of yourself, but when the focus becomes “look at me,” that’s immodest.

We know that God isn’t concerned with dress, wealth or good looks but rather our hearts. If we derive our value and identity from our relationship with Christ, the Spirit will slowly change our attitudes and shine a spotlight on wrong attitudes. Those kinds of changes work from the inside out, not the other way around with tape measures and legalism.

Where is the room for a woman to simply be pretty, or even beautiful?

Where is the room for a woman to simply be pretty, or even beautiful? Sheila Wray-Grigere, in her book The Good Girl’s Guide to Great Sex, shares the story of a co-worker who was very beautiful and dressed conservatively but was often chastised by church leaders for being immodest.

From the inside out

Teens need the tools to discern the appropriate dress for the social context and to critically self-examine one’s own attitudes and motivations. We need to teach teens to shift the attention off one’s self and focus on God.

We give teens a bad rap here, but how many women, of all ages, have critically asked a mirror how that pair of jeans makes them look? How many men and women dress with an eye to displaying a particular brand name or wear expensive accessories so others think better of them? How many are immodest with their nutrition and fitness routines? It’s OK to want to look nice and to take care of yourself, but when the focus becomes "look at me,” that’s immodest.

We know that God isn’t concerned with dress, wealth or good looks but rather our hearts. If we derive our value and identity from our relationship with Christ, the Spirit will slowly change our attitudes and shine a spotlight on wrong attitudes. Those kinds of changes work from the inside out, not the other way around with tape measures and legalism.

Lisa Hall-Wilson is an award-winning freelance writer. She lives in London, Ontario, with her husband and three children. She hangs out on Facebook—a lot.
Has authenticity trumped holiness?

Brett McCracken

In recent years, evangelical Christianity has made its imperfection a point of emphasis. Books were published with titles like Messy Spirituality: God’s Annoying Love for Imperfect People; Death by Church, and Jesus Wants to Save Christians, and churches popped up with names like Scum of the Earth and Salvage Yard. Evangelicals made films like Lord, Save Us from Your Followers, wrote blog posts with titles like “Dirty, Rotten, Messy Christians,” and maintained websites like anchoredness.com, modern-reject.com, churchmarketingsucks.com, recoveringevangelical.com and wrecked.org – a site that includes categories like “A Hot Mess,” “Muddling Through,” “My Broken Heart,” and “My Wrackage.”

Meanwhile, self-deprecating humour sites like Staff Christians Like and Staff Christian Culture Likes became hugely popular repositories of Christianity’s many warts, and writers like Anne Lamott and Donald Miller became best-selling, “non-religious” expositors of messy spirituality.

Evangelicalism – both on the individual and institutional level – is trying hard to purge itself of a polished veneer that smacked of hypocrisy. But by focusing on brokenness as proof of our “realness” and “authenticity,” we have evangelicals turned “being screwed up” into a badge of honour, its own sort of works righteousness? Has authenticity become a higher calling than, say, holiness?

How did we get here?

Erik Thoennes, professor of biblical and theological studies at Biola University, sees the authenticity trend in the undergrads he teaches. At the beginning of each class he asks his students to write down two things they love and two things they hate. Consistently, one of the things they say they hate is “fake people.” But the Christian life involves a whole lot of “fakin’ it” on the path to being integrated, Thoennes says.

“There’s this idea that to live out of conformity with how I feel is hypocrisy; but that’s a wrong definition of hypocrisy,” Thoennes said. “To live out of conformity to what I believe is hypocrisy. To live in conformity with what I believe, in spite of what I feel, isn’t hypocrisy; it’s integrity.”

Thoennes hopes his students understand that sanctification involves living in a way that often conflicts with what feels authentic. Still, he gets why younger evangelicals have such a radar for phoniness. They grew up in an evangelical culture that produced more than a few noteworthy cases of fallen leaders and high-profile hypocrisy. Their cynicism reflects a church culture that often hid its imperfections beneath a facade of legalism and self-righteousness.

All of this contributed, in the early and mid-2000s, to an authenticity boom in evangelicalism. Recognition of the biblical calls to confession (James 5:17) and “walking in the light” (1 John 1:5-10) had not gone away in Protestantism; they just became more and more couched in language of being real, raw, transparent and authentic in community.

Typical of the many articles written about the topic is Josh Riebeck’s 2007 piece for Relevant, “Fighting for Authenticity,” which announced that “authentic community, authentic faith and authentic Jesus are the cry of the new generation.”

“We don’t want to be fooled anymore. We don’t want to be gullible anymore,” Riebeck wrote. “We want flawed. We want imperfect. We want real.”

But why must “real” be synonymous with flawed and imperfect? When someone opens up about their junk, we think, “You’re being real,” and we can relate to them. But what about the pastor who has served faithfully for decades without any scandal, loved his wife and family and embodied the fruit of the spirit? Is this less real?

When ‘authentic’ is actually inauthentic

Often, what passes for authenticity in evangelical Christianity is actually a safe, faux-openness that establishes an environment where vulnerability is embraced, only up to a point.

Becky Trejo, a 20-something photographer from Los Angeles who attends Mars Hill Church’s Orange County location alongside her husband, Nep, has observed this trend in some small groups she’s attended.

“There’s this ‘sweet spot’ of authenticity,” Trejo said. “Like if you reveal that you struggle with gossip, people are like ‘woohoo!’ But then there are some sins you might share where it’s like ‘whoa, that’s too much.’ There has to be this middle ground, like ‘I’m struggling with wanting to sleep with my boyfriend.’ That’s the sweet spot where people see you as really vulnerable and authentic, and it’s required admission.”

We’ve become too comfortable with our sin, to the point that it’s how we identify ourselves and relate to others. But shouldn’t we find connection over Christ, rather than over our depravity?

In Christ, we can be more than scum. And that’s a message the world sorely needs.

In Christ, we can be more than scum. And that’s a message the world sorely needs.

Reflecting on Christianity’s “current obsession with brokenness” for her meneutics (Christianitytoday.com), Megan Hill wrote, “If we are constantly looking for someone else who is broken in all the same places, we overlook the comfort we can have in the perfect God-man.”

Hill wisely notes, “Grace covers. And it covers again and again. Thanks be to God.”

But if we stop there, “we are only telling half of the story… receiving grace for my failures also includes Christ’s help to turn from sin and embrace new obedience.”

Could it be that the most authentic thing any of us can do is faithfully pursue holiness and obediently follow after Christ?

In Scripture, Paul teaches again and again that Christians are “dead to sin” and risen to new life, no longer slave to sins but to righteousness (Rom. 6). That doesn’t mean the battle with sin is gone. But as Paul describes the struggle in Romans 7, he says “it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me” (Rom. 7:17), noticeably separating his identity from this unwanted alien thing still residing within.

The struggle is neither the point nor the marker of one’s identity. In Christ we are new creations (2 Cor. 5:17), called to flourish through life in the Spirit (Rom. 8).

“I think goodness is more real in that we are actually living more as humans were intended to,” Thoennes said. “Jesus is the real human we’ll ever see. He’s authentic.”

He understands our brokenness. But he’s as real as can be.”

No authenticity points

Sin is necessarily part of our story as redeemed people. We shouldn’t ignore or make light of it. But we also shouldn’t wallow in it or take it lightly for the sake of earning authenticity points.

As someone who became a Christian in his 20s, after having experienced the rocky ups and downs of a life without Christ, Luis Salazar of Whittier, California, finds it sad that so many young evangelicals seem to think dramatic struggles with sin are more real.

“I would never want to walk through it again,” Salazar said. “I wish I hadn’t gone through all that. A lifestyle of flashy sin isn’t necessary to experience grace. It’s not necessary to have a grand testimony of brokenness in order to be an authentic Christian.”

To overcome our “authenticity” confusion, evangelicals must see themselves differently. Rather than focusing on our brokenness, we should look to Christ and those who model Christ-likeness. We should move in that direction, by grace and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We should also, perhaps, stop speaking of ourselves in such “we are scum” terms. In Christ, we can be more than scum. And that’s a message the world sorely needs.

“We think we self-deprecating causes us to be more relatable and empathetic to non-Christians, it’s ultimately communicating a sense of disappointment, disillusionment and discontentment,” Stephen Matsson wrote for Red Letter Christians. “It thrives on negativity and kills our sense of hope.”

“The reality is that there are many things wrong with Christianity,” Matsson said, “but instead of focusing on the bad, let’s attempt to reclaim the hope that Jesus represents – redeeming our world by personifying the sacrifice, service, grace, hope, joy and love of Christ.”

Brett McCracken is a film critic for Christianity Today and is the author of the recently released Gray Matters: Navigating the Space Between Legalism and Liberty, as well as Hipster Christianity: When Church and Cool Collide. This article was first published by The Gospel Coalition (TheGospelCoalition.org) in January 2014.
Features

Interceptions

Christy Janssens

The blood clinic is one of the most depressing places I know. I spend more time in that place than the average 20-year-old and, frankly, I hate it. You sit around with a bunch of people who are sick and waiting, and there is too much time to think.

I was there again yesterday. I go to the blood clinic so often that it has gotten to the point where the nurses recognize me. They know I need to lie down or I get dangerously close to passing out, and that it is easier to find the veins in my right arm than my left.

Sometimes the most annoying interruptions are actually answers to prayers.

I usually arrive with a stiff-necked kind of resolve, like I am about to conquer something. This time I kind of limped in, tired and a bit defeated. This worked in my favour because I was super relaxed while lying on the table, liquid red quietly draining into those little plastic tubes. But I also left the clinic with a deep-set frustration, like I wanted to either punch something or lie down and sleep forever. Instead, I went into my van, put my forehead against the steering wheel and cried.

Silent rage

I live with an autoimmune disease called Ankylosing Spondylitis, and I hate talking about it because I think it’s a little over dramatic to use the word “disease” followed by the whole Ankylosing Spondylitis mouthful when I’m 20 years old and visually appear pretty healthy. It just sounds like I’m dying or something, which I’m not. I experience a lot of inflammation and general pain in my body on a daily basis. I get tired easily. My body has a shorter threshold than other people. It kills me to admit all of this.

Essentially, with autoimmune illnesses, the body is attacking itself internally. I hold a bit of a silent rage against my body because of this. It is the deepest kind of betrayal for your own flesh to turn against you.

Sometimes I can feel my body starting to lose its grip, and it is disheartening. No! Not yet! We’re a team, here. You can’t give out already. There is still so much further I want to go. This is my internal dialogue, and generally it is followed by anger and a resolve to push through because I don’t want to be sick, and besides, everyone else looks fine. I refuse to be beaten down by my own self.

Slow grace

This only works for a short time, until I find myself in a blood clinic and taking time off work to rest, which gives me too much time to spend getting upset at my body for not working properly. It’s a vicious cycle. I’m noticing that I have no grace for my own flesh and bone, and I’m beginning to understand that this isn’t helping anything.

I’m working through all of this right now. This is a really deep problem, and I need to address it or I’ll keep getting sick, and I’ll keep sending little tubes of blood to sterilized labs while I sort through all of my pent up anger and frustration for the thousandth time.

I’ve realized that when my body stops healing itself, it means that I need to stop and listen. That is so obvious, I know, but it is so difficult for me to honour.

What I know is that the body and soul are intimately interconnected, and when I get stuck emotionally or spiritually my body is the first thing to shut down. I hate acknowledging that I have limits, because to me that equals weakness, and I always want to be the strong person, the one who knows the answers, the one who is there for you all the time. I’m slowly learning, though, that I need to lay down that pride and accept a new rhythm that includes grace and a bit more humility. I am not superwoman, and that is OK.

Stop and listen

A few hours after I returned home from the blood clinic, a friend texted to ask how I was doing. I answered honestly that I was a bit discouraged. She replied and said that maybe God was getting me to rest because he needed to speak to me or teach me something and this was the only way to make me stop and listen. She told me that sometimes the most annoying interruptions are actually answers to prayers and, if you are open to it, they can bring about the deepest transformation.

That thought bounced around in my mind all night. It occurred to me how totally selfish and isolating it was to prove myself as the strongest one all of the time. I thought about how our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and how I was spending so much time ignoring the little danger signals and getting upset and feeling generally sorry for myself that I was not listening to God so much anymore. I was letting bitterness chip away my gratitude. I was choking out the possibility of God using the quiet, weak moments I experience for his glory.

Surrender

Right now I’m standing closer to grace and humility and quietly scraping back the bitterness to listen again. I’m starting to walk the long journey of making peace with this broken body that God gave me. I’m learning to see it as a reminder to stop shouting and let him speak. It is surrender, and it is hard. But somehow I think that it will make me softer, and more grateful, and more aware.

That is so healthy and beautiful.

---

*Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is a type of inflammatory arthritis and an autoimmune disease. An autoimmune disease is one where the body’s immune system becomes confused and begins to “attack” the body. In AS, the joints in the spine are the target of the immune attack, resulting in pain and stiffness (inflammation) in the back. The first symptoms of AS typically start in late adolescence or early adulthood (ages 15-30).*

---

*Christy Janssens (christy.janssens@gmail.com) is a student in Ontario who writes about art, student life, faith and finding inspiration in the daily at christyjanssens.wordpress.com and on Instagram @christyjanssens.*
**Clean-up jobs**

Our basement flooded last October. Before that, we’d lived in our home for 27 years without a single water problem. Which explains why, when the hydro went out during a violent thunderstorm, we didn’t check the sump pump. Complacency. Several inches of water soaked our basement, resulting in ruined flooring, a crawl space full of soggy Christmas decorations and the marshy reek of groundwater.

With five fully-finished rooms in the basement, it was a big clean-up job. My husband Mark and brother-in-law Harry worked to extract the water with shop vacs. A mountain of waterlogged possessions accumulated outside. Our insurance company sent over a crew who ripped out carpets and laminate flooring and installed huge fans to dry out the place. An adjustor arrived to survey the damage. Eventually we got a cheque.

The flood was a nuisance, but it wasn’t tragic. With the passing away of my brother-in-law Tim earlier in the year, it wasn’t hard to muster up perspective. Everything we lost was replaceable.

However, I found myself surprisingly reluctant to replace the stuff. It was freeing to toss out damp magazines, kids’ toys and the ridiculous amount of Christmas paraphernalia I had collected over the years. Perhaps it’s my age, or an evolving eco-responsibility, but I’m increasingly unwilling to fill up my life with things. I don’t want to be responsible for the nautical lamp that belonged to Mark’s grandfather. I don’t want to imbue with unwarranted nostalgia the needlepoint and crewel work I did in my 20s. Simplicity has a growing allure.

So, though we could afford to replace everything with the insurance money, we didn’t. We refreshed undamaged paneling and bookcases and coffee tables with paint. We kept our 12-year-old sofa and loveseat since they were relatively unscathed. Of course we replaced the floors and spoiled drywall. Mark did the work himself.

We purged our books. Again, liberating. In fact, some resentment flared at my university profs for requiring me to buy so many obscure textbooks I never looked at again. Still, those books represented the heady days of university. Billy observed that we’d decided to or keep Origins of the Modern Japanese State and The Chinese View of Their Place in the World?

**Stone Soup**

Stone Soup

Monica deRegt

“Not all of us can do great things, but we can all do small things with great love.”

-Mother Teresa

In one of my favourite children’s folk stories, Stone Soup, a tale is told of a poor beggar who arrives at a village, hungry and asking for something to eat. The villagers, impoverished themselves, claim they do not have enough food to share with the man and he is sent away. Dejected, he leaves but then returns shortly with a cracked cooking pot, a stone and water from the creek. As he builds a fire to boil the water, he arouses the villagers’ curiosity. He explains to each person who stops by that he is making stone soup, a delicious and magical meal, and that it is almost ready for everyone to eat, but is just missing one thing (a little salt, a few potatoes, a bit of onion, a small carrot, etc.). Each villager eagerly contributes their one item, and soon they realize they have been cleverly tricked into creating a tasty pot of soup to nourish the whole village.

I love the simple “magic” of this story as much as I love a steaming bowl of soup on a crisp fall day. From the devastating news reports of desperate refugees literally dying for a new place to live, to the endless lists and emails of volunteer opportunities and needs coming home from church and school, it is easy to feel that there will never be enough of my time or resources to make any difference at all in the lives of other people. It is also easy to feel like I can’t say no, and that I need to do it all. Both of those reactions lead to giving up and burning out.

**Cheesy Corn and Ham Chowder**

4 cups water
3 tsp chicken bouillon powder
3 peeled, cubed potatoes
2 ribs celery, chopped
1 medium yellow onion, chopped
¼ tsp black pepper
¼ cup butter
¼ cup flour
2 cups milk
2 cups shredded cheddar
19-oz can whole kernel corn
1.5 cups cubed cooked ham

**Directions:**

Bring water, bouillon, potatoes, carrots, celery, onion and pepper to boil in a large soup pan, adding more water to cover vegetables if needed. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes until potatoes are tender. In the meantime, melt butter in a medium sauce pan. Blend in flour. Add milk all at once, cook over medium heat until thick and bubbly. Add cheese. Stir until melted. Pour mixture into undrained, cooked vegetables. Simmer 15 minutes. Add corn and ham, and salt to taste, stirring occasionally and simmering another 15 minutes before serving.

*Alternative:* Use crispy, cooked bacon in place of ham.

So, trusting that the whole solution is not your responsibility, what one thing can you give? Perhaps I can’t end homelessness in my city, but I can make a pot of soup for a family in need. And when I do, it will most likely be this hearty potato chowder. It doesn’t contain any stones, but it sure is satisfying!

**Fresh start**

Recently we put the finishing touches on our renovated basement. I scrubbed every nook and cranny to remove lingering drywall dust. I washed the new tile floors the old-fashioned way, on my hands and knees. I lovingly wiped everything with the insurance money, we didn’t. We refreshed undamaged paneling and bookcases and coffee tables with paint. We kept our 12-year-old sofa and loveseat since they were relatively unscathed. Of course we replaced the floors and spoiled drywall. Mark did the work himself.

We purged our books. Again, liberating. In fact, some resentment flared at my university profs for requiring me to buy so many obscure textbooks I never looked at again. Still, those books represented the heady days of university. Billy observed that we’d decided to or keep Origins of the Modern Japanese State and The Chinese View of Their Place in the World?

**Taste & See**

Monica deRegt

In one of my favourite children’s folk stories, Stone Soup, a tale is told of a poor beggar who arrives at a village, hungry and asking for something to eat. The villagers, impoverished themselves, claim they do not have enough food to share with the man and he is sent away. Dejected, he leaves but then returns shortly with a cracked cooking pot, a stone and water from the creek. As he builds a fire to boil the water, he arouses the villagers’ curiosity. He explains to each person who stops by that he is making stone soup, a delicious and magical meal, and that it is almost ready for everyone to eat, but is just missing one thing (a little salt, a few potatoes, a bit of onion, a small carrot, etc.). Each villager eagerly contributes their one item, and soon they realize they have been cleverly tricked into creating a tasty pot of soup to nourish the whole village.

I love the simple “magic” of this story almost as much as I love a steaming bowl of soup on a crisp fall day. From the devastating news reports of desperate refugees literally dying for a new place to live, to the endless lists and emails of volunteer opportunities and needs coming home from church and school, it is easy to feel that there will never be enough of my time or resources to make any difference at all in the lives of other people. It is also easy to feel like I can’t say no, and that I need to do it all. Both of those reactions lead to giving up and burning out.

**Give what we have**

But just as I am reminded in 1 Corinthians 12 that I am just one part of a larger body working together, arranged perfectly by God in the place he needs me with the gifts he has given me, the story of Stone Soup is a refreshing perspective that sometimes all it takes is giving what I have, and allowing God to use the transforming power of community to turn it into something that will bless everyone. Each one of the villagers in the story believed the soup was only missing one ingredient – their item! This took away their fears of the overwhelming need, and freed them to give.

So, trusting that the whole solution is not your responsibility, what one thing can you give? Perhaps I can’t end homelessness in my city, but I can make a pot of soup for a family in need. And when I do, it will most likely be this hearty potato chowder. It doesn’t contain any stones, but it sure is satisfying!

My ecstatic heart beats “yes” to Wangerin’s exuberant insights. “Yes” to the wink of polish beneath grime, “yes” to the emancipation of soup and water, “yes” to the conversion of old to new.

It’s my turn. I bless you, Mom, for teaching me to clean. I bless you, every janitor and maid, handyman and housekeeping aide. May your gnarled hands know the consecration of your work – the holiness of your shined surfaces, the redemptive enchantment of “fixed” and “restored,” the partnering smile of God as you renew the places where he is coming to live.

Cathy Smith is a retired teacher and contributing editor with CC. She lives in Wyoming, Ontario.
This was a summer of deaths. Four friends and acquaintances in our local community and my father (in Wisconsin) all passed away. The four “local” deaths were commemorated with memorial services. In our area these are often termed “a celebration of life.” I have read enough from Thomas Long, Thomas Lynch and The Book of Common Prayer to know that there are some weighty reasons for having a funeral, complete with casket (sometimes open), a procession to the cemetery, a graveside liturgy, the lowering of the casket on straps and ropes and a covering of real soil.

There are also, however, weighty reasons for conducting a memorial service later on: it gives the family private time for initial expressions of grief and offers time for consideration of a suitable eulogy and reflections on the life of the deceased.

I consider myself blessed that all of those five people who died in August were admirable folk: no embarrassed fumbling to say something nice about someone whose life caused much distress to family and friends.

I ask your indulgence as I comment on my father’s life. First, however, some explanation as to why I am saying these things in a column and not at a funeral or memorial. Before the funeral we held a “viewing” with a closed casket (we children chose to keep the casket closed). It was heartening to see perhaps 500 people (just a guess) and hear very brief greetings – words of appreciation and an anecdote or two about my father.

On the Sunday just prior to the funeral, a few of us visited one of the churches Dad attended in his youth in Schwarzwald, a few of us visited one of the churches two about my father. Words of appreciation and an anecdote or two about my father. Words of appreciation and an anecdote or two about my father.

What I learned from my Dad: Every person is worthy of respect and a greeting. (I also learned that shopping trips can seem to last forever.)

Had we a family or community memorial, here are some of the things I would have considered saying about Dad.

First, he came from a dysfunctional family. His “ma liger’s” first husband “drunk himself to death.” Second husband Martin Gesch ran a store and was imperious, penurious (the Great Depression a contributing factor) and domineering. My favourite uncle, Herman, ran away from home at about 15 years of age because of the physical abuse he received from his father. We loved Grandma Gesch, a pious saint, longsuffering and loving. Grandpa did not buy his wife false teeth, so as children we watched in shock, awe and wonder as Grandma Gesch gnawed a piece of meat or mashed an apple. Grandpa Gesch rarely went to church and often forbade his wife to attend, but ponderously pronounced grace at every meal.

My Dad found out at about age 11 that his “nurturative parents” were not his biological parents. He was actually the son of his sister and an “unknown” father. His sister, my “Aunt Esther” (we named one of our daughters in honour of her), “scrubbed floors on her knees” so that Dad could have some of the necessities of life and a good education. Once, when he had lost a nickel from Grandpa Gesch’s store, he wasn’t allowed into the house until he found it. Aunt Esther sneaked out in the dark and put a nickel on the ground so Dad could say he found it and go to bed.

What I learned from my Dad: From such beginnings came a man of profound faith, a loving father and husband and one who was to be a light to the many thousands he encountered in his life.

When we were driving the country roads in the daytime, Dad would wave (or, irritating, beep the horn) to every car he met and say, “Chris, John.” Later I figured out that he was using an older greeting common in German but also in New England: in effect he was saying, “Morning, Christian” (brother or sister).

When I managed to screw up my life, rebelled against God, was divorced and financially broke, Dad used his savings to buy me a car so I could get a job and go to work.

One of my relatives said, “G’pa was 40 years old for 40 years.” He was spry and able to do almost whatever he pleased for 40 years. (He did get a little slower during those years. After purchasing a king-sized bed: “I can’t catch your mother anymore in that bed.”) Then decline set in, including the death of my mother after 65 years of marriage. Dad fell down, again and again. Falling, falling, falling: bruises and contusions; complications from Parkinson’s disease. One of the last times I sang “My Buddy” to him was also one of last times he was able to react normally (as in the past). He gave me a blessing over the telephone.

What I learned from my Dad: Life is very long, too long, sometimes. And that Christian faith means that you are in God’s hands when you no longer make much conversational sense.

What did I learn from my father? That our circumstances do not always determine our future lives; that dogged determination often brings temporal rewards; that God’s grace is triumphant in the short run and at the end. My dad, 5’5” with his shoes on, was a giant. I wish you all could have known him.

Curt Gesch is a retired school teacher from Quick, B.C., who rarely encounters skunks and never competes with them when he does. He finds honouring his father and mother a delight (Ps. 119:24).
The day I’m writing this marks Ed’s and my 25th wedding anniversary. That is astonishing to me. Not that we’ve stuck it out for 25 years—we knew we would, with God’s help: on oath we promised God, each other and those gathered in support of us that we would. What amazes me is that it’s already been two-and-a-half decades! They have flown by ever so swiftly. Such a milestone gives human beings (perhaps especially Christians) the opportunity to reflect on events that filled that time and on the nature of God’s presence in those years. There are many other kinds of signposts in human life that naturally elicit celebration, reflection and thanksgiving, but a marriage milestone does that in a specific way.

I’m quoting from our marriage service regarding the institution and purpose of marriage: “The holy bond of marriage was instituted by God himself at the very dawn of human history. The Lord God in his goodness created us male and female, endowed us with many blessings, and entrusted to us the care of his earth. Marriage is one of those blessings, evidence of God’s grace and intended for the furtherance of his Kingdom. It is God’s purpose that the man and woman become one flesh, that they grow together and are united in love as Christ is united with his Church. “The union of man and woman in heart, body, mind and spirit is intended for God’s glory and their mutual comfort and help, that they may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love and that they may be blessed in the procreation, care and upbringing of children. Marriage, then, is a divine ordinance intended to be a source of happiness to those who enter it, an institution of the highest significance to the human race, and a symbol of Christ and his Church, ...”

And when Christ returns, at the consummation of all things we his Bride will rejoice with him, our Bridegroom, and heartily feast at the wedding supper of the Lamb. A helpful annual ritual

Marriage is the only human relationship that God established from creation, as Jesus himself told the Pharisees who were trying to trap him with questions about divorce. “It is the bond that mirrors the relationship between Christ and his Church. There’s a weighty responsibility on the part of the marriage partners to live up to that reality. A husband and wife must reflect in their marriage Christ’s self-emptying, sacrificing love for his Church. (Since defining marriage has become a contentious issue in modern society I can’t ignore that life goes on, and I am not going to let sadness stop her from the next thing God has for her to do. Even at her age, God has a plan and purpose for her and we see her embracing this call of service unto the Lord. She seems to have no trouble stepping into the next phase of life.)

Faith like a child

As I watched my daughter’s behavior, I had to ask myself some questions. Do I believe the plans and purposes for my life in the midst of loss? Can I, in childlike faith, be just as excited as our daughter was to take the next step in the adventure of serving God? Or do I, in the midst of change, lose sight of what God wants to do next? To be perfectly honest, I know that this is a challenge for me. During times of change I can lose my enthusiasm and forget that God is good and does have fresh things in store. I can get stuck in the memories of what I am missing and lose sight of the new all around me. New people who will join our house group, new families to meet and foster friendships with, and new and creative ways to stay intentionally connected with our absent friends. Rather than fight these changes I can learn from my daughter.

The truth is that life goes on, even in the face of loss; and God’s grace and mercy is new to us every morning. This gives us the ability to face each and every day as a gift. Of course, we still live in a fallen world. Ed has a near life-long handicap; I have a decades-long chronic illness. But neither of those has impeded our marriage; quite the opposite. The most painful disappointment was God’s withholding of children from us. I’m convinced we would have been good parents. But clearly God wanted us focused on other relationships and other work, and he blessed each of us with talents accordingly. So it’s still a wonderful thing to recount God’s blessings, to “name them one by one” as the gospel hymn says. Reraditing that service compels us to do that.

There’s a centuries-old blessing/admonishment that says simply, “Go with God.” A church I know of uses that, and adds, “or don’t.” citing Exodus 33:15: “If your presence does not go with us, do not lead us from here.” It strikes me that an entire Christian marriage ceremony—the institution, the union, the biblical instruction, the prayers, the hymns—can be summarized in that cryptic phrase.

Words from Wild Horses

“Best day ever!” exclaimed my five-year-old daughter as we headed to church on Sunday. These words stuck in my mind. Exactly a week prior, we had helped move a family of seven to a northern community eight hours away. This family had been in our house group for three years and their two oldest kids were my daughter’s playmates. They were “biff”s (best friends forever). Our daughter is an only child and so the friendship that these kids have had has been an incredible blessing to us as parents; it filled a need for our daughter. Needless to say we were all missing their presence and we knew that Sundays would be the hardest for our daughter.

So when she pronounced this to be the “best day ever,” I wondered what was going on in her mind. Did she forget that her best friends were gone?

Yet there she was—getting herself dressed and ready with a smile and a song in her heart. She was literally overjoyed, and I was taken aback. I asked her why it was the best day ever and she said, “Daddy, I am going to be the teacher’s helper in Sunday School today.” She could hardly control her enthusiasm, even choosing her clothes based on “what a helper would wear.”

I didn’t ask her if she was missing her friends; I just let her be in her joyful state. I watched as she went down to the class grinning from ear to ear. There were no outward tears or eyes searching for her friends; no, it was Sunday as usual and she went downstairs with her teacher without (apparently) a care in the world.

I know that she is processing the loss of her friends in her own way. It usually takes a while for her to voice her thoughts and emotions. Though technology has grown and given us the ability to foster continued connection via Skype and Facetime, this isn’t the same for a young child who needs tangible, in-person connections. Yet somehow I wonder if my daughter gets this realization that life goes on, and she is not going to let sadness stop her from the next thing God has for her to do. Even at her age, God has a plan and purpose for her and we see her embracing this call of service unto the Lord. She seems to have no trouble stepping into the next phase of life.

Singing the Truth

Marian Van Til

‘Go with God’

The day I’m writing this marks Ed’s and my 25th wedding anniversary. That is astonishing to me. Not that we’ve stuck it out for 25 years—we knew we would, with God’s help: on oath we promised God, each other and those gathered in support of us that we would. What amazes me is that it’s already been two-and-a-half decades! They have flown by ever so swiftly. Such a milestone gives human beings (perhaps especially Christians) the opportunity to reflect on events that filled that time and on the nature of God’s presence in those years. There are many other kinds of signposts in human life that naturally elicit celebration, reflection and thanksgiving, but a marriage milestone does that in a specific way.

I’m quoting from our marriage service regarding the institution and purpose of marriage: “The holy bond of marriage was instituted by God himself at the very dawn of human history. The LORD God in his goodness created us male and female, endowed us with many blessings, and entrusted to us the care of his earth. Marriage is one of those blessings, evidence of God’s grace and intended for the furtherance of his Kingdom. It is God’s purpose that the man and woman become one flesh, that they grow together and are united in love as Christ is united with his Church. “The union of man and woman in heart, body, mind and spirit is intended for God’s glory and their mutual comfort and help, that they may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love and that they may be blessed in the procreation, care and upbringing of children. Marriage, then, is a divine ordinance intended to be a source of happiness to those who enter it, an institution of the highest significance to the human race, and a symbol of Christ and his Church, ...”

And when Christ returns, at the consummation of all things we his Bride will rejoice with him, our Bridegroom, and heartily feast at the wedding supper of the Lamb. A helpful annual ritual

Marriage is the only human relationship that God established from creation, as Jesus himself told the Pharisees who were trying to trap him with questions about divorce. “It is the bond that mirrors the relationship between Christ and his Church. There’s a weighty responsibility on the part of the marriage partners to live up to that reality. A husband and wife must reflect in their marriage Christ’s self-emptying, sacrificing love for his Church. (Since defining marriage has become a contentious issue in modern society I can’t ignore that life goes on, and I am not going to let sadness stop her from the next thing God has for her to do. Even at her age, God has a plan and purpose for her and we see her embracing this call of service unto the Lord. She seems to have no trouble stepping into the next phase of life.)

Faith like a child

As I watched my daughter’s behavior, I had to ask myself some questions. Do I believe the plans and purposes for my life in the midst of loss? Can I, in childlike faith, be just as excited as our daughter was to take the next step in the adventure of serving God? Or do I, in the midst of change, lose sight of what God wants to do next? To be perfectly honest, I know that this is a challenge for me. During times of change I can lose my enthusiasm and forget that God is good and does have fresh things in store. I can get stuck in the memories of what I am missing and lose sight of the new all around me. New people who will join our house group, new families to meet and foster friendships with, and new and creative ways to stay intentionally connected with our absent friends. Rather than fight these changes I can learn from my daughter.

The truth is that life goes on, even in the face of loss; and God’s grace and mercy is new to us every morning. This gives us the ability to face each and every day as a gift. Of course, we still live in a fallen world. Ed has a near life-long handicap; I have a decades-long chronic illness. But neither of those has impeded our marriage; quite the opposite. The most painful disappointment was God’s withholding of children from us. I’m convinced we would have been good parents. But clearly God wanted us focused on other relationships and other work, and he blessed each of us with talents accordingly. So it’s still a wonderful thing to recount God’s blessings, to “name them one by one” as the gospel hymn says. Reraditing that service compels us to do that.

There’s a centuries-old blessing/admonishment that says simply, “Go with God.” A church I know of uses that, and adds, “or don’t.” citing Exodus 33:15: “If your presence does not go with us, do not lead us from here.” It strikes me that an entire Christian marriage ceremony—the institution, the union, the biblical instruction, the prayers, the hymns—can be summarized in that cryptic phrase.

Words from Wild Horses

Kenny Warkentin

‘Best day ever’

“Best day ever!” exclaimed my five-year-old daughter as we headed to church on Sunday. These words stuck in my mind. Exactly a week prior, we had helped move a family of seven to a northern community eight hours away. This family had been in our house group for three years and their two oldest kids were my daughter’s playmates. They were “biff”s (best friends forever). Our daughter is an only child and so the friendship that these kids have had has been an incredible blessing to us as parents; it filled a need for our daughter. Needless to say we were all missing their presence and we knew that Sundays would be the hardest for our daughter.

So when she pronounced this to be the “best day ever,” I wondered what was going on in her mind. Did she forget that her best friends were gone?
Robert J. Joustra

And this lesson cuts both ways, as Owen points out in Lesson #3: A state may be rational and ideological at the same time. In fact, there may be no such thing as a state that is not on some level ideological, which goes to the root of the conflict. The political-theological contest on how and why to arrange social and sacred life is one in which the West has definite positions it defends. As cosmopolitan and inclusive as we fancy ourselves to be, the very fact that we champion things like religious freedom, and the package of human rights that come along with it, means we are not agnostic in this debate.

The history of intervention is partially because we can’t not care.

Owen argues that every country is, in a sense, ideological, “because every country or every regime has some vision of the good society, both domestic and international” (99). Every society has a political theology. And no society can sit indifferent about its basic truths. It is possible, likely in fact, that states are rational in their method, but value-driven in their goals. What we want and who we are, after all, is not the stuff numbers-driven social science can spit out.

Which is the reason why, historically, political communities generally cannot resist foreign interventions. That’s Lesson #4: Even the realists among us occasionally back interventions for reasons Owen parrots straight from the Reformation and the Wars of Religion. Our intervention secures a safer world for our policies and our way of life, and it reinforces our power and hegemony. Not even the most hardened American ideologue would sit by dispassionately if a plausible case were made that some nudge from the United States could push Iran toward a pro-democracy, pro-American trajectory. A nudge, naturally, does not need to mean war. It could be humanitarian aid, trade status, or more. Here’s Edmund Burke talking about the French Revolution, but he could be in Egypt or Saudi Arabia talking about those countries’ interventions in Yemen today:

“Formerly your affairs were your own concern only. We felt for them as men; but we kept aloof of them, because we were not citizens of France. But when we see the model held up to ourselves, we must feel as Englishmen, and feeling, we must provide as Englishmen. Your affairs, in spite of us, are made part of our interest; so far at least as to keep a distance your panacea, or your plague.”

The history of intervention is partly because we can’t not care. The liberals among us delight to see our beliefs give people better standards of living. The realists among us delight to see our beliefs spread to make the world safer for us. Wars are built on this logic. They always have been.

This is the key reason that calling some states like Iran irrational is a comforting self-deception. Or why calling political Islam generally irrational is also a misleading diagnosis. What we have is not the progressive march of history vs. Islamist hold-outs. What we have is what Scott Thomas calls a “clash of rival apostasies” hybrid, and often regional incarnations of great, big, sometimes incoherent things called political Islam and the secular. To label the problem this way is not to get relative about it, as if to say that the Islamic State (ISIL) is just another kind of attempt to reconcile a political theology similar to what the United States did—and all are equally valid attempts. No, some attempts can be better than others. Some can degrade and destroy human persons. Some are wrong, but that doesn’t make them irrational. Morally repugnant and unjust, certainly, but not irrational.

Secularism and Islamic democracy

Which brings us to a possible note of hope. Pure secularism, like Ataturk’s revolution in Turkey, has been tried and failed in the Muslim world. There is very little appetite for it. But pure secularism has been tried and failed in the Western world too. There is no such thing as a pure secular world, except maybe in the imaginations of western academics. And if, as Owen says, “Western democracy is not as secular as many suppose, Islamic democracy may not need to be either” (129). Might it not be possible to talk about Islamic democracy unfolding in the same way that Christian democracy took root in Europe, and in the Commonwealth? Can Europe’s own troubled past show us what to expect here?

The answer: watch Turkey and Iran, because political theology may not be imprinted or coerced, but it can be caught, it’s contagious. What Owen calls exemplar countries in the history of the West are perhaps the most powerful agents for global change. They are states that order themselves in such a way that the tangible benefits of wealth, power, and peace are impossible to ignore. Nothing did more to further practical secularity in society than the successful political programs of the Netherlands and England in Europe. In other words, real world tests. People see what works, and people adopt it. Owen gets close to Huntington’s idea of a “core state” within a civilization here, a lead player that shows “how it can be done,” and has the clout and respect of the world to hold its own. The only real candidates today, he says, are Turkey and Iran, who have the size, power, and ability to project a successful political project. The future of political Islam may rest with the real-life performance of these two states.

But Owen’s most sobering word is probably for the West itself. In the race for world leadership, being worthy of emulation is about more than boats and guns. There, he channels Cold War George Kennan at the beginning of a century full of hot wars: containment will depend on “the degree to which the United States can create among the peoples of the world generally the impression of a country which knows what it wants, which is coping successfully with the problems of its internal life and with the responsibilities of a World Power, and which has the spiritual vitality capable of holding its own among the major ideological currents of the time” (164). Iran and Turkey should be so lucky as to fit that bill. But so should the United States of America. And so should Canada.
Trudy (Truus) deBruyn
went to be with her Lord and her beloved husband
Bernard (Ben) on Sunday, September 6, 2015
in her 97th year.

Trudy was a strong, indomitable woman in her life
and in her faith. She was born in Dalen, in The Nether-
lands, married Bernard and with their five children immi-
igrated to Canada. After a few years in southwestern
Ontario, they made the Peterborough area their home.
As part of the Peterborough community, Trudy nursed
at Civic hospital for over 25 years. Once Bernard died,
she moved to Holland Christian Homes in Bramp-
ton, where she enjoyed many years being a strong
member there. She chose to move to Fairhaven in
Peterborough when her sight failed.

Cephas Christian Reformed church in Peterborough
and the wider church community were very important
to her. She served as National President of the Ca-
nadian Federation of Christian Reformed Women for
eight years. She was also involved in the local Ladies
Auxiliary and the Mary and Martha Society at Cephas.
Trudy was incredibly proud of her family. She knew
each child, grandchild and great-grandchild’s ac-
complishments, their concerns and their joys. Her incredible memory was a database for all of us, as
she remembered important facts, trivia and any date
of any family activities. She remembered entire Bible
passages and hymns.

Trudy is predeceased by her sister Johanna, and
remembered with love by her sister Willy deVos and
brother Folgert Zwaving of Rotterdam, The Nether-
lands, as well as many Dutch cousins, nieces and
niephews.

She will be missed as the moral compass for her 8
children, 22 grandchildren and 23 great grandchildren.

Celebration of Life Service was held on Sept 24th
at Cephas Christian Reformed Church.

Hennie Duiker-Van Arragon

On September 9, 2015, in her 86th year, Hennie Van Arragon peacefully went to be with her
Redeemer and Saviour.

Hennie, predeceased by her first husband Rink
Duiker, is survived by her husband of 45 years,
Johan Van Arragon, 12 children and their spouses;
Magda (Duker) and Jake Binnema, Rink and Marlene
Duiker (deceased by Marg Duiker), Len and Chris
Duiker, Marjke (Duker) and John Suceska, John and
Angelina Van Arragon, George and Lisa Van Arragon,
Joyce (Duker) and John Ouwelend, Henry and Kim
Duiker, Paul and Kathy Van Arragon, Linda (Duker)
and Rob Jorey, Susanne (Van Arragon) and Wayne
Spronk, Fred and Cyndi Van Arragon. In addition,
Hennie will be missed by her 52 grandchildren and 28
great-grandchildren.

As Hennie’s earthly heart failed, she was encouraged
by the Bible passage from Psalm 73:26, “My flesh and
my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.” Hennie confidently trusted
in God and eagerly looked forward to her future in
heaven and is now celebrating with her Lord.

“I know that my Redeemer Lives and that in the end
he will stand upon the earth.” Job 19:25

Donations were done in lieu of flowers to World
Passages and hymns.

Contact our Succession Planning Committee
at succession@gmail.com
or call the Committee’s chairperson,
Stan Baker at 905-440-6683.

HAPPY 65th ANNIVERSARY
1950 October 8 2015

Cor & Tina Bos
Thankful for God’s grace during their 65 years, we wish them God’s blessing as they celebrate their
anniversary.
Your love and faithfulness are an inspiration to us all.
Congratulations and best wishes
With love from
Your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
Home Address: 69 Concord Street
Fonthill ON L0S 1E0

National Director
Canadian Bible Society
The Canadian Bible Society (CBS) exists to promote and
encourage the translation, publication, distribution and use
of the Scriptures throughout Canada and Bermuda, and to
co-operate with the United Bible Societies in its worldwide
work.
The Society was formally founded in 1904. In 1906, it be-
came a chartered member of the United Bible Societies,
a fellowship of over 145 national Bible Societies around
the world. The Societies work in partnership with churches
and other Bible agencies to facilitate and support transla-
tion and Scripture distribution work around the globe.
In Canada, CBS translates, publishes and distributes
Bibles, New Testaments and other Scriptures, which are
available in over 100 languages including Canadian First
Nations languages. The first Canadian native translation
to be published by the Bible Society dates back to 1804,
when the Gospel of John was translated into Mohawk.
The Society is now seeking a new National Director with
relevant experience who will direct the ongoing establish-
ment and implementation of a strategic plan and oper-
a tions. The National Director will provide leadership and
direction to the Board of Directors. S/he will ensure an
effective balance of the strategic and operational roles
of the Board and small staff in the implementation of the
Society’s strategic initiatives.
Reporting to the Board of Governors of CBS, the suc-
cessful candidate will have a passion for the Bible and an
ecumenical approach towards promoting the Scriptures,
potentially complemented by experience with advocacy
and/or association management. As established within the
Society’s governance framework, the National Director will
work collaboratively with, and provide leadership and sup-
port to, district boards, regional ministry teams and other
regional entities.
Among the new National Director’s many skills are sound
judgment and the ability to think creatively, which will be
required to develop innovative approaches to enhancing
the strength of the CBS brand. Bilingualism would be a
definite asset.

To apply for this exciting Toronto based opportunity,
please visit www.ogdenberndon.ca/en/careers/12974

Principal
In beautiful Ottawa, Redeemer Christian High
School seeks a principal with a love for Jesus and
Web: rchs.on.ca. Email: searchteam@rchs.on.ca.

Investment Opportunity
Meatcutter/Sausage maker
Investment opportunity
@ Smithers Sausage Factory (est. 1904) in the
beautiful Bulkley Valley, Smithers, BC – a thriving
meat shop, European deli, imports, sausage mak-
ing, custom meat cutting. Presently 12 staff.
Contact Fred Reitsma
250-847-2861 Ext. 277, 250-847-5001 Ext. 280
Email: sausagefactory@telus.net
Your Will is a Testimony of your faith and values.

To help your family AND benefit charity, contact CSS for professional, impartial, and confidential advice.

Connecting Donors, Charities & Ministries

- 1-800-267-8890 | admin@casservices.ca
- www.casservices.ca

Christian Stewardship Services

Low Interest Rates? Ever considered a charitable GIFT ANNUITY?

GIFT ANNUITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex and Age</th>
<th>Rate /Amount</th>
<th>Charitable receipt</th>
<th>Tax Free</th>
<th>Taxable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male 70</td>
<td>5.97%</td>
<td>$1,194</td>
<td>$5,791</td>
<td>$1,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female 75</td>
<td>6.20%</td>
<td>$1,240</td>
<td>$6,010</td>
<td>$1,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male 75 &amp; Female 75</td>
<td>5.59%</td>
<td>$1,118</td>
<td>$4,889</td>
<td>$1,045</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amount based on sample of $20,000
Sample for joint life annuity (payable as long as either person is alive)
Male 75 & Female 75 | 5.59% | $1,118 | $4,889 | $1,045 |
|                   |      |        |        | $73     |

Call or fax for an explanatory brochure and/or confidential no-obligation quote.

Link Charity Canada Inc.

Phone: 416-410-4244 | Fax: 416-465-6367 | www.linkcharity.ca
1-800-387-814 | 45 Harriet St. Toronto ON M4L 2G1

Your funds will be invested in Christian Reformed Church and Christian school building projects in Canada.

Rates to September 30, 2015
We pay 2.75% on CRC deposits. Earn approx. 3.2% on RRSP/RRIF/TFSA

Write: Christian Reformed Extension Fund
45 Harriet St, Toronto ON M4L 2G1
Email: harry@crcextensionfund.org
Call: 416-461-1207 | Fax: 416-465-6367

Classifieds

DEADLINE Christian Courier is published on the second and fourth Mondays of the month. Deadline for each issue is 13 days prior to publication date.

RATES: All personal and family announcements: $7.00 per square inch. Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: $8.00 per square inch.

SUBMITTING YOUR AD:
- e-mail – admin@christiancourier.ca
- Mail: 2 Aiken St.
St. Catharines ON L2N 1V8

More information on our website:
christiancourier.ca

Reading a hand-written down copy of CC?
Call 1-800-969-4838 or email use@christiancourier.ca to get your own Christian Courier – earlier, and intact.
Plan at your own pace.

In the comfort of your own home review our FREE Plan at Your Own Pace Guide.

> Make thoughtful decisions with your faith and family in mind
> Discuss with your family under no pressure
> Take advantage of our free plan registration process.
> Get additional information only if YOU want

Contact us to get your free guide sent to you.

We promise there will be no hassle or follow-up call!
Laura Heming

On August 23, 365 bike riders blazed trails into the scenic corners of Niagara for the 2015 Johnson MS Bike Tour. After cruising through the Friendship Trail and the Niagara Parkway, riders heard at the end of the day that their fund-raising efforts had raised over $296,000 for the Ontario MS Society. The tour took place in five locations across the province, including Prince Edward County, Grand Bend, Ottawa, Niagara and Toronto on September 20.

The MS Bike Tour has been raising money to fight this disease for 26 years – a fundraiser known as the largest cycling tour across North America. The annual tour unites around 10,000 riders in total throughout the summer in all locations.

Canada has the highest rate of MS in the world, and the Niagara region is home to a significant portion of that population. This disease is a long-term illness that stops the brain from sending messages to the body properly. MS typically attacks a person’s balance, ability to move, hearing, sight and memory. The average age of onset for MS is 34 years old, although it can affect people as young as 15. Though it does not look the same for everyone living with the disease, Multiple Sclerosis becomes a great obstacle to completing simple and everyday tasks.

Advocacy

Larry Peyton is just one of the many Niagara residents deeply affected by MS. With a son living with the disease, Peyton has avidly pursued donors each year since his son’s diagnosis. At 81 years old, he has never slowed down in his efforts.

“Our son was diagnosed with MS 11 years ago when he was 43. Along the time it happened, I remember seeing an ad in the local paper for the MS Bike Tour, and decided to train for the 75 km bike tour,” says Peyton.

An active Anglican Church member for the majority of his life, Peyton finds most of his support from his congregation members. He has found great refuge and support in this, his community of believers. Along with time spent in this tight-knit community, Peyton can be found raising awareness of and money for MS research at the local farmers market Friday mornings – a tradition he has followed for the past five years. This year alone, he has raised a total of $4,678 – about $600 more than last year.

Peyton also occupies his time with occasional preaching and sermon writing. For the past 43 years as a lay reader, he has had the opportunity to preach at his congregation when the priest is on vacation.

“In Canada, you have a greater risk of developing MS than in any other country,” the MS Society website says. “So what will you do? Flee, or fight?”

Making a ‘wheel’ impact:
The 2015 MS bike tour Niagara raises the bar for next year’s bikers

Larry Peyton (#15) takes part in the 75-km bike tour for his son.

His involved lifestyle mirrors his persistent and dedicated style of fundraising, which he believes is necessary for making an impact on MS research.

“It is important for volunteers to raise funds for research because of the lack of help from the government.” Government funding for MS research is limited. Although the Canadian government allocates a portion of funds for research and clinical trials in MS, the MS

Continued on page 19