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CHRISTIAN COURIER
70 YEARS

The ripple effect: Tim Bosma and the gift of community

Krista Dam-VandeKuyt

This article, written in collaboration, is dedicated to the memory of our friend Tim Bosma.

Sometimes the simplest thing can trigger a memory. The other day a song played on the radio, one that Tim always asked our friend Rebecca to sing at karaoke. As the first verse started on the radio, so did the tears. I could remember Tim clearly, sipping his beer and nodding along to the beat of the song. That’s the way many of our memories are now, coated with a bittersweet glaze.

Tim had an unmistakable laugh, one you could hear in a crowded hall and recognize right away. He was a storyteller, a loud-mouth and a prankster. He was a pain at times but we loved him like a brother.

Whether it was fixing a furnace or helping someone move, Tim would be there. He was the kind of guy who, aside from exasperating his friends, would show up. He’d always connect with his friends, with a call on his way home from work and an “open door” policy at his place. When something bothered Tim, he wasn’t afraid to speak the honest truth. For Gerry Kikkert, Tim wasn’t just his best friend but someone who saved his life, instrumental in arranging an intervention. Gerry has been sober for five years.

When Tim introduced us to Sharlene, she fit right in with our group. We were so happy he had met his perfect match. He loved to tease her and she would put up with him, keeping him in line. Aside from being a joker, he did have a sweet side, one very evident when they became parents.

Tim always loved kids, even as a teenager; he was so excited to be a dad. Every time we’d get together, he would proudly tell us about his daughter’s latest achievements, from crawling to walking and talking. But now he won’t watch his own daughter grow up, become a crazy teenager like we were, or scare off her boyfriend. He won’t see his precious girl graduate or walk her down the aisle to the man he deems worthy. That has been stolen from them. For what? A truck? A thrill?

The Donut Diner days
I knew Tim for 17 years. Many in our circle of friends have known him longer. Our group grew out of the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church’s “FISH” youth group. We were not model teenagers but what we lacked in piety, we made up with heart – a genuine caring for our friends and families. A heart for God and a desire to do better. It wasn’t unusual for a campfire, even a light-hearted kangaroo court, to turn to a heated debate about creation, the day of judgement and everything in between.

We spent so much time together that we became “us” or “the group,” also nicknamed “the Dutch” by Tim’s friends from Ancaster High. Most nights we could be found at the Donut Diner, our local meeting spot. We loved camping, karaoke, fielding old cars and just hanging out. The bonds that developed those years are hard to describe. People have...

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Battle cancer with hope in extraordinary new game

Kevin Schut

"Choosing to desperately love somebody that you could lose, I think that has changed me,” Ryan Green, co-creator of That Dragon, Cancer told the Huffington Post. It’s a game about the experience of Ryan and Amy Green’s family in the face of terminal illness. Their son, Joel, was diagnosed with incurable cancer when he was only one. A few years later, Ryan and colleague Josh Larson started making a game in order to share the Green’s experiences, and after Joel passed away at the age of five in the spring of 2014, the game very much became a tribute to the little boy. Since then, That Dragon, Cancer has been at the top of “most anticipated indie games” lists across the industry. Released on January 12, this game is a powerful and important title, demonstrating what authentic Christian art can look like.

This title is nothing like the blockbuster action and combat games that get the most attention of money in the industry. It is an interactive narrative: a slow, thoughtful, point-and-click adventure in which the player explores an artistically beautiful series of scenes accompanied by haunting music. The game doesn’t require good reflexes to play and there’s no high score. Rather, exploration touches off little bits of story or scenes with reflections. We can sit in a hospital chair with Ryan, cradling a baby Joel hooked up to an IV, and press on a phone to listen to the hopeful voicemail from Amy...

Continued on page 2
The ripple effect continued
said we are unique, but we had a good example in our parents’ Good News church group.

Working to find Tim
Early that Tuesday morning, May 7th, 2013, our friend Mike Vanhouten drove by Tim and Sharlene’s house as he was heading out to work. In the darkness, he thought he saw a police car in the driveway. He pulled in to see what was going on and was told Tim took two guys out for a test drive the night before and never returned. He went up to Sharlene, asking if it was true. She nodded and asked, “Mike, I need you to call the boys.”

When Mike called that morning and told us Tim was missing, we all asked over and over, was he kidding? Was this a prank? As it sank in that this really happened, each of us dropped literally everything. Nothing was more important than being there to help. Tim would have done the same. After getting Mike’s call, Brad Bootsma arrived at Tim and Sharlene’s home soon after and Sharlene asked, “Go find him. Bring him home.”

What began as combing ditches in close proximity to their home soon developed into a huge missing person campaign that spread across the world. “The Dutch,” Tim’s high school friends, Tim’s and Sharlene’s families and their friends – all of us came together, a community bound by one goal. We had to bring him home.

“It was six days in a row that I didn’t see my kids,” said Mike. “I told my wife, Tim can’t go home to his little girl right now, so I’m not stopping until I find him.”

A small rock in a huge pond
As friends and family, we used every avenue of networking we could think of to set up that missing poster and social media campaign. Everyone quickly fell into roles, doing whatever they could to be useful. Some were pounding pavement while others set up administrative support. Some surrounded Sharlene while another’s week was about keeping quiet, unusual for a group that is very animated all of us have fought the dragon of cancer – as the game itself really mattered what we all did that week, it got the calls in.”

“That week was really about the community we were already a part of,” explained Brad. “Pastor John Veenstra, at Tim’s memorial service, talked about throwing a stone into the pond and the ripple effect that is created. If you throw a stone into a mud puddle, there’s only so much water that can be splashed around. We were a small rock thrown into a massive pond. The ripple effect just kept going because of the community we are in.”

It was our whole community, not just friends and family but our church, local community and then all of Canada that became part of this search. Hundreds of people came out to put up flyers and also to drop off food and coffee. Employers gave paid time off, fellow colleagues did our work for us or planted our fields, sisters and mothers took our children into their homes. Community members came forward to help us out financially, with gas cards and to cover our expenses. Local businesses donated printed posters, signs and bumper stickers. There were so many, too many people and companies to thank individually, that made this search possible. They gave us the needed help and hope in such an intense, emotionally exhausting week.

Seven days later, the unthinkable became reality. The day that I’m not even sure how to write about. How do you describe the moment you see your friends’ hearts shutter with one text message: They killed him? Some physically collapsed as they heard the news. We had to pick up others off the road. We were in disbelief as the news swept across the nation, the horrific shock in hearing what happened to his body. Nothing could have prepared us for that announcement and the anger that followed. Later, a somber quiet fell over us, unusual for a group that is very animated and loud. Just as we had many times in that week before, we gathered into a circle and prayed.

“We found him. Not how we wanted to, but we found him,” Mike said, sadness in his voice. We removed the posters from Tim’s garage and from our cars. The community mourned with us and pulled down the thousands of posters we had taped up. We shared memories of Tim and we got through that day as we had those six days of searching. Together.

Held up by community
At get-togethers, there is still an unexplainable hole, a piece of us taken away. Our grief has come to a standstill in many ways while waiting for the trial to begin.

“There are so many unanswered questions. How do you deal with this, not knowing how or why? How do you process the gravity of such a horrific thing? It holds you back from fully having closure,” explained Rebecca Bootsma. Our church, Ancaster CRC, met in prayer two weeks ago to commit the trial’s outcome to God. We are still surrounded by our community and together we will get through these next months.

“I’ve learned to appreciate my community like I didn’t before, to value looking out for other people,” said Brad. “Community was a big part of all of this, a huge part. I’ve realized that community is one of the biggest blessings I have in my life.”

We cannot fully express our gratitude to our community in Christ, all those who helped in the search for Tim. As the trial proceeds, we ask once again for your prayers. Each day, Ancaster CRC will be posting a scripture verse (ancastercerc.org). At 10:00 a.m. as each court day begins, please join us wherever you are with a prayer to support the Bosma family, the crown attorneys, judge, the jurors... all those a part of Tim’s trial.™

Krista Dam-VanDeKay is a member of Ancaster Christian Reformed Church.

Battle cancer with hope in new game continued
We can watch Joel cuddle with a dog as we listen to audio of family recordings play. Sometimes, the game jumps into unexpected creative and unusual experiences, like the dream family recordings play. Sometimes, the game jumps into unutterable moments of joy (Joel and Sharlene’s home soon after and Sharlene asked, “Go find him. Bring him home.”). An unexpected scene of guiding a little Joel hanging from balloons made of inflated surgical gloves through a minefield of cancer cells.

It is not, then, a game that requires players with lightning-quick reflexes. Rather, the challenge to progress is its emotional power. I have never cried before while playing a game. That Dragon, Cancer had me sobbing more than I ever have during a movie. Because video games have the ability not only to put us in someone’s shoes but to control how we walk in them, That Dragon, Cancer gave me a tremendously vivid experience of living with impending death.

Profound reflection
What makes the game even more compelling is that Ryan and Amy are completely open about their Christian faith and their struggles with God in a time of immense suffering. They believed that God would produce a miracle of healing, but maintaining such faith took its toll in the face of doctors’ grim diagnoses; one particularly moving sequence allows us access to Amy’s desperate hope and Ryan’s simultaneous despair. And, of course, all their thoughts and hopes and fears are now filtered through the bitter knowledge that the miraculous healing never did occur. There are precious few expressions in contemporary Christian culture of the sorrow and pain of the children of God that we see over and over again in the book of Job and the Psalms and the prophet Jeremiah’s Lamentations. That Dragon, Cancer steps boldly into that void. So many of us have fought the dragon of cancer – as the game itself notes – and we should be mourning and struggling together. Along with the sorrow, however, are moments of joy (Joel continued on page 3)

Ryan and Amy describe the game as a tribute to Joel, the youngest of four boys.
If you’ve always wondered why anyone would care about a video game, I strongly encourage you means to follow God through this vale of tears into the Promised Land beyond.

This is the experience of the Greens, and they have displayed an unshakeable faith.

In other words, this game is a profound theological reflection on our place in this world. A perfect Creation was corrupted, and we cannot remove the stain of evil present in all experiences. Jesus proclaimed to his followers that he had initiated the Kingdom of God in this world and redemption is at hand. At the same time, we live in the time of the now-and-not-yet, and until Christ comes again in power to set all things right, the knowledge and joy of salvation will be mixed with the tears of death.

In the movie The Dark Knight, Michael Caine plays Alfred the Butler and Christian Bale plays Batman. At one point, they’re talking about the nature of evil, and Alfred says: “Some men aren’t looking for anything logical, like money. They can’t be bought, bullied, reasoned or negotiated with. Some men just want to watch the world burn.”

That last part – “some men just want to watch the world burn” – has become one of the most quoted lines in recent movie history. But it’s the line before it – this idea that some people simply “can’t be bought, bullied, reasoned or negotiated with” – that I find really interesting.

Because it’s true.

Ever get into an argument on Facebook? It happens to me all the time. I’ll post something about, say, vaccinations, and suddenly my feed is full of anti-vaccination conspiracy nuts accusing me of being blinded by Big Pharma. Or if I post about global warming, there’s always some Facebook troll who will say “but it was snowing last week.”

I respond – patiently – with facts and figures and charts and graphs supporting my position.

But then a funny thing happens. Instead of convincing the other person, all my facts and figures seem to do is make the other person more convinced that they’re right and I’m wrong. They’ll argue harder. Get louder. Start calling names.

Most of us stick to our beliefs instead of questioning them.

In an argument with someone you know – particularly on a social network like Facebook – you don’t actually see the other person in the argument as neutral. If you know them, you know their politics, their educational background, their biases – so you’re less likely to see them as a trustworthy source of information.

Motivations
So does this mean that arguing with someone on Facebook or Twitter is useless? In an earlier article, I offered up the opinion that social media is making us all more – not less – empathetic towards people who are different from us, so doesn’t that mean I was wrong?

At the risk of sounding like I’m a victim of the Backfire Effect myself, I don’t think that’s true.

After all, arguments on social media aren’t like a debate over a beer at a bar. People are actually listening in, and they may not have formed an opinion about the issue you’re debating. So the debate you’re having may not convince your opponent, but it might change the mind of someone who is just listening in to the conversation.

But if you really want to convince someone in an argument, researchers say, don’t disagree with them. Rather, look for what is motivating the argument and see if you can agree with the underlying belief. For example – you could start a discussion about vaccination by saying “I understand you want what’s best for your child. You’re a good mom.”

Or, as some Israeli researchers discovered, taking a person’s belief to its logical extreme to make the opposite point – like: “Israelis are the most moral people on earth, which is why we need to continue fighting others” – can sometimes bring the other person around.

So what does this mean for Christians?

The Backfire Effect confirms what we already know. Arguing with someone who doesn’t share your beliefs doesn’t work. You’re not going to bully or goad someone into a relationship with God. Bullhorn evangelism, getting into debates with fedora-wearing atheists on news aggregators like Reddit or Fark won’t get you anywhere, either.

Science confirms what the scriptures tell us. Remember in Acts 17 when Paul debated Greek philosophers in Athens? It... backfired. The lesson is: if you want to change minds, change hearts. Speak to others in love. Find out what they care about – about the deeper beliefs behind the ideas they passionately defend. And if you can find a way to speak to those beliefs, the ideas may change.

Lloyd Rang is Senior Director of Communications at Lakeridge Health and a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville.

Battle cancer with hope

In the arts, media + culture, play is a powerful tool. In the realm of serious issues like cancer, the same can be said.

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The work of our hands

Angela Reitsma Bick

A pillow from odd socks? Hearts painted on rocks? This month is all about lists with suggestions like that: 30 Valentine’s Day Gifts for Fabulous Singles; 19 Fun and Easy Valentine’s Day Crafts for Kids; 45 DIY Valentine’s Day Gifts Your Spouse Will Actually Want. There’s still time for you to make some really special heart-shaped tea bags – all you need is coffee filter paper, loose-leaf tea, a needle, thread, scissors, several free hours and the patience of a saint.

The current Do-It-Yourself (DIY) trend is fascinating. It celebrates the average person completing a task rather than paying someone else to do it, most often in creative endeavours (like baking and decorating) and in home improvement. With a DIY mindset, anyone can learn how to change the oil or carve a rubber stamp out of an old eraser. The emphasis on self-sufficiency can be a really neat thing, especially when it helps to develop expertise in a certain area. Here’s one example.

Barbara and her husband had always expected their kids to participate in house and yard work. They live in Texas, where even hardy grass needs regular watering, and decided that they needed an irrigation system.

“Why pay someone to install a sprinkler system when you have a strapping seventeen-year-old available in your own home to do the work?” So Barbara gave the task to her son. He researched sprinkler installation, bought the equipment and started digging trenches. It took him three weeks. When school started, no one – not his friends or teachers – believed his answer to the perennial trench question, “What did you do this summer?” Successfully completing the project needs to pass a test: Are the supply costs actually cheaper than purchasing the completed item? Do I really want/ have the required time to learn? Will the process bring me joy? As long as you answer yes to at least one of these, it’s probably worth it. You might be willing to spend more on the material for a bookshelf than you would for a new shelf, for instance, for a gift. Just don’t assume that every DIY idea is automatically cheaper, more meaningful and more fun.

Once, not all that long ago, the only option was to make most things at home. Store bought items were special. now we’re living in a world where the reverse is true: you can buy anything, even a hug from strangers, therefore what we’ve come to value most is the work of our hands.

If you’ve walked into a Michaels store lately, or the craft aisle of any supermarket, you know that – bizarrely – even this handmade trend has been commercialized. That’s why every project needs to pass a test: Are the supply costs actually cheaper than purchasing the completed item? Do I really want/ have the required time to learn? Will the process bring me joy? As long as you answer yes to at least one of these, it’s probably worth it. You might be willing to spend more on the material for a bookshelf than you would for a new shelf, for instance, for a gift. Just don’t assume that every DIY idea is automatically cheaper, more meaningful and more fun. Is that Build a Birdfeeder Kit worth $49.99? As I type this, my mom is helping my son Ben (age 4) pore lard into a giant pinecone and cover it with birdseed. There are so many great ideas online for unique and simple birdfeeders. DIY doesn’t need to start at Home Depot.

And if a project doesn’t work out? You’re in good company on Pinterest Fail, where “good intentions come to die.” This is the spot to admit that those penguin cupcakes look like a nuclear meltdown in the Arctic.

Behind the silly and sensationalised I think something beautiful is happening in the DIY movement. Evidence is everywhere, right down to the level of typeface. I heard Salina Vanderhorn, a designer for Holt Renfrew in Toronto, speak on trends in design that relate to the publishing industry. In an age of “content congestion,” she said, fonts that look hand drawn are increasing in popularity; you’ve probably seen them on umbrellas, magazine covers and online.

Macleans has recently experimented with marginalia – circled words and comments in the margin that mimic handwriting, as though each copy is a hand-me-down and the previous reader took notes. But the notes are a deliberate part of its layout, placed to catch our attention. In an over-processed world the imperfect stands out. And it may even draw us in.

The work of our hands

The best deals

Not all DIY activities will result in handy abilities (unless the demand for homemade heart-shaped tea bags suddenly increases). Why is Do It Yourself so popular, then? Largely because anything done by hand is believed to be cheaper, more meaningful and more fun.

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What’s your DIY? Some people have described DIY or the “maker movement” as a new industrial revolution – “combining the spirit of the old shop class with modern tech” (csmonitor.com). Do you have an interesting DIY project, invention or “life hack” – a trick or tool that makes life easier?

We want to hear about it! Send the details to editor@christiancourier.ca by March 30, 2016 for a chance to win a copy of Matthew Crawford’s Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work. We’ll publish the best ones on our Letters page.

How God used Supertramp in my life (twice)

John Van Sloten

As a young teen I was deeply insecure. While everyone around me seemed to know what to do and who to be, I was lost and afraid. I had so many questions. I didn’t know if I belonged. I felt alone.

Then I heard a song on the radio, from a band called Supertramp, that gave voice to my existential cry, “Please tell me who I am!”

After hearing Logical Song and then buying the album, I realized that there was someone out there who understood, who knew my struggles and was there with me.

Hide in your Shell was probably the most influential Supertramp song for me. As lead singer Roger Hodgson sang about “playing joker,” he named what I had become: a kid who had to be funny all the time, quick with the one-liners, always trying to “grab on to what I could scramble for.”

And then, as the song continued, beautiful words of invitation came: “If I can help you, if I can help you, if I can help you, just let me know. . . .” I didn’t realize it then, but it was as though God was reaching out to me.

“Will, let me show you the nearest signpost to get your heart back and on the road. If I can help you, if I can help you, if I can help you, just let me know.”

I didn’t make the connection until four years ago. Which led me to write a sermon entitled, How God Used Supertramp (Roger Hodgson) to Save My Life. It was the most personal message I’d ever preached.

I quoted Psalm 19:7 (MSG), “The revelation of God is whole and pulls our lives together. The signposts of God are clear and point out the right road,” and I talked about how all people belong to God. I spoke of how Hodgson’s cries gave voice to my deepest prayers, “I wanna know you. . . . I wanna feel you. I wanna touch you. Please let me near you.”

And when the sermon reached its crescendo, Supertramp’s words sounded like they could have come from the mouth of Jesus: “Why don’t you listen / you can trust me / there’s a place I know the way” (which led me to write a sermon entitled, How God Used Supertramp (Roger Hodgson) to Save My Life.)

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“Will, let me show you the nearest signpost to get your heart back and on the road. If I can help you, if I can help you, if I can help you, just let me know.”

I didn’t make the connection until four years ago. Which led me to write a sermon entitled, How God Used Supertramp (Roger Hodgson) to Save My Life. It was the most personal message I’d ever preached.

I quoted Psalm 19:7 (MSG), “The revelation of God is whole and pulls our lives together. The signposts of God are clear and point out the right road,” and I talked about how all people belong to God. I spoke of how Hodgson’s cries gave voice to my deepest prayers, “I wanna know you. . . . I wanna feel you. I wanna touch you. Please let me near you.”

And when the sermon reached its crescendo, Supertramp’s words sounded like they could have come from the mouth of Jesus: “Why don’t you listen / you can trust me / there’s a place I know the way to / a place there is no need to . . . feel that you are alone.” The connections seemed so perfect.

‘This next song . . .’

A few weeks after preaching that message, Calgary CBC reporter Russell Bowers brought it to Hodgson.
John, Roger Hodgson and Fran Van Sloten in the singer's dressing room.

Supertramp star listens to Van Sloten's sermon.

Son's attention during an interview. Bowers then took this photo of Roger holding an iPad with a screen grab from the sermon of me preaching about his music. And then, a few weeks later, I got an email from Hodgson's manager letting me know how much Roger appreciated listening to the message. She said that Roger's spirituality was one of the reasons Supertramp appreciated listening to the sermon. “I’m not much into preachers, but you’ve got it right... keep spreading the love.” After gushing like a teenager for a few minutes, I told him about what it felt like while he played *Hide in Your Shell*. “When I was a kid I didn’t know that God was saving me through your words. When I preached that sermon four years ago I named that fact for the first time. And as you played it tonight (once the shock faded) it felt as though I heard God’s voice in behind your voice, in real time!”

The whole time we were in his dressing room Roger embodied such a humble, loving and thankful demeanor. “I’m the one who’s been blessed,” he said. “I don’t even really write those songs... I just receive them when they show up.” We talked about how important “getting out of the way” is when it comes to divine inspiration.

My wife and I couldn’t believe what was happening. It felt as though God was putting his imprint on our ministry and our calling to listen for his truth everywhere; affirming again, in a dramatic fashion, his everywhere presence in our lives. I told Roger that I’m now inspired to preach for the next 15 years! And I am.

Now, three months later, I still shake my head. Did that really happen? What a beautiful story God has spoken: “The parable of Roger Hodgson’s otherworldly impact on an unknown (yet fully known) Canadian kid (sunn preacher).”

John Van Sloten is a pastor at New Hope Hillside Church in Calgary, and the author of *The Day Metallica Came to Church*. His new book, *Your Job is a Parable* (Navpress) is scheduled for release in 2017.

Announcing Christian Courier’s first ever reader internet survey

We’re grateful to you, our readers, for your attention and support, and want to know how we can serve you even better.

Please take the time to tell us what you think about Christian Courier by entering the following link into the internet browser on your computer, tablet, or smartphone:* http://goo.gl/forms/QvLlvxw 

If you don’t use the internet regularly, please ask a friend or family member to help you complete the survey. Think of it as a great way to share Christian Courier!

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your participation; your opinion is very important to us.

What’s your story?

Seventh Annual Christian Courier Short Story Contest!

Adult Division: Send in your original short fiction (1,000 to 3,000 words) on any theme by April 30, 2016. First prize receives $100 and publication in a summer issue of Christian Courier. Second prize receives a one year subscription. Please note that this contest is for fictional short stories, not essays or articles.

Youth Division: Our readers 9 to 15 years of age (Grades 4-9) can participate in the category for youth. There will be two divisions: junior (Grades 4-6) and intermediate (Grades 7-9). Send your short stories (500-1000 words) to monica@christiancourier.ca by April 30, 2016. The first-place winner in each division will win a gift certificate to Chapters valued at $50.

Please note: All stories must be submitted electronically, as an attachment to an email, to monica@christiancourier.ca. Entries over the word limit will not be considered. All entries must include (on the attached document, not in the email): your full name and mailing address, a photo of yourself, a short bio about who you are and the title of your story to be considered as a valid contest entry. All valid entries will receive a confirmation of receipt by May 15. Only the winning entries will be contacted after that point.

The survey will display properly on small screens, but you may have to scroll sideways for some of the question scales.

*The survey will display properly on small screens,*
Iraq: 1400-year-old Christian monastery destroyed by ISIS

MOSUL, Iraq (CNA/EWTN News) – St. Elijah’s Monastery in Mosul dated back to the sixth century, making it the oldest Christian monastery in Iraq. Both poets and historians have written about the monastery’s long impact in the Middle East.

The Associated Press obtained satellite images this month showing that St. Elijah’s, also known as Dair Mar Elia, was demolished by militants of the Islamic State between August 27 and September 28, 2014. But until January 20, when the AP published the images, no one in the West seemed to know.

Mosul, Iraq’s second-largest city, was overrun by the Islamic State in June 2014. More recently it extended its reach in the regions surrounding the city. The militants have displaced hundreds of thousands of Christians from their homes while slaughtering or enslaving thousands of others. They have also gone after Yazidis and Shia Muslims.

“We see it as an attempt to expel us from Iraq, eliminating and finishing our existence in this land,” Father Paul Thabit Habib, a Catholic priest from Mosul who now lives in Erbil, told The Associated Press. He added that the monastery was “a very important place for the history of the Church in Iraq.”

St. Elijah’s was located about four miles south of Mosul. It was built in the late sixth century and renovated or rebuilt several times. It was used by monasteries until 1743, when a Persian shah martyred the 150 monks who lived there for refusing to convert to Islam. The monastery then became a pilgrimage site.

Iraq’s Christian heritage

James Foley, a journalist who was to be beheaded by the Islamic State in August 2014, recorded efforts by the United States military to help renovate the monastery in 2008 during the Iraq War.

The Chaldean Patriarch of Babylon, Louis Raphael I Sako, told Vatican Radio in Erbil, told The Associated Press. He added that the monastery was “a very important place for the history of the Church in Iraq.”

The group have destroyed several pre-Christian sites as well, including at Nimrud, Hatra, Nineveh and Palmyra. The tomb of the prophet Jonah, on which a mosque had been built, was destroyed with explosives in July 2014. It is feared that since the Islamic State does not always publicize its destruction, and information does not flow freely from the caliphate, more demolition has occurred than is known.

Archbishop Bashar Warda of the Chaldean Archeparchy of Erbil told CNA in June 2015 that the Islamic State “have destroyed walls and historical sites, but they were unable to destroy the faith of the community. And that’s the good news. That our people are strong enough to leave everything behind and just stay Christians.”

Canadian CRC office hosts new ministry leaders

BURLINGTON, Ontario (CRCNA) – More than a dozen Christian Reformed Church pastors and ministry leaders gathered at the CRC office in Burlington, Ontario, last fall to learn about ministry in the Canadian context. The event was designed for church leaders who are new to the ministry and/or new to Canada, said Rev. Darren Roorda, the denomination’s Canadian Ministries director.

Roorda said the gathering was aimed at “ministry leaders who had come into ministry in Canada within the last 18 months or so.” The hope was “for them to have some experience under their belt, and that way it would make the conversation and teaching and learning that much more valuable.”

During the two-day event, ministry leaders met for discussions, presentations, meals and worship, learning about ministry in Canada both regionally and nationally. Participants heard presentations from the agencies and ministries in the CRC in Canada, giving them an idea of the work done by each one. After each session, there was opportunity for participants to interact with ministries that caught their interest.

The participating Canadian CRC ministries were the Centre for Public Dialogue and the Aboriginal Ministry, as well as denomination-wide agencies and ministries like Home Missions, World Renew and Faith Formation.

The idea for the gathering sprang from a meeting last year after and between clerks from Canadian classes gathered in Burlington to discuss ministry in a Canadian context. It was decided then that similar meetings should be held each year, alternating between stated clerks and leaders new to ministry in Canada.

The event coincided with a meeting of Youth Ministry champions from across Canada, with about 15 coming for each meeting. Youth Ministry champions work in classes across the Canadian CRC to assist youth leaders serve in their churches.

The hope with these gatherings is to build, said Roorda, “contextualized local ministry in church bodies across Canada that is appropriate for their place; matches the Canadian context; and is integrated with denominational resources, tools, and people. That’s the goal—to marry all those things together for effective ministry so that the kingdom of God is built up and people understand what it means to be in relationship with Jesus Christ in their local church in Canada.”

Pastor Saeed feels ‘born again, again’ after release from Iranian prison

WASHINGTON, DC (BCN) – Many Christians around the world have prayed for Iranian-born American pastor Saeed Abedini during his three-and-a-half years as a prisoner of the Islamic regime. Saeed was one of the four U.S. prisoners released from Iran late last month.

Saeed’s wife, Naghmeh, had been open about marital troubles she and Saeed experienced over the years. Because of those issues, along with his need to recover from years of mental and physical trauma in a harsh Iranian prison, she said they will need much time to heal. “Please pray for us as we will be spending weeks or possibly months healing as a family and going through counseling. I am thankful for Franklin Graham (son of and successor to Billy Graham) for coming along side our family through these next steps of the difficult journey ahead,” she said.

“I am believing in a miracle for our marriage. We need your prayers more than ever. The enemy wants to bring division and destruction. Please pray that we can heal and move forward united as a family,” Naghmeh continued.

On his first day of freedom Saeed was first sent to Germany for medical treatment. He spoke out about what it’s like for him to finally be free. “I’m doing great,” he said.

“Today was like my first day of my life. I felt like I was born again. . . Like I was born again, again,” he told Jay Sekulow of the American Center for Law and Justice. The ACLJ worked on Saeed’s behalf to advocate for his freedom since he was thrown in prison by the Iranian regime for charges relating to his Christian faith.
Catholics join Lutherans to thank God for insights of the Reformation

The Vatican (CH) – The Catholic and Lutheran churches have issued a joint prayer thanking God for the “insights” received through the Reformation. The service was devised jointly by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation in advance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation next year.

The jointly developed liturgical order – the first of its kind – is based on the report “From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017.”

The “Common Prayer” (which is an entire service) is meant to be used by Catholic and Lutheran parishes worldwide. It can be adapted to suit local customs and preferences.

At the Vatican it was led by two presidents, one Catholic and one Lutheran, with two readers, again one Catholic and one Lutheran. Other ecumenical readers and leaders of intercessory prayer took part in the service.

One prayer reads: “Thanks be to you, O God, for the many guiding theological and spiritual insights that we have all received through the Reformation. Thanks be to you for the good transformations and reforms that were set in motion by the Reformation or by struggling with its challenges. Thanks be to you for the proclamation of the gospel that occurred during the Reformation and that since then has strengthened countless people to live lives of faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.”

The commemoration in 2017 should bring “joy and gratitude,” the Common Prayer says, and must “also allow room for both Lutherans and Catholics to experience the pain over failures and trespasses, guilt and sin in the persons and events that are being remembered.”

When Trump came to town

Derek Schuurman

Being a Canadian living in Sioux Center, Iowa during the political primaries has been an interesting cultural experience. To take in that experience I have attended several talks given by candidates who have visited Dordt College. As a college informed by that great statesman and theologian, Abraham Kuyper, it seems appropriate to host folks that we may not necessarily agree with to join in the wider dialogue in the public square. But none of the political candidates raised more controversy than the visit of Donald Trump to Dordt’s campus on January 23. Braving the sub-zero temperatures, people waited in line in front of the BI Haan auditorium, which was quickly filled to capacity (about 1,500 persons). There were perhaps another couple hundred people gathered in an overflow area in the Recreation Center which was equipped with video screens. A small group of protesters peacefully stood outside the auditorium equipped with signs that read things like “Don’t confuse Trump Values with Christian values” and “Our immigrant neighbours are not criminals.” There were people I knew among the protesters; and I also recognized someone among those wearing Trump shirts and handing out Trump brochures.

As a curious Canadian, I quietly watched the video feed in the overflow. The Trump rally began with a pastor who opened in prayer before Trump appeared to loud cheers and applause. Trump did not appear to have notes and spoke for about an hour. He didn’t provide many details on how he would make America great again, but I suppose such is the case with many political candidates. Much of his talk centred around the polls and dismissing his opponents. At one point he went so far as to suggest he could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and he wouldn’t lose voters. At other points he described those he disagreed with as “stupid,” “weak,” “pathetic” and a “loser.” It brought to mind the wise words of Richard Mouw who has encouraged Christians to adopt a posture of “convicted civility” – having convictions along with a posture of civility, also towards those with whom one disagrees.

I was disappointed that Trump did not take any questions. A few thoughtful questions, spoken with “convicted civility,” might have contributed to the ongoing national dialogue. I was reminded of Neil Postman’s words written decades ago in his book Amusing Ourselves To Death, about how in an age of television politics would become a type of show business. But the impact of modern media is bigger than the Trump phenomena and extends beyond America to other places too. Postman’s words now seem prophetic: “...when cultural life is redefined as a perpetual round of entertainments...when, in short, a people become an audience and their public business a vaudeville act, then a nation finds itself at risk.”
The kingdom of God in Brazil

In the 1991 film, At Play in the Fields of the Lord, an evangelical Christian missionary family go to Brazil to preach the gospel. All of their efforts to convert the natives to their faith go awry with tragic results for virtually everyone. The overarching message? Brazil is a huge and impenetrable country impervious to the efforts of well-meaning North Americans to change it.

Over the last quarter of a century, however, it has become evident that the message of this film is rather wide of the mark. A traditionally Roman Catholic country, Brazil’s evangelical population numbered only around five percent as recently as 1970. By contrast, evangelical Christians today account for some 22 percent of the population. That this proportionate increase has occurred during a period when the population of the country as a whole more than doubled means that in absolute terms the numbers of believers have increased nearly twelve-fold. By any measure this is extraordinary growth and strong evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in Brazil.

In Latin America, Brazil stands out for at least three reasons. First, it is the only Portuguese-speaking country in a continent dominated by the Spanish language. Second, it attained independence from Portugal, not by rebellion, but, like Canada, peacefully under a member of that country’s royal family, Pedro I, who subsequently became the first emperor of Brazil. The monarchy lasted until his long-reigning son, Emperor Pedro II, was toppled in 1889. Third, unlike its neighbours, which formed several countries out of Spain’s empire in the New World, Brazil managed to maintain its territorial integrity at independence.

Today Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, both in land mass and in population, with just over 200 million people. As the church continues to grow, Brazil is joining the ranks of countries in the global south that are quickly becoming centres of world Christianity. The landscape is diverse. Brazil still boasts the largest number of Catholics of all the world, numbering some 123 million in 2010. Pentecostals rank second and have experienced the most dramatic growth of any denomination. A Pew survey 10 years ago revealed that nearly half their number were converted former Catholics, moving into the Assemblies of God, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, Maranatha Churches and the Foursquare Gospel Church.

Political emphasis
Reformed Christianity is definitely playing a role within the larger evangelical landscape. The Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil is the oldest of the Reformed churches, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. Its membership numbers just over one million. A much smaller group, the Reformed Churches in Brazil, is a sister church to the Canadian Reformed Churches, consisting of 21 congregations located mostly in the tropical north of the country. But ecclesiastical bodies tell only part of the story. Reformed Christianity appears to be a transdenominational phenomenon. Brazilian Baptists are just as active as those in the Reformed churches, showing an affinity, not just for the English and New England Puritans, but also for the great nineteenth-century “Prince of Preachers,” Charles Spurgeon. Evangelical publishing houses continually churn out translations of popular and academic works well known to English-speaking Reformed Christians, including the writings of C. S. Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd and Tim Keller. L’Abri Brazil, counterpart to the Schaeffers’ famous ministry in the Swiss Alps, is located in the northern city of Belo Horizonte and led by Rodolfo Souza, and Guilherme and Alessandra de Carvalho, who also established and continue to lead the

CEAF lawsuit settles after two-year battle

John A. Tamming

One point five million. A third of that to lawyers. The litigation over the CEAF tax fiasco appears to be at an end.

Two years ago, the Ontario-based Christian Economic Assistance Foundation (CEAF) was forced to shut its doors after Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) revoked its charitable status. CEAF provided “arms-length, third-party grants to Christian schools” through its School Support Program, which involved accepting donations from parents that impacted their charitable donation tax credits. In 2013, more than 4,000 families received reassessment notices from CRA informing them of tax monies owed (see “Christian school supporters hit with unexpected repayments,” Sept. 23, 2013). This led to litigation when some of the affected Christian school parents decided to challenge CEAF to compensate for damages. The case has finally been settled out of court with CEAF denying any liability.

How much will each participating parent get from this pool of funds? Up to 46 percent of the face amount of the CEAF tuition tax credit which the parent claimed. Let’s use as an example Mr. Terry Emms, the lead class action plaintiff in this case. In 2010, he paid tuition of $9,500. Of this, CEAF generated him a tax credit receipt for $7,600. Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) said nice try and reduced it to $400. After being reassessed, Mr. Emms paid back $7,200. Mr. Emms now stands to obtain an amount equal to 46 percent of that $7,600, or $3,496. If parents prefer, they have the right under the deal to redirect their share of the settlement to their local Christian school instead.

As with all class action settlements, if you do not formally opt out of the class action settlement, you are deemed to be covered by it, though there are still forms you need to fill out to obtain your cash (see the Notice of Settlement on page 19). The settlement covers all CEAF receipts issued for 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. Some caveats apply. If more people sign up with more claims than anticipated, the 46 percent figure could drop. As well, if sufficient people opt out (highly unlikely), the deal folds. It is for all practical purposes a done deal.

To remind the reader, since 1985 CEAF issued tax receipts for a large part of a Christian School tuition bill, grossly inflating the allowable charitable donation. It was arguably endorsed by the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS). The CRA caught wind of the scheme and nixed it. Since a statute of limitations applies, they could not go back further than 2009. So we had a really good run, you might say.

Lessons learned
When this mess first broke, I wrote in these pages that I had repeatedly asked the heads of CEAF and OACS for one simple thing: proof that CRA had baptized the scheme in years. The first involved Redeemer University College. The reputational harm to Christian education has been substantial, as news of these tax avoidance schemes leaked out into the Hamilton community in particular. As one National Post reader reflected, when the story first broke, “I guess the Christians don’t realize that ‘Thou shalt not steal’ probably covers ‘Thou shalt not try to cheat on one’s taxes.’”

John A. Tamming is a barrister and solicitor in Owen Sound, Ontario.
On reading Hemingway with grandchildren

James Dekker

Last summer I read The Old Man and the Sea aloud with three of my grandchildren – twins Lucas and Ella, age 12, and Caleb, age 8. Though I thought the book might be a bit of a stretch for young children, it was certainly worth the effort. All three “loved the book,” a response not universal for Hemingway’s work.

The Old Man and the Sea (OM&S) was the first of Ernest Hemingway’s writings I read; I was in Grade 10 in Chicago Christian High School. I’m sure it captivated me because I’d been dealing with fishing off Florida for a couple of times before then and dreamed of catching a “bill fish” – if not an 18-foot black marlin, maybe a smaller blue or white or a spectacular sailfish. I remember crying after Santiago, struggling for days to land the giant, saw sharks, bite-by-bloody bite, reduce its magnificence, even in death, to a skeleton longer than his sturdy skiff.

Since then, I’ve read OM&S at least six times, not counting this summer’s two-week long adventure. My grandchildren, though, helped me dig deeper into my own love and appreciation for this novel that was the last significant piece of fiction Hemingway published before his suicide in Ketchum, Idaho on July 2, 1961. I still recall hearing the sad news that Sunday evening, the photo of Hemingway looking like the kind uncle he surely wasn’t. Yet he was deeply attractive to that 13-year old boy who caught bass, bullheads and perch on Lake Macatowa in Holland, Michigan during family holidays.

None of my grandkids, though, are nuts about fishing like I was, so they heard the story without prejudice, yet with significant understanding of Hemingway’s love of the chase and the catch. Caleb: “I liked how Santiago respected the fish, but was sad that Santiago didn’t get back with anything but the skeleton.”

Lucas saw that Santiago “viewed the fish as an equal. It was his job to kill it, but if he had known the fish was such a big and good and graceful creature, I think he’d be less inclined to kill it.”

For her part, Ella was touched by how Santiago “encourages himself while he’s out in the boat and talks to the fish all the time, even thanking the fish during the fight.” On the boy and Santiago: “The scene near the end where the boy, Manolin, puts a blanket over Santiago still sticks with me. He loved the old man.”

Yet, like every Hemingway story or book that I know, death is the final and only winner, no matter how long, moving or ennobling the life leading to the end might be. Some critics draw parallels how long, moving or ennobling the life leading to the end might be. Some critics draw parallels

Hemingway’s vision is captivating but ultimately leads to a despair, which perhaps contributed to his out-sized, often violent life and habits. His marriages were several and sad, except for the last. His fishing and hunting expeditions aimed at the kill – often multiple marlins or big game – not at the skill and joy of the chase. His end was tragic, violent, self-inflicted early that Sunday morning in the cottage in Ketchum, a natural paradise that embraced, but couldn’t heal the hell and pain of Hemingway’s life, especially his last decade.

Yet OM&S and much of his writing continue to draw readers more than five decades after his death. Of Hemingway’s death-filled writing, OM&S is perhaps the least cynical and outwardly despairing, inviting rereading, reflecting and more readings. Because the narrative pulls readers along, OM&S is surprisingly accessible to young readers, its final darkness disguised, but not hidden. With its publication “Papa” Hemingway probably helped seal his 1954 award of the Nobel Prize for Literature. While sad, tragic, it is also a mature, mournful resignation to mortality; though not a paean to death and self-destruction, Hemingway offers no hope of anything beyond. If nothing for Literature. While sad, tragic, it is also a mature, mournful resignation to mortality; though not a paean to death and self-destruction, Hemingway offers no hope of anything beyond. If nothing

Singing through the changes

Walter Miedema

Four years ago Adele brought us an album that at its core was a raw, angry, anhetic “I will survive” that reflected on the painful relationship that dominated the year that she was 21. Four years, a child, and a new stable relationship later she has given her newest album: 25.

While much of her previous album consisted in an explosion of rage and heartbreak, 25 is a more hopeful and compassionate album. The heartbreak is still obviously there, but it’s clearly in the process of transforming into acceptance and hope. Adele herself has said that this album for her represents healing, and though in 25’s first single “Hello” she states “I ain’t done much healing” it’s clearly what she’s searching for, for herself, and for the others that she’s hurt along the way.

“Hello” opens the album with what feels like a tentative attempt at connection with an old friend. While it seems that we might be hearing one half of a telephone call, the song feels more like a series of misfired voice-mail messages, leaving us to wonder if the intended recipient had actually heard them, or if the song itself is a last ditch attempt by Adele to be heard and give a heartfelt apology.

Musically, the verses of “Hello” are actually quite thin and Adele’s voice helps us fail to notice that they are sung basically on one note. The simplicity does work for the song, however, and emphasizes the uncertainty that occurs when one is trying to fix a strained relationship. It also sets up a strong contrast to the powerful chorus where Adele claims “at least I can say that I’ve tried / to tell you I’m sorry for breaking your heart.” The longing and remorse in her voice is palpable.

The emotional decision to let go pervades 25. If letting go must happen, how can it be done well? The second to last song on the album, “All I Ask,” has a clear sense of inevitable breakup, but seeks to find the best of what was, and remember it. “Let this be our lesson in love / Let this be the way we remember us.” “Water Under the Bridge” argues that a relationship is worth saving, giving a list of reasons and benefits of the relationship and a challenging her lover: “Don’t pretend that you don’t want me / Our love ain’t water under the bridge.”

Woven through the album is Adele’s general awareness that she is maturing, growing older, and that the process involves change. “Hello” clearly reflects on how her life has caused her to become distant from old friends and acquaintances, but “A Million Years Ago” and “When We Were Young” emphasize that time is a major factor in these changes. “When We Were Young” states her fears of what growing up means most clearly: “We were so sad of getting old / it made us restless / I’m so mad I’m getting old / It makes me reckless.” The song is an attempt to regain the past, but the nostalgic sadness is clear. “Cause I’ve been by myself all night long / hoping you’re someone I used to know.” She can’t even be sure that the person she’s addressing is the person from her past that she’s looking for. “Hello” opens the album with what feels like a tentative attempt at reconnection

Adele’s music will always possess an emotional intensity. Her voice is well suited for expressing intense feeling. Four years of maturing have allowed her to use that factor in these changes. “When We Were Young” states her fears of what growing up means most clearly: “We were so sad of getting old / it made us restless / I’m so mad I’m getting old / It makes me reckless.” The song is an attempt to regain the past, but the nostalgic sadness is clear. “Cause I’ve been by myself all night long / hoping you’re someone I used to know.” She can’t even be sure that the person she’s addressing is the person from her past that she’s looking for. “Hello” opens the album with what feels like a tentative attempt at reconnection

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In progress:
To love and to cherish

Tom Baird

What is the first thing you think of when you hear the expression: “be faithful to your marriage vows”? Whenever I ask people that question, they usually say something about long-term commitment or sexual fidelity. But the emphasis falls on the “till death do us part” aspect of the marriage pledge. I find this revealing because, while loyalty-over-a-lifetime is certainly an important part of the commitment we make on our wedding day, it is only one part of it. Couples also pledge “to love and to cherish” one another. We promise our spouse a journey of emotional depth, not just a journey of duration. So why doesn’t this other part of the marriage vow spring instantly to mind when we think about faithfulness in marriage? Is this telling us something?

This common response could be telling us that couples are not as focused on their commitment to love one another as they ought to be. But I think there is more going on here. I believe couples do not know exactly how to focus on this part of the marriage vow. After all, there is no ambiguity about what “till death do us part” means in marriage, but “to love and to cherish” is less easily defined and measured. When it comes to loving your spouse, how do you know exactly what you’re aiming for, and how do you know if you’ve hit the target?

Several years into my own married life, I heard someone explain what “to love and to cherish” means in practical terms. It clarified for me the meaning of my marriage vow, and enabled me to pursue my love for my wife with greater focus and energy. This simpler concept transformed my marriage. Perhaps it will help you as well.

We promise our spouse a journey of emotional depth, not just a journey of duration.

In my mind, putting God first meant that I was to work hard for the Kingdom. Then, after I had finished working for God, I could invest energy in my marriage. I did not understand that the best way I could live out my love for God was by loving my wife. My marriage was suffering, but I thought it was because of Janet’s lack of devotion, not my failure to keep my wedding vow. I was blind to the role I played in creating problems in our marriage.

At a crisis moment, I complained to God that he was not giving me the resources I needed to live the life in ministry to which he had called me. In the midst of my distress God graciously reached out and touched me. As I was praying, two questions impressed themselves on my mind: “Can you trust me for your married life? And can you trust me for this week’s sermon?” These questions, which identified precisely the two points of ongoing tension in my life, came as a gentle whisper within, yet I knew that Jesus himself was asking me to respond. So I said out loud, “Yes, Lord.”

Not long after this experience Janet and I learned that a Marriage Encounter weekend was being offered in Peterborough, four hours from where we lived in Ontario. We signed up, and the weekend turned out to be a wonderful experience of renewal for us as a couple. I will never forget looking into my wife’s eyes and feeling that I was looking through deep pools of water into her very soul. She looked back at me with a quality of affection and vulnerability I had not seen in years. On that weekend I felt as if God had kissed us from heaven.

We returned home. Things went well at first but, in time, my pattern of workaholism began to reassert itself and we started to experience some of the old friction again. I knew I faced a decision. I had to either believe that God desired the best for couples and was able to give us an intimate marriage, or I had to believe that I had bought into an impossible dream. I chose the path of faith, and, with God’s help, began to dismantle the attitudes that were undermining my marriage.

That moment of decision began a journey of real, if imperfect, progress. By God’s grace Janet and I have come to experience a deep contentment in marriage that we still enjoy today.

Your decision

What about you? Are you protecting the priority of your married love? A seminary professor of mine once said, “Any marriage that fails, fails because there is a third party involved.” His statement startled us and caught our attention. Then he went on to explain: “By ‘third party,’ I do not mean that there is always another person involved. The ‘third party’ could be anything that a spouse latches onto that undermines his or her marriage.”

Understood in that way, the professor’s statement is completely true. For me that third party was my work. (Janet actually confided to me once that she came to think of my ministry as the “other woman” in my life.) The “third party” in someone else’s life could be any of a number of things. It could be pornography or an emotional attachment to someone other than one’s spouse. It could be one’s friends. It could be something as important as one’s children or as trivial as a hobby.

The vow you made “to love and to cherish” your spouse means that you committed to guard the priority of your marriage relationship—that you would let no wedge come between you and your spouse by allowing other priorities into the bullseye of your life.

Are you keeping your marriage vow? Is your marriage on target?
Confessions of a mother bear

Renée Hoogstad

One of the many camping trips I enjoyed while growing up was a week-long trip to Algonquin Park. My sister and I were excited at the prospect of seeing lots of animals. We were hoping to see moose and bear (our normal trips to the Pinery Provincial Park allowed us to see only small animals like raccoons and deer).

Imagine our excitement when, in the middle of breakfast, a baby black bear wandered through our campsite. Karen and I, missing the concern on our parents' faces, got up and tried to get the bear to come to us by holding a breakfast sausage out as bait. We were almost as startled as the bear when my father began clanging pot lids together behind us and my mom started shooing the cub away. My parents ignored our request to “just take a picture first.” They knew that the only thing more dangerous than meeting a bear face to face was meeting a baby bear face to face with the Momma bear looking on. After the bear fled, presumably back to its watching mother, my parents explained about the mother bear instinct. A mother bear will do anything to protect her cubs.

Racial baggage

As a high school English and History teacher, I find the subject of race is a topic often raised in my classroom. Teaching novels like To Kill a Mockingbird and Of Mice and Men provide important avenues for discussing race issues with students. Teaching about residential schools, the holocaust and the Japanese internment during World War II also serve as excellent springboards for honest discussions about racist attitudes. Since my first semester of teaching, I have been appalled, dismayed and finally resigned to the fact that even today people carry racist baggage around. For some reason, in my classroom, this baggage seems to get unpacked, its contents spewed on the floor around me.

I’ve taught the novel Night by Elie Wiesel, a firsthand account of a concentration camp, in a classroom where one student’s grandfather had been imprisoned in a camp while another student’s grandfather had been a guard. I had a Korean-Canadian student ask for a seating plan change in my history class, pointing out that he was seated between a Japanese student on the right and a German student on the left. I’ve cringed while one student ignorantly asked my guest speaker, an Ojibwe, what “Indian tribe” he was from, and then apologized on his behalf to the offended speaker. I’ve struggled with students who openly admit, “I just don’t like Indians” and then, after seeing my shock, correct themselves saying, “Sorry, I just don’t like First Nations people” (because that’s so much better!).

Over the years I have developed better strategies for dealing with race in the classroom. Outrage does not work. Calling an opinion racist upfront only leads to defensiveness. Patiently demonstrating how word choice can cause pain to others, creating lessons that present the flip side of the situation, helps students to think about people of colour differently.

Sending messages

One strategy that seems to work well is to talk about race by showing three different positions. I write the words “Racist” and “Non-racist” on the board and discuss those terms. Someone who is racist is someone who discriminates according to race, makes racial slurs or tells racist jokes. They are engaging in racist behaviour. Someone who is Non-Racist does not discriminate according to race or make slurs. When racist jokes are told they feel uncomfortable and may even want to leave the room. Many of my students share that they are in this second category. They feel uncomfortable when they hear a joke and don’t really know where to look when someone says something negative about someone because of their race.

I challenge them, however, demonstrating that unless they actually say something in response to the jokes, their silence is interpreted as approval. By not challenging the person telling the jokes, they are sending a message that they, too, agree that the joke is funny. Simply being a non-racist is not enough. Non-racists contribute to racism without even meaning to.

We are called, instead, to be anti-racist. That means speaking out whenever and wherever racism is met. When a joke is told, or a comment made, we must ask the speaker to please refrain from making them. We must stop racism and fight against it.

I have tried to live as an anti-racist. I have asked our doctor to remove some ancient children’s books from his office that had inappropriate illustrations of people of colour (they had been donated by an elderly person after her grandchildren were too old for them and my doctor quickly apologized, admitting that he hadn’t even looked at them). When older people from my church or community use language that is no longer politically correct – words like “coloured” or “negro” (which they use not as put downs, but because they think it is nicer than saying “black”), I patiently correct them and explain the reason why those words are no longer appropriate. I have even spoken to a well-meaning pastor, who, in his effort to illustrate a Bible text for his sermon, used inappropriate language about Canada’s Aboriginal people. I have always found myself able to confront racism in a patient, loving way that, while correcting the person, still maintains their dignity and shows my respect for them as people.

Until now.

Changed by painful joy

Recently, in the exact same types of situations described above, I find I can not seem to remain composed. Where I was once able to remain professional and calm, I now become passionate, to the point of tears. Comments hurt me deeply and personally. Even when people are speaking broadly about race labels and debate, simply because they enjoy the discussion, I take it personally. For me, this is no longer an academic discussion, or a case of political correctness. I’m not advocating on behalf of “people of colour everywhere”; I am now speaking for my son.

Although I had not even met him, my mother bear instincts would rise up in my heart and soul and pour out passionately and even angrily on unsuspecting victims. I can no longer deflect comments with humour or with patience. Instead, I’m ready to pounce and fight and do anything to protect my son from words and ideas which could hurt him.

I’ve come away from these encounters amazed at myself. What was happening to me? Why such an emotional response? How come I couldn’t remain composed?

And then, I had an epiphany.

I have changed. My son whom I’d never met was changing me. I had already attached in the most primal and instinctual way to the son I hadn’t met yet. This boy who is not born from me, but is a most remarkable gift, was already my own little bear cub whom my mother bear instincts would do anything to protect.

And that fills me with joy. It is a painful joy as I think of the uphill and constant battle that is before us as a trans-racial family, but a joy all the same.

Shortly after writing this article, Renée Hoogstad and her husband Marc completed the adoption of their son, Jeremy, who was born in South Africa. They now live in Trenton, Ont., with all three of their children. Renée teaches English as a Second Language at Quinte Christian High School in Belleville, Ont.
Men and abortion: Renouncing secrecy and experiencing God’s grace

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema: An interview with Warren McDonald

When I attended the 2014 National March for Life in Ottawa, I heard for the first time a man speak about his involvement in the abortion of his child and how it had affected him. Then, in Sept. 2015, I read in the St. Catharines Right to Life newsletter a report on a conference in Niagara Falls, Ont., the first of its kind in Canada to focus on men and abortion.

What is the impact of abortion on men? In an email interview, Warren McDonald, 57, from St. Catharines, Ontario, tells his story.

CHRISTIAN COURIER: How did you go through the abortion process?

WARREN MCDONALD: First, in agreeing that it was the course of action that must be taken. Then, I drove to the city where my girlfriend, Colleen, was attending college. I took her to the hospital for the procedure. I was 19 years old. We had been dating for about a year and a half.

What factors influenced your decision? Fear and shame. We were afraid to disappoint our parents, siblings, and church community. About a year before, we’d both become Christians. We feared the judgement and shame from what was, sadly, for the most part, a very legalistic and uncompromising church community.

Guarding my secret robbed me of closeness and authenticity in relationships with family, friends and fellow believers.

Our crisis pregnancy didn’t bring relief or peace, but rather a deadness of spirit that revealed itself in anger, bitterness, shame, guilt and brokenness. Guarding my secret robbed me of closeness and authenticity in relationships with family, friends and fellow believers.

After the abortion, I drove Colleen back to her apartment. She was so sad, so upset. She wanted to talk about it, share her pain and feel my support. I wasn’t capable of hearing her or talking about it or giving her the compassion she needed. I told her, “It’s done with. Forget about it.”

Against all odds, Colleen and I stayed together and married in June 1979. We continued to attend church and serve in various ministries. I was very good at keeping up appearances. No one could find out what I had allowed to happen.

Life got busy as it does with houses, children, work and more. I welcomed the busyness. It helped me to not think about the reality of my decision to end the life of my own child and the pain I had caused, especially to Colleen. I worked too much, stayed out too late and drank too much, trying to avoid my grief and guilt. But in quiet moments, it was always there, haunting my deepest thoughts, even in my sleep. For years I had a recurring nightmare that I still can’t speak about. Colleen and I didn’t speak about it to each other. Instead, we suffered silently and separately for almost 30 years.

Colleen suffered from anxiety, battled an eating disorder, and felt she must earn God’s love and acceptance through serving at church, which only led to more depression and anxiety. She finally came to the point where she felt that, literally to survive, she needed to break the silence. First, she told some close friends, then our children, siblings, pastors and congregation.

You went to Elisha House Pregnancy & Family Support Centre in Welland, Ontario, for counselling. How did God lead you there? How were you helped?

A member of our congregation was working at Elisha House at the time and suggested to Colleen that she might benefit from a post abortion counselling program. Colleen agreed to go and, as it turned out, the other two women who were scheduled to participate had to back out. The counsellors then proposed that I join in the sessions. They had never had a man go through the program. I agreed, thinking that this would be a way that I could finally support Colleen.

As it turned out, it was I who was desperately in need of healing and support! Colleen had essentially done a self-guided grieving and healing process while I remained in denial. The counsellors gave me a safe place to open up and speak about my regret and grief. They helped me to be brutally honest with myself and God, and to recognize the selfishness and pride that were really the motives behind agreeing to the abortion. I was able to see my aborted child as a real person, grieve this horrible loss, and, without judgement or manipulation, allow myself to acknowledge my sin and to ask forgiveness from Colleen and God, and to forgive myself.

The process of being completely honest and vulnerable about my part in the conception, abortion and cover-up had an immediate impact on who I was and what I’d caused myself to become. My relationships with my children and everyone else became so much more natural and engaging because I wasn’t wearing a mask anymore. I have publicly shared my story and have received feedback that my honesty has been an encouragement to many others dealing with a variety of secrets and struggles.

What have you learned about God through these experiences?

Through all this, God has reinforced his faithfulness, his promise of forgiveness, no matter how terrible the transgression. He has always pursued me. It’s amazing that he wants communion with me. He has shown me that our identity isn’t in what we do or have done. It’s not in what we think we should be like or how others perceive us. Our identity is from him and in him. We are his beloved. He can and wants to use us to accomplish his plan and can use us even in our brokenness. It is in our weakness and humility that he is strong and can accomplish great things through us.

If you had a chance to talk with a man who has been through the abortion process, what would you say to him?

I would like to know if anything about my story resonated with him. If it did, I would encourage him to open up completely about his feelings and experience, first with a trained counsellor whom he can absolutely trust and then with significant people in his life. It’s the secrecy and denial that allow the damage to spread through virtually every relationship and to the core of who we are as men. I’d say that this sin is no less forgiven than any other and God only desires to restore us and accomplish his plan for our lives.

What is your life like now?

Colleen and I have been a couple for 40 years. We’re empty-nesters now. We have three wonderful adult children and three even more wonderful grandchildren. We deal with all the same family and financial issues and aches and pains that most people in our age bracket experience.

About five years ago, I started playing guitar in the worship band at our church. I feel I’ve finally found the area of service I was suited for and really enjoy. I periodically have the opportunity to share my story and, while it’s emotionally draining, I do it quite willingly in the hope that healing can happen in other lives.

Some relief did come, but not in the way I’d hoped, sitting alone in that waiting room almost 40 years ago. It was exactly the opposite that brought about the relief. Not secrecy, but confession and openness and honesty with myself, God, family and community. The relief only goes so far. Part of my program with Elisha House included naming our child and having a memorial service. Colleen had always felt that the baby was a girl and had named her long ago. Her name was Tanya Grace. Rarely a day goes by that my heart doesn’t ache with loss and regret.

Welland Crisis Pregnancy Center/Elisha House

Information, counselling, live chat line elishahouse.on.ca

Phone: 905-735-8934 | After Hours Text Line: 289-823-2424

Futher Resources:

www.beforeyoudecide.ca/for-the-guys/shes-pregnant-now-what/
www.beforeyoudecide.ca/for-the-guys/after-abortion/

For a list of pregnancy support centres across Canada:

1-800-665-0570


Sonya VanderVeen Feddema is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ont.

Warren McDonald lives in St. Catharines, Ont. with his wife Colleen. They have two sons and a daughter, and two granddaughters and one grandson.

A lesson in humility

C. Green

It’s happened again. My heart has been broken and my mind opened – again. It came out of nowhere. There I was, sitting in a waiting room at a local hospital with my friend, Selam, as her chair and dialysis machine were being prepared. She had just shared an update on the horrible news about her brother back home in Yemen. Thankfully he survived the attack, but who about her brother back home in Yemen. just shared an update on the horrible news machine were being prepared. She had

C. Green is a Steeltown girl

C. Green is a Steeltown girl who would always rather be sailing. She enjoys dining with friends who can’t speak English while eating exotic dishes with names she can’t pronounce. She loves sharing stories, because everyone has a story. And if given a choice, she will always opt for the road less travelled by.

A good work

The time came for my young, diminutive yet plucky friend to climb into her lounge chair and begin her dialysis. She’s in desperate need of a kidney. I watched as the nurse placed the needles into her now-deformed arm, wewed by aneurisms from being punctured on a tri-weekly basis. She looked at me, her niqab removed, and I felt a lump form in my throat.

“Why’s wrong?” Selam asked. I waited for the nurse to leave and gathered my thoughts. “Two things,” I began. “First, I am sorry that you have been treated so unkindly by the people in Hamilton who stare and jeer at you because of how you dress.”

“It’s okay,” she shrugged. “I’m used to it.”

“Secondly,” I continued, “I want to know why God brought you into my life only to take you away in a few weeks when you move three hours away.” Selam looked at me and smiled.

“Carla, we are friends now, but soon we will be sisters. You will come visit me and sleep over at my new apartment. I have lived in Canada for five years and you are the first friend I have ever had here. I don’t leave my house because of the way people treat me, and yet God brought you into my life.”

I know she’s right. There is something bigger happening here. But a good work has already begun. I will take a picture of my new friend dressed in her traditional clothing and niqab, and I will hang that photograph on my office wall to always remind me that behind the veil is a woman with a heart just like yours, with fears and hopes and dreams just like ours, in need of a Saviour, just like me.

Pauline Johnson (1861–1914) was born on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ont., the daughter of an English mother and Mohawk chief father. As the first native poet to have her work published in Canada, her poetry often celebrates her native heritage, and Canada’s natural beauty, along with occasionally reflecting her Christian faith.

The Prodigal's Father

Amy Vanderlende

Amy Vanderlende lives in Chilliwack, B.C. and attends Cornerstone CRC. She created this multi-media piece for a Theology class in 2001.
Tennis, anyone?

Heidi Vander Slikke

We’re on the lam from the Canadian winter, basking in the Florida sunshine, spending time in a rented house where salamanders proliferate in the gardens and snow shovels are nowhere to be seen. For a few weeks we can forget our usual responsibilities and work hard at relaxing.

Since it’s early in the New Year we’re trying to redevelop some good habits—like eating properly, getting enough sleep and taking a daily walk. The neighbourhood we’re in is ideal for the latter. We can make a five kilometre circuit mostly through quiet residential streets—without boots, coats or mittens. Every day we walk past a tennis court.

“We should play tennis sometime,” Jack said one day. “There are racquets in our garage.”

I laughed at the idea, then looking at his face I realized he wasn’t joking.

“You’re not serious!” I said, quite seriously. “You, with your bad back and me, with my fancy feet?”

“We don’t have to kill ourselves,” he said. “Just a nice relaxing game, lobbing the ball back and forth to each other.”

“I suggest you bring a bucket of balls.”

“What for?” he said.

“Come on, don’t you remember? We tried that when we were first married.”

He looked at me blankly.

“Pike Lake?” I prompted. “Every time I hit the ball it went over the fence. I was happy just to connect. But after half an hour of fetching it from the parking lot you were red-faced and worn out. Finally you said we were done and it was time to go canoeing.”

We laughed at the memory.

“Oh yeah,” he said. “But you’re older now and the ball probably wouldn’t go so far.”


In sync

It’s funny now, but at the time I took it very personally. I admit I took a lot of things personally in those days. I had this notion that we needed to cultivate some kind of common interest to keep our relationship fresh. At the time we didn’t even have our work in common. Jack was just starting out on the farm and I had an office job at the local nursing home. He often played tennis with his cousin and came home sweaty and happy. I thought it would be a great hobby for us as a couple.

Sometimes I have good ideas. This wasn’t one of them.

I recall fretting about it for a long time afterward. He could have been more patient with me, I thought. I never considered that it must have been a chore chasing my wild shots over the fence, especially since he and his cousin were so equally matched and played well together.

I knew he loved me. I never doubted his commitment. But, I wondered, what would make him like me? What would make him want to spend his time with me—not just the rest of his life, but as much of the rest of his life as possible?

I could have saved myself the worry. Walking along the sidewalk together now, usually hand in hand, steps in sync, I realize my early fears and frustrations were groundless and petty. In the years since then a host of common interests have presented themselves. We had the essentials—like raising our kids, making a living, participating in church life and school communities. Beyond that we discovered mutual interests in things like politics, theology and motorcycles. Most of it required considerable effort, but none of it had to be coerced.

Somehow along the line we came to the point of completing each other’s sentences (not always accurately, mind you, and that can really make it interesting). We have sufficient differences to keep it lively and enough independence not to worry if the other person takes up something on his or her own. As life goes on every passing year gives us more and more in common with each other. And there’s never a dull moment.

Alongside

Years ago I remember asking a guest speaker at our Young Couples’ Club what he would recommend to foster spiritual growth in married couples. His answer stuck with me.

“Think of your marriage as a triangle,” he said, using his hands to illustrate. “You and your spouse are here, at opposite corners of the base. And the Lord is the apex. As long as you’re both headed toward him, you automatically come together. You may travel at different speeds sometimes, but as long as the direction is the same, you can’t help but grow closer.”

Jack still thinks we should try tennis again. We’ll see about that. If nothing else, it could provide material for a future column. Meanwhile, I’m happy to keep walking with him—hand in hand or arms swinging freely, but always in the same direction.

Heidi Vander Slikke (hvanderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Mapleton Township, Ontario.

A pair of pants on my door

Julia Van Huizen

I have a pair of pants hanging off the front of my bedroom door. They’re wrinkly and slightly stained. And they’re small.

I used to fit into those pants a few years back. Breastfeeding my second child, the baby weight just fell off, that child sucked me down to a size “small.”

It was great. But over the last couple of years, some extra weight has befriended me, setting up camp around my hips and butt. Along with my pride, I unfortunately had to tuck those small pants into the bottom of my drawer and buy myself a pair of fat pants. Okay, “fat-ter” pants.

Emblematic

With the turn of the new year and a fresh new beginning, however, my husband and I have decided it’s time to get into better shape, get healthier and shed a bit of those extra pounds. We’re eliminating all sugar for two weeks in order to reboot our systems and to reduce our bodies’ cravings for sugar.

Knowing it would be hard for me to abide by this new diet, I pulled out that pair of small, wrinkly pants and hung them in a place where I could look at them every time I felt tempted to give into my craving. We live in an open-concept house, and our bedroom door faces out toward the living room, the dining room and, most importantly, the kitchen.

This week, every time I longed to grab some carbs, my eyes would fall upon those pants and I’d grab a bag of celery instead. Every time I was tempted to cheat, I’d suddenly catch those pants spying on me from the bedroom door, and I’d exhale loudly and pop a handful of cherry tomatoes into my mouth.

Inner Critic

I want to fit into those pants again. It’s kind of embarrassing to admit that. To admit that my motivation for getting into shape is not really about health or longevity or having more energy for my kids. It’s because I want to look good.

Don’t get me wrong, I want all those other good things too, but mostly, I just want to fit into those pants again.

It’s just that as I get older, it’s getting harder for me to look as good as I did when I was younger. My hair isn’t as shiny as it used to be. My eyes are puffier.

I know. Vanity, vanity, pure vanity. Like the pants on my door, my motivation for getting fit is pretty stained and wrinkly. And small.

My impulse is to beat myself up for such a shallow motivation. To chastise myself and allow my Inner Critic to hurl insults in order to force me to change my motivation into something more pure. But, like a quote I recently read, “If being hard on yourself worked, it would have worked by now.”

So instead I’ve decided to pray. Pray that God can come through the backdoor of my flawed motivations and make them into something more beautiful. Pray that he can forgive me for my shallowness and vanity. Because maybe he understands what it’s like to struggle with it. He was human, after all. Maybe he “gets” it. Maybe he even gets me. And perhaps he doesn’t condemn me for my ‘small’ motivations but rather sees me in light of his motivation for coming to earth: to love me and die for me and make me pure in his sight.

Julia Van Huizen is a part-time marketing director, freelance writer and stay-at-home mom. She lives in Stirling, Ontario. You can contact her at jvanhuizen@hotmail.com.

"Woman holding a mirror", circa 430 B.C.
columns

My iPhone made me do it!

I believe most of us sense that technology is impacting our lives, but often we do not completely understand how. It seems like technology is generally helpful, allowing us to do more things more quickly. Nevertheless, we might hesitate to declare it GOOD in a Genesis sort of way. In fact, technology feels like an intruder at times, distracting us from what is important and turning our priorities upside down. However, I think that most of us would also acknowledge that blaming their iPhone for their rude, anti-social behavior is akin to blaming the fires of hell for the burnt beef roast they just pulled out of the oven. We know that our devices are tools and it’s our responsibility to use them appropriately.

The realization that our tools are neither good nor evil in themselves may tempt us to conclude that they are harmless. However, it is a dangerous misconception to believe that our technologies are completely benign. Every human-made tool, from a sharpened stick to a microwave oven, is biased. The characteristics of each encourage certain behaviors and habits, while making others more difficult, as Andy Crouch might say (Culture Making, 2008). If I replaced my blunt stick with a sharp one, it would make poking and stabbing possible and pushing and prodding more difficult, if not impossible. In time, I would likely shape many of my habits and choices around sharp stick activities, leaving behind my old pushing and prodding methods. The same is true for a microwave. A microwave oven makes it possible to cook a small portion of food quickly, making it easier to heat up leftovers or a packaged meal. One result is that family members are less tied to a common eating schedule, which in turn makes it more difficult to maintain regular family mealtime. In addition, with a microwave sitting on the countertop, conventional cooking starts to feel like a waste of time (and beef roast perhaps).

Clearly, the microwave is not forcing us to abandon family mealtime, but its built-in characteristics make skipping family dinners a more doable option. I am not suggesting that sharp sticks, iPhones and microwave ovens are necessarily bad things, only that they are biased: they encourage certain behaviors. In a strict sense we have control over the extent to which we allow our technologies to shape our lives, but unless we vow to not use them at all, technologies always change the world and our interactions in it. If you play with sharp sticks, something or someone will inevitably end up getting picked.

Redefining normal patterns

While it may be easy to see how technology gives us new and important choices, it may not be clear how this is necessarily dangerous. God has created us to depend on him and to depend on each other as we love and serve in community. In fact, it is within our close, interdependent relationships where, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we often experience and share the gracious love of Christ most deeply. We need to depend on each other to know that we need God and to see God’s active care for us through the love of others. In contrast, our culture values personal independence over meaningful relationships. We glorify self-sufficiency, giving rise to individualism. This cultural bias gets expressed and reinforced in and through the technologies that our society produces and eventually redefines what is considered to be the normal patterns of day-to-day life. (In fact, I suspect that in many circles it is no longer considered rude to let a text message distract you from a face-to-face conversation.) We need to be cautious because these cultural currents are eroding our closest relationships, including our families, and with them, Christian community.

Our technologies are part of God’s good creation, blessings that can open up many new and wonderful ways of serving, but they also come with cultural biases that can shape the way we interact with each other. So while our iPhones and other devices are not, by themselves, destroying our relationships, it is critical to remember that they come with characteristics that are, in concert with the surrounding cultural patterns, pulling us away from each other and ultimately from God. Using any technology brings risk. In fact, given our current individualistic cultural context, wisdom may require us to use less technology in all things.

Kevin Timmer is a Professor of Engineering at Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa and enjoys exploring topics in renewable energy and responsible engineering design. This article was adapted from an essay originally published on inallthings.org, Dordt College, Sioux Center, IA. Republished with permission.

Country Living

Celebrate chickpeas, beans and lentils!

It’s the International Year of Pulses

What do dried beans, dried peas, chickpeas, lentils, lupins, dry broad beans, pigeon peas and edible beans have in common? They are all part of the legume family but now they will be better known worldwide as “pulses,” thanks to the United Nations General Assembly.

You are probably asking yourself if this has something to do with your health or blood pressure. Health benefits, yes. The term “pulse” comes from the Latin word puls, meaning a thick soup or potage; pulses are the edible seeds of plants in the legume family. I had to study up on this as it was news to me.

The 68th United Nations General Assembly declared 2016 the International Year of the Pulse. The United Nations, led by its Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), launched the 2016 International Year of Pulses to raise awareness about the protein and health benefits of all kinds of dried beans and peas, to boost the production and trade of legumes and to encourage new and smarter uses of these humble seeds throughout the food chain.

“Pulses are important food crops for the food security of large proportions of populations, particularly in Latin America, Africa and Asia, where pulses are part of traditional diets and often grown by small farmers,” said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva, in a recent news release.

Each year the United Nations makes a declaration about an issue of importance in global agriculture. Last year was the International Year of Soils; the year before was the International Year of Family Farming.

Powerhouse food source

The term “legume” refers to the plants whose fruit is enclosed in a pod. When growing, legumes fix nitrogen into the soil which reduces the need for fertilizers. North American farmers are familiar with legumes like alfalfa, clover, peas and soybeans. Lupins, peanuts and mesquite are also legumes. Pulses are part of the legume family, but the term “pulse” refers only to the dried seed. Dried peas, edible beans, lentils and chickpeas are the most common varieties of pulses. Pulses are very high in protein and fibre, and they are low in fat. Like their cousins in the legume family, pulses are nitrogen-fixing crops that improve the environmental sustainability of annual cropping systems.

Pulses also have high levels of minerals such as iron, zinc and phosphorous, as well as folate and other B-vitamins. In addition to their nutritional profile and links to improved health, pulses are unique foods in their ability to reduce the environmental footprint of our grocery carts. Put it all together and these sensational seeds are a powerful food ingredient that can be used to deliver the results of healthy people and a healthy planet, the UN General Assembly says.

Pulses come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colours and can be consumed in many forms including whole or split, ground into flours or separated into fractions such as protein, fibre and starch.

Affordable alternative

Chickpea is an ancient pulse crop first grown in Turkey about 7,000 B.C. The term “pulses” is limited to crops harvested solely for dry grain, thereby excluding crops harvested green for food (green peas, green beans, etc.) which are classified as vegetable crops. Also excluded are those crops used mainly for oil extraction (such as soybeans and groundnuts) and leguminous crops (like seeds of clover and alfalfa) that are used exclusively for sowing purposes.

In addition to their food value, pulses also play an important role in cropping systems because of their ability to produce nitrogen and thereby enrich the soil.

FAO also added that as an affordable alternative to more expensive animal-based protein, pulses are ideal for improving diets in poorer parts of the world, where protein sources from milk are often five times more expensive than protein sourced from pulses.

Canada is the largest exporter of pulses globally, according to the FAO. An estimated 70 percent of Canada’s production is exported. I’m not keen on eating chickpeas and lupins myself. Maybe they’re healthy but they’re not my kind of food. But I am going to look at maybe growing chickpeas or pulse peas as a cash-crop in the future now that the UN has given it a big boost. Meanwhile, pea soup with split peas is always a favourite in winter. I just made a pot with pork hocks a few days ago, for my birthday.

Meindert van der Gaijen is a Renfrew area farmer (eastern Ont.) and agriculture columnist.
Open Positions:
Part Time Counsellor – London Ontario
Part Time Counsellor – Burlington Ontario

If you want the opportunity to utilize your skills and passions for helping provide hope and healing in the context of a soul-caring, professional, Christian community, this job just might be right for you. Established in 1990, Christian Counselling Centre is a non-profit organization providing care for human souls. Our passion is to help others live deeply from their hearts and experience relational transformation. Christian Counselling Centre provides Biblically-Based counselling and support to individuals and faith communities. Christian Counselling Centre also provides various other opportunities for personal growth, deep encouragement and Christian spiritual formation. For those wanting to work closely in a team setting, we are currently looking to expand our existing counselling staff.

All candidates must:
• Have a Master’s Degree in Counselling, Counselling & Guidance, Psychology or other behavioral science from an accredited university.
• Agree with the Statement of Faith of Christian Counselling Centre.
• Have a strong, growing faith in Jesus Christ.
• Be currently involved in a local Christian church community.
• Demonstrate strong organizational skills (detail-oriented)
• Have a working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite and Client Management software.

The ideal candidate will also have:
• Experience, education or training in a Biblical counselling model.
• Three or more years of counselling experience.
• Demonstrated interest in teaching skills and concepts in a variety of settings (i.e. guest speaking, small groups, etc.)

If you are interested in applying for this position, please email the following information to:
info@christiancounsellingcenter.ca

Cover letter, Resume and Your personal Statement of Faith.

The Niagara Association for Christian Education is Seeking an
Executive Director

The Niagara Association for Christian Education is an inter-denominational Christian school system comprised of two sites which are nestled in the heart of the Niagara Peninsula. The schools provide a safe, positive atmosphere in which students can explore God’s amazing world and develop their gifts and abilities.

The current opportunity will suit a Christian leader who is interested in leading an organization through a three person administrative team, which consists of the Executive Director and a Principal at each of its two sites. The successful candidate will have the appropriate combination of vision, leadership, interpersonal skills, business acumen, development and educational experience.

The Executive Director is the Board’s sole official connection to the operation through which it seeks to fulfill its vision to develop a vibrant community that understands the value of excellent Christ-centered education, which is available to an economically, ethnically and denominationally diverse membership.

More information about the position can be found in the Opportunity Profile posted at www.nace.ca/news-and-info Nominations for the position should address the candidate’s suitability. Applications for the position are to include a letter of interest and curriculum vitae.

Kindly direct nominations and applications in confidence to:
NACE Search Committee
Mrs. Wendy Colyn, Administrative Assistant to the Search Committee, 6470 Regional Road # 14, Smithville, ON, L0R 2A0
executivedirectorsearch@nace.ca

Other questions and inquiries may be directed to:
Mr. Brian Verheul
647-808-7355
verheulandassociates@cogeco.ca

The Niagara Association for Christian Education is Seeking an
Director and a Principal at each of its two sites. The successful candidate will have the appropriate combination of vision, leadership, interpersonal skills, business acumen, development and educational experience.

The current opportunity will suit a Christian leader who is interested in leading an
organization through a three person administrative team, which consists of the Executive
Director and a Principal at each of its two sites. The successful candidate will have the
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Mr. Brian Verheul
647-808-7355
verheulandassociates@cogeco.ca

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**Obituaries**

**Jacob Hultink**

After a good long life, well lived and greatly loved, Jacob Hultink, faithful servant of His Lord Jesus Christ passed on to Glory, at the home of his daughter, Wilhelmina, peacefully and with amazing grace on Sunday, December 27, 2015 at the age of 88. He will be greatly missed by his beloved wife of 65 years Hilda, by his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

He was the father and “Grampa Jake” of:

Wilhelmina & George Hooytser
Adrienne & Lance LePage – Emily, Maddie, Thomas
Sharlene Hooytser & Glenn Humplik – Mira
Robert & Sabrina (Blisse) Hooytser – Jacob, Henry
Matthew Hooytser & Joshua Hilton
Rick & Joyce Hultink
Eric & Amber Hultink – Ryan, Braeden
Adam & Shannon Hultink – Evan
Jaclyn Hultink
Jessica Hultink & Kevin Leung
John & Ann Hultink
Michael & Debbie Hultink – Tyler, Gabe, Mason, Molly
Curtis & Michelle Hultink – Gregory
Danny Hultink
Jacob & Jean Hultink
James & Kelly Hultink – Hayden, Macie
Daniel & Anna Hultink – Riley
Lorraine & Jon Prins – Kate, Jason
Sandra Hultink (2004)

Henry & Diane Hultink
Sharon & Chris Jones – Harper, Adelyn
Darlene & Ryder Croassen – Piper, Simeon

Aalije Hultink
Hilary & Chris Gottschant – Ethan, Caleb, Elianna, Charlotte
Diana & Alex VanderHof – Alicia, Chelsea, Janelle
Tim Moes

Jake is survived by his family in the Netherlands: Jan (Betsy) Hultink, Aile Hultink, and Trijnke Bakker. He also is survived by Willy Oegema, Anita Salaytah and Maynard VanderGallen. He was predeceased in 2004 by his granddaughter Sandra Hultink and is also lovingly remembered by many nieces and nephews who called him “Oom Jaap”.

Jake was born in the Netherlands in 1927, and was the only one of his ten brothers and sisters who immigrated to Canada, in 1957 after serving 12 years in the Dutch Military. He and his family settled in Renfrew, Ontario. By 1967 he had developed his greenhouse and landscaping business, and he maintained his beautiful gardens well into his 89th year of life. He was active in his church and community, and in his retirement he worked tirelessly for the Canadian Cancer Society, and for Renfrew Home Support. He was a kind, humble man of deep faith and patience and was genuinely interested in the well being of others. He had a keen interest in Christian Education, he studied theology and his Bible, and he applied biblical truths to his life. He spent the past seven years being the faithful caregiver for his wife, until it was no longer possible, and he moved to rural Eastern Ontario to spend his last months with her. There he enjoyed walking in the countryside, good meals, rest, reading, painting, listening to his favourite music, and attending church every Sunday. Although Jake had many challenges in his life, he looked back on his life with no regrets, often saying that he had a “sweet” life.

Visitation and a Memorial Service was held on Thursday, December 31, 2015 at the Hebron Christian Reformed Church in Renfrew. He will be fondly looked back on his life with no regrets, often saying that he had a “sweet” life.

**Geertruida (Gerda) Cornelia Postma**

Geertruida (Gerda) Cornelia Postma passed into the arms of Jesus for rest. Gerda was born in Holland in May of 1929. In 1951 she came to Canada to join her fiancée Albert and start a new life in a new country. She is survived by her beloved husband of 64 years, Albert. They were a team in every way, farming in Manitoba and then Ontario. They retired in 1992 to London and were able to enjoy many years of travelling together. Mom would help in the fields all day and then spend the evenings sewing, knitting or crocheting. Her hands were never quiet until arthritis overtook them and then she read voraciously. She was an avid photographer and recorded every memory of our family life.

Missing her are her daughters and their families:

- Margaret & Marinus Bakker - Dungannon, ON
- Helen & Fred Gruwezcht - Austin, TX
- Janet & Ray Geldman - London, ON
- Loving Grandma to Karen, Ruth Anne, Michael, Carolyn, Kristina, Maryann, Kyle, Andrew, Jocelyn and Mark and their families. Bespo to 8 great-grandchildren plus one on the way.

Survived by one brother, Wout Groenenboom, in Alberta.

John 14: 1 - 4 “Let not your hearts be troubled…”

Address - Albert Postma
83 Buchanan Rd, London ON NSV 4H9

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**Home Exchange Wanted**

Would you like to explore the Niagara region during the month of June of this year? We live in St. Catharines and would like to spend June in the Vancouver area.

If a home exchange tickles your fancy, please give Bert and Alice Witviet a call at 905 684-3991 or email us at betl@sympatico.ca

**Job Opportunity**

**Interim Pastor**

John Calvin CRC in Truro NS is looking for an interim pastor for no less than a 3 month period and possibly longer beginning April 1.

Contact - Kelseywithrow@hotmail.com

See more job ads p. 16

Recently run job ads are also posted on our website at christiannominator.ca

**Birthday**

Diny Brobbel

February 19, 2016

Happy Birthday Mom.

With love from your children

Lena, Adrian, Thea, Wilfred, Peter and John along with their families including 15 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren.

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**Maranatha Homes**

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For further information contact: Rosanne van der Woerd 109-3260 New St. Burlington ON L7N 3L4 905-681-0311 Email: rvanderwoerd@gmail.com

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**Dialacon Ministries Canada**

Seeking applicants for the position of **NATIONAL DIRECTOR**

The National Director will be responsible for ensuring that Dialacon Ministries Canada fulfills its mandate of partnering with diaconates, churches and parachurch organizations across Canada to demonstrate God’s love in the community.

For more information please visit our website at dialaconministries.ca/careers.

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**Pastor**

The CRC of Collingwood ON, is seeking a pastor who desires to lead a small, dedicated congregation. We seek a spiritual leader who is gifted in preaching, meeting the pastoral needs of our congregation and mentoring us to reach out with love to the community around us.

For more information, please contact Jeff Beck at landbeck@hotmail.com
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Amount based on sample of $20,000
Sample for joint life annuity (payable as long as either person is alive)
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NOTICE OF CERTIFICATION AND SETTLEMENT APPROVAL
CHRISTIAN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAM

Read this notice carefully as it may affect your legal rights.

PURPOSE OF THIS NOTICE
A Court proceeding was commenced as a proposed class proceeding (the "Action") and has been settled with the Defendants and approved by the Court (the "Settlement"). The hearing to certify the Action as a class proceeding for purposes of settlement and to approve the Settlement took place on DECEMBER 8, 2015 at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in Toronto.

The Action was commenced against Christian Economic Assistance Foundation ("CEAF") and Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools Societies ("OACS") and alleged that CEAF designed, developed and promoted a School Support Program ("SSP") which was endorsed by OACS. The SSP operated to increase tax credits available to families paying tuition at Ontario Christian Schools. Canada Revenue Agency ("CRA") disallowed the tax credits.

THE SETTLEMENT
CEAF and OACS have agreed, in exchange for a full release of all claims made against them in the Action, to collectively pay $1.5 million into a Settlement Fund. CEAF and OAS do not admit liability.

The Settlement Fund of $1.5 million will be distributed to Class Members pro rata subject to a cap, after deduction of Class Counsel Fees, disbursements, costs of notice and taxes, Administration Fees, disbursements and taxes, and Representative Plaintiff Compensation.

Class Members will be entitled to receive payment of a pro rata distribution of settlement funds to a maximum of 46.41% of their total donation (46.41% is the maximum combined federal and Ontario tax bracket). The amount per Class Member will be dependent upon the number of Class Members who prove their claim.

The Court has approved Class Counsel’s fees at 30% of the Settlement Fund, together with disbursements, Representative Plaintiff Compensation, costs of notice and applicable taxes, totaling $526,544.27, to be paid from the Settlement Fund.

The Court has approved that Class Counsel administer the settlement as efficiently as possible and fixed Administration Fees, disbursements and applicable taxes at $113,000.00.

Accordingly, Class Members will share in a pro rata distribution of the Net Settlement Fund in the amount of $860,455.73.

OPT-OUT OF CLASS ACTION
Class Members who do not wish to participate in the Action, or to receive a Settlement Benefit under the Settlement Agreement, or to be subject to the terms of Settlement and Final Order, may choose to opt-out of the Action, by completing and submitting an Opt-Out Form before the Opt-Out Period Deadline on Friday, March 26, 2016. Class Members who do not opt-out of the Action shall be entitled to receive a Settlement Benefit and will be subject to all terms of Settlement and the Final Order.

DISTRIBUTION OF SETTLEMENT BENEFITS
Class Members who wish to receive or direct payment of a Settlement Benefit must complete and submit a Settlement Benefit Notice and Claim Form together with proofs of CRA reassessments pertaining to their participation in the SSP before the Settlement Benefit Claims Deadline on Friday, June 17, 2016. Settlement Benefit Notice and Claim Forms will be sent to Class Members within 30 days of expiry of the Opt-Out Period Deadline.

CLASS COUNSEL
Scarfone Hawkins LLP represents the Class Members. Class Counsel can be reached at:

By Email: CEAFlshlaw.ca
By Fax: 905-523-5878
By Telephone: 905-526-4395
By Mail: Scarfone Hawkins LLP
Lawyers and Trade-mark Agents
One James Street South, 14th Floor
Hamilton, Ontario L8N 3P9
www.classactionlaw.ca

If you would like a copy of the Settlement Agreement, Opt-Out Form or Settlement Benefit Notice and Claim Form or have questions, please visit Class Counsel’s website at www.classactionlaw.ca. This Notice contains only a summary of the Settlement and Class Members are entitled to review the full Settlement Agreement.

Questions about this action or this Notice should be directed to Class Counsel and not to the Court.

YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS
The Class definition as certified is as follows:

“all individuals who participated in the SSP for the taxation years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, and who were reassessed by Canada Revenue Agency, which reassessments resulted in the disallowance of the charitable donation tax credits related to participation in the SSP.”

This notice has been approved by the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS NOTICE SHOULD NOT BE DIRECTED TO THE COURT.

Classifieds

DEADLINE Christian Courier is published on the second and fourth Monday of the month. Deadline 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.

PHOTOS: There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement.

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Is there a birthday or anniversary of a friend or family member coming up? Wondering what to get him/her? Consider giving a gift subscription to Christian Courier. It is the gift that gives all year.

Contact Rose, Rose@christiancourier.ca or 1-800-969-4838 or subscribe online at christiantourier.ca

Calendar of Events

Feb 14 Open House Jacob Kurz birthdy. 2-4 pm Horizon Hall, Holland Christian Homes, Brampton, Ontario. See announcement Jan. 25 issue.
March 5 Woodstock Dutch Theatre presents “Abseilin”. Market Centre Theatre, Woodstock. 2 p.m. & 8 p.m. Tickets at ticketscene.ca or phone 519-709-1402. See ad.
March 12 Woodstock Dutch Theatre presents “Abseilin”. Great Lakes Christian College, Beamsville. 2 p.m. Tickets at ticketscene.ca or phone 519-709-1402
March 19 Woodstock Dutch Theatre presents “Abseilin”, Blyth Memorial Community Hall, 8 p.m. Tickets at ticketscene.ca or phone 519-709-1402
April 1 Woodstock Dutch Theatre presents “Abseilin”, London Dutch Canadian Hall, 8 p.m. Tickets at ticketscene.ca or phone 519-709-1402
May 14 Spring Friendship Festival, Clearview Church, Oakville, Ont. See weloveourfriends.com
The rapid rate of change in our world makes choosing a career path difficult. You need a dynamic university education where theory meets experience. Along the way, you’ll be challenged to deepen your faith as you discover your world and transform your mind. You’ll find more than a future job. You’ll find your place in God’s world. This is your calling. This is Redeemer.

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