

Reformed CELEBRATING GOD'S TRUTH

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2025
Volume 44 Issue No. 6

PERSPECTIVE

SINCE 1982

THE IMPORTANCE OF RISKY PLAY



RP

YOUR TURN!

**Inspire Christians to think, speak,
and act for God's glory**



Have you been inspired by a video to defend your faith or be in awe of God's amazing creation? Has a podcast empowered you to improve your marriage or manage your finances better? And have articles in this or other magazines and websites helped you serve as a friend, elder, teacher, or mom?

Almost every hour of the day we are being blessed directly, or indirectly, by godly resources that others have developed.

Now it's your turn!

Reformed Perspective respectfully challenges you to turn your passion, creativity, story, and ideas into something that can bless others. A generous sponsor is offering **\$7,000 in cash prizes**, and *RP* will platform some of the entries with our magazine, website, podcast, and social media channels so that they can bless tens of thousands of people.

Perhaps you have training and education that would be a huge help to others, or you have experienced a trial and have learned lessons that may help others. Maybe you have a story to share to encourage or warn your siblings in Christ. This is your calling and opportunity to bless Christ's church!



Categories:

There will be the three main categories below, with each of them subdivided into **YOUTH (UNDER AGE 19)** and **ADULTS**, resulting in 6 categories overall.



VIDEO: make your message come alive!

AUDIO: speak, or even sing, from your heart!

WRITTEN: whether it is an article, comic, or maybe even a script, get it from your mind onto “paper”!

Teachers and home-schooling parents, this could be a great way to challenge your students!

\$7,000 in cash prizes

A generous donor has allowed us to offer:

- **\$1,000 for the winner of each of the 6 categories.**
- **\$1,000 for the overall fan favorite.**

We will ask our readers to vote for their favorite in the March issue. The judging criteria is to inspire and equip your brothers and sisters to think, speak or act to God’s glory.

Entry Criteria:

- Content must be original. You are welcome to make use of resources like books, friends, and AI to help you (but please credit sources when relevant).
- Entries must be faithful to God’s Word and bring glory to God.
 - We welcome any topics that are suitable for a Christian audience. Mechanics, art, philosophy, theology, relationships, mission, sports, mental health – or anything else. After all, every square inch belongs to Christ. But we ask that submissions be focussed on inspiring your audience.
 - Quality: must be good enough that it can be shared with our audience without us needing to edit or improve it (so, bounce it off friends and family first, and ask them to help you hone it – what could you do to make it as good as it can get?).
 - Although you will keep the rights to your content, by entering the contest you give *Reformed Perspective* the right to publish it in the magazine if we decide to, and also on our social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.), and on our *Real Talk* podcast.
 - Entries must be submitted through the form on **ReformedPerspective.ca/YourTurn** by **January 31, 2026**.



WHAT'S INSIDE:

You can't fight screens with nothing

Given how popular our summer screen-fast challenge was, it's evident that our tech usage is an issue that deserves ongoing attention in Christian homes. It was great so many of us could take a break from our phones, but if we're going to limit our screen-time for the long-term, we need to think of what we're going to do instead. So, what alternatives do kids (and adults) have to screens?

1. Get outside

One option: in this issue, school teacher Dave Penninga shares stories from his own childhood to speak to the importance of risky play. He's also working from Jonathan Haidt's recent book *The Anxious Generation - How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. Penninga makes the case for parents to back off some, and allow more unsupervised outdoor play.

2. Stack bricks – our "Building Block" contest is back!

Lego is another great alternative to screens. Earlier this year, more than 500 youth pulled out their bins of Lego and entered our first-ever "building block" contest. It's back and in time for

Christmas break. Be sure to point your little, and not-so-little, ones to the back cover for details.

3. Write or record – we need you to share your training, experiences, wisdom, or story

In light of what we confess in Lord's Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism, that every Christian shares in Christ's anointing as a prophet, priest, and king, we are grateful to launch a new contest where you have an opportunity to share your own message in writing, audio, or video. Perhaps you have training and education that would be a huge help to others, or you have experienced a trial and have learned lessons that you could share to the benefit of many. Maybe you have a story to encourage or warn your siblings in Christ. This is your opportunity to inspire and bless Christ's Church!

Not only could your work be published, thanks to the generosity of a donor, there is a whopping \$7,000 in cash prizes! Find the details on pages 2-3.

Keep the printing presses rolling

As the year draws to a close, we respectfully remind our readers that *Reformed Perspective* is only able to publish this magazine (and produce many other resources) and give it away for free because of the generosity of people like you, who recognize the importance of thinking, speaking, and acting for God's glory. As you can read on pages 82-83, our donors allowed us to take 4 big steps forward this year. Are you willing to help keep the presses rolling through 2026?

Reformed PERSPECTIVE

A MAGAZINE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

Published bimonthly by Reformed Perspective Foundation Inc.

For advertising, print magazine requests, or to change your address, contact:

Joanne DeRuiter - Reformed Perspective Administration,
admin@reformedperspective.ca
PO Box 3609
Smithers, BC, V0J 2N0
250-643-8114 (Pacific time zone)

For Letters to the Editor and submissions: editor@ReformedPerspective.ca

Editorial Team: Mark Penninga (Executive Director); Jon Dykstra (Editor); Marty VanDriel (Assistant Editor); Jan Broersma (Copy Editor)

Board of Directors: Bruce DeBoer (Chairman); Marty VanDriel; Mark Penninga (Executive Director); David Visser; Aubrey Vandergaag; Sharon de Boer; Lucas Holtvliwer; Rebecca Poppe

Art Direction, Design and Layout: Annelies Veurink; Vanessa Appleyard

Template Design (2013): Compass Creative Studio Inc. compasscreative.ca

Contact Address for Australia:

Pro Ecclesia Publishers, PO Box 189, Kelmscott, W. Australia 6111

Copyright statement: Copyright in letters, articles, cartoons and any other material submitted to Reformed Perspective and accepted for publication remains with the author, but RP and its reciprocal organizations may freely reproduce them in print, electronic or other forms.

This periodical is owned and operated by the Reformed Perspective Foundation Inc., a Canadian charity whose mission is to promote a Biblically Reformed perspective in all spheres of life by equipping and encouraging Christians to think, speak, and act in a manner consistent with their confession.

If you are interested in the work of Reformed Perspective Foundation and in the promotion of Reformed principles in all spheres of life, especially in your local area, and you need help, contact us at admin@ReformedPerspective.ca.

Registration: ISSN 0714-8208

Charitable Organization under Canada Income Tax Act

Registration No. 118929272RR0001

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:

One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

reformedperspective.ca



THE IMPORTANCE OF RISKY PLAY

by Dave Penninga

Page 30

- | | | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|----|---|
| 2 | RP CONTEST: Your Turn! | 40 | Why you (or someone you know) should plan to go to Calgary's 2026 Summit Reformed Young Adult Conference
- Maggie Vandenberg | 58 | Why It's Good For Teens And Kids To Do Chores
- Holly Braendlein |
| 6 | Readers' Response | 42 | Why I Don't Have A Bucket List
- Barbara Braendlein | 60 | IN A NUTSHELL: Tidbits relevant, and not so, to the Christian life
- Jon Dykstra |
| 8 | GUEST EDITORIAL: What will Canada look like in 2040?
- Mark Penninga | 46 | ANNUAL CHRISTMAS STORY: Learning
- Christine Farenhorst | 67 | Post Tenebras Lux: Martin Luther and the road to Reformation
- Paul Cox |
| 12 | NEWS IN PERSPECTIVE
- Levi Minderhoud, Mark Penninga, Marty VanDriel | 49 | CROSSWORD PUZZLE
- Jeff Dykstra | 80 | More Than the Magazine |
| 18 | Veya's Story: The Fight For Her Life...
- Mark Penninga | 50 | INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST: Paula Roth loves painting her studio
- Jason Bouwman | 82 | E.D. UPDATE: Our donors enabled us to take 4 bigs steps forward in 2025
- Mark Penninga |
| 23 | Why Charlie Kirk's Death Hit So Hard
- Janelle Oosterhof | 54 | COME & EXPLORE: Have you ever wondered...
- Stephanie Vanderpol | 84 | RP CONTEST : Can You Build It Better? |
| 30 | THE IMPORTANCE OF RISKY PLAY
- Dave Penninga | | | | |
| 38 | Introducing ARPA Academy
- Daniel Zekveld | | | | |

READERS' RESPONSE

DEAR EDITOR:

I read Rev. Bouwman's article on the Strive 2024 conference (Sept/Oct 2025 issue) with great interest, but I came away with a concern about how the event was presented.

In his introduction, Rev. Bouwman described Strive as a response to men — especially those who are white, straight, and Christian — being told to “sit down and shut up.” He suggested the conference existed as a pushback against cultural forces seeking to “emasculate Christian men” and positioned Strive as a rally for men to “dare to be men.”

However, when the article turned to the content of the actual speeches, the emphasis was notably different. Dr. Will den Hollander reminded men that God has already given all the resources necessary for godly living. Dr. Ian Wildbe-
boer, with humility, confessed his own struggles and pointed men to covenant faithfulness. Rev. Al Bezuyen urged men to guard against misusing leisure and instead serve others for Christ's sake. Other testimonies spoke of overcoming sin, addiction, and personal failings through God's grace.

What struck me is that the speakers were not primarily railing against cultural marginalization, but rather calling men to holiness, repentance, and responsibility in their daily lives. Their focus was not on reclaiming a “place” in society but on living faithfully before God in the ordinary and difficult parts of life.

This difference matters. If we frame Strive chiefly as a reaction to political or cultural sidelining, we risk missing the deeper, richer message proclaimed by the speakers: that the true battle is not against cultural forces but against sin, worldliness, and our own hearts.

In short, while Rev. Bouwman highlighted the conference as an answer to the cultural mo-
ment, the speakers themselves emphasized personal faithfulness, covenant life, and service. I found the latter emphasis more compelling and more aligned with the gospel.

JOHN LUDWIG
HAMILTON, ON



DEAR EDITOR:

I have an idea for the next photo contest... *perspective*.

Sometimes looking at an object from a new angle can breathe fresh energy into something all over again. I was also thinking along the lines of how we see the world and how it impacts our actions.

During a recent visit with an elderly gentleman (we were going to do a quick Bible reading), he went to get his glasses. Inside his well-worn glasses case was a list of Bible passages. It was the first thing he could see when he got up in the morning and the last thing he could see when he went to bed. I took a quick photo and I hope that it is as encouraging to you as it is to me. It is ordinary, yet extraordinary.

SCOTT ZYLSTRA
ST. CATHARINES, ON



Reformed
PERSPECTIVE
Store

This Christmas,

BLESS YOUR LOVED ONES
WITH CLOTHING THAT IS

**Cozy, Beautiful
& God-Glorifying**



CHRISTMAS CARDS, TOQUES,
& GIFT CARDS NOW AVAILABLE!



AFFORDABLE, CANADIAN, QUALITY

This is a non-profit store. Our goal is to see God's name honored, not to raise funds. This allows us to price the merch as low as possible, resulting in more sales and more opportunities to shine.



STORE.REFORMED
PERSPECTIVE.CA

What will Canada look like in 2040?

Where some see gloom, God's people can proceed in hope, knowing that God remains in control

by Mark Penninga

"Canada to Become a Dystopian Nightmare, Households Will Flee: Gov Report."

A Christian friend shared this article with me, from *Better Dwelling*, a news outlet specifically focused on Canada's housing market. This friend wanted to make sure I was aware of a government report that was published last January but which hasn't been noticed and circulated until more recently.

According to *Better Dwelling's* Stephen Punwasi, the report from the federal government's own think tank, Policy Horizons:

"paint[s] a grim picture resembling a dystopian mashup of a Charles Dickens' novel meets *Terminator*. A Canada where wealth & the ability to own a home are determined at birth, hungry households hunt & fish for sustenance in cities, and moving down social classes is the norm. Welcome to Canada in 2040."

The message will undoubtedly resonate with many Canadians who have

noticed that things have been changing quickly in the past five or ten years. Not so long ago, children could anticipate earning more, and spending more than their parents ever did. Now we may make more money, but it doesn't go nearly as far. We can go to university, but a degree doesn't mean much when it comes to getting a good job today.

Young adults are finding it hard to imagine being able to buy even a modest home. Those that can find jobs are working more, and not having as many children. So, instead, to keep our population growing, we are bringing in millions of immigrants. But they need a place to stay too, which makes it even harder and more expensive for everyone to find a place to live.

Then there is AI: that mesmerizing but creepy technology that is replacing many jobs and seems to be a lot smarter than most people using it today.

Indeed, anticipating 2040 can be rather scary.

But that is only true if we aren't looking to the future with faith in our sovereign and loving God.

PROVIDENTIAL GLASSES

In Lord's Day 10 of the Heidelberg Catechism, we confess that God upholds heaven and earth and all creatures so that "all things come to us not by chance but by His fatherly hand." As a result,

"with a view to the future we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from his love."

I don't know what is going to transpire in the next 15 years, but based on this confession of God's providence, I believe a good case can be made that the changes we are experiencing aren't something to fear but can be means through which God is gathering His Church and kingdom.

What follows are some possibilities of the future, when looking through providential (in contrast to rose-colored) glasses.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI will have us seeking something authentic

From my limited experience, the hype around AI is well-warranted. It is far "smarter" and more capable than I would have imagined. Even the over-used word "revolutionary" may not suffice. The advance of AI means we're soon going to have a hard time telling whether what we read, see and hear is real or original:

- Did Emma really make that valedictorian speech that had us laughing and crying? Or was it the product of Chat GPT with a few tweaks to make it sound authentic?
- Was that YouTube clip about the New York Yankees having a moment of silence after Charlie Kirk's death real, or just AI-generated? How can we even know?
- Did the pastor actually write that sermon on Lord's Day 10, or did he ask AI to make a sermon for him, pointing it to www.TheSeed.info to ensure that the result would line up with solid Reformed orthodoxy?

- Can I trust that the person calling me to ask for money is actually my son/grandson in trouble? He sounds just like him, but something just doesn't seem right.

This is just a small taste of AI's impact and is legitimately concerning.

God's Word remains trustworthy

But when we look through the glasses of God's providence, something else becomes clear: in a world where it is very difficult to know what is true, solid, trustworthy, and real, the things that *are* will become all the more noticeable and meaningful. *And what is more true, solid, trustworthy, and real than God and His Word?* "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Psalm 18:2).

Just as many young men today are

pushing against the woke culture they were catechized in, I won't be surprised if many people begin recognizing the beauty of God's Word for what it is: unchanging, reliable, proven, not open to opinion, and anything but artificial.

In that dizzying sea of AI will stand the rock of God's Word and the sure hope of the Gospel. That may explain in part why popular secular influencers like Joe Rogan, Piers Morgan, and Andrew Schultz are all asking Canadian Christian Wes Huff to come on their platforms to explain how Scripture is reliable. Who would ever have seen that coming this year?

The Colson Center also shared news about a "quiet revival" across England and Wales: "the number of 16- to 24-year-olds in the U.K. attending church at least once a month jumped from 4% in 2018 to 16% in 2024." To add to this, the most recent data from book sales revealed a 22 percent



This past year, Joe Rogan, Piers Morgan, and Andrew Schultz all wanted Canadian Christian Wes Huff to come on their platforms to explain how Scripture is reliable. Who would ever have seen that coming?

increase in Bible sales in the USA (compared with 1 percent for total book sales). And the “religious books” category saw the largest increase in publishing in 2024.

For the past 75+ years, many in Western civilization saw God’s Word as a relic from the past, that isn’t all that relevant. That seems to be changing.

IMMIGRATION

So many people

With a plummeting fertility rate, Canada, along with most Western nations, relies on immigrants to keep our population and economies stable, let alone grow. In just two years, from 2022 to 2024, Canada’s population grew by 2,358,697 with about 98 percent of that increase due to incoming temporary and permanent residents.

Such a large influx of new people over a short time can result in challenges. One has only to look at the housing shortage and the high cost of rent.

So many who can now hear

But when we look through providential glasses, here too we see some amazing possibilities for the Church.

My friend and his family were missionaries in a remote region of Africa, carrying God’s Word on foot to people immersed in paganism. But they came back to our small community in northern BC not long ago and realized that a lot has changed since they left for Africa. God has literally brought people from around the world to our own doorstep. This friend has decided to continue his mission work at home, reaching out to immigrants in our own community. At the same time, many “Canadians” who grew up in this nation have become as pagan, or more, than many of places where these immigrants are coming from. Millions of people in our own provinces aren’t familiar with the Gospel. The fields are ripe for the harvest, and they are next door!

Ironically (providentially), God is sometimes using immigrants to challenge the trajectory that our society, and even some churches, have been on. For ex-

ample, recent election results show that immigrants and minorities are swinging to the political right, favoring conservative parties federally and provincially.

Closer to home, delegations representing different ethnic communities within the Christian Reformed Church urged their synod to adopt a biblical perspective of sexuality and were one of the forces leading to a shift in direction within that denomination.

SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

The partial collapse of government

The government report mentioned at the beginning of this article made waves in part because it warned that in the dire near future “people may start to hunt, fish, and forage on public lands and waterways without reference to regulations. Small-scale agriculture could increase.” To add to this “governments may come to seem irrelevant if they cannot enforce basic regulations or if people increasingly rely on grass-roots solutions to meeting basic needs.”

In other words, if Canadians are struggling under our socialized government welfare system, they may just start to take matters into their own hands and provide for themselves and their families. We saw a taste of this during Covid, as rural land became much more popular to own, and the public trust in government regulations was broken (in spite of daily assurances from public health officers).

More freedom to be productive?

I don’t think I need to work hard to convince most readers that there is a lot to this “warning” that may be a providential blessing. In a land where government regulation has stifled productivity and development for decades, many Canadians and Christians would welcome increased freedom and responsibility so that they can fulfil the cultural mandate that God gave humanity to “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28).

That said, I think it is also the case that many Christians have become reliant on government income (i.e., monthly child



We’ve sent out missionaries, but now millions of people in our own provinces aren’t familiar with the Gospel. The fields are ripe for the harvest, and they are next door!

care benefits, independent school funding, and even funding for their magazines) and may have a hard time adjusting if this were to decrease or terminate.

Society will be greatly blessed when more responsibility is put on individuals, families, churches, and community organizations, rather than the state. But that is only the case if these people use their responsibility for the furtherance of *God's* kingdom, and not their own.

UNIVERSITIES

Ivory towers may topple

The government report also warned that “post-secondary education could be a stranded asset.” A stranded asset loses its value prematurely, as a result of a shifting market – think of someone who had a horse buggy factory as motor cars were taking over. University degrees might become like that.

“People may look for alternative forms of training in new niches that appear to offer upward mobility. Non-traditional providers, including private firms, may outcompete traditional PSE players in attracting consumers.”

What could rise from the rubble?

As with the decline of the social welfare system, not many Christians will lament the breakdown of post-secondary education as it is represented in much of Canada today. Universities have been bastions of evil in our land, training generations of Canadians to undermine the Christian heritage that our civilization and country was founded on, and replace it with hedonism and, more recently, critical theory. There is little surprise that the “centers of higher learning” don’t help with “upward mobility” and might be outcompeted by private firms that seek to build, rather than tear down.

The question is, what will be the worldviews of the private firms that are built? Will they, like Harvard and Princeton University were when they were founded, operate on a biblical and Reformed foundation? If so, unlike Harvard and Princeton, will they stay true to their mission?



Will the future see more of us not just wanting to,
but needing to get out into nature to hunt and fish?

CANADA IN 2040

I understand why people aren’t optimistic about the future of Canada. Even in my own community, far removed from any urban centers and which, until recently, was known for being an idyllic place to raise a family, there are places that feel eerily similar to Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. I see more homelessness, open drug use on the streets, and the need for 24/7 policing. My family isn’t even comfortable walking down parts of Main Street anymore. The same is true in communities across Canada today.

This is the natural fruit of a secular worldview (ironically labeled “progressive”), and we can expect the trajectory to only continue as long as our country refuses to humble itself before the LORD.

But God isn’t looking to us to save Western civilization. Civilizations have risen and fallen many times. It is His kingdom that endures.

God’s kingdom is above all of this and is advancing perfectly according to His

plan. He put us in this time and place intentionally. He has a calling for us, right here and right now. We can leave the future in God’s hand, confident that He has the authority and power to guide all things. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

There may be reformation or revival, like in the time of Josiah (2 Kings 22-23). Or God may have good plans for another civilization to take our place, as He has done to the Babylonian and Roman empires, along with so many others. Or He may usher us into glory today yet.

God doesn’t burden us with the future. Our task is to focus on the present. We can use each day He has given us to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ, confident that “if the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward” (1 Cor. 3:14).

As such, it doesn’t matter so much if Canada still exists in 2040. We know with certainty that God’s kingdom will endure. RP

NEWS IN *Perspective*

ARPA CONDEMNED IN THE BC LEGISLATURE

BY LEVI MINDERHOUD



On the very first day of the fall legislative session, British Columbia MLAs debated the “views and policies of [the]

Association for Reformed Political Action” for almost an hour. The debate was over a motion tabled by the NDP:

“That this House condemns the intolerant views of the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA), including its harmful discrimination against transgender people, its belief that homosexuality

is ‘immoral’ and its explicit policy goal of restricting abortion access in British Columbia.”

The NDP’s motive for the motion seemed to be to condemn the Conservative opposition for attending ARPA’s MLA reception at the BC legislature back in April. However, the debate never talked about the two issues that ARPA specifically raised at that reception: medical gender transitioning for minors, and euthanasia.

By what standard?

Several NDP, Green, and independent MLAs rose to condemn ARPA’s positions on gender identity, sexual orientation, same-sex marriage, conversion therapy, abortion, IVF, and surrogacy. They argued that ARPA’s views violate various rights and freedoms and run counter to principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and tolerance.

Now, it goes without saying that ARPA – and all Christians – are in favor of all of these things when viewed in a proper way. In fact, a recognition of rights and the practice of tolerance only really arose in the Christian West.

What this debate exposed is what happens when these things are unmoored from their Christian anchors and made our ultimate political goals. If the expansion of freedom becomes the most important aim of politics, then medical transitioning for minors makes sense. If diversity is the legislature’s most sacred value, then opposition to gay marriage is indeed out of place.

But orthodox Christians know all of these values – rights and freedoms, equity and tolerance – are not the ultimate basis for morality or justice. Rather, the ultimate basis for just laws is God’s revelation to us in His Word and creation. MLAs spent a whole lot of time talking *about rights* in this hour of debate. But they spent virtually no time talking about what *is right*. They refused to acknowledge how removing the breasts of a fourteen-year-old girl in the name of “gender-affirming care” is not in her best interest. They refused to consider whether providing euthanasia to the mentally ill might be a step too far even for them. They refused to contemplate whether pre-born children at 35 weeks of age deserve any protections in law.

Calling good evil (Is. 5:20)

Instead, MLAs voted 48-3 to condemn ARPA’s “intolerant” views. (The text of the motion uses “intolerant,” but the word “hateful” was bandied about the most.) Here’s how the vote broke down:

- The entire NDP and Green caucuses, along with independent Elenore Sturko, voted to condemn ARPA.
- The two MLAs from OneBC, and another independent, Jordan Kealy, voted against the motion and spoke up to defend ARPA.
- None of the Conservative MLAs opted to be present for the vote. The lone Conservative speaker to the motion accused the motion of being a “political trap.”

All of this might remind us of the words of Jesus in John 15:18-21:

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.”

If Reformed Christians were of the world – if we supported medical gender transitioning, same-sex marriage, or abortion on demand, or kept silent about them all – these MLAs would not have condemned ARPA. Reformed Christians strive to stand publicly for what God reveals to be true. God says that He created two sexes? That’s how it is. He designed marriage to be between one man and one woman for life? That’s our definition too. God created human life to begin at conception and commands us not to murder? Then abortion is wrong. Recognizing and honoring these truths is good for everyone.

What true love looks like

Our motivation, then, for raising these issues is one of love. Earlier in John 15, Christ says:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my Name, He may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”

And that’s what ARPA and all Reformed Christians should intend to do. We endeavor to love our fellow citizens. This includes not just the fellow brothers and sisters in Christ that Jesus has in mind here, but all people, as Jesus taught in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. We call for a law against abortion because we love pre-born children. We love children who are confused about their gender. We love the same-sex couple next door. And yes, we ought to love the MLAs who voted yesterday to condemn ARPA. For, as John wrote later, “we love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

And so, in this condemnation of ARPA in the BC legislature, as Reformed Christians we might feel “afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-9). For we know that “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

But in light of the fact that few MLAs stood up to defend ARPA – much less defend the bodily integrity of gender dysphoric children or the lives of those threatened by euthanasia or abortion – our provincial representatives need to hear from us. Encourage them not to be afraid to discuss the issues that desperately need our government’s attention, but to boldly hold the government to account.



A RENEWED HUNGER FOR THE BIBLE

BY MARK PENNINGA

Data from the Association of American Publishers reveals that the biggest sales increase among all categories of books being published last year in the United States was religious books – up 18.5 percent from the previous year. This comes on the heels of similar growth the previous year.

Publishers Weekly asked these publishers what was driving the increase and the answer was Bibles, Bible study materials, commentaries, and devotionals.

“Christianity and Scripture... hit people where they live,” explained Shane White, divisional VP for sales at InterVarsity Press. “That’s why we see the sales we see.”

“Whatever denomination you’re in, whatever your religious background, you’re engaging the Bible more now than you did 10 years ago,” noted Bob Gaudet, the executive VP of marketing and publicity for Baker Publishing Group.

Although there isn’t data of Bible sales in Canada, the Canadian Bible Society distributed 631,298 Bibles and pieces of Scripture in 2024, a 20.1 percent increase from the previous year, which was already 22.5 percent more than the previous year.

In Isaiah 55:10-11, God reminds us that just as the rain comes down from heaven to water the earth and make it sprout, giving us both seed for sowing and bread for eating, the same is true of His Word: “It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose.” Praise be to God for giving more people an appetite for the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

90,000 LEGAL HOMICIDES IN CANADA SINCE 2016

BY MARK PENNINGA

According to calculations from the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (EPC), as of September this year approximately 90,000 Canadians have been euthanized since this form of homicide was legalized by the federal government in 2016.

Homicide is defined under Section 222 of Canada's Criminal Code as an act causing the death of a human being.

The staggering number of euthanasia deaths has been steadily increasing, from 1,018 in 2016, to 15,343 confirmed cases in 2023. Based on the reports available for 2024, the EPC projects there were 16,500 euthanasia deaths that year, an increase of 7.5 percent.

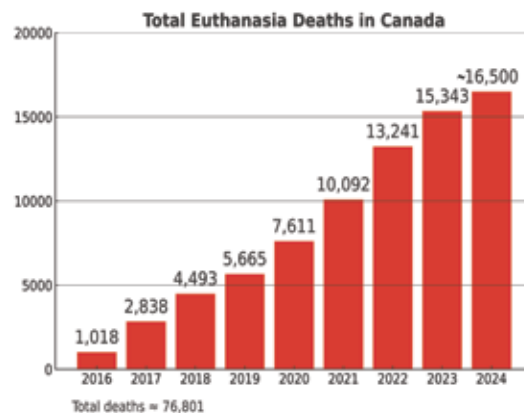
EPC drilled in on BC's 2024 data and found that 35 percent of the 2,767 euthanasia deaths were approved based on "other conditions." Of these, 65.9 percent were related to "frailty." They

noted that "frailty" isn't defined and can encompass euthanasia for a "completed life" – in other words, an elderly person is not sick or dying but simply wants to die.

The increasing numbers, and broad standards for qualifying, are a far cry from what the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *Carter v. Canada* (2015), when it allowed euthanasia for a competent adult who

"has a grievous and irremediable medical condition (including an illness, disease, or disability) that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition."

Behind each of these statistics is a human being made in the image of God,



many of whom left this earth without hope. As ARPA Canada and others communicated to Parliament and to the courts prior to the legalization of euthanasia, as soon as we remove the sacred line of the Sixth Commandment to not murder, it becomes impossible to maintain any other line. Sure enough, Parliament is now considering further expansions of euthanasia for those whose suffering is solely psychological, as well as for children.

WERE THE 215 SOIL ABNORMALITIES ACTUALLY GRAVES? 37% OF CANADIANS THINK WE SHOULD JUST PRESUME SO.

BY MARK PENNINGA

Allegations of mass graves outside of Canadian residential schools was one of the top news stories in the world in 2021. Ground-penetrating radar was said to have found evidence of the remains of as many as 215 children on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. But no exhumation has been done, and no actual bodies have ever been found. And today, for many Canadians, the lack of proof is seen as irrelevant.

The results from a survey released by Angus Reid this summer revealed that 63% of respondents would only accept the initial claim if further information from exhumation was made available. However, more than a third of respondents will accept these are unmarked

graves, even if nothing is being done to verify whether these are actually graves.

Among indigenous respondents, 44% accepted the claim without more evidence. The numbers who don't need evidence increases to 56% of young women, aged 18-34.

A few years ago, Christian apologist Abdu Murray argued that we have

transitioned from a post-modern world to a post-truth world.

"Post-Modernism says there's no such thing as truth, but Post-Truth mindsets say, 'Truth is important, but only in so far as it feeds and satisfies my feelings and my preferences. So truth exists, but I don't care unless it happens to conform with what I like.'"

How do we engage with a world that acknowledges that truth exists but is happy to ignore it? In his book *Saving Truth: Finding Meaning & Clarity in a Post-Truth World*, Abdu Murray concludes that "the answer is Jesus – the truth who is personal. He is the Saving Truth."

In other words, Christians must communicate truth, but we must also introduce our neighbors to the person of Jesus – the "way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Christ alone speaks to the head and the heart.



QUEBEC TO BAN PUBLIC PRAYER AND ADVANCE SECULARISM

BY MARK PENNINGA

The government of Quebec announced in August that it intends to introduce a law this fall to outlaw public prayer in the province. As Jean-François Roberge, Quebec's "Secularism Minister" explained in a statement on X:

"The proliferation of street prayers is a serious and sensitive issue in Quebec. Last December, our government expressed its unease with this phenomenon, which is becoming increasingly common, especially in Montreal. The Premier of Quebec has given me the mandate to strengthen secularism, and I firmly intend to fulfill this mandate diligently.... This fall, we will, therefore, introduce a bill to reinforce secularism in Quebec, notably by prohibiting street prayers." [As translated from the original French.]

Roberge was indirectly referring to how Muslims have been gathering in prayer for months outside the Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal, leading to a growing counter-protest.

"In recent months, Islamic prayers have also spilled into parks and downtown streets, with worshippers rolling out mats outside shopping districts and public offices," explained Leslie Roberts, writing for the *National Post*. "What began occasionally has become a regular source of tension."

All government laws in Canada are required to align with Canada's highest law, our constitution, which enshrines the freedoms of religion, expression, and assembly as "fundamental freedoms" in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As such, it is expected that Quebec will make use of Section 33 of the Charter, also known as the "notwithstanding clause," which allows a legislature to override some of the rights in the Charter, though for only five years at a time. However, this override can be



renewed indefinitely. Quebec already made use of this clause in 2019, when it banned public employees from wearing religious symbols while on duty.

Roberge's announcement came on the heels of a report from a Quebec government committee tasked with providing advice on how to strengthen secularism. The committee gave 50 recommendations, including to phase out funding of private religious schools, eliminate religion as a charitable purpose, prohibit religious symbols in government advertising and create a National Day of Secularism.

The definition of secularism is that the state is neutral in matters of religion. The Quebec government isn't actually interested in neutrality. It is interested in using the power of the state to undermine religions that it disagrees with. This is simply another example of one religion (secularism) opposing other religions.

As the Preamble of the Charter reveals, our rights and freedoms are based on "the supremacy of God and the rule of law." Quebec, and Western society in general, is experiencing

tension in the streets because the religions of secularism and Islam both fail to respect this. The constitution doesn't work so well when the foundations beneath it are ignored or denied. The inevitable result is conflict, with one religion warring against another.

The very concept of rights and freedoms did not, and could not, originate from a Muslim or secular worldview. Our "rights" come largely from God's prohibitions – we have a right to property and life because God forbids theft and murder. Freedom of conscience finds a foundation in God's hatred for hypocritical worship (Amos 5:21-24) making legislated, compelled worship not just pointless but blasphemous.

A biblical understanding of freedoms brings with it, however, a corresponding set of responsibilities. So, in this case, we ought to be able to pray both publicly and privately, but that also means that our praying shouldn't cause a public disturbance that prevents others from exercising their rights and freedoms.



CHARLIE KIRK'S FUNERAL SPREADS THE GOSPEL

BY MARTY VANDRIEL



On Sunday, September 21, an estimated 100,000 people gathered inside State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, for the funeral of Charlie Kirk, with an overflow crowd outside also in the tens of thousands. Kirk, just 31 years old, was an extremely popular and influential Christian leader, especially among young people; he was assassinated on September 10 while debating with "those who disagreed with him" in front of a large group of students and on-lookers on the campus of Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah.

Turning Point USA, the organization founded by Kirk, stated that over *100 million people* streamed portions of the service or watched it on cable or other broadcast services.

More remarkable than the size of the audience was the message they heard. Speakers included powerful politicians, sitting White House cabinet members, President Donald Trump, ministers of the Gospel, friends of Charlie Kirk, coworkers, and, touchingly, his wife Erika. Almost without exception, each orator brought the Gospel message to the millions of ears listening, often with Scriptural exegesis and explanation, all pointing to Jesus Christ as the answer to all of mankind's problems.

Apologist Frank Turek, a mentor to Kirk who was with Charlie on stage when he was shot, told the crowd:

"I want you to know that Charlie right now is in heaven, not because he was a great husband and father, not because he saved millions of kids out of darkness on college campuses, not because he changed minds and chased votes to save the country, not because he sacrificed himself for his Savior. Charlie Kirk is in heaven because his Savior sacrificed himself for Charlie Kirk."

The Vice President J.D. Vance, a close friend of Kirk, said,

"I always felt a little uncomfortable talking about my faith in public, as much as I loved the Lord, and as much as it was an important part of my life. I have talked more about Jesus Christ in the past two weeks than I have my entire time in public!"

Vance also reminded the audience that "It is better to be persecuted for your faith than to deny the kingship of Christ." He quoted John 16:33:

"I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world."

Even the President's son, Donald Junior, who quipped that Charlie knew way more about the Bible than he did, took

the Scriptures seriously in speaking about the martyrdom of Stephen in the book of Acts, pointing to the vision of Jesus standing, not sitting, at the right hand of God the Father to welcome Stephen into Heaven.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio summarized the essentials of the Gospel: focusing on our sin, our salvation in Jesus Christ (through His historical and actual life, death, and resurrection), and our service and thankfulness to God for our salvation. Does that sound at all familiar to Reformed Christians?

Other notable speakers with Gospel messages included podcaster Tucker Carlson, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth.

Some of the praise heaped on Kirk bordered on deification (and sounded out of place), and President Trump could not bring himself to follow the example of forgiveness of our political foes, as illustrated by widow Erika Kirk, who publicly forgave her husband's murderer. But overall, the nearly five-hour event was a remarkable witness to millions of the power of the Gospel message – only our Lord Jesus can redeem us from the mess of fallen mankind.

If you've only seen clips or highlights of the funeral service, it is worthwhile to watch the whole event: you can find the complete stream online in many places.



What if your investments reflected your values?

Biblically Informed Investing (BII) goes beyond the bottom line. At Capstone, we help you invest with integrity by avoiding industries that harm and supporting companies that reflect your values. Whether you're faith-based or you simply value impact, BII offers a clear framework for meaningful investing.

At Capstone Asset Management we offer:

- ◆ Investment strategies rooted in Christian values.
- ◆ A commitment to faith-driven stewardship.
- ◆ Solutions that reflect your beliefs and financial goals.
- ◆ Purpose beyond profits.

Together let's make a positive impact with purpose.



Visit capstoneassets.ca
To connect call 1-855-437-7103



VEYA'S STORY

The fight for her life in a broken and biased healthcare system – one that sees doctors perpetrating euthanasia and abortion and calling them both medical care.

by Mark Penninga



“Our sweet Veya Hope ran into the arms of Jesus yesterday.” So shared Veya’s mother, Krystal Vanderbrughen, on her Instagram page on August 2, 2025. Krystal continued: “Her name was her calling – Hope. She carried it with her every single day she spent inside those hospital rooms and gave it to all who knew her.”

Veya was first introduced to the waiting world, and to the arms of her parents Krystal and Jeremy, just a year and a half earlier, on December 4, 2023. Although the LORD didn’t have many days allotted for Veya here on Earth, her life touched tens of thousands of hearts. And her experiences here also exposed just how difficult it can be to fight for care in a broken world and medical system.

“We pray that Veya’s story continues to encourage other families who are given this same precious gift – the gift of loving and raising a child with Down Syndrome,” Krystal explained.

HOPE BORN

Jeremy and Krystal, along with their other children Ivylee, Irelyn, and Lincoln, live in Caledonia, Ontario. In the fall of 2023, as they were eagerly awaiting the birth of another child, they learned that their baby had a congenital heart defect which would require surgery at some point after birth.

“While this is a lot to process, we know without a doubt God truly has a perfect plan for this baby even though the road ahead is filled with uncertainties.”

That’s what Krystal shared at that time on Instagram, not realizing just how true these words would be for her and her family. She would continue to share, with all who took an interest, the challenges of the road they were on. In an appearance on RP’s Real Talk podcast earlier this year, talking with Lucas Holtvluwer, Krystal explained that hospital stays brought their own problems.

“She was born with Down Syndrome and a cardiac defect – pretty straightforward – but she has now encountered some medical complexities from living her life in a hospital this long and from delayed treatments.”

One complication and delay led to another, and Veya was transferred from Hamilton's McMaster Hospital to SickKids Hospital in Toronto, which is one of the leading children's hospitals in the world.

CRUMBLING CARE

"Our journey started off really great, like we had teams that were really invested," Krystal explained to Lucas. "But then we experienced her care declining January of this year, so that kind of set her on a totally different trajectory."

"Specifically with her last ICU admission, you could just tell through the conversations with the doctors that they were really just trying to wrap things up with her and kind of coerce us into letting her go rather than help her," she shared on the podcast. "I feel like the team coach, trying to keep the spirits alive.... But they all just kind of vanished."

Krystal was particularly confused when Veya was denied a necessary liver transplant. She asked their Pediatric Advanced Care team if it was Veya's Down Syndrome that was influencing their decision-making. "They can never say yes or no, but they said, 'Mom, I think you know the answer to that deep down in your heart.' And I said, 'well, that is the confirmation.'"

One particular incident really broke Krystal's trust in Veya's care.

"Right after her liver surgery, she got RSV [Respiratory Syncytial Virus], and then a few days after that, she got overdosed with a lethal amount of potassium. It wasn't just a little bit, it was 10 times the regular amount that she normally gets, and it was during the evening when none of us were there."

Veya's heart rate went to 350 beats per minute, and she had to be shocked three times to stabilize her.

"I do have questions whether it actually was an accident or not, because these sorts of things happen when families step away. So, the timing of it, but also the amount. You know, it's one thing, if you gave a little extra, but 10 times the amount, like, an actual lethal dose?"

GROWING SUPPORT

Krystal shared the ups and downs of Veya's journey on her Instagram account. Her photos, videos, and touching words lit a fire in many hearts around the world, and she ended up with close to 40,000 Instagram followers, many of whom were praying for Veya, and encouraging Krystal and her family.

"For me, social media was like an open diary and a way for me to process but also a way for me to be able to connect with others that were raising children with Down Syndrome, because I knew nothing about it, and so it's been a really great place for resources and connecting"



Veya's Bravery Beads: the pictured collection of beads was earned, one bead at a time "for every procedure, poke, test, surgery, milestone, or tough day" that a child has to endure, "each one a tangible symbol of bravery and perseverance." As the Vanderbrugghe's shared, "Our daughter Veya earned over 4,000 bravery beads during her time in the hospital."



Veya, hands folded, shortly after deciding to kick off her cast that had just been put on. Her mischievous look was captured by her mom: "...and I ain't guilty of anything except for stealing hearts."

But the care hasn't only been virtual. Krystal and Jeremy are members of Trinity Canadian Reformed Church in Glanbrook, Ontario. And as she told Lucas back in July, "Our church community, they're phenomenal. I'll tell you this, we had a meal train set up for Veya when she was born, and we are 19 months into this and that same meal train is still going." She added that the amount of support they have received allowed them to be fully present and to advocate for Veya, because everything else was being taken care of.

The many prayers that were raised for their family carried them. "I don't think my husband and I really understood that till we lived this experience. Like you really feel carried by prayers. There's just this indescribable peace that comes with it."

GROWING FAITH

We read in James 1:3 how "the testing of your faith produces endurance" and Krystal attested to this when speaking about their journey prior to Veya's death.

"As much as we want to enter the next season of life and be off of this medical journey, there's a part of you that doesn't, because of the experience you have with God's nearness. Because it forces you to slow down and really lean into Him.

"...The ways we've experienced God's goodness and care over these 19 months, we're forever thankful for that. Faith is not without pain. It's there to give you the courage to face it, right? And a lot of times this journey has really forced us to our knees."

She later added that, as hard as it has been, they have seen so much good come from this journey already, particularly with the many interactions with people in the hospital.

SEEKING JUSTICE

After Veya's promotion to glory, Krystal shared with *Reformed Perspective* that they hope to have further meetings with SickKids Hospital regarding the neglect that Veya experienced, which Krystal sees as a push to end Veya's life rather than care for it. "What was happening was the team was trying to 'stealth euthanize' Veya through means of denying life-saving measures."

They are working with other families who experienced similar harms for their medically complex children at the same hospital, seeking to raise their concerns collectively. Her hope is to see a formal acknowledgement of harm, public reporting requirements, independent investigations, disability rights training, and whistleblower protection so that staff can report unsafe practices without fear of losing their jobs.

Although she has devoted much of her past couple of years to being an advocate for Veya and others with disabilities, she also understands that she can only do so much. And that is OK. "Our God, The Creator of Life has the final say."

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

When asked by *RP* what advice she would have for other families who may face similar situations, she urged them to document everything, including conversations and decisions, names, and copies of medical records. She also advised to never go into important meetings alone. Bring someone to witness and support you.

Further, use clear and assertive language like “can you explain in writing why you are denying this treatment?” And if there are concerns, escalate them by asking to speak with a patient relations person or ombudsman, or even filing a complaint with the hospital leadership or licensing board.

She encourages others to seek a second, or third opinion, and not be afraid to transfer care to another institution, even if it feels scary. And “trust your instincts – God gives them to us for a reason!” You know your child best so “if something feels wrong, it probably is.”

Most soberly, she warns “know that Canada has become a death culture.” In an age where it has become legal to end the life of someone who requests it simply because they are suffering, it becomes all the more important to be on guard for the care of our loved ones, particularly those who are more vulnerable. “Instead of offering care, too many hospitals offer ‘comfort care only.’ Instead of fighting for life, they push families towards giving up and will blame you for your loved one’s suffering.”

Her final advice is most encouraging. “You are not alone, God goes behind you and before you.... When you are battling the medical system for your child never forget to stop and ask God for guidance, strength, wisdom and peace. He sees, He knows, and He will lead you step by step.”

A TRIBUTE FOR VEYA

In the weeks following Veya’s death, Krystal paid tribute to Veya with these words:

“I didn’t have to look into your eyes to fall in love with you. I didn’t need to hear your soft, raspy cry to know you loved me too. I didn’t have to hold your hands to cherish you forever – because from the very beginning, within my womb, our hearts were already intertwined.

“Veya, you changed me. Through you God gave me a deep perspective. You touched my soul and awakened a love so deep that can only be explained by His goodness. You gave me countless memories that I will hold close for the rest of my life. My heart aches in a way words can’t fully capture, and I know that ache won’t leave until we’re together again. ... Though the longing never fades, each day moves me closer to the joy of holding you in Heaven.”



You can watch Krystal’s full interview on *RP’s Real Talk* podcast by scanning the QR code here or by searching for “Real Talk Reformed Perspective” on YouTube.

Pictures used with permission of the Vanderbruggens.

Snuggle time for Veya and her dad...



Like children everywhere, Veya was a fan of Sandra Boynton books.



TRANSFORMATIVE

by Krystal Vanderbruggen

Transformative.

That is the word that holds the weight of Veya's impact. Her life was not a small ripple – it was a wave God used to shift hearts, minds, and even whole communities. Through her, the Lord reminded us that His Image is stamped on every child, that worth is never measured in years lived, medical charts, or abilities, but in the eternal truth that every life is sacred, beloved, and designed with purpose.

Veya transformed compassion because she reflected the heart of Christ. People who followed her story weren't left with pity – they were compelled to action. Compelled to pray without ceasing, to rally around the weak, to stand up for justice, to speak truth even when it was costly. Through her, God taught us to love our children more tenderly, to treasure the moments we are given, and to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

She transformed courage because she carried the bravery that comes only from heaven. In her small body was a strength that made others rise. Parents found faith to confront giants. Strangers found boldness to challenge broken systems. Families learned that even in the valley of the shadow of death, they could keep walking, because God's rod and staff were still guiding them.

She transformed faith itself. Her journey pressed people to wrestle with hard questions, yet anchored them in the truth that Emmanuel – *God with us* – was near in the suffering. Through her, we caught glimpses of heaven: that it is not far, that hope is eternal, and that even the smallest child can declare the greatness of the Lord.

Veya's story was, and forever will be, transformative. Through her, God turned grief into purpose, sorrow into testimony, and love into a legacy that cannot be shaken. Her impact will continue to echo in every child defended, every prayer lifted, and every voice that dares to proclaim truth because of her. She was His vessel, and through her, He has written a story that He will continue to bless for generations to come.

A close-up photograph of Charlie Kirk, a man with short dark hair, wearing a dark blue blazer over a dark t-shirt. He is looking upwards and to the right with a slight smile, speaking into a silver microphone. The background is a warm, out-of-focus orange-brown color.

by Janelle Oosterhoff

WHY CHARLIE KIRK'S DEATH HIT SO HARD

For a time, in September, my Facebook feed – I’m sure yours too – was full of tributes to Charlie Kirk. At this point, I don’t need to tell you that Kirk was big. He was the founder of Turning Point USA, an organization maybe best known for setting up tables at university campuses across the USA, with Kirk, and sometimes his friends too, willing to debate anyone who would take the mic. Some give Kirk credit for Trump’s win in 2024, because of the way Turning Point was so effective in its outreach to young voters.

I felt a weight when I heard about his assassination. And the weight increased as I processed. Maybe that’s how you felt too.

If you track the news, it’s been a heavy year. Overdoses. Transgenderism. Abortion. Stabbings. Euthanasia. Shootings. Never mind the economy. Now this.

But why is this hitting so hard? I only watched Kirk’s videos occasionally. Why am I mourning someone who had so little impact on my day-to-day life? Of course, you have to feel sad for his loved ones – but it’s not that kind of grief. Assassinations are jarring, by nature. Not that I’ve lived through too many.

But this is different.

Charlie Kirk’s murder crystallized

the hatred that I’ve been seeing directed towards Christian ideas and towards prolife activists. The hatred that activist Christians have felt directed our way through the condescension and the shouts, now manifested through murder. Across America, and Canada too, thousands celebrated. Mocked. Laughed. Who watches a man die, and laughs? That scares me. The apostle John equated hatred with murder (1 John 3:15), and I’ve never felt how close that link is until now.

In her video commemorating Charlie, Christian commentator Allie Beth Stuckey put it, “We’re bringing words. They’re bringing weapons.”

Ultimately, Charlie Kirk was murdered for views *that I hold*. Probably not all of them, but the fundamentals. Many of those views are non-negotiable Christian convictions that you and I and all God’s people hold. Christianity wasn’t a part of Kirk’s message: it was the driving force behind it.

THE GAP AND THE BRIDGE

For a while, it’s been pretty clear that Christianity stands at odds with secular beliefs.

Now, two seemingly contradictory things come to mind:

1. It’s not an “us” versus “them”

We can’t just write off everyone on the other side. Christ came and died for us while we were still His enemies (Romans 5:8-10), and if not for Him, we would be enemies still. So, if God can do that for us, what might He be working in *those folks over there*? So we need to talk.

As Charlie put it:

“When people stop talking, really bad stuff starts. When marriages stop talking, divorce happens. When churches [stop talking], they fall apart. When civilization stops talking, civil war ensues. When you stop having a human connection with someone you disagree with, it becomes a lot easier to want to commit violence against that group.”

The Christian response is to treat everyone with dignity (Matt. 7:12), and pray for anyone who hates us (Matt. 5:43-44).

2. There are two sides

We can’t be confused about how there are two sides (Josh. 5:13-14): God’s side, and everyone else’s. As God’s people we are, and are called to be, fundamentally different. To me, the spiritual battle was brought to light by this assassin’s physical act.

Are these two conflicting views? No. These both make sense when we recognize what we share with our enemies: we’re all made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6), and we’re all in desperate need of a Savior. We can look across the divide in humility knowing *there but for the grace of God, go I*.

SOCIAL MEDIA MAKES BOTH SIDES THINK, “DUH!?”

The algorithms selecting what’ll show up in our social media feeds only sharpen the division, making it difficult to actually have compassion for others. Everyone wonders:

How can anybody support ____? It’s just so obviously wrong!

Then we all click on what we want to see, and afterwards the algorithm feeds us more and more of the same.



Charlie Kirk during his 2024 “You’re Being Brainwashed” university tour.

My liberal friend commented, “He shouldn’t have been killed. But he said the gun deaths are worth it, so it just feels ironic.”

Worth it. Worth what? Did he really say that? What did he mean? But the internet clip stops right there. “Hah,” laughs an anti-gun activist. The assumption is that had Charlie known he would be killed by a gunman, then his tune would’ve changed. I disagree, largely because I got to see what else Charlie said.

Another thing Kirk said was: “I don’t believe in empathy,” and since his murder that quote has been pasted across the Internet. “*How heartless can you be?*” thinks the social studies student. Missed is the next phrase that isn’t included: “I prefer sympathy.” And Kirk went on from there to explain why.

One student asked him, “If your ten-year-old daughter was raped, would you want her to have the baby?” Kirk answered: “Yes.” Some stop listening at “yes.”

Those who listen longer hear a compassionate “why.”

Explanations on immigration and marriage aren’t heard, but clips “proving” xenophobia, transphobia, and homophobia dominate YouTube. Charity is dead. Assumptions of good intent are gone, and undiscerning scrolling forms a world-view. Those who hear only what they want call him a hateful, dangerous fascist. When that’s your belief, then all redeeming qualities fail. They’re not redeeming qualities at all – they’re manipulation tactics.

And assassinating a fascist is a heroic act.

One spray-painted billboard read: “Death to all Charlie Kirks.”

That’s enough Internet for me today.

CAN WE GET BACK TO NORMAL?

It’s tempting to dismiss this as a one-time event. A crazy person shot a MAGA activist. We’re not American. Most people aren’t crazy. Right?

Maybe we could start to be discern-

ing again. More neutral. The words “He had it coming,” will always be wrong. But we might reflect, “Should he really have linked his Christianity so closely with partisan politics?” or “He was unnecessarily controversial... if he just spoke the Gospel, this wouldn’t have happened.”

Not quite victim blaming, but maybe we should adjust the halo a bit? *Should we really call him a martyr?*

If he is one – if that’s what we were to conclude – we’d also have to conclude that Christianity itself is hated, not just some Christians who don’t put a good face to it. Then it’s not just about Charlie; you and I are hated. And I think the 100+ church burnings across Canada in the last 5 years bear witness to Who is really hated.

So no, this wasn’t a matter of tone. We don’t look at prophets in the Old Testament, and suggest perhaps their tone was off. Sorry, Jeremiah. You were a bit harsh there – a little too blunt on that one!

Watch any of his videos – *in whole* –

CHARLIE KIRK IN CONTEXT

Many will condemn a man for an isolated sentence or two. Christians do it too. Instead, we should assess others just as we would like to be judged (Matt. 7:12).

by Janelle Oosterhoff and Jon Dykstra

If you have liberal friends or family, then in the days and weeks after Charlie Kirk’s murder, you probably saw all sorts of Kirk quotes, shared by them to warn people about what a problematic figure Kirk supposedly was.

While Kirk had his flaws, the most common quotes being shared were generally not at all what they first seemed, being taken right out of context. As Proverbs 18:17 teaches us, “The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him,” so we need to go beyond that first impression, and do the cross-examination.

We can do so, not as people who must defend Charlie Kirk wrong or right, but instead as God’s people equipped by Him to discern right from wrong. Using our discernment, it’s easy to see that Kirk was attacked by the Left, not for what

he might have gotten wrong, but for how often he expressed godly thoughts bravely and clearly. So, we shouldn’t accept their word for any of it. We need to check whether the quote is:

1. even accurate
2. in context

So, what follows are a few of the more common accusations stated in bold, and then put in context right below.

“I don’t believe in empathy.”

This is likely as much a misquote as it is a quote out of context. You can find Kirk saying he didn’t like the particular term *empathy*, but he wasn’t at all opposed to feeling for the injured and suffering. What he has said along these lines is:

“I can’t stand the word empathy.

Actually, I think empathy is a made-up, new-age term that does a lot of damage. But it’s very effective when it comes to politics. Sympathy, I prefer more than empathy.”

“Black women do not have the brain processing power to be taken seriously”

This was pitched as proof of Kirk being racist. The quote is both inaccurate and out of context. Kirk wasn’t insulting black women in general; he found it ridiculous that four specific black women were proudly declaring they were beneficiaries of affirmative action. Kirk was arguing, during the July 13, 2023 episode of his podcast, that affirmative action is the opposite of *earning* something. So, he thought it funny that anyone would brag about being an affirmative action beneficiary.

and listen to those who knew him; Charlie Kirk was incredibly patient and well-versed. He was grounded in the Gospel, in both public and personal life. Many young people attribute their own shift to conservatism to Charlie Kirk, and many are now opening their Bibles for the first time while navigating the loss.

Charlie Kirk was targeted because he was effective.

THE TURNING POINT

I'm not the first to say this – it's ringing all over the Internet: in the bullet, hate took a physical form.

And this is how Charlie's wife responded: "You have no idea what you have just unleashed across this world and across this entire nation." Erika Kirk is right, God has so used this that in Charlie's death his voice has been amplified. His videos are being watched even more. And I'm excited for all the new voices who have been emboldened to speak. Christian voices.

As I'm writing this, a lot has already been said. An insane amount of commentary. But the hate felt personal, so I wrote too.

I've done outreach – speaking up for the unborn – some of it on university campuses. My life hasn't been in danger, but the hate's been the same. The people in Kirk's videos are the same sort that pro-life activists talk to every day on the streets. Like Charlie Kirk, I enjoy talking to someone who radically disagrees with me; I get to show my own humanity, and I get to tear down the image of heartless, ignorant pro-life monsters that they've crafted about us in their minds.

CONCLUSION

Charlie's assassination brought it home: *they hate us – they really hate us. And there are so many of them.*

I wrote a poem a few years ago, while struggling with the weight of others' opinions of me. I find it a good measure

for checking my own heart and actions. Am I doing something wrong, or am I just scared of being ridiculed? Am I hesitant to speak because I think it's prudent, or because I fear the opinions of others?

*Strive, at the end of the day
When fingers are pointed my way,
To have no fault but Thine.*

*Let them hate my faithfulness, I say.
Your laws, they laugh at.
Your love, they despise.
I pray, they find those in me,
And be not me, they criticize.*

You and I both know we'll do it imperfectly. But that's not the calling. We don't have to worry about perfection – Jesus has accomplished that for us. The outcome of evangelism isn't on us either.

But obedience is. May God grant us the courage to speak out boldly and patiently to a world that so desperately needs to hear His Good News. RP

"If we would have said three weeks ago... that Joy Reid and Michelle Obama and Sheila Jackson Lee and Ketanji Brown Jackson were affirmative-action picks, we would have been called racist. But now they're coming out and they're saying it for us! They're coming out and they're saying, 'I'm only here because of affirmative action.' Yeah, we know. You do not have the brain processing power to otherwise be taken really seriously. You had to go steal a white person's slot to go be taken somewhat seriously."

In other words, he wasn't critiquing black women. He was criticizing *these* four, decidedly left-wing, black women.

"If I see a black pilot, I am now going to wonder: Boy, I hope he's qualified."

Charlie Kirk was no fan of affirmative action, which responds to past discrimination by flipping the script – you are still judged by the color of your skin, but the racism is directed the opposite way now. Here he was responding to a 2021 United Airlines plan to have half their pilot trainees be blacks or women. Among the points he was making was that this kind

of DEI/affirmative action has the effect of undercutting blacks who are qualified, by giving people a reason to question whether they earned their position or were just given it on the basis of their skin color. Black economics professor Thomas Sowell made a similar point on the *Uncommon Knowledge* podcast about how his students treated him:

"I received more automatic respect when I first began teaching in 1962 as an inexperienced young man with no PhD and few publications than I did later in the 1970s after accumulating a more substantial record. What happened in between was affirmative action hiring of minority faculty."

"I think it's worth it. I think it's worth it to have a cost of, unfortunately, some gun deaths every single year so that we can have the 2nd Amendment to protect our other God-given rights."

Longer and shorter versions of this quote circulated again after Kirk was killed by a gun-wielding assassin. While Kirk's enemies were sharing it gleefully, the quote was blunt enough to shock Kirk-appreciating Christians. Why would

he say something like that? How can *any* gun deaths be "worth it"?

In this case, the quote was entirely accurate, but in need of context. As Christians we know life is to be revered as a precious gift from God. But we live in a broken world in which death is an ever-present enemy – everything we do comes with risks of injury, and even death. The example Kirk used was that: "Driving comes with a price. 50,000 people die on the road every year." Do we think that's "worth it"? We could cut down on those deaths entirely by banning cars. But, of course, that comes with a cost too, in all the freedoms that come with driving, like a broader range of places you can live, or work, or people you can visit, foods you can eat, and entertainment you can enjoy. All of that would be severely curtailed. And it would cost lives too – without ambulances, some wouldn't get to the hospital in time.

We can agree or disagree with Kirk on whether the 2nd Amendment is worth the price being paid, but we should acknowledge his larger point. The Left will deny or ignore it, but life always involves tradeoffs, and freedoms always come with risks. RP

Faith-based addiction recovery.

Through the truth of Scripture and the freedom found only in Christ, we guide individuals toward healing from addiction. Our mission is to see lives restored and renewed by the power of God for His glory.

01

OUTPATIENT PROGRAM

Beginning **January 2026**, certified counsellors will walk patients through a 10-step outpatient program focused on individual recovery and family support for addiction-related challenges.

02

INPATIENT DEVELOPMENT

With the Lord's blessing, Agape Recovery plans to develop a site for an inpatient care facility and reintegration support, offering 30-60-90 day programs for men and women.

03

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

We aim to expand our addiction services with integrated mental health care. This will support individuals facing a range of psychological conditions and challenges.

Support this initiative.

Contact us to learn more – agaperecovery.ca



Adventure awaits.



Come join our team at John Calvin School Launceston, Tasmania!

We aspire to be a **strongly connected** community of learners, **deeply committed** to our faith and to continual growth, nurturing individuals to be their best in the service of God and to His glory.

We have exciting opportunities for full-time and part-time positions starting January 2026 and beyond:

Primary & Secondary Teachers

Applicants must:

- Be a member of the Free Reformed Church of Australia or any of her sister churches.
- Have a genuine commitment to Christian education and student growth
- Have a relevant teaching qualification and Tasmanian registration (or eligibility)
- Want to work in a collaborative environment that values your unique skills and ideas.
- Possess the ability to use cutting edge resources and technology to enhance teaching.
- Demonstrate strong communication, planning and classroom management skills
- Hold (or be able to acquire) a Working with Vulnerable People registration

What's in it for you?

- A supportive, Christ-centred school community
- Small classes and a collaborative teaching team
- Professional development opportunities
- A fulfilling role in beautiful, peaceful Tasmania
- Competitive salaries cover all award entitlements as listed in **Educational Services (Teachers) Award 2020** and more.

Sign me up! How do I apply?

- For more information contact Mr D Coote - Principal cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Find application forms at www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment
- Send completed applications to board@jcs.tas.edu.au



Start the New Year with *Tabletalk*

Tabletalk, the monthly Bible study magazine from Ligonier Ministries, helps Christians add depth and application to their devotions. Each issue features articles following a monthly theme to guide your theological growth as well as daily Bible studies to help you understand and apply God's Word to all of life.

Sign up for your free three-month trial to receive a printed issue each month and gain full access to exclusive articles on TabletalkMagazine.com.



TryTabletalk.com | 800-733-0408

Your trial includes the delivery of printed issues for three months and digital access to past issues. No payment details required.

A young boy with dark hair, wearing a light grey t-shirt and dark blue shorts, is climbing a thick, dark brown tree branch. He is looking down and slightly to the side with a focused expression. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a park or wooded area with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

by Dave Penninga

THE IMPORTANCE OF RISKY PLAY

“Make sure you’re home by suppertime... and don’t get your feet wet!” Mom called out as my brother and I hurried to our bikes. We were about 9 and 11 years old at the time.

“Have you got the matches?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said, patting his pocket and jumping on his hand-me-down bike. Our plan was to use the matches to light birch-bark torches so we could see properly inside the cave we wanted to explore. It was pitch black in there, and last time the battery in our old flashlight had died right away.

To get to Kelly’s Cave we first had to cross the multiple sets of train tracks that were two blocks from our house. But this time out, a long train of coal cars blocked the way. Thankfully they were just coming to a halt, so we waited until they stopped, then glanced up and down the tracks looking for any adults, and

quickly crawled under the middle of one of the cars, dragging our bikes behind us. We knew that it took a long time for railcars to start moving after coming to a standstill, and we’d have plenty of time to scramble out if they did begin going again.

Biking briskly down the service road, then veering off onto the old trail at the base of the mountain, we soon arrived at the bottom of a pile of loose rocks that had been carved out about 70 years earlier to form the cave. Before we scrambled 100 feet up the steep slope that led to the entrance, we first found a nearby birch tree and stripped off several sections of bark, then broke off some branches. Arriving at the cave’s mouth we wrapped the bark around the end of our sticks and pulled out the matches. When the bark was lit it curled tightly, allowing it to burn slowly and steadily, while giving off

a wonderful aroma.

Quickly, we moved to the end of the first 25-foot stretch of tunnel, where the daylight still reached. Then we turned right, keeping our heads down, looking at the ground ahead of us; soon we came to the pack rat’s nest of shredded paper and random objects we’d seen last time. I’d spotted a ball-peen hammer in the mess and really wanted it, but I was convinced that, should there be an angry and cornered rat in there too, he was liable to jump for, and bite at, my throat. So, I worked up my courage, shielded my neck with my hand, and then lunged for the hammer – thankfully this time the nest seemed empty, so I came away with a great prize which I could proudly take home!

Then we continued on, shuffling along deeper into the mountain. It was very cold and damp, and the only sound was

the crackle of our torches and the steady dripping of water hitting the cave floor. We were very careful not to brush the walls since we'd once seen a large clump of spiders clinging onto them.

Our dad, who'd been in the cave with us before, had warned us about a water-filled pit further in, so we moved slowly and carefully, and we soon saw some logs and branches which spanned an ominous pool, which was who knew how deep? After testing the strength of this wooden span, we slowly crept across, imagining a bottomless crevice filled with icy water. A few years later I learned that it was only about two or three feet deep, but at the time we assumed it was bottomless – better to be safe than sorry!

Our torches were burning down, so we pushed ahead, promising ourselves we'd turn around shortly, since we didn't want to end up stranded in the pitch dark! Soon enough, there it was – the end of the tunnel. We'd made it!

Somewhat disappointed that there wasn't a treasure chest or other artifact (I was reading *The Hardy Boys* and *The Three Investigators* books at the time!), we shuffled quickly, but carefully, back the way we'd come... over the bridge, around the corner, past the nest, one more 90° turn, and then we could see daylight. We emerged just as our torches were flickering out – we'd finally made it out again! Thrilled at our conquest, we slid down the scree slope (this is why we always changed into play clothes after school), discarded our torches (making sure they were completely out so as not to start a forest fire), and pedaled down along the trail, elated and ready for another adventure.

SO MUCH TO EXPLORE

We knew this forested area well, having spent many hours exploring and playing in the bush, and near the tracks. Over here was where we'd spent many days chopping small trees down with a hatchet, attempting to make a log cabin. We learned that this was harder than Farley Mowat's books made it seem, and we often came home tired, and with scrapes



A LOAD OF LUMBER IS A WONDERFUL THING

Back in 2007 Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School here in Smithers decided to supply the students with an "imaginative play kit." What was it? A pile of lumber, fence posts, plywood pieces, shovels, and rope. And since then the students have spent countless hours using these materials to make forts, obstacle courses, bike jumps, and many other creative structures. Over the years pallets and plastic pipes have been added, and the students complemented the supplied equipment with long grass and rocks from the grounds.

Since the uses are limitless, the students' interest has not waned. In fact, it is so popular year-round that a schedule had to be made to ensure that the grades all got their own turns.

The entire package was less than \$1000 – paid for by the school's "Helping Hands" committee – an amazing value for the amount of enjoyment over the past 18 years (especially compared to the cost of ultra-safe playground equipment). Yes, many structures have collapsed, students get slivers and scrapes, and there have been minor injuries. But the kids also get to use their imaginations, learn how to cooperate and resolve conflicts, and grow in confidence as they take risks while having lots of fun!

– Dave Penninga





Three of the Penning boys – from left to right, Tim, Jeremy and Dave – up on Hudson Bay Mountain.

or bruises. Once, when we were pushing over dead trees, a top snapped off and smashed to the ground right beside us – a close call!

Farther down the trail was the site of the old ski jump where you could still see some outdoor lights attached to trees. In the winter many hours were spent climbing up this hill, and sliding down on inner tubes, toboggans, and even a homemade sled.

A few hundred yards off in another direction was an old dump site where we had explored and found many rusty objects, and well down the other way was a railway siding where we could clamber into boxcars and pretend we were hobos. Halfway between, under that one spruce tree, was where our dad had shot a grouse with his old .410 shotgun. His catch motivated us to try to go after grouse too, or rabbits, using our homemade bows and arrows or slingshots, but without any success (although my Boy Scout manual did explain how to snare rabbits, so that was a plan for later in the fall).

During those childhood years we spent many hours roaming, playing, and trying not to get hurt or get wet feet in those forests, trails, and caves. On other

days we biked around town, explored the alleys and dumpsters behind businesses, looking for treasures, and collecting cans and bottles to exchange for quarters which we quickly spent in the arcade games in the back of the seedier stores. We rubbed shoulders with the local youth in these places and even had to turn down the offer of drugs because we knew that they were bad for us.

BUT WHAT ABOUT...

Maybe you're wondering, "What about the risks and dangers?" Yes, we got plenty of minor injuries and had some close calls and moments of genuine fear, but these became excellent learning opportunities and helped us grow in confidence and wisdom. Also, we were very aware of the consequences of foolish actions, and knew that recklessness, and endangering ourselves, was wrong.

However, there is a big difference between fun adventures and recklessness, and a kid can do some exciting and even foolish things without crossing this line. Kids learn from the direct instructions of their parents, by watching others, and from reading about or experiencing the consequences of dangerous or reckless

choices. They learn quickly from their own mistakes and accidents, and will develop a strong sense of self-preservation. Thankfully, rarely do minor childhood mishaps have serious consequences (and let's not forget that "safe" and sedentary lifestyles comes with their own health hazards!). By learning to manage the risks and cope with the results, our kids can increasingly be empowered to make good decisions, and to take care of themselves.

The reality is, Mom and Dad only vaguely knew where we were when we went out on our adventures, but they trusted and prayed that we wouldn't do anything foolish, dangerous, or illegal. Besides, they were very busy working, and looking after the younger siblings, and they didn't live in constant fear of the world or other people. They also modeled an outdoor playful lifestyle (including taking risks), and encouraged us to get outside and entertain ourselves. Over time, these factors fostered confidence and bravery in us, while still showing us that recklessness was both wrong and foolish.

For example, my dad was actively involved in my late-November childhood birthday parties, taking my classmates and me on hikes, exploring and making fires, and crafting equipment like slingshots or bows and arrows, and doing all of this despite the snow and the darkness that came early in northern BC.

When the climate or other factors discouraged outdoor play and adventure, we would busy ourselves with indoor forts, Meccano, electronics kits, and reading. Oh, the books we devoured by the hundreds! We were going on adventures with the *Bobbsey Twins*, *Tom Swift*, *Wambu*, *Scout*, and many others. Their exploits were recreated in our imaginations, as we pictured ourselves with them in the jungle, desert, tundra, or under the sea. Our knowledge and understanding of the world, and of people, broadened, and our worldview solidified as we incorporated these stories and experiences with the Christian perspective with which we were raised. Many lessons were also learned about safety, and taking risks, as we experienced, vicariously, the exciting exploits of the books' characters – lessons

that were often useful and realistic, thus also helping to prepare us for life in the real world.

TECH TAKEOVER

Screens and technology were lurking on the horizon though, already way back then in the 1980s. As the decade progressed, more and more parents would rent a VCR and videos to entertain the kids at birthday parties. It was so much easier, less messy and tiring, and sure kept the partygoers happy. Within a few years we had a Commodore 64 computer in our home, and by the time we were adolescents many hours had been spent on *Test Drive* (!), *Winter Olympics*, and other games. Our play-based childhood was being affected by screens, and in the next decades this transition only accelerated for others in my age group. Thankfully we all had a solid grounding in the outdoors, and TV and technology were still regarded with suspicion by the older generation. However, as the years and decades have passed, the temptation to spend time on screens has only increased.

THERE ARE OTHER DANGERS...

So, how much do these childhood experiences matter? And what's been the cost for the children who are not allowed to explore and have adventures, and who spend way more time on screens than reading? No doubt these kids

are a lot safer physically (and cleaner!), and parents probably worry less, as their children are shuffled between adult-supervised activities like after-school programs and sports, or are quietly gaming, or scrolling through social media on their phones. Does this trend towards supervision and screens have significance?

According to lots of careful research it has become very clear that the cost of replacing a play-based childhood with a screens-based one has been enormous, especially on kids' mental and emotional well-being. In his book, *The Anxious Generation - How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, Jonathan Haidt makes just that case.

Its first section outlines the impact smartphones and social media have had on children and adolescents in the last 15 years. Data conclusively shows that rates of anxiety and depression have greatly increased (depression for girls rose 145% between 2010 and 2020; for boys 161%), as have suicide rates and visits to ERs for self-harm. These destructive trends occurred across many different countries around the world, and correlate directly to growing up with smartphones. Haidt's theses

are backed up by data that is both scholarly and current.

While the author has evolutionary, atheist presuppositions, his book is still an excellent research-based overview of the damage that Internet-enabled devices (especially smartphones) have done to the Millennial and Gen Z generations.

Thankfully, Haidt also addresses what can be done about it all. He points to play, the sort that is unsupervised and unstructured and has elements of genuine risk – the kind of play that most kids all around the world naturally engaged in prior to the recent explosion of fears and screens. According to Haidt:

“Unsupervised outdoor play teaches children how to handle risks and challenges of many kinds. By building physical, psychological and social com-

The author, his siblings, and his dad, enjoying the great outdoors.



petence, it gives kids confidence that they can face new situations, which is an inoculation against anxiety... a healthy human childhood with a lot of autonomy and unsupervised play in the real world sets children's brains to operate mostly in 'discovery' mode with a well-developed attachment system and an ability to handle the risks of daily life. Conversely, when there is society-wide pressure on parents to adopt modern overprotective parenting, it sets children's brains to operate mostly in 'defend' mode with less secure attachment and reduced ability to evaluate or handle risk."

He goes on to explain how being in *discovery mode* means you are curious and excited about life, and eager to explore and move ahead. Those who operate in *defend mode* are careful and suspicious, and

"tend to see new situations, people and ideas as potential threats, rather than as opportunities... being stuck in *defend mode* is an obstacle to learning and growth in the physically safe environments that surround most children today."

A play-based childhood, Haidt argues, encourages the positive *discovery mode* while a screen-based one promotes a more fragile and restrictive *defend mode*. Overprotective parents, trying to guard their children from risks and conflicts, actually harm their kids who need to experience thrills, fear, and conflict to learn how to manage it in the real world. Children are thrill-seekers who need adventures and risks to overcome their fears and develop resilience.

HOW DOES HAIDT STACK UP AGAINST THE BIBLE?

This rings true because it lines up with Biblical principles.

For example, in Proverbs 28:1 it says, "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." King David trusted in God to protect him, and, consequently, took on bears and giants with confidence.

Meanwhile, in the list of curses for covenant disobedience God says "... those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you" (Lev. 26:17b).

Godly leaders need to be brave to stand up against threats and deal with challenges. For example, God tells Joshua, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified: do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). In the knowledge of God's providence, we can face life and the future without fear and can be confident that nothing will separate us from His love since nothing happens by chance (Lord's Day 10). Since our eternal future is secure, and we can trust that God will be with us, we do not need to live in fear of catastrophe or death like the unbelievers do. Yes, bad things do happen in a fallen world, and we need to accept that sometimes, even with abundant caution and care, people will get hurt or even die in accidents. But this should not scare us or make us elevate safety to the status of an idol, thinking that somehow we can control everything. If we love the Lord and live according to His will, we can trust that He will provide and care for us, which gives us what we need to face life's challenges and dangers with confidence. As those who live with a view to eternity, our spiritual health should be our main concern (1 Tim. 4:8). We must live in fear of God, who controls our eternal

destiny, and not of man (Luke 12:4-5). Recklessness and foolish behavior is an evil on one end of the spectrum, but living in constant fear of injury or death, and thinking we can control everything also is sinful. The balanced Christian life lies somewhere in the middle.

WHAT DOES THIS SORT OF PLAY LOOK LIKE?

So, what does this beneficial play look like? It usually happens outdoors when there is free choice, and not when supervised or structured by adults. Researchers have found that play needs to be thrilling and exciting with a real risk of physical injury and an element of uncertainty (think merry-go-rounds, exploring forests, and bike jumps!). Six factors characterize this kind of play:

1. heights (climbing, trampolines, haylofts);
2. high speeds (sledding, swings, racing down hills);
3. dangerous tools (axes, saws, knives);
4. dangerous elements (waves, fire, ice);
5. rough and tumble play (wrestling, tackling, "king-of-the-hill"); and
6. disappearing (hiding, exploring and wandering, not fully knowing where you are).

Roller coasters, zip lines, and other thrill rides are a good example of



Since his childhood adventures, Kelly's Cave has been all cemented up.

combinations of these things. Kids need, and seek out, these factors but too often parents, teachers, and other adults try to deter them. The adults are overly afraid of injuries, abductions, or lawsuits, and treat even minor scrapes and bruises as akin to serious harm. Many adults have an unrealistic sense of danger and are too overprotective, and they don't trust other adults to intervene, or don't trust their kids to know their own limits. A growing culture of litigation, insurance, and well-meaning but harmful "safety police" work together to counter these important parts of childhood play.

In the August 11, 2025 entry on the *After Babel* Substack, Haidt and his two co-authors of "*What Kids Told Us About How to Get Them Off Their Phones*" wrote:

"Since the 1980s, parents have grown more and more afraid that unsupervised time will expose their kids to physical or emotional harm. In another recent Harris Poll, we asked parents what they thought would happen if two 10-year-olds played in a local park without adults around. Sixty percent thought the children would likely get injured. Half thought they would likely get abducted. These intuitions don't even begin to resemble reality. According to Warwick Cairns, the author of *How to Live Dangerously*, kidnapping in the United States is so rare that a child would have to be outside unsupervised for, on average, 750,000 years before being snatched by a stranger. Parents know their neighborhoods best, of course, and should assess them carefully. But the tendency to overestimate risk comes with its own danger. Without real-world freedom, children don't get the chance to develop competence, confidence, and the ability to solve everyday problems. Indeed, independence and unsupervised play are associated with positive mental-health outcomes."

Children who were raised on screens need more freedom out in the real world.

Jonathan & David, & the difference between brave & crazy

The divide between brave and crazy isn't always easy to see. God wants us to be brave –how many times did He encourage Joshua to be "strong and courageous"? – but our lives and limbs are gifts from Him, not to be carelessly gambled away. So brave is good, crazy is not. But which is what?

Some activities are always crazy – *don't stand on a rolly chair to change a lightbulb, don't do it!* – but oftentimes whether a thing is brave or crazy depends on why you are doing it. We see that contrast in 1 Samuel 14 and 2 Samuel 23:13–17. In both, Israelites fight Philistines.

In the first we find Prince Jonathan and his armor-bearer climbing up a cliff face to go attack a Philistine outpost, just the two of them.

"Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, 'Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few.' 'Do all that you have in mind,' his armor-bearer said. 'Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul'" (1 Sam. 14:6-7).

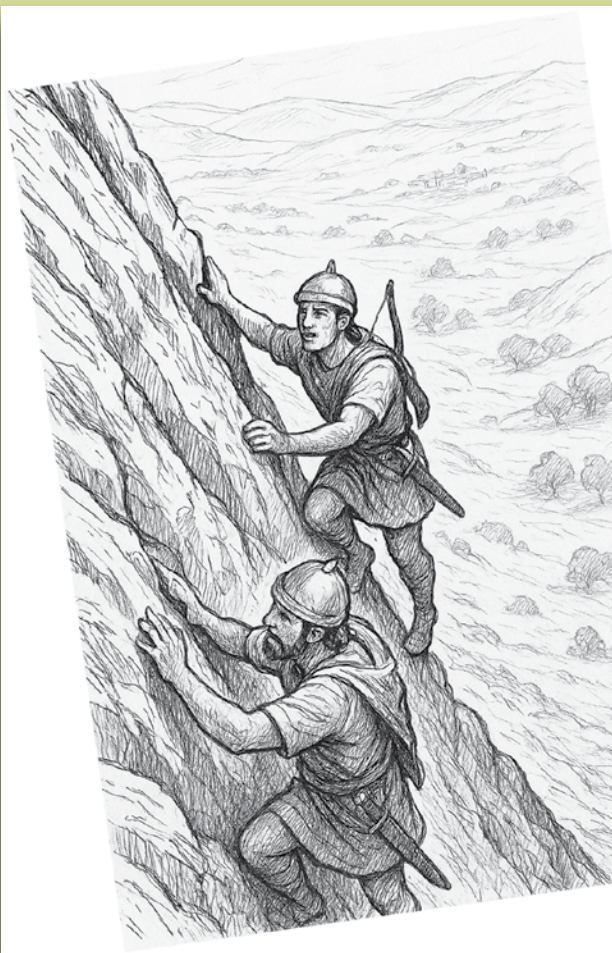
Doesn't it seem insane? How do you even swing a sword when you're climbing up with your hands and feet? But this was *brave* because they were doing it for the Lord. If they'd died doing it, they wouldn't have had any reason for shame.

In 2 Samuel 23:13-17, Israel is again battling the Philistines, who have a garrison at Bethlehem. When David dejectedly declares, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" three of his mighty men go to do it. They break through enemy lines and get David his water... which he then pours out.

"'Far be it from me, Lord, to do this!' he said. 'Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?' And David would not drink it."

Why not? Because what they'd done was *crazy*, and he didn't approve. Had they died, it would've been for what? Their leader's wistful whine? That's not a good *why*. And that's quite the difference.

– Jon Dykstra



ORGANIZED SPORTS HAVE THEIR OWN DANGERS

Unstructured and risky outdoor play is actually safer for kids, with fewer injuries per hour, than participating in adult-guided sports teams, according to play researcher Mariana Brussoni of the University of BC.

Unstructured and unsupervised physical play also has more developmental benefits for the children since these kids

“must make all the choices, set and enforce rules, and resolve all disputes. Brussoni is on a campaign to encourage risky outdoor play because in the long run it produces the healthiest children” (Haidt, writing in *The Anxious Generation*).

In their paper “What is the Relationship between Risky Outdoor Play and Health in Children? A Systematic Review” published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Brussoni and her co-authors found that risky play had overall health benefits for children aged 3-12.

“Specifically, play where children can disappear/get lost and risky play supportive environments were positively associated with physical activity and social health, and negatively associated with sedentary behaviour... There was also an indication that risky play supportive environments promoted increased play time, social interactions, creativity and resilience. These positive results reflect the importance of supporting children’s risky outdoor play opportunities as a means of promoting children’s health and active lifestyles.”

As an example, despite my adventurous childhood, I only ended up in the local hospital once for an injury, and that was a broken foot I got in an indoor-soccer PE class at school!

A SUDDEN SHIFT

In general, children born before 1980 were much more likely to grow up engaging in risky play and were allowed

and encouraged to roam out and about, away from parents, by age 7 or so. Kids had more freedom to walk to school, play with neighbor children, get into and resolve conflicts, and generally have a more exploratory lifestyle.

But, as Haidt details, in the following decades parenting became more intensive, protective, and fearful, resulting in kids who were more sheltered, coddled, and unable to roam freely until much older (age 10 or 12). Safety became paramount, as a fear of strangers, abductions, injuries, and death, skyrocketed. At the same time, technologies like computer games, DVDs, and phones made it much easier to keep kids from playing and exploring. Haidt goes on to provide other reasons why this change occurred, including more intensive parenting, more supervised and structured sports and programs for kids, and a renewed focus on academics.

WHEN IT RAINS IN THE WORLD, DRIPS ARE FELT IN THE CHURCH

As is often the case, Christian parents are swept up in these changes and can too easily accept them without thinking critically about the disadvantages. After all, isn’t it better to be safer? To provide more structured and supervised activities for the kids? To supply a tablet or phone to keep them quiet? And do we speak out when the merry-go-rounds disappear from the playground and are replaced by much safer (and more boring) equipment? Do we read books or articles that feature research about factors that affect our children?

For example, a very good book that addresses many current challenges to parenting came out in 2019 entitled *Gist: The Essence of Raising Life-Ready Kids*. It was by child psychologist Michael W. Anderson and pediatrician Timothy D. Johanson, and the book was featured as a Focus on the Family Resource. This very practical manual discourages parents from always trying to protect and control everything, and it encourages them to back off and let their kids sort out way more of their own problems. In this sin-tainted world life is full of challenges, difficulties, and

disappointments, and children need to learn how to face and overcome these to prepare them for managing in adulthood. Although the book is not overtly Christian, *Gist* is clearly grounded in Scriptural principles and displays a nice balance between truth and grace. It’s the kind of book I wish would have been available sooner, so I could have read it when my children were small!

WHAT’S TO BE DONE?

The final section of Haidt’s book provides many more examples of what schools, parents, and governments can do to promote a return to a play-based childhood, and a turn away from a screen-based one. Several of these ideas are already being implemented, such as more rugged playgrounds, and banning phones in schools. It seems that the pendulum is swinging back towards a healthier balance again, from the safety paranoia, and excessive screen time, back to how it was more in previous decades.

CONCLUSION

God’s people do not need to live in fear, since we know we have a Father in heaven who watches over us and protects us. As it says in Proverbs 1:33, “whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.”

We must also heed what the Bible teaches about this topic, as it is found in the Sixth Commandment where we are told “you shall not murder.” In Lord’s Day 40 of the Heidelberg Catechism, it explains that this commandment means we are not to “injure my neighbor, personally or through another... or harm or recklessly endanger myself” and we must “protect our neighbor from harm as much as we can.” To takes risks is different than being reckless.

Also, Proverbs 27:12 tells us, “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.” We need to use our heads.

And let’s consider also the Fifth Commandment, where we are taught that authority needs to be obeyed, like wearing seat belts and bike helmets, and not

trespassing (including on railways!). But we also need to speak out against and resist the multiplication of safety rules imposed by overly-zealous authorities and companies. As an example, the entrance to Kelly's Cave was blocked by a thick cement wall in the late 1980's (as were other caves around here), closing another door to adventure.

Of course, many children do not live near forests, caves, or railway tracks, or attend schools that have any forest or brush land. Families are smaller and there don't tend to be packs of kids roaming around outside together. Still, there are many things that can be done to encourage healthy play: parents need to model fun and adventurous behaviour, screens need to be avoided or severely limited, and it's helpful to have spaces where kids can explore and which contain materials they can use.

It can start small with pillow and blanket forts inside, wooden blocks and other basic items for toys, trips to nearby parks or bush areas. But then parents need to be brave and begin to pull back from constant supervision and intervention and let the children explore and figure things out for themselves. It's also important to understand that the world is not nearly as dangerous a place as the media suggests (yet another reason to avoid too much media), and that disallowing adventurous and risky play comes with very serious negative consequences (anxious teens and young people who struggle to cope with the demands of adulthood). So set a good example by confidently getting out into the yard or neighborhood and finding adventure and fun! It takes more effort but is far better for you and makes better memories, too! Be wise and discerning but not fearful, and remember that we have a Father in heaven who watches over us and blesses us, also as we seek to do what is best for our children. **RP**

Dave Penninga was raised in Smithers with his seven siblings. He enjoys metal detecting, fishing and working in the great outdoors, as well as fixing cars, reading, developing courses and interacting daily with teens at school.

RECOMMENDED RISKY READING

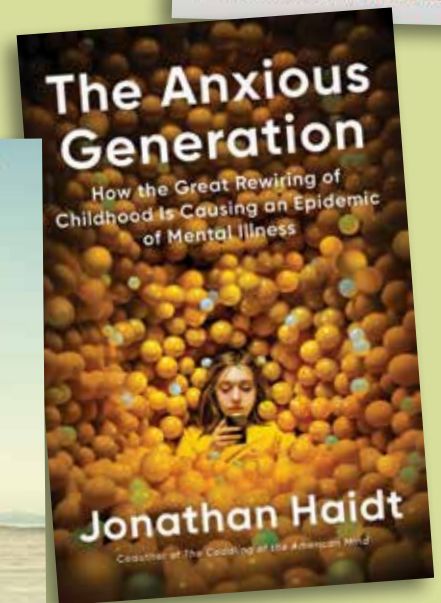
1. Risk is Right: Better to lose your life than to waste it

This John Piper 50-page booklet was originally a chapter in his *Don't Waste Your Life*. Download either for free at DesiringGod.org/books.



2. The Anxious Generation and Gist

The thesis of the first could be summed up as social media and smartphones are an experiment, and our kids are the test subjects. The author has some evolutionary presuppositions, but his case doesn't depend on them. This is a book every parent should read. *Gist* is backed by Focus on the Family, and while it doesn't cover exactly the same ground, it shares the same prescription: help your family by putting away the screens and kicking your kids outdoors.



3. God wants young men to be brave, not crazy

"Bravery, like most things in life, is learned. To develop it, one must practice. However, it is the very rare young man who wants to practice being brave. Many will be eager to prove that they are *already* brave, which is why young men do crazy, dangerous, reckless things – to prove to themselves and others that they have no fear. So they drive motorcycles too fast, and drive cars too fast, and drive motorized vehicles of various other sorts and sizes too fast. But this is not brave..." Find the rest of this article at ReformedPerspective.ca/risky.

INTRODUCING ARPA ACADEMY

*A one-month program in Ottawa
to sharpen and shape you!*

by Daniel Zekveld



Interning in Ottawa – you get to go to the nation's capital!

RP's Nov/Dec 2024 issue – the “Get Educated, Not Schooled” edition – described all sorts of opportunities for young people to consider for after they'd graduated from high school. The possibilities discussed ranged from attending university to entering trade school to starting a family. Now ARPA is pleased to offer a new opportunity this coming summer: ARPA Academy!

Abraham Kuyper famously said, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: Mine!” As Reformed Christians, we believe in the sovereignty of God and His providential rule over all things. What does that actually mean for Canadian law and politics? ARPA Academy seeks to help answer this very question.

THE 5 WS

ARPA Academy will be a one-month program in Ottawa to prepare young people aged 18-25 for faithful political engagement. Not only will the program be offered at no cost to participants, ARPA will also offer a small stipend to help cover expenses for the month. While participants will be responsible for finding their own housing, ARPA staff will suggest options and assist where necessary.

Throughout the month of August, participants will explore biblical and Reformed worldview foundations for political action, learn about Canada's constitutional history and legal system, study current policy issues, and develop key skills through readings, assignments,

interactive sessions, and direct grassroots action. ARPA Academy will address questions such as “What does the Lordship of Christ over the political square look like in a society that largely does not recognize or understand His rule?” and “How does that apply to the wide variety of law and public policy issues?”

The focus of ARPA Academy is on education and worldview training, but it also aims to prepare participants to be involved in politics in the future. While in Ottawa, participants will meet with political staff, lawyers, and non-profit leaders to learn about different careers. If a participant wants to pursue a hands-on internship, work on Parliament Hill, or get involved with a local non-profit organization after ARPA Academy is completed, ARPA staff can help make connections to pursue these goals.

Some participants may go on to work full time in law, politics, or advocacy. Others may decide to pursue very different lines of work. In either case, participants will deepen their Christian worldview and be better equipped to be engaged and active Christian citizens.

Lucas, one of last year's ARPA interns, had this to say about his time deepening his understanding of politics from a Reformed worldview:

“My experience at ARPA gave me a broad understanding of Canadian politics and the functioning of our political system. It also sharpened my worldview, enabling me to think critically about issues from a Christian perspective. This has allowed me to become a more effective citizen and has enabled me to take political action in my community.”

BENEFITS TO CONSIDER

I'm excited about the ARPA Academy because in my own life it's opportunities like this that helped me immensely. I spent a semester in Ottawa while in university, and that confirmed for me that I wanted to work in political advocacy for the long term. There were three other key components I learned from my own opportunities that I want to share, because they are also a focus for ARPA Academy.

- First, my time in Ottawa helped me better understand the nature of politics and political advocacy at a worldview and practical level, including a hopefulness because of God's sovereignty over all things.
- Second, I had the opportunity to meet and learn from many devout Christians working on and around Parliament Hill, who were seeking to apply their Christian faith to politics for the good of their neighbors and their country.
- Finally, it allowed me to see what kinds of career options existed in the political and non-profit world and where I could fit into that kind of work.

Whether you're just out of high school, finished university, doing a trades apprenticeship, or between jobs, this is worth considering. This one-month program is an opportunity for Christian youth to engage with Reformed Christian thought and apply it to the world around them. 

ARPA interns participating in a book discussion.



If you love learning, discussing, and debating
this might be just the thing for you!

Applications for ARPA Academy will open in December 2025. Check out our webpage at arpacanada.ca/academy for more information about the program and how to apply. If you have any questions, or would like to be added to an email list for updates, contact academy@arpacanada.ca.

Why you (or someone you know) should plan to go to Calgary's

2026 Summit Reformed Young Adult Conference

by Maggie Vandenberg

I once heard a sermon in which the pastor compared faith to salmon. “A dead salmon floats downstream with the current,” he said. “A living salmon, however, must battle upstream, against the flow.” Then he smiled and said, “An imperfect analogy, but you get the point, right?”

There is a deep flaw within the young community of Reformed circles; in day-to-day life, we don't easily talk about our Father with each other. And we frequently fail to encourage each other in our walk. We might not be dead, but too often we seem to be doing little more than floating along. It's not true of all of us. But it is true of too many of us.

Sure, we may know what TULIP stands for, or be able to recite the Apostles' Creed, but how often do we discuss God

and theology outside of our church's fellowship hall, or a weeknight Bible study? We tend to avoid more personal conversations about faith, and don't easily share our deep questions with each other, or invite each other into thought-provoking or challenging conversations. We float, leaving that all to the “grown-ups.” It is almost as though there is an unspoken taboo: “We're too young to get serious about that in our free time. Let's keep things light; if we have questions, we can talk to older people. There's no need to talk to each other about it.”

However, in conversations I've had with fellow young believers about this problem, many of them have expressed the same thing: a desire for this mindset to change. Many of us do want to learn better how to grow together and push

each other on to deeper faith walks; many of us have a hunger to discuss these important topics.

The problem is, we don't know how to naturally broach them, and we often let the fear of awkwardness keep us from pursuing them. We need help fostering this change and growth.

Therefore, I would like to advocate for an event which has greatly helped me and many of my friends in this learning curve: the Summit Reformed Young Adults Conference, or RYAC.

This past year, I was privileged to be a member of the organization committee for the conference, which takes place every February (est. 2021) in Calgary and is hosted by the Bethel URC. This was my third time attending, and my first time helping organize. It is an extremely edifying event. The richness of it, as always, shed a light on the stark contrast that RYAC offers to the weekly culture of young adult life in our church circles.

I had several conversations with attendees who were new to the conference, and many of them expressed a strong appreciation for the experience, often noting how “different” it was in its encouragement and doctrine-focused environment.

In hopes of further promoting the incredible spiritual benefits of this event, I interviewed several other members of the organization committee – all young adults themselves, who have now attended the conference several times – to discuss the positive impact this conference has had on our faith lives. Additionally, this past year's speakers, Rev. Paul Murphy and his wife Julie, also shared some thoughts.

Q. RYAC encourages young believers to discuss theology and faith life. In today's social climate, why is this especially important?



Mark G: Young adults, especially young men, struggle to talk about faith and life, and a conference like this gives an organic setting for those conversations to happen. Even apart from the times set aside to discuss our faith, many conversations about faith and life happen, with others beyond your own church, over meals and games that do not happen very often in our everyday lives.

John P: As young adults who are just venturing out into the world for the first time, it can be a confusing and challenging environment to navigate. At times it may feel like we are lost in this environment, but coming together with a group of likeminded people who are all in the same battle together not only strengthens you, but everyone in the group together, in the fight against the world and the devil. As Ecclesiastes 4:12 says: “Though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him – a three-fold cord is not quickly broken.”

Q. What would you say are some of the benefits of attending a Reformed conference specifically geared towards your age demographic?

Mark M: In recent generations the wider church community in North America has suffered from a lack of sound doctrine. Having active discussions about theology is especially important among young adults, as we are the future of the Reformed churches, and thus it is essential for us to know what we believe, why we believe it, and how that aligns with Scripture as the ultimate authority. This is one of the many things that the Summit RYAC conference is good at. Both times I’ve attended the conference, I’ve had my understanding of the Bible and certain doctrines challenged, and that has strengthened my faith. It is also incredibly encouraging being around people my age who believe the same thing.

Julie T: At its core, this conference is about training soldiers for Christ and sending them out as active members of

God’s church, wherever they might be located. The conference helps build that sense of Christian unity and community: young adults leave the conference with newfound connections all over the country, knowing not only that their struggles or doubts or temptations are not unique to them, but also that the church of God is so much bigger than just their own little corner of it.

Rev. Paul M & Julie M: This age group is often in university or in the workforce, maybe now living away from their parents’ home. These Christians need great friends; ones who live faithfully to their Lord and Savior in every area of life. Iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17). We need the benefit of each other’s differing perspectives, thoughts, and experiences. Together they serve as a multitude of counselors in which safety and wisdom are found (Prov. 11:14). Such conversations also serve as correctives to the subtle influences of our post-Christian culture; that is especially important in today’s social climate. As Paul states in 2 Cor. 10:3-5, we are engaged in an ideological warfare, in which Christians are assaulted almost daily by the thoughts and ways of the secular world. We need to encourage and equip one another to be strong and faithful in that battle.

In conclusion, RYAC is not merely a fun weekend to meet friends, or find a significant other, or to simply get away on holiday. It is an event that presents incredible learning opportunities, as well as an environment in which to stretch new muscles of the mind and heart. It is an event that provides us with the opportunity to encourage one another forward, just as Timothy was encouraged by Paul:

“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” 

For information on how to sign up for the 2026 conference visit www.summitrefcon.ca.



by Barbara Braendlein



WHY I DON'T HAVE A BUCKET LIST

Admittedly, to get guilt tripped into a camping trip exposes character weakness on my part. When someone bounds up to you, excited as a kitten encountering his first ball of yarn, and says they have the best idea for a *geology fieldtrip*, spanning 3 days (“ooh, ooh, no let’s turn it into 4!”), 400 miles, and something like 8 piles of rocks, any person with their wits about them would laugh and say, “Y’all have fun now, I’ll be over here, sleeping in my own bed.”

People who camp on purpose, non-

ironically, are an utter mystery to me. The more I learn about camping, the more outrageous and certifiable it seems! Did you know that KOA (one of the largest campground empires in the United States and yes, there is such a thing as a campground empire) stands for Kampgrounds of America?? How are we not promoting illiteracy and the overall degradation of our dignity by paying these people to borrow their dirt so we can *sleep on it*? Did you further know that after you have paid to sleep on dirt out in “nature,” you

still are required to either buy or pack in your own wood for building campfires? In the (wait for it...) woods?

Yet for the longest time during the diabolical planning of this trip, whose chief stated end was to go and stare at rocks, I could not bring myself to say “no, absolutely not, life is too short.” Which leads me to the character flaw, and my grandmother.

My grandmother was the quintessential farmwife. She raised four children, kept a lovely home, and was known for feeding people well.



In the same week that this trip was scheduled to take place, I received word that my grandmother, my dad's 94-year-old mother, had suffered a severe stroke. As I write this, I await further word on her condition; things didn't look good last night. So I have been contemplating my grandmother, someone I have always found to be remarkable and not, perhaps, for the usual reasons.

My grandmother was the quintessential farmwife. She raised four children, kept a lovely home, and was known for feeding people well. In many ways, I didn't truly

get to know her until I got married at age 20 and we both discovered that I shared her love of beautiful dishes, and of tables set to appeal to the senses. It was something she was teased about a bit over the years, her large collections of glassware, full sets of tableware, antique bowls and coffee service, but it has captivated me since childhood. She gave me my first everyday serving bowls when my oldest was a toddler – the same ones she used when her kids were little, and then proceeded to gift me antique glassware for my birthday for the next nearly 20 years. The year the glassware stopped was the same year she stopped calling on my birthday; that was, perhaps, the first time a birthday ever made me feel my age.

I was blessed with 2 beautiful, intelligent farming grandmothers growing up; my mom's mom went to the Lord a couple of years ago, and I like to think there are flavors of each of these women's influences in my own farmwife homemaking.

My maternal grandmother was known for ingenuity with the food at hand, with using her abundant garden to set visually peaceful tables, with the sort of minimalism that employs only that which is meaningful.

My paternal grandmother was known for overflowing tables (why serve one kind of meat when you could serve three?), and for leftovers that could feed an army, created with simple recipes that everyone loved, served with what I find to be an uncommon blend of elegance and utility. She had no shame in making her mashed potatoes from a box, and paper napkins were a blessing. No one ever left her table hungry. I asked her once to teach me how she cooked various meats, how her meals always tasted so good. She shrugged and said, "just a little salt and pepper?" As a person tempted by gourmet magazines, it was an important lesson for me.

And this, obviously, leads me to the ill-fated camping trip (not obvious, you say? We should spend more time together).

The thing that guilted me into agreeing to this grand adventure of curiosity and literally leaving no stone unturned was the feeling that good mothers, or for that matter, that really interesting people, are the sort who long to travel the world, to always be experiencing new things. They are the ones who cannot simply read about a volcano, they have to climb it! At sunrise! And then go glissading down it, trying all the while to avoid hidden frozen lakes (you think I am making this up. Friend, I couldn't make this stuff up. I refer you to your friendly neighborhood internet browser to prove the point)! How could I be worth anything at all if my bucket list was not perpetually on the verge of overflow? What does the truth – that I don't even have a bucket list – say about me, about my value as a mother, as a wife, as a Christian?

My grandmother has run well. She has lived an extraordinary life, and why? Because her life has been marked by extraordinary faithfulness to the task at hand. She has steadily built the portion of the kingdom wall God put in front of her. The pitfall I fell into was to believe that true faithfulness had to look different than embracing the life God has given me – it had to look both more "normal" and more exciting. I gave room to the lie that setting a gracious table was inferior to seeing something new, to having an adventure outside my own home. I am kicking myself as I write this... how could I have been so daft as to think that kicking rocks was more full of glory than grilling fresh corn on the cob, that sleeping on dirt had more inherent value than putting clean sheets on my family's beds? Sitting here in the morning light, having removed myself from the geology fieldtrip, the truth of what it means to live well shines brightly before me. Only what's done for Christ will last. **RP**



Could you be our new Business Manager?

Come on an adventure to beautiful Tasmania, and join our team at John Calvin School, Launceston!

Part-time Business Manager

starting Jan 2026 (or earlier)

This part-time position (3 days per week) is ideal for a finance professional who wants to contribute meaningfully to a mission-driven school community and is looking to make a long-term commitment.

John Calvin School Launceston is a small, close-knit Independent Christian School in Tasmania with 25 dedicated staff and 120 students, committed to providing Christ-centred education. We are seeking a financially qualified, organised, and reliable Business Manager to oversee our school's finances, compliance, and strategic operations.

You'll work closely with school leadership and be supported by two capable admin staff who manage day-to-day operational tasks. This allows you to focus on financial stewardship, regulatory compliance, and providing sound strategic advice.

Key responsibilities:

- Managing budgets, financial planning, and reporting for the leadership team and board
- Ensuring full compliance with relevant education, charity, and financial regulations
- Maintaining and improving internal controls and financial systems
- Supporting strategic decision-making with timely, accurate financial insight
- Collaborating with staff to ensure effective financial practices across the school

Applicants must have:

- A recognised tertiary financial qualification
- Experience in finance and compliance within a not-for-profit or independent school setting
- Strong organisational and analytical skills, with clear communication and a proactive mindset
- The confidence to ensure accountability and uphold policy and procedure

What's in it for you?

- Flexible 3-day working week
 - A meaningful, long-term role within a faith-based educational community
 - A high-impact position with autonomy and purpose
 - A fulfilling role in beautiful, peaceful Tasmania
-

Sign me up! How do I apply?

- For more information contact Mr D Coote - Principal cooted@jcs.tas.edu.au
- Find application forms at www.jcs.tas.edu.au/employment
- Send completed applications to board@jcs.tas.edu.au

GIVING HOPE

WORD & DEED
GIFT CATALOG

BIBLES to be distributed at various projects.

\$6.00 CAD
\$5.00 USD

10 MEALS for a malnourished student in Colombia.

\$10.00 CAD
\$7.00 USD

A **CHRISTMAS GIFT** for a student (a toy and a practical item) in Guatemala.

\$18.00 CAD
\$14.00 USD

SCHOOL SUPPLIES for a student at Adoration Christian School in Haiti.

\$20.00 CAD
\$15.00 USD

110 LB **BAG OF MAIZE** for a centre that supports vulnerable children in Malawi.

\$65.00 CAD
\$75.00 USD

Provide a **SEWING MACHINE** for a graduate of the sewing program in India.

\$105.00 CAD
\$115.00 USD

A year of **HOME-BASED CARE** for a patient of the Nakekela HIV/AIDS Clinic in South Africa.

\$150.00 CAD
\$115.00 USD

Translation of a **BIBLE CURRICULUM** book into Spanish to be distributed in several countries.

\$735.00 CAD
\$550.00 USD

Operation of a **VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM** in South Sudan for 20 youths for one month.

\$2,300.00 CAD
\$1,700.00 USD

Questions? Email office@wordanddeed.org

WORD
& DEED

PLACING AN ORDER



To place your order online, and to view the full catalog, visit wordanddeed.org/givinghope

Mail a check to:

CAN: PO Box 20100, St Thomas, ON N5P 4H4

USA: PO Box 157, Hudsonville MI, 49426



LEARNING

"It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees."

- PSALM 119:71

by Christine Farenhorst

Is it possible that something bad can be good for you? Can it be that God purposes adversity for our benefit? Perhaps it is only after the fact that we see the Almighty's intent. Perhaps it is only later that we recognize blessings.

The boy's teddy bear was a friendly yellow-brown. It was not yellow like a dandelion, nor brown like a garden snail, but yellow-brown like straw. The pads on the bear's feet and hands were blue – the

kind of blue that the feathers of an indigo bunting display. The bear's eyes were two, small beads. His brown irises glistened and blinked like black maple bark after a rainfall. The teddy's nose had been sewn onto his face to resemble an inky cross. And below the nose, his solemn mouth was merely an ebony line. But the mouth was inconsequential. It was unimportant. It was unimportant because the bear never talked. He only listened.

And there were many things the boy told him. The boy, whose name was Joseph John, was very fond of his teddy.

He did not openly share this affection for the teddy bear with anyone. But his siblings knew, and so did his father.

Joseph John was the youngest of six. His two older brothers did not live at home any longer. Harvey, the firstborn, had been hired by a farmer in a neighboring district and boarded with that family. William, the second oldest, was apprenticed to a local apothecary in a nearby town. Although both the boys often came home on weekends, they were more like uncles than brothers. In age, they

were many years ahead of Joseph John.

His three sisters were all married and only dropped in on birthdays and holidays. Jane, Joanne, and Mary, all endowed with solid names and strong maternal instincts, loved their younger brother but had their own families now.

"Your birth was a total surprise to Mother and Father," Jane once told him during one of her visits as he sat on her lap.

"I like surprises," Joseph John had rejoined and had not understood why his sister had laughed and hugged him.

Michael Phillips, Joseph John's Father, was a rather solid man in his late forties. Robust-looking and chipper, he liked to think of himself as well-conditioned. His piercing blue eyes usually twinkled as he regarded people over the top of his golden-rimmed spectacles. If someone suggested adiposity, he had been heard to speak candidly: "I'm able-bodied not stout. Stoutness betokens laziness and no one can ever accuse me of being lazy."

It was true. Michael Phillips was as active a person as you could find anywhere in town. Principal of the local school in Rainsville, Ontario, there was not one child or adult living in that little burg who did not know or respect Mr. Phillips' vigorous attitude and lifestyle. If he said you should do something, you automatically did it; and if he said you should not do something, then you absolutely did not do it.

Mr. Phillips taught the higher grades in school. Miss MacKechnie, a new teacher and a thirty plus something spinster,



taught grades three and four, while Miss Potts, a pretty young woman fresh out of college, had the grade one and two students under her wing.

There was another aspect of Michael Phillips which did not manifest itself that often, but which trait was embedded firmly in his ample figure. That trait was jocosity – a sense of humor which came to the fore when something suddenly struck him as farcical or ludicrous.

“You are older now,” Michael Phillips informed Joseph John, as the boy walked next to him.

They were on their way to school on one of the first Wednesday mornings of the autumn.

“I think,” Michael continued slowly and placidly, “that being that you are older now and attending school, you ought to get rid of your teddy bear.”

It was raining. The sound of the droplets spattered comfortably on the rounded top of the black umbrella held up over Michael Phillips’ head. Next to him, Joseph John half-walked under it as well. His father’s sturdy frame, however, easily overlapped the middle section of the umbrella and, consequently, denied the boy protection for his right side. Joseph John considered the possibility for a moment that he had been divided into two boys – a dry one and a wet one. But he knew that this was not possible.

“Perhaps,” his father went on, even as he navigated over a puddle, “perhaps we might get you a bicycle.”

Joseph John looked up in astonishment at his father. Taking his eyes off the road for a moment, he promptly stepped into that puddle. Now he had both a wet left side and a right wet foot. “A bicycle?” he repeated somewhat slowly.

“Yes,” his father’s voice was strong, as strong as the gust of wind that suddenly pulled at the umbrella. “The truth is,” his father went on, placing both his hands on the umbrella shaft to hold it straight, “that William is getting rid of his bicycle. The pharmacist is giving him a new one and William is kindly thinking that you might like to have his old one.”

“Oh.” Joseph John’s answer was almost lost in the brief wind bluster.

There were many things to consider. For one thing, he knew as sure as raindrops were wet, that once his father made up his mind about something, there was not much you could do to change it. Another thing was that he did not really want William’s old bicycle and neither did he want to get rid of his straw-colored teddy.

“Well,” his father’s voice bellowed above him, “that’s settled then. You’re almost six years old now and growing up quite sensibly. Your Mother would be proud of you, Joseph John.”

Joseph John thought of the black and white photo on the dresser in the living room. Mother had sewn teddy and wouldn’t it be a little like getting rid of Mother if he got rid of his teddy? Mother had never said much, but she, like teddy, had listened to everything he said.

“You’re not saying much, son,” Michael Phillips commented, even as he strode along, “But I’m glad this problem’s been cleared up. I expect you’ll want to throw that bear out with the trash. I’ll burn it tonight.”

These last words left Joseph John aghast. He rarely concluded anything quickly, but rather tossed an idea over and over in his mind before deciding upon it. Glancing at his father’s hands gripping the handle of the umbrella, he remembered his mother’s hands – small and fine hands they had been. They were not like his sisters’ hands. Their hands were raw-boned and reddish. No, mother’s hands had been.... His recollections stopped.

“Oh, yes,” his father continued, “I



think I neglected to tell you that I’ve invited Miss MacKechnie over for supper tonight.”

For the second time during their walk, Joseph John looked up at his father in amazement. Miss MacKechnie was his teacher. That is to say, she was his teacher some of the time. She taught art to the first and second graders every Tuesday. He was a little afraid of her. She rarely praised a child, but she often criticized, criticized and made fun of students. A ridiculous scene presented itself in his mind – the scene of Miss MacKechnie sitting at the kitchen table with himself and his father. It was almost more than he could conjure up. No colored chalk in her right hand, but a knife; no wooden pointer in her left hand, but a fork. And what would she do if the food did not please her?

“Why?” he asked, even as the rain kept pattering on the umbrella and as his right foot began to feel soggy and cold.

“Why?” his father repeated, as they

neared the schoolyard and as the noise of children's shouting and squabbling met them, "Because I say so."

He stopped at the gate of the iron enclosure encompassing the playground and so spiritedly shook the umbrella that spatters flew into Joseph John's face. Then he undid the latch and lumbered through.

Joseph John shuffled in behind his father, immediately blending in with the noisy crowd. The boy sighed. It was hard to sigh in a crowd. The small puff of it evaporated in the throng surrounding him. His right foot was thoroughly cold by now and he wondered if he could go inside before the bell rang and take off his shoe and sock. Miss Potts was nice and she might have an extra sock somewhere in her closet. She had given Miranda, who sat in front of him in class, an extra pair of mittens only yesterday. Walking towards the entrance, he contemplated what he might be able to do or say to change his father's mind about the teddy bear. But his mind, like his right foot, seemed soggy and was not able to function properly. Swinging open the door, he began to dawdle down the long corridor heading towards his classroom. Through the corridor windows, a pool of light fell beautifully on the hall floor ahead and, consequently, he could discern that the door to his classroom was open. He could hear Miss Potts' voice long before he reached it.

"Helen, you are devious."

Helen was Miss MacKechnie. Joseph John knew this to be true. He halted underneath one of the wooden coat-pegs not too far from the door.

"Why shouldn't I be? Michael is a handsome man and I've got such a hankering to go out with him. His wife has been gone now, let's see, it must be upward of some two years now, and all his children are out of the house..."

She stopped. Joseph John had frozen in position, had become completely immobile.

"Aren't you rather forgetting his youngest?" Miss Potts' voice had turned sharp.

"That boy's a trifling consideration. What sort of real conversation could..." She stopped talking and left the sentence dangling.

Joseph John leaned against the wall, his

heart beating rapidly. Miss MacKechnie was coming for supper. And it became clear to him, although he would not have been able to put it into words, that she intended to take Mother's place.

Miss Potts' voice began again. "I still think that you ought not to have supper with Michael, Helen. The man is quite a bit older than you are. At least fifteen years, I believe. You're going there under wrong pretenses. You're ingratiating yourself. And he actually believes that you need his help in keeping your students under control?"

"He was... He was flattered, Ann. And, the truth is that I could actually stand a few pointers in that department. That's the truth."

"No, you are lying to him, Helen. You're making him think you... that you need his help. And that's just plain dishonest."

"You're such a goody-two-shoes, Ann. No fun to talk to at all."

Joseph John looked down at his shoes. His right shoe was shiny with wetness. He bent over and began to undo the laces. Pressed against the wall, small and unobtrusive, Helen MacKechnie didn't even see the child as she stormed past him back to her room.

Later, after school, Joseph John ran home. The first thing he did upon reaching the red, brick path leading to the back-door, was to close his eyes and smile with relief. The house was still standing. It was still intact. Regardless of what the day had brought, the path wordlessly welcomed his feet and the white curtains with the red geraniums behind them, smiled at him. He smiled back.

"Hi, home," he said softly.

Mrs. Marjorie, the part-time housekeeper, was puttering about in the kitchen. "How was your day, Joseph John?"

"Fine, Mrs. Marjorie, how was yours?"

"Fair to middling, child, fair to middling." Having said that, she poured Joseph John some tea into a green mug and the green of the mug and the red of the tea

imbued peace and security to the boy. He sat down by the kitchen table, coat hung over the back of his chair, feet dangling comfortably. This routine occurred every day and it sheltered him from the unusual, from the abnormalities of life. His hands soaked in the warmth of the mug even as his mouth carefully sipped the hot liquid. Mrs. Marjorie had been Mother's friend and she lived only two doors down. Every day she was there when he came home from school and she stayed until six, until Father came home. Setting the table for supper, cleaning and tidying up, she could always be counted on for a hug. Mrs. Marjorie had loved Mother.

"Did you," he began, but then stopped.

"Did I what?" she answered as she sliced him a fresh piece of bread and slathered it with butter.

"Did you ever have ...?"

"Have a what?" she smiled.

"Well," he continued, "have a doll, or a ... a something that you loved. You know like a toy." 

Get the rest of the story at **ReformedPerspective.ca/learning**. For 33 years it's been an annual tradition for *Reformed Perspective* to feature a longer, 10+ page Christine Farenhorst Christmas story. Space constraints have meant that in the past the story was sometimes split up over two or three issues, but that meant that readers would have to have quite some patience to wait for the whole story. Thankfully our website has no such constraints, so we're featuring this three-page teaser here to grab your attention, and go the URL above with your computer or tablet, or use the camera on your phone to scan the QR code here that will take you to the same place.



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

BY JEFF DYKSTRA

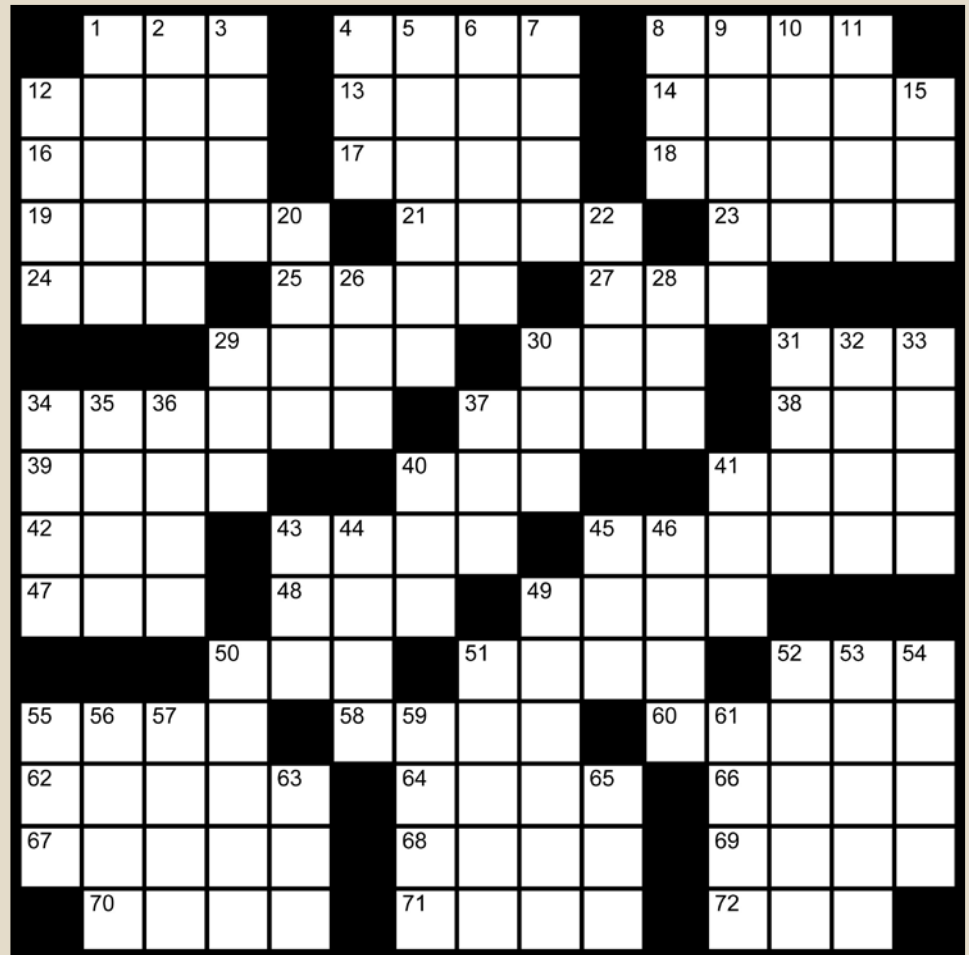
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025

PUZZLE CLUES

Find this issue's solution on page 62.

ACROSS

1. Big burger under the golden arches
4. What the "Three Little Fishies" did
8. Musty or moist
12. Color of Death's horse (Rev. 6)
13. Not there
14. What you feel when it goes off
16. "I call ____ the Lord..." (Ps. 18)
17. "And his ____ were opened..." (Mark 7)
18. Sounds like someone underage finding coal?
19. Instrument for Bach's Partita in A Minor
21. "First past the ____" - electoral system
23. They're found in Florida.
24. "I ____ you with milk..." (1 Cor. 3)
25. Diet for someone proved wrong?
27. "The poor ____ entreaties..." (Prov. 18)
29. "must obey God rather ____ men." (Acts 5)
30. "the people gathered as ____ man" (Ezra 3)
31. One of two necessities for a sport this season
34. "Stay dressed for ____..." (Luke 12)
37. "he ____ off his sandal." (Ruth 4)
38. Type of stripes that suit some men?
39. Uncommon way to grill a steak?
40. "If your ____ causes you to sin..." (Mark 9)
41. Something you hit at night
42. Anagram of 43 Down
43. "with the ____ of the sword" (Job 1)
45. Thoughtful rhyme for 33 Down
47. Most effective insect pollinator
48. High ____ content increases paper quality.
49. Type of tree from which Augustine stole
50. Painful thing to mix with feathers
51. "asked him to... ____ his son" (John 4)
52. Out of the ordinary, but part of ordinary?
55. "Jeroboam was very ____" (1 Kings 11)
58. Second-last word of many fairy tales
60. "there are ____ that testify" (1 John 5)
62. "The Lord ____ from Zion" (Joel 3)
64. "has ____ conceived a son" (Luke 1)
66. Run without going anywhere
67. Short pause, but longer with one "m" gone
68. "Whoever is ____ to anger..." (Prov. 14)
69. "Draw ____ to God..." (James 4)
70. You're a hero when you stand it.
71. "cried out in a ____ of anguish," (Dan. 6)
72. "Eye it. ____ it. Buy it!" (1940 Chevrolet slogan)



DOWN

1. Canada's national tree
2. "...wept with ____ voice" (Ezra 3)
3. Two of this are what an opinion is "worth."
4. *Murder, ____ Wrote* (1984-1996 mystery show)
5. Longbow
6. Ammo for 5 Down
7. What you get when you spill food in it
8. What the "Three Little Fishies" went over
9. "Share and share ____." (*Robinson Crusoe*)
10. What a horse's neck is clothed with (Job 39)
11. "I observed... beasts of ____" (Acts 11)
12. Dose of asthma medication
15. ____ *Miniver* (1942 World War II movie)
20. Basis of bats' and subs' navigation
22. Something named on a TV game show
26. Akira Kurosawa version of *King Lear*
28. What you can do with a Singer
29. "____ them around your neck" (Prov. 6)
30. "copper smelted from the ____" (Job 28)
31. "their ____ is toil and trouble" (Ps. 90)
32. A good start for a motorcycle
33. Signs (a contract)
34. ____ Spring (2011 protests and uprisings)
35. "Take ____, brothers..." (Heb. 3)
36. Resting place for Elijah (1 Kings 19)
37. That multi-color t-shirt is to ____ for!
40. Probably not created before the chicken?
41. "____, we wish to see Jesus." (John 12)
43. Age; period
44. *Where Eagles ____* (WWII war novel)
45. It can be white, orange, red, green or black.
46. "they came to a ____ at..." (Neh. 12)
49. "not a needy ____ among them" (Thatcher)
50. "offer ____ of peace" (Deut. 20)
51. Hi! Howdy!
52. "put what remained into ____" (Titus 1)
53. "O Lord, do not ____!" (Ps. 70)
54. Dangerous animal to catch in the headlights
55. Part of a circle, and part of circle?
56. What you don't want your boss to give you
57. "invite... the crippled, the ____" (Luke 14)
59. "his kingdom... is ____" (Esther 1)
61. Synonym for what this is
63. "So they ____ down in groups" (Mark 6)
65. "I ____ nothing to Women's Lib." (Thatcher)

PAULA ROTH

loves painting her studio

INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

by Jason Bouwman

It's no surprise that someone who has lived in as many beautiful places as Paula Roth has, would be drawn to landscape as the subject for her art. This very same landscape has also become a studio for Roth who now takes her easel and paints outdoors to complete her colorful paintings on location.

Roth's life journey includes time in Nigeria, Colorado, Washington State, Michigan, and finally Ontario, where she married a Canadian. Paula and her husband Ray currently live in Tillsonburg, Ontario where they are members of Hope Reformed Church.

Paula minored in art in college and graduated in 2003 with a B.A. and B.Ed. from Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She spent the first 20 years of married life teaching, finding particular fulfillment supporting students with unique learning profiles. "I learned patient perseverance, and hopefully grew in compassion." Paula has since founded her home-based business, Early Bird Learning Consultant, to support children with learning challenges.

For Roth, art fulfills a need for creative expression and provides a sense of "balance and well-being." The youthful dream of being an artist began when she was 9. A watercolor artist/neighbor, (also a Wycliffe Bible Translator), took her to buy her first art supplies. She also helped Roth set up a small studio in an old pioneer milking parlor on the property her family was renting at the time. The start was modest but exciting. The studio spaces have been even more modest since then.

During her teaching career, Paula loved to teach art in the classroom setting, and enjoyed making beautiful bulletin board displays. After she left the classroom, to focus on special education, her creative outlets were mostly found at home where she made space for her creative work in corners of bedrooms, on desks, or at the kitchen table.

Motivated in part by her parents' mantra "You can always learn something new," Paula is a lifelong learner. She has completed many art classes at Dundas Valley School of Art, including classes by mentors Marla Panko and Guennadi Kalinine.

In 2008, Paula started illustrating for *Open Windows*, a Free Reformed publication for children creating collage images with paper. Then, about four years ago she discovered a passion for plein air painting. Currently, she is inspired by rural landscapes in Oxford County, ON.

The dream of becoming an accomplished artist still captures Paula's imagination. "If the Lord wills, I hope to keep taking courses, reading books about painting, and to be out in the field painting as often as I can."

Paula says, "Painting has taught me to be still. I lose all sense of time and am completely at peace. Pausing to observe, interpret, and represent creation makes me feel small and makes the Lord's world feel gloriously large. When painting outdoors, I seek to capture a special moment in time, a scene that depicts the beauty, essence, and uniqueness of that location. Through my art I hope to share my enjoyment of my rural region and inspire others to appreciate its unique beauty too."

You can view more of Paula's work at RuralHuesArt.com and [Instagram.com/PaulaRoth.RuralHues](https://www.instagram.com/PaulaRoth.RuralHues). 





◀ **Duffy Line Sunrise** is an impression of light over rolling hills and tree lines. Moments like this lead to praise and delight because they reveal the glory of our great God. I've heard the Amish women singing hymns in the distance while I'm painting at sunrise. Wonderful!

▼ **Hawkins Pond** was painted at sunset to capture light sparkling off the leaves of the trees surrounding the pond. I enjoyed the contrast of the shapes of each type of greenery from spikey and straight, to ribboned and round.



◀ **Ruts & Paths** was painted in August in Oxford County. I am often drawn to roads as they symbolize a journey. Life can feel uphill, and it takes faith and hope to see beauty in the midst of challenge.



▲ **Morning Fog** on Pigram Line was painted as the crops were ripening in the fall. The golden fields covered with dew and fog were enchanting. The saturated reds and fuchsias have drawn hummingbirds to my palate which makes time stand still for a few seconds.

Your Reformed *Voice* in Ottawa



Planning a trip to Ottawa?
Stop in for a visit.

ARNOLD VIERSEN
MP | PEACE RIVER—WESTLOCK

1-800-667-8450 613-996-1783 arnold.viersen@parl.gc.ca mparnoldviersen
mparnold.ca arnoldviersen

Assisting parents by training students for **a life of service to God** and their neighbour through biblical redemptive teaching.

Now hiring for
Principal
Elementary Teacher
3 Educational Assistants

It's time to look at us again. 

 **Covenant**
CANADIAN REFORMED SCHOOL
Leading Children in the Light

Apply today. Contact principal@covenantschool.ca or secretary@covenantschool.ca or 780-284-5456

WE SERVE OUR **CLIENTS**, OUR **COMMUNITY** & OUR **LORD**

 Rachel VANDYK sales representative 289-214-1825	 Randy MULDER sales representative 905-359-9411	 Bill BROUWER sales representative 905-341-4400	 Ron MULDER sales representative 905-327-4564	 Kristen VAHRMEYER sales representative 289-821-0386
---	--	--	---	---

 **YOUR NIAGARA HOME TEAM** For All Your Real Estate Needs  **RE/MAX GARDEN CITY** realty inc., brokerage
2390 South Service Road, Jordan

each office independently owned & operated

Wishing you a

Blessed Christmas

From your friends at River's Edge

VOLUNTEER.
MENTOR.
ENROLL.
SUPPORT.
JOIN OUR TEAM.



THANK YOU TO ALL
WHO CONTINUE TO
WALK ALONGSIDE
US IN SHARING THE
GOOD NEWS OF
JESUS CHRIST.



RIVER'S EDGE

HAVEN OF HOPE

1 Haldimand Rd 17 Dunnville, ON

info@riversedge.ca • 289-426-0481 • www.riversedge.ca



ATTENTION! ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING IN A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SETTING?

COVENANT CANADIAN REFORMED TEACHERS
COLLEGE IS SEEKING A

**PRINCIPAL/CEO and a
FULL-TIME FACULTY MEMBER**

effective August 1st 2026.

The Principal/CEO will be directly involved in the institutional operation of the College, will work closely with the Board of Governors and with the Academic Dean, and will be expected to do some teaching.

A full-time faculty member will be passionate about covenant education, possess excellent communication skills, have administrative experience in an elementary and/or secondary school, hold a Master's degree, and is willing and able to pursue a doctoral degree in due time.

Please contact us if you are interested in serving in this capacity and are a communicant member of a Canadian Reformed Church, or of a church with which the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches maintains ecclesiastical fellowship.

FOR ADDITIONAL DETAILS CONTACT:

Dr. Christine van Halen-Faber PRINCIPAL
cvanhalen@covenantteacherscollege.com

Tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord.

PSALM 78:4



EVERYTHING YOU NEED
FOR STUDY AND CATECHISM,
ALL IN ONE PLACE!



REFORMED CHRISTIAN BOOKS
YOUR MOST TRUSTED SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN BOOKS

🌐 www.reformedchristianbooks.com
📍 201-20381-62 Ave, Langley, BC V3A 5E6
☎ 604-309-3924



Come +
EXPLORE

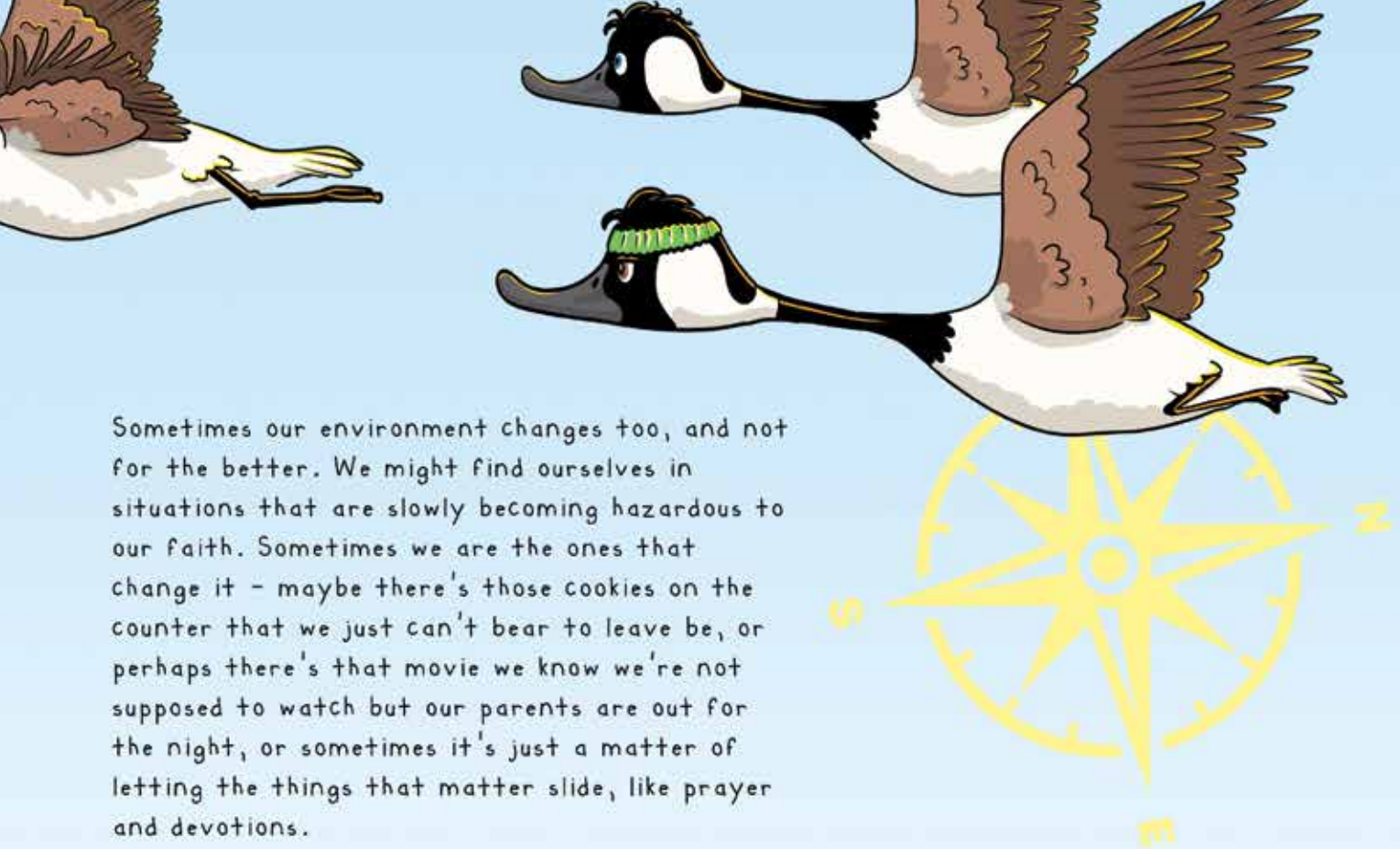
HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED...

... what would happen if a bird decided to stay North for the winter? Considering the incredible journey they have to take South, about 2000-3000 miles (as the crow flies), they must push the limits of their God-given ability to fight changing weather, face food shortages along the way, and be able to fly with half their brain off to sleep (no joke). I'm sure that if birds had the capability to choose whether or not to make the journey some would definitely choose to stay despite the oncoming challenges of colder weather. Maybe it's not so bad as they make it seem?

GO ON WITHOUT ME-
I'M SURE I'LL ADAPT
TO THE CHANGES!

But God did not give them the ability to choose. He designed them to instinctively desire *literal* greener pastures; pastures full of crawling insects - a smorgasbord of all things crunchy and delicious (to a bird). The call to journey South saves their lives - they were not designed to withstand the changing environment. God gives them a way of escape! With the ground freezing beneath their feet, the insect populations diminished, and exposure to freezing weather, they must flee the North and find solace in the South!

AUTUMN



Sometimes our environment changes too, and not for the better. We might find ourselves in situations that are slowly becoming hazardous to our faith. Sometimes we are the ones that change it - maybe there's those cookies on the counter that we just can't bear to leave be, or perhaps there's that movie we know we're not supposed to watch but our parents are out for the night, or sometimes it's just a matter of letting the things that matter slide, like prayer and devotions.

But maybe it's a friendship that's gone awry - it used to be good, filled with harmless fun, but now it's become dangerous: a friend asking you to do, say, or watch things that you know are causing you to sin. We can fool ourselves sometimes and think that it's easier to follow along with the changing environment - that maybe we won't be affected by the changes around us. But we weren't designed to thrive in an environment where we compromise our virtues - it will damage our souls. Take a look at what happened to Israel in the times of the judges and kings!

Just like a bird must flee the oncoming winter, we too must flee the things that are not building us up in faith. We must be pushed sometimes to do hard things. It's not easy to tell friends that you can't hang out with them anymore. It's painful. But it's a journey we sometimes have to take in order to reach the greener pastures where our souls will be edified and grow stronger. God always provides an escape - for the birds it's a journey South. What could it look like for you?



MIGRATION CLASS OF 2025



ARCTIC TERN

Most likely to make the longest migration of over 47,000 miles per year.



BLACKPOLL WARBLER

Most likely to gain twice their body weight to store fat and use it as energy reserves through the migration. Hello, McD's!



RÜPPELL'S VULTURE

Most likely to be the over-achiever, flying at the highest altitude of 11,300 meters.



GREAT SNIPE

Most likely to fly the fastest; 4000 miles at 60 mph!



CARDINAL

Most likely to stay north for the winter, using their God-given ability to build a layer of insulation (not the pink stuff in houses) to keep warm against the winter cold.



BAR-TAILED GODWIT

Most likely to go nearly 4,500 miles without stopping for food or rest!



SONGBIRD

Most likely to travel at night when there's fewer predators and to avoid the turbulent air currents that form during the day.

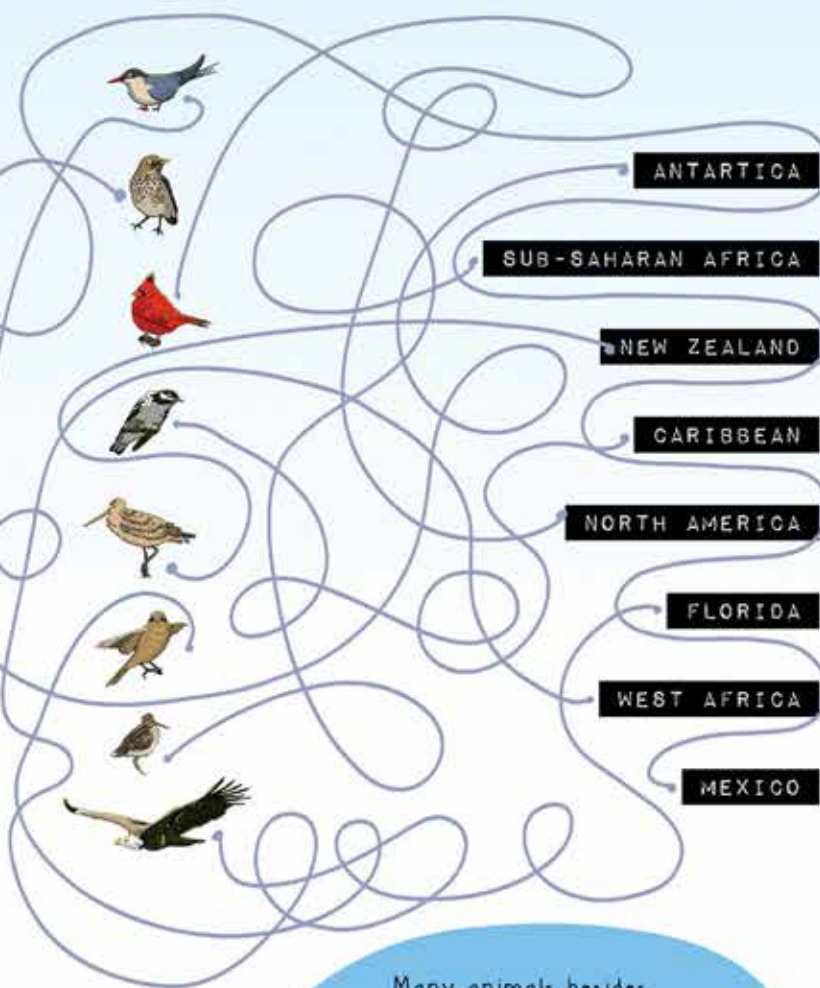


SWAINSON'S THRUSH

Most likely to enter a sleep-like state for nine seconds at a time keeping one half of their brain awake to avoid predators and mid-air collisions while the other half rests during a 3,000 mile migration.

FOLLOW THE MIGRATION PATH TO MATCH THE BIRD TO THEIR SUNNY DESTINATION

(Their summer habitat can be found on their photo on the page opposite.
Print off a world map and map their migrations!)



Many animals besides birds migrate, including mammals like whales and caribou, fish such as salmon, insects like butterflies and dragonflies, and even reptiles like sea turtles. Can you think of any others?



Memory work:

"THEREFORE LET ANYONE WHO THINKS THAT HE STANDS TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL.

NO TEMPTATION HAS OVERTAKEN YOU THAT IS NOT COMMON TO MAN. GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND HE WILL NOT LET YOU BE TEMPTED BEYOND YOUR ABILITY, BUT WITH THE TEMPTATION HE WILL ALSO PROVIDE THE WAY OF ESCAPE, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO ENDURE IT. THEREFORE, MY BELOVED, FLEE FROM IDOLATRY."

1 CORINTHIANS 10: 12-14



CHECK OUT THE COME & EXPLORE THEMED SHIRTS ON THE RP STORE!

10 WAYS TO MAKE THE WINTER MORE FUN

1. Camp indoors in front of the fireplace. That's right. Time to haul out the tent and mattresses, set them up in front of the fireplace, have a s'more or ten and listen to dad read a story by the "campfire."

2. Choose to become friends with the snow. Every day spend at least 20 minutes decked out in snowgear experiencing the fun that snow has to offer (snow men, snow fort, snow fight, snow village....). I'll bet the 20 minutes turns into an hour pretty quick.

3. Have a gingerbread house contest with your friends or family. Use the kits but perhaps it has to be anything BUT a house!

4. Learn a new hobby! Painting, crocheting, baking, sourdough, guitar, perler beads, knot tying, origami, sewing... the list is endless.

5. Make an epic Rube Goldberg machine (if you don't know what this is, ask your dad - I'm sure he made an epic one back in his day).

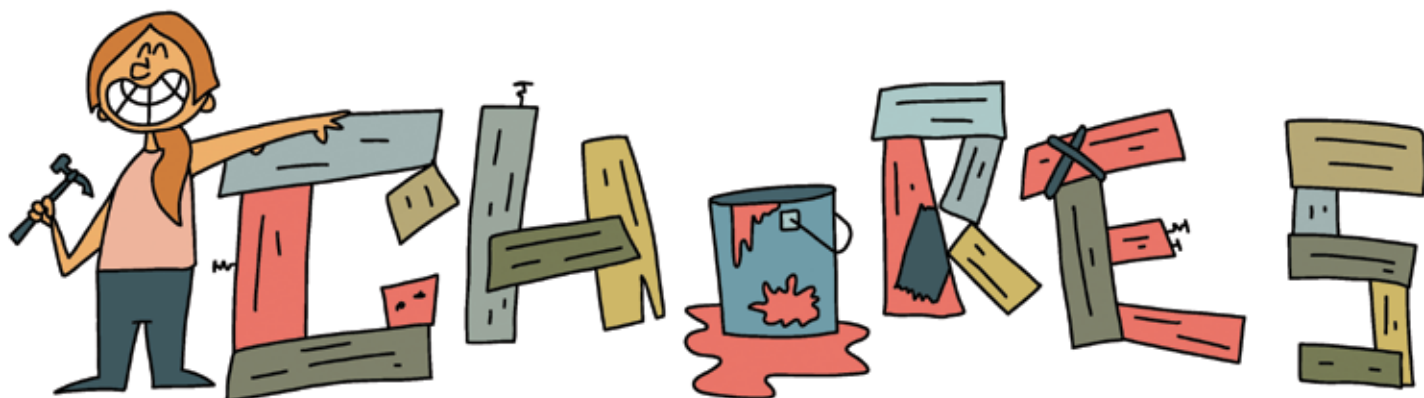
6. Play all the board games you own but add one "house rule" to make it interesting. E.G. every time you pass "Go" in Monopoly, you also have to do the chicken dance.

7. Follow a "Bob Ross" painting tutorial (YouTube) with the family. Not only is it fun, but maybe you will discover an artist in your family!

8. Re-read every single Come & Explore issue since the beginning!

9. Make a gift basket for a random family in your church. Pick some of your family's favorite things and leave it on their doorstep! (For added fun, don't say who it's from).

10. Go for a drive in the evening and check out the Christmas light displays in the neighborhood.



WHY IT'S GOOD FOR TEENS AND KIDS TO DO CHORES

We should do chores for the same reason we go to school – preparation

by Holly Braendlein

Chances are, as a part of the family, you are asked to do various menial (or not so menial) tasks about the house or yard.

“Son, will you take out the trash?”

“Sweetheart, would you dust the house for me?”

“Will you mow the lawn?”

“Will you start the laundry?”

“Would you put away the dishes?”

Or, if, like myself, your mother decides to finish writing a fifty-lesson Bible study in a week flat, then you find yourself generously helping her keep the house running by taking over the role of “housewife” for a week. This should be easy.

Now, to most of us, the word “chores” sends us running to our bedrooms

where we promptly take solace under the bed where nobody can find us (unless that’s always the first place you go when you’re trying to avoid doing something. Too predictable, mate. Find a new spot). Your parents assign you chores from an early age because you are a part of this family, and so it is your duty to contribute to the running of the house.

What if I told you that chores will inevitably prepare you for being an adult?

And if you hope to be married, you need to be doing chores for along the same reasons why you do school. It’s imperative that we all learn how to read, write, and calculate arithmetic so we can be better prepared for what the world has in store for us. It would be a bummer if you were not able to read your

Bible because you had never learned how to read.

Same with chores. What if you had never learned how to load the dishwasher until after you moved out? Any roommates wouldn’t be impressed. Or what if you never learned how to fold clothes until you were finally forced to do it after your marriage? Your husband would come home and find his clothes smelling awful from not being washed, and all his shirts wrinkled after being stuffed carelessly into the bureau (hang them up – *Braendlein* men’s shirts should be hung up in the closet!).

What if you had never dealt with the trash in your life, and now you watch helplessly as your roommate drags the overflowing garbage bag to the apart-

ment hallway, where he leaves it for no other reason than “I don’t know what to do with it!” ...and you don’t know either!

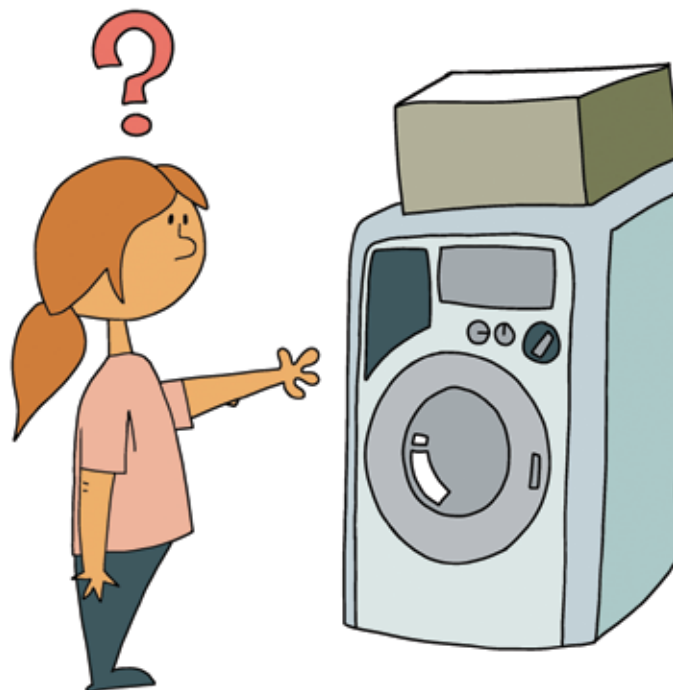
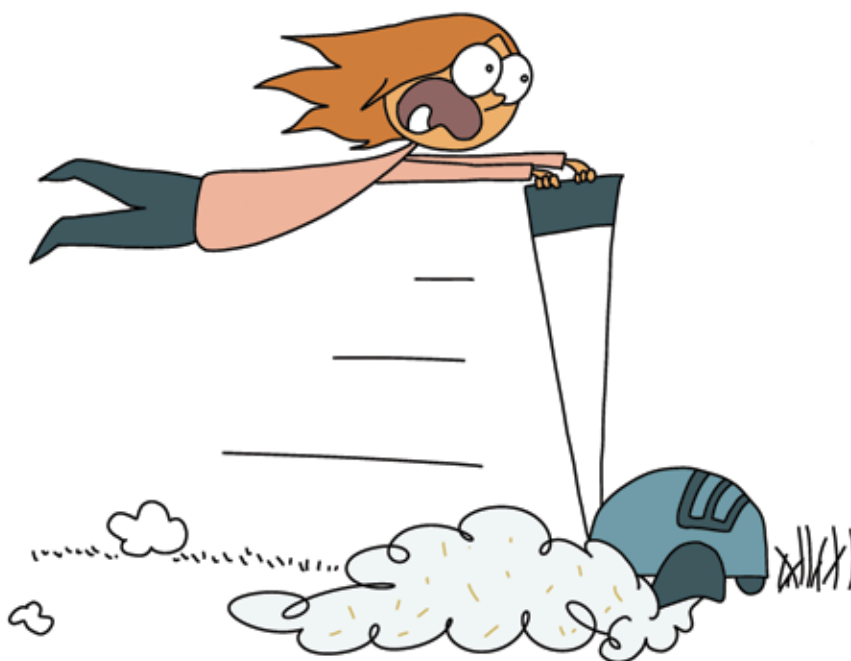
What if you had never learned how to make a decent peanut butter and jam sandwich, and you starved? Or your kids starved? Or you starved your husband of the nutrition he so sorely needs in order to support his growing family? What if you never learned how to scramble a decent egg, and all you could do, to surprise your wife with breakfast in bed, was bring her the box of Cheerios?

Doing chores and learning how to manage a household will get you off on the right foot as you prepare to leave your home and someday get married.

And if you think that women should learn how to do women’s chores, like dishes and laundry, while men should learn how to do men’s chores, like mowing the lawn and taking out the trash, then think again. Both sexes should learn how to do all of the aforementioned chores, regardless of whether or not the wives will spend their married days mowing the lawn and the men folding the clothes. You might find that your husband is great at folding laundry, and that you actually love mowing the lawn. My father is terrible at folding laundry and figuring out the difference between his boxers and his son’s (what an awkward day it was when he tried on my brother’s boxers and found that he had put the wrong ones in his own drawer). But he will do it if it blesses my mother (actually, scratch that; he will willingly make his four children fold the laundry if it blesses his wife).

So if your mother asks you to move over the laundry and start a load of delicates, or your father asks you to take out all the trash in the house (how many trash cans are there, seriously?), do it with joy, and know that knowing how to do chores will save you a lot of pain when you finally move out or get married.

And besides, you get to do *all* the chores when you’re a grown-up! 



{ IN A TIDBITS RELEVANT, AND NOT SO, TO CHRISTIAN LIFE NUTSHELL }

BY JON DYKSTRA

FOR WANT OF A COMMA

In her bestseller *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*, author Lynne Truss highlighted the importance of commas with the story of a panda who enters a bar, asks for a meal, then shoots the bartender and exits. When the panda is asked why he took this violent turn, he opens up a dictionary, and points to the entry on *Pandas* where it says that "The panda eats, shoots and leaves." A badly placed comma did the bartender in!

Clearly then, commas are important. Just take a look at what mayhem can occur when commas are taken out of these sentences or placed in the wrong spot.

- I love, love, love cooking my husband and my kids.
- You have a voice, like Celine Dion.
- Let's eat everyone.
- Slow children at play
- Attention: this restroom only for disabled elderly pregnant children.
- My heroes are my parents, Margaret Thatcher and William Wilberforce.
- I like shooting hoops and all of Jane Austen's novels.

SINCERITY ISN'T ENOUGH

"If you sincerely drink poison, it will kill you: if you sincerely cut your throat, you will die. If you sincerely believe a lie, you will suffer the consequences. You must not only be sincere, but you must be right."

- C.H. Spurgeon

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD: PATIENCE

We read in Genesis 6 that God was grieved by the great wickedness of Man, and decided to blot out this wickedness, and start again with Noah and his family. What often gets overlooked in the story of the Flood is what it may tell us about God's patience. I use the word "may" here, because while what follows is not simply conjecture, it also isn't certain. So don't forget that very important "may."

It isn't much of a leap to think that it would have taken Noah and his sons *years* to build the Ark. All that time, their actions would be a witness to the wicked that God's coming judgement was coming.

But God was patient for more than just those few years. In Genesis 6:3 we read that God has appointed for man a limit of 120 years. This has been interpreted by some as a new limit that God was going to give to how long men could live. Previously men had lived hundreds of years, but that would stop now. This seems a plausible interpretation, as no one today lives any longer than 120. But a better way to understand this passage might be

as a 120-year countdown to the coming judgement. This fits in well with the context of the surrounding chapter, and if this is the proper understanding, it means that *the wicked were given more than a century to repent!*

But now consider this: Noah's grandfather was Methuselah, who was born 969 years before the Flood and died the very year of the Flood. When Methuselah was born, almost a millennium before the waters covered the Earth, his father Enoch may have given him a prophetic name (note that "may" again). According to several sources, "Methuselah" can be translated two different ways, as either "Man of the dart or spear" or "his death shall bring judgment." If the latter is the right way, then it means God gave a warning *almost a thousand years beforehand* of His anger, and His coming judgement.

While these two interpretations are not at all certain, they do match up well with what we learn about God's loving patience elsewhere in the Bible, like in 2 Peter 3:8-9:

"...with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

DEEP DAD THOUGHTS

- Why are pirates called pirates? I don't know – they just arrrrrrr.
- I threw a boomerang months ago. Now I live in constant fear.
- Where do you take someone who has been injured in a peek-a-boo accident? The ICU
- I asked my son what he learned today, and he said: "Dutchmen like Sony, Scots like Yamaha, and Italians prefer Bose." I looked down at my little man and just shook my head. "Son," I told him, "don't you know those are just stereo types?"
- How do flat-earthers travel? On a plane.
- "I once got a job at a canned juice company, and got along great with everyone there, but they had to let me go because I just couldn't concentrate."

WHEN YOU ARE LOOKING FOR LOVE

What really matters in a marriage partner? Is it looks? Looks fade. Is it a man's ability to provide? Jobs and money can be lost. In his book *Meaning of Marriage* (pages 125-126) Tim Keller asks us to re-evaluate the way we evaluate potential marriage partners.

"Most of us know that there is some truth in the stereotype that men overvalue beauty and that women overvalue wealth in a potential mate. But if you marry someone more for these things than for friendship, you are not only setting yourself up for future failure – wealth may decrease and sexual appeal will decrease – but you are also setting yourself up for loneliness. For what Adam needed in the garden was not just a sexual partner but a companion, bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh.

"If singles accepted this principle, it would drastically change the way people seek a marriage partner in our day. It is typical for a single person to walk into a room and see a number of

people of the opposite sex and immediately begin to screen them, not for companionship but for attractiveness. Let's say three out of ten look appealing. The next step is to approach those three to see what rapport there may be. If one of them will agree to go out on a date, and you get romantically involved, perhaps you will see if you can turn that person into a friend as well. This problem is many of your best prospects for friendship were likely among those you ruled out because they were too tall or too short, too fat or too skinny.

"We think of a prospective spouse as primarily a lover (or a provider), and if he or she can be a friend on top of that, well isn't that nice! We should be going at it the other way round. Screen first for friendship. Look for someone who understands you better than you do yourself, who makes you a better person just by being around them. And then explore whether that friendship could become a romance and a marriage."

NO NEED FOR FALSE MODESTY

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less." – C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*

THRILL SEEKING

Ray Comfort is generally a pretty calm and tactful sort, but he has little patience for Christians who want to get a rush by jumping out of airplanes.

"If you're a Christian and you are tempted to jump, instead of catering to your thrill-seeking ego, think of someone else other than yourself. Think of those who love you and those for whom you are responsible. This injudicious world doesn't know any better. You should. Think of the more than 150,000 people who die every 24 hours, and if you want a thrill, get up on a soapbox and tell dying sinners how to find everlasting life. That will kill your ego."

ADD A WORD, RUIN A CHRISTIAN BOOK

About a decade back, a meme circled the globe that had people tweeting famous Christian book titles with one-word additions that, had they been real, would have completely ruined the book. For example, C.S. Lewis's *Surprised by Joy* became *Surprised by Joy Riding*. Other notables include:

- Till We Have **Smiley** Faces (C.S. Lewis)
- Dave Ramsey's complete guide to money **laundering**
- Don't Waste Your Life **Reading** (John Piper)
- The Silver **Rocking** Chair (C.S. Lewis)
- The Pilgrim's Progressive (John Bunyan)
- Calvin **Klein's** Institutes
- The Lion, the Witch, and the **Locked** Wardrobe (C.S. Lewis)
- Orthodoxy **Schmorthodoxy** (G.K. Chesterton)
- Strange **Camp** Fire (John MacArthur)

One title was actually improved with an addition; Joel Osteen's *Your Best Life Now* became *Your Best Life Isn't Now*.

AN APPROVED CHRISTIAN PICK-UP LINE

"Hey baby, wanna come back to my place? My parents *are* home."

WHEN'S THE LAST TIME AN ELEPHANT CALLED YOU ON YOUR BIRTHDAY?

I've always been bad with names – so bad that, back in high school, I just called all my teachers "sir" (which worked great, except with Miss Schoen). I'll sometimes be told about how "an elephant never forgets," as some kind of challenge or encouragement to do better. But really, what do elephants even need to remember? Where they left their car keys? Nope, because elephants insist on walking everywhere they go. What about



A SHIRT THAT SPEAKS

The goal of this magazine is to equip us all to think, speak, and act to God's glory. RP's shirt store has a particular emphasis on the *speaking* part, using what we wear to point people to Who we serve. And the "RP Speak" line – with shirts like the one here – does that speaking in three different ways.

First, the shirt makes a point – in this case, that size doesn't determine our worth.

Second, the QR code on the back takes whoever scans it to an article about where our worth and where equality comes from – not from our size, or what we can do, but from Who made us.

Third, that same short article equips the wearer to be ready to speak – ready for any questions directed your way. Find this shirt, and more like it, at Store.ReformedPerspective.ca.

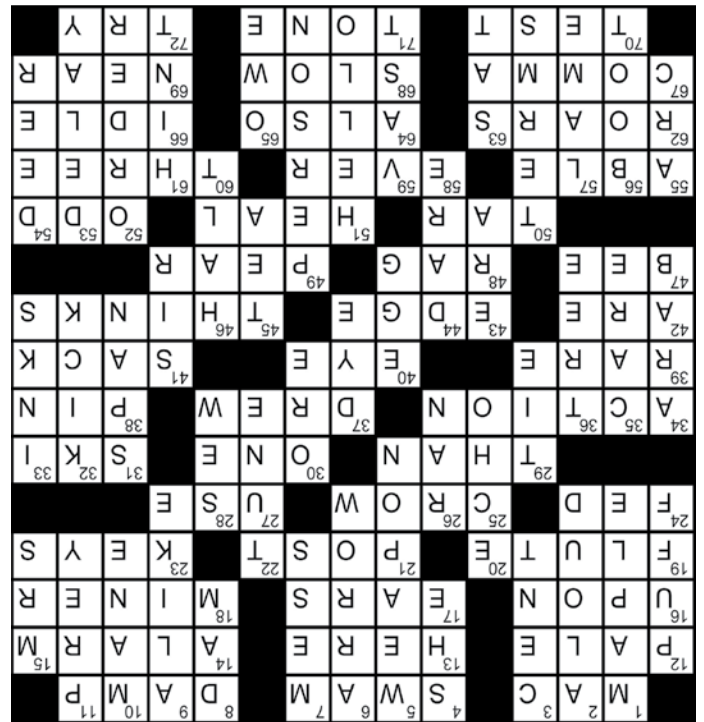
putting the milk back in the fridge? Don't need to remember that either, because elephants are totally fine with lukewarm milk. Do they know any of the provincial capitals? No siree, because where they're from they don't have provinces. What about all their spouse's coworkers' names? Not only do elephants not have coworkers, *they don't have names!* I mean, when we're born, right there in the hospital, we get slapped with Harry, Sally, Fred, or Brooke – so many names to remember! But elephants? They don't even have a place where the elephants are named! If an elephant never forgets, it's only cause he's got nothing to remember!

So, yes, I do need to get better at people's names... but don't get me started on elephants!

WE DO HAVE FUN HERE

Last month, RP staff was batting around new catchphrases for our *Real Talk* podcast. All sorts of ideas were shared, including some solid ones by our Executive Director Mark Penninga. But the last on his list struck me as curious: "a place where the elephants are named." I thought he was having fun, ending his serious list with one that was just plain silly so, to add to the joke, I pledged that if we didn't pick it, it was so good I'd have to use it in my Nutshell column. So I did, in the joke above. Turns out, though, the joke's on me. Only afterwards did I realize Mark was referencing the "elephant in the room"... which we do indeed need to name. Just not *Harry, Sally, Fred, or Brooke!*

CROSSWORD SOLUTION NOVEMBER-DECEMBER



A one-week Christian service trip for teens ages 14–19. Learn more about 2026 sites and dates at rms.org/tasc.



NEW CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT LANDMARK

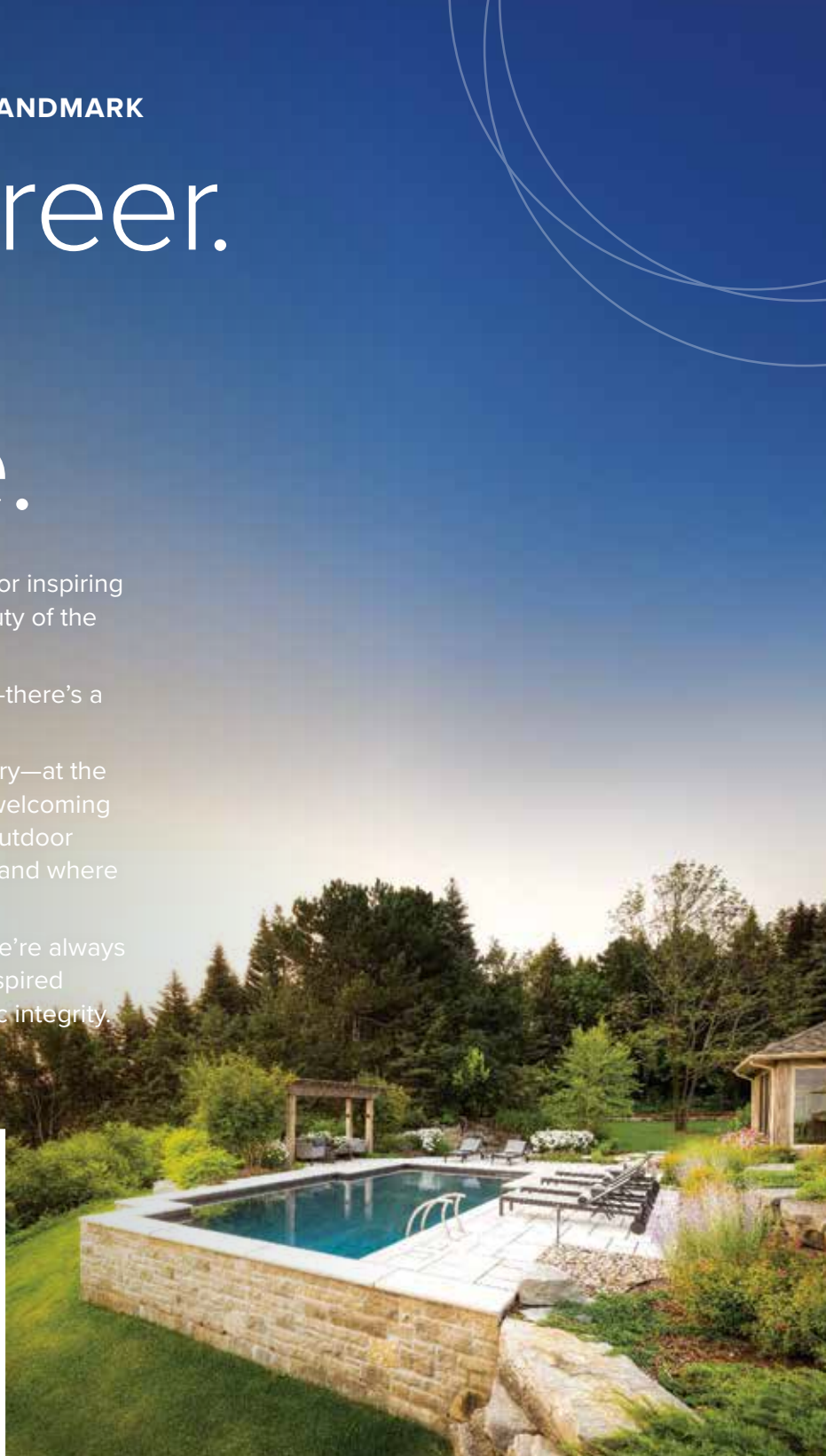
Build a career. And a life you'll love.

At The Landmark Group, we create and care for inspiring landscapes that connect people with the beauty of the outdoors. And we're growing!

Whether your passion is outdoors or indoors—there's a place for you to grow with us.

Enjoy a relocation bonus to join us in Thornbury—at the heart of Ontario's Georgian Bay region. With welcoming churches, Christian schools, and year-round outdoor adventure, it's a place your family can thrive—and where you'll find a rewarding career with great pay.

Don't see the right posting? Apply anyway—we're always looking for people who share our values of inspired beauty, committed relationships, and authentic integrity.



**AWARD-WINNING
LANDSCAPES &
PROPERTY CARE**



Apply today at
thelandmarkgroup.ca/careers
or scan the QR code.



PRESSING ON

SPIRITUAL CARE

for Pilgrims

JANUARY 9 & 10, 2026
BURLINGTON, ON

Register at:
canadianreformedseminary.ca



Registration
Deadline:
Dec 15,
2025

Featured Speakers





DR. MARK JONES DR. TIMOTHY LANE DR. REUBEN BREIDENHOF



CANADIAN REFORMED
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CRWRF IS
THANKFUL FOR
GOD'S GOOD
GIFTS FOR OVER **60** YEARS!



Save the dates

CELEBRATION EVENINGS:

Flamborough, ON - **FRI, NOV 21**
St. Albert, AB - **THURS, NOV 27**
Aldergrove, BC - **FRI, NOV 28**

MORNING WORKSHOPS & PANEL DISCUSSION

Flamborough, ON - **SAT, NOV 22**
Aldergrove, BC - **SAT, NOV 29**

For more information email:
ADMIN@CRWRF.CA

CRWRF.ca

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY INTRODUCES

Master of Education

- Canada's only Christian M.Ed.
- Finish in two years and work while you study
- Online courses with one week-long summer residency on campus
- \$2,000 inaugural scholarship for the 2026 incoming class

Apply by January 15, 2026 for early consideration
Deadline to apply is April 30, 2026



Learn more here!



Redeemer
University



HOPE REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

COME JOIN OUR TEAM!

We are looking for passionate, committed and professional applicants who seek to serve Jesus Christ in Reformed Education and are a member in good standing of a NAPARC church. Due to growth within our school, we are looking to fill the following positions for the 2025/2026 school year.

Interested applicants are asked to submit a statement of faith, philosophy of teaching, and references (including their pastor) along with their resume to:

Mr. J Kikkert, Principal
principal@hopercs.ca
 519-448-9913
www.hopercs.ca

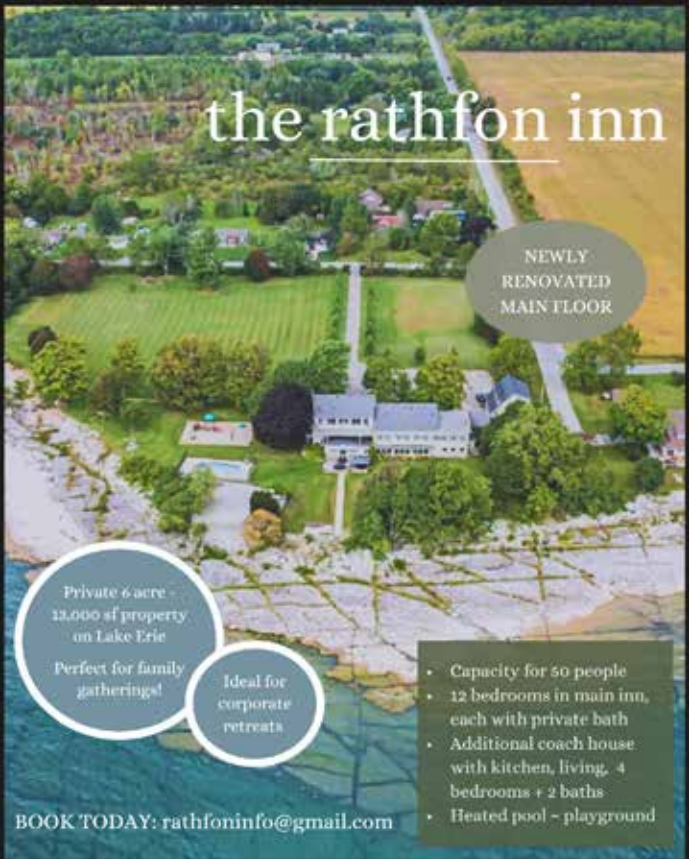
**OPENINGS FOR
2025/2026:**

Secondary Teachers:

Part-Time Teacher for
Second Semester (French and
Humanities beneficial)



"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord...that they may set their HOPE in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."
 Ps 78: 4, 7



the rathfon inn

**NEWLY
RENOVATED
MAIN FLOOR**

Private 6 acre -
12,000 sf property
on Lake Erie

Perfect for family
gatherings!

Ideal for
corporate
retreats

- Capacity for 50 people
- 12 bedrooms in main inn, each with private bath
- Additional coach house with kitchen, living, 4 bedrooms + 2 baths
- Heated pool - playground

BOOK TODAY: rathfoninfo@gmail.com



"I am a pastor who wants to feed my sheep. I know this is what the Lord wants from me, but it is difficult for me to teach the sheep in such a way that they will understand. Will you please help me with easy material so that I can teach them the basics of the Lord and his Word?"
 - Ethiopia

"I am so thankful that I can study the Word and know that it is my Reformed brothers who made this commentary. I always struggle to know the truth. I thank the Lord for your guidance."
 - Kenya

TIMOTHY project

& LAMAD

It is our hope and prayer that the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ will reach the ends of the earth and that God would continue to use each of us as instruments in His hands.
 To Him be the glory!



WHAT DO WE DO?
 Prepare and equip men for service in the churches by providing them with relevant, theological, and scripturally based study material.

Request based service
Over 15,200 pastors
90+ countries
Material to teach, guide and grow in His word!

Your contributions directly allow us to continue to bring the Word to those who would otherwise not have access to the complete Gospel of salvation.

LAMAD : Free Bible Study

Easy-to-understand bible study lessons.
Topics: biblical, doctrinal, ethical, leadership, and pastoral themes.

Lessons encourage the study of God's Word among lay pastors and church members. Also serving as preparation material for Sunday preaching.

www.lincolnvineyard.org



The Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Elementary School

invites applications for the position of

GRADE 1 TEACHER

commencing in March, 2026.
This is an 18 month maternity leave position.
Job-sharing arrangements are also a possibility.

Applications should include a resume,
statement of faith, philosophy of education
and two letters of reference.

For inquiries or to apply for this position,
please contact the principal,
Mr. Clarence Blokhuis
(principal@acreschool.ca).



ADMISSIONS SEPTEMBER 2026

Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College
invites applications from prospective students
for the 2026-2027 academic year.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

For the Two-Year Diploma of Education Program:

- a suitable university degree

For the Three-Year Diploma of Teaching Program:

- a grade 12 diploma with university
entrance equivalence

APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 1, 2026

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

COVENANT CANADIAN REFORMED TEACHERS COLLEGE
410 Crerar Drive Hamilton, ON L9A 5K3 • 905-385-0634
admissions@covenantteacherscollege.com

www.covenantteacherscollege.com



REFORMED BOOK SERVICES

Promoting Godliness, Revival & Reformation

BRANTFORD STOREFRONT

16 Roy Boulevard
Brantford, ON N3R 7K2
519-304-4709
info@reformedbookservices.ca

CALGARY STOREFRONT

3311 Centre Street North
Calgary, AB T2E 2X7
587-216-9828
calgary@reformedbookservices.ca

NIAGARA PICKUP POINT

195 Victoria Avenue
Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0

OXFORD PICKUP POINT

685 Main Street South
Burgessville, ON N0J 1C0

A CHRISTIAN BOOKSTORE
FOR CANADIANS

www.reformedbookservices.ca

New & Notable

The Sing
Hymnal
(various
formats)

compiled by
the Gettys



We Sing!

Kristyn
Getty



12 Truths
Every Teen
Can Trust

Paul David
Tripp



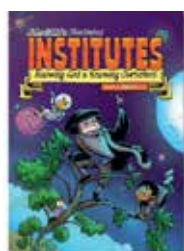
Take
Heart for
Teens

David
Powlison



John Calvin's
Illustrated
Institutes -
Book 1

Paul Cox
(illustrator)



Growing in God's
Word Curriculum
Ligonier Ministries



Reformed Education for *Real Life*.

Learning Centre Ontario offers:

- On-site classes
- Online courses
- Micro-credential certificates
- Conferences and lectures
- Story Time for children
- Author meet-and-greet events
- Learning Centre Library

For more information or to register, visit
www.rbslearningcentres.com

We are partnering with
Puritan Reformed
Theological Seminary to
offer content through the
Transform program.



POST TENEBRAS LUX

MARTIN LUTHER & THE ROAD TO REFORMATION





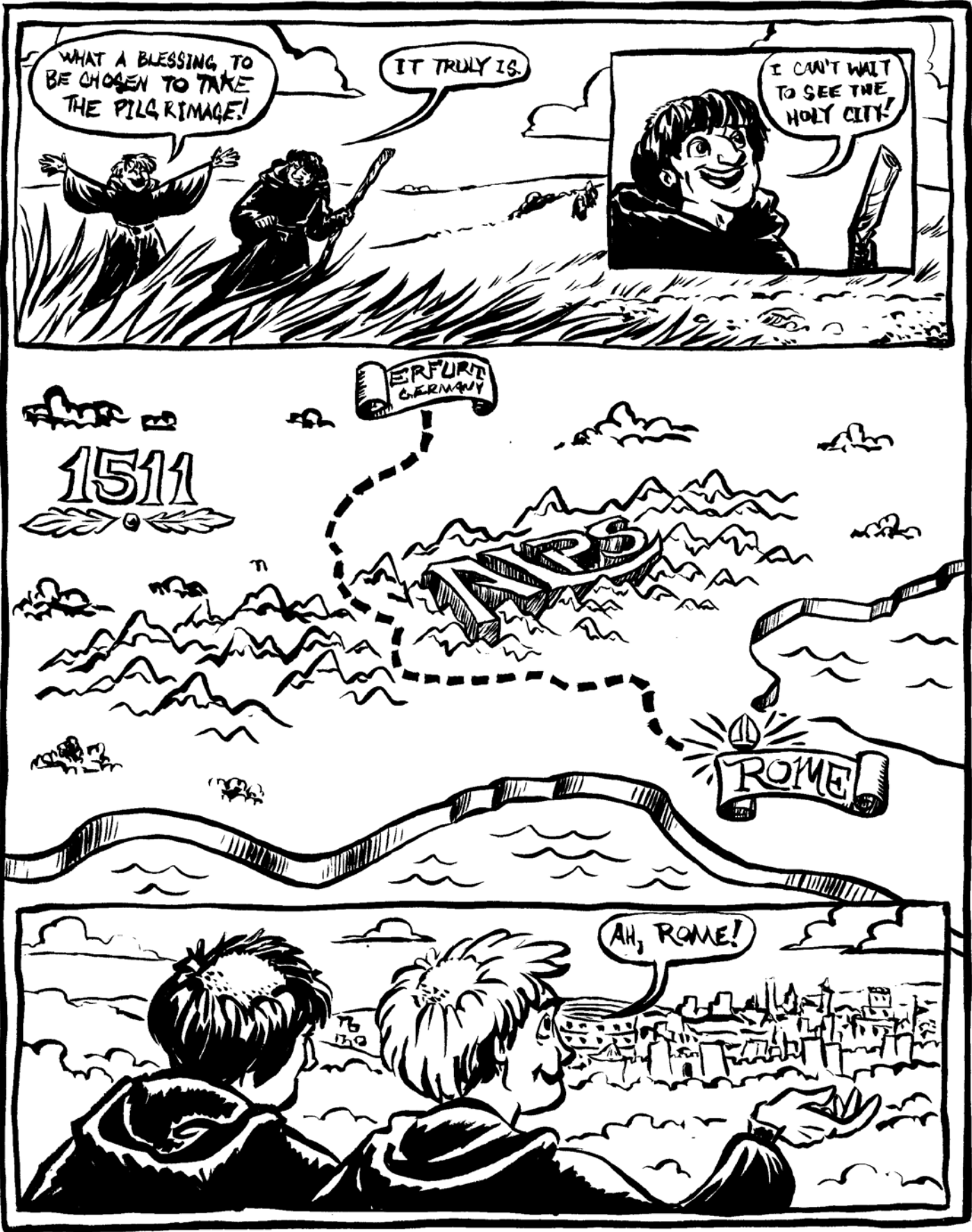






















MORE More Than the Magazine

Our print issue isn't all we do – we have devotionals, a podcast, and online exclusives.

So scan the QR codes to take you right to the best of the rest!

Best of *Saturday Selections*

Every Saturday we publish the *RP Roundup*, an email newsletter that shares the 6 articles we've published that week. The last article shares links to a half dozen great pieces from other publications, introduced with a dose of Reformed perspective by editor Jon Dykstra. Use your phone to scan the QR codes below to visit some of the highlights from the last couple of months, and then get the newsletter delivered to your email inbox by signing up at ReformedPerspective.ca/RoundUp.

SATURDAY
6



Greg Bahnsen vs. Christopher Hitchens, the Rap Battle

Here's AI put to its weirdest and most wonderful – the late Reformed apologist Greg Bahnsen taking on the late atheist apologist Christopher Hitchens in this epic *and insightful* rap battle.

Chris Gordon: a word to young people over the death of Charlie Kirk

Too many of us actually saw Charlie Kirk die – the videos of his death, videos of people celebrating his death, videos of nihilists preaching chaos, were streamed all over the Internet. Pastor Chris Gordon begs young people to look away. We are not meant to dwell on this brutality and darkness. Look to Christ instead!



IVF may have killed more than 250 million since 1978

To put that number in some kind of context, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* estimates the total number of people killed in World War II, including the Jews murdered in the Holocaust, the soldiers on both sides, and the civilians who died too, was between 35 million and 60 million. So, the IVF deaths you aren't hearing about anywhere may amount to four times the number killed in the biggest war ever waged.

Take the tech exit: it's not too late to get your kids off their smartphones

"...nearly one-third of parents regret giving their child a smartphone or access to social media when they did. Only 1% say they wished they had provided these devices sooner. Take the tech exit. Your kids may not thank you now, but they probably will later on."



Jeff Durbin: Christless conservatism saves no one

Matt Walsh, Donald Trump, and, to a more limited extent, Pierre Poilievre have made the case that guys in dresses aren't girls. But... so what? Tearing down one lie without pointing people to the Truth they can actually stand on only leaves them falling for the *next* lie. The world needs God, which means the world needs God's people to speak as God's people.



Best of *Real Talk*

Lucas Holtvluwer and Tyler Vanderwoude have been podcasting for five years now, and you can find all the episodes at RealTalkPodcast.ca or by scanning the QR code to watch them on YouTube. Recent highlights include:



#128 – Is your marriage missing Christ?

Why is marriage hard? If you're single, does marriage scare you? Pastor Matt King joins Lucas to discuss the real struggles in marriage, as well as the real hope found in God's beautiful design.



#129 – Ditching the Psalms dismantles doctrine

Do we prioritize the Psalms in worship, or do we prefer hymns? Does this mean anything when it comes to theological drift? Lucas is joined by his father, Pastor Peter Holtvluwer, the editor of the *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms* commentary.



#131 – Answering the Old Testament's hardest questions

Seminary professor Dr. Jannes Smith was happy to join Tyler and take on the hardest questions about the OT that we could come up with, like: who were the Nephilim, should Christians automatically be pro-Israel, and why don't we cast lots?



Daily Devotionals

If you haven't already, you'll want to check out RP's two daily devotionals.

Manna is audio, 7-15 minutes each, and the fruit of a Christian radio program called "Voice of the Church" that ran for four decades up until 2022. Now old episodes have been transformed into this daily podcast available at MannaPodcast.ca.

Nearer to God is text, with a different Reformed pastor providing a month of devotionals built on a Bible book, or topic, like the Holy Spirit.

Access both on the front page of ReformedPerspective.ca or through the RP App, downloadable at ReformedPerspective.ca/App.



OUR DONORS ENABLED US TO TAKE 4 BIG STEPS FORWARD IN 2025

by Mark Penninga

*“The heart of man plans
his way, but the LORD
establishes his steps”
- Proverbs 16:9*

It is humbling, and a little overwhelming, to look back on 2025 and see how the LORD allowed this organization to take four big steps forward, and on the heels of some more great progress in recent years.

To each of you who made this possible with a donation, we extend a most sincere thanks.



1

1. Expansion to 292 more churches!

In recent years we grew RP's circulation from about 2,000 homes to 10,000 and from a handful of churches to close to 200. This year we provided introductory copies to 292 more churches in Canada, bringing the total close to 500. We plan to do this for three issues and are inviting them to keep receiving it, if they request it. Our hope is that God will use this magazine to promote faithfulness to Him, and unity in the truth.



2

2. New merchandise store!

Late this summer we unveiled our new online store where you can buy clothing and other merchandise to help you speak up for God's glory. Emma DeBoer has been working hard, building up the selection with close to 200 products already.

Our hope is that clothing can be a simple and effective way to help you start conversations about the Gospel and the issues you see covered in the magazine. That is why we priced everything as low as possible – simply to break even. This year, consider getting your Christmas gifts or gift cards at **Store.ReformedPerspective.ca**.



3

3. Real Talk podcast upgrade!

Many Reformed Christians are blessed with excellent preaching and teaching. But what we sometimes lack is applying God's Word to the nitty-gritty of our lives. That is exactly what our *Real Talk* podcast aims to accomplish.

Real Talk has been publishing great content for five years, on a very minimal budget. This year we decided to invest more into the podcast, with the goal of allowing it to endure and also reach far more people. We substantially expanded the role of Mariah Tamminga, the show's producer, allowing her to professionalize the production and create far more video content (which is already getting hundreds of thousands of views).

And we are building a professional studio, complete with soundproofing and multiple video angles, in the basement of Reformed Book Services (Reformed-BookServices.com), a wonderful ministry in Brantford, Ontario. We hope to begin recording from there in November, the Lord willing.



4



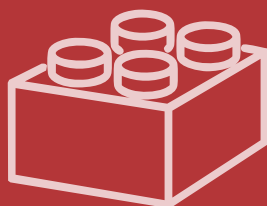
Will you help keep the momentum going through 2026?

4. Changing lives!

We have always tried to be a blessing to Christian families through the articles we publish. But more recently we have been able to step this up, helping families put some of the principles we read about into action. As James 1:22 says, "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

For example, it is one thing to read about the importance of creative play (in contrast to screens), and another to organize a Lego contest last winter. We were thrilled to see over 500 children and youth send in a video with their creative construction!

But the highlight of the year for us was the response from our readers to a 10-day fast from our screens this summer. More than 900 of you registered to take part! If you read some of their feedback in the last issue, you saw how it was literally life-changing for many who took part. Destructive habits were broken, replaced with God-glorifying living. Praise be to God!



It is easy to write about reaching 492 churches and another thing to pay the bill (printing and shipping the last issue cost us \$38,733.66). Although we are facing some headwinds, like the unexpected debanking notice we received in August, it has been so encouraging to see God providing for us month after month through so many of you.

Our budgeted expenses for 2025 are \$618,780. Unlike almost every other media organization in Canada, we don't receive any government funding. If the LORD has given you the means, we respectfully ask that you consider supporting RP alongside your other giving.

- ***If you stood behind us financially this year, are you willing to maintain your support into 2026?***
- ***If it has been a long time, are you willing to start a monthly donation of any amount so that your support can be stable and enduring?***
- ***And if you have never given a donation to Reformed Perspective, are you willing to give a contribution to help cover our expenses for you and to make it possible for others to also receive a Reformed Perspective?***

Donations can be made at www.ReformedPerspective.ca, via e-transfer to admin@reformedperspective.ca, by calling 250-643-8114 (being mindful that we are on BC time), or by mailing a cheque to PO Box 3609, Smithers, BC, V0J 2N0.

Regardless of your ability or willingness, we move forward into the future confident of the LORD's care and protection.



DONATE

Soli Deo Gloria!

The CAN YOU BUILD IT BETTER? Contest

Last year, in our first ever LEGO/brick building contest, hundreds joined in. So of course we wanted to do it again!

This time the theme is “things that aren’t but should be” – we want you to improve on whatever you want. Would your alarm clock be better if it had a coffee pot on top? Should your car have 6 wheels instead of 4? Would your cat run faster if he had rollerblades on? Our God is the Grand Inventor, and as His Image-bearers, we can echo His creativity!

THEME: THINGS THAT AREN’T BUT SHOULD BE

Create something entirely new. It can be functional, fun, or out-of-this-world.

CATEGORIES:

1. Age 0-9
2. Ages 10-13
3. Ages 14-17
4. Ages 18+

PRIZES:
\$200 gift certificate
towards Lego for each
category

RULES:

- One entry per person;
- Entries must be 100% original: not from kits or copying examples from books or online.
- Entries must be designed and built entirely by the person entering the contest.

HOW TO ENTER:

1. Have someone take a picture of you with your creation.
2. Have someone also take a video where you explain your creation.
 - a. Say your first name only.
 - b. Show us what you built.
 - c. No need for editing the video or making it look professional; Just hit record on a phone or tablet.
 - d. Maximum 2 minute video.
3. Submit your picture and video via the online form at **ReformedPerspective.ca/contest**.
4. Under 18? Have a parent give permission to *RP* to share your video/photo (we will only post first names of youth online).

Deadline: January 20, 2026

RP plans to share as many of the entries as we can online – maybe even all of them! – with some also appearing in our March/April issue, along with links to the videos.



Contest sponsored by:



– where adults get to keep building
creative things that help this world