

KERUX

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and to Die is Gain”
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“To Live is Christ, and to Die is Gain”

by John Knoester

Ken Hekman is a friend of mine from my home church in Holland, Michigan. Approximately two years ago on a cold wintry Michigan night he lost his 17-year-old daughter in a tragic car accident. Carla’s car had hit a patch of ice and slid into the path of another vehicle.

She died instantly. Four times in the two weeks preceding her death, Carla had petitioned God in her prayer journal to keep her safe on the dangerous winter roads. Yet, apparently God did not choose to honor her request.

Since that evening Ken and his wife Mary Beth have endured many “dark nights of the soul.” Ken has shaken, and sometimes continues to shake, his fist at God and demanded an answer to the question, “Why?” He has wrestled with God in ways that many of us have never had to, and many of us cannot even imagine. Ken has screamed, wailed, groaned and wept—and continues to do so even today. Yet, despite the tragedy, he has clung to his faith, he has grasped onto God and has given his life in complete service to him. Our pastor back home describes it as having received a “terrible anointing”.

Ken is a poet. Since Carla’s death he has written many powerful poems that

have been dedicated to mourners, and to those who support them. The ministry that God has given to him through his poetry has affected thousands of people living in the Holland community.

This past summer I was preparing to preach a sermon on Philippians 1:21, which says, “*for me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” Because I know Ken well enough I was able to ask him what this verse meant to him. The following was his response:

Dear John,

“*For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” Yeah, I could say that. In fact I have,

Homesick for Heaven

I’m homesick for heaven,
A place only seen
With eyes of faith
And a heart that leans
Upon its creator.
This sense of yearning,
Of not belonging
Is fueled by thoughts
Of those gone before;
But magnified brighter
By tongues of fire.

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There is no containing
A soul's desire.

Though most delight
To celebrate
This home away from home
I'll set my sights
To be translated,
My heart unabated.
For life's overrated.

Yes, you may use the poem in your sermon if you think it will help. Just tell people about Carla. When I was an administrator at a nursing home, I had to come to grips with death, to an extent. I saw adult children who couldn't come to terms with their parents' inevitable death, and they would expect us to do all we could to keep them alive. I developed this philosophy: "Love life, but don't fear death."

Most people think those two are mutually exclusive, but I think they are wrong. Did Christ want us to forget his crucifixion? Does it make it a happy day if we call it Good Friday? We marvel that he said "Not my will be done, but yours" in Gethsemane, but ignore the fact that he was sweating blood before he could submit. Have you ever sweated blood? What kind of anguish do you think it takes? If he was there an hour, my bet is that he suffered beyond our ability to comprehend for fifty-nine minutes. And what does it mean to share in the suffering of Christ? Do we think that to live with Christ is bliss? What if it means

to suffer with him? Would we still sign up? Let's take it further. If to live is Christ, and that means suffering, but we're not all that bad off, then what? Are we to take on other people's sufferings? Like maybe befriending a homeless person, investing in someone in prison or serving in the inner city? Does discipleship mean sacrifice? Even voluntary sacrifice?

So if we see death as gain, does that mean we're suicidal? I like C.S. Lewis' quote on this one: "Die before you die. There is no chance after." That inspired this poem:

No Chance

Our time is but a season,
Like a simple wisp of breath.
So look quick to find life's reason
'Fore your eyes are closed in death.

Seek the Lord of earth and sky,
With the faithful take your stance.
Die to self before you die,
After death you'll have no chance.

I hope this helps John.

In Christ,
Ken

It seems to me that Seminary, and for that matter, all of life, is a continuous process of dying. Dying to our own wants and desires in this world, and submitting com-

(Continued on page 3)

You Will Never Hear this Faculty Member Say this at Calvin Sem

"I think we place way too much emphasis on the original languages."

-Professor J.A.D. Weima

"You know, I think the Hindus are on to something."

-Professor R. Greenway

"We might think our way into new ways of behaving, but we will never behave our way into new ways of thinking"

-Professor R. De Vries

"You really can't apply Biblical principles to the twentieth century—I mean, the Israelites were thousands of years ago half way around the world. It's a whole different culture."

-Professor C. Van Reken

"The season finale of *Friends* is as good a reason as any to reschedule your exam."

-Academic Dean Bekker

"This year, no syllabus!"

-Professor H. Zwaanstra

(Continued from page 2)

pletely to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We might resist, but that's only a sign of our own insidious pride. You see if we're not ready to die, then we're really not ready to live. And it is only when we die that we can really begin to serve. Serving others because we have allowed ourselves to become completely abandoned "in that reckless raging fury that is called the love of God."

Two days after the above email, Ken sent me another poem.. It is entitled *Be the Church*, and it is my prayer that we will indeed be this to each other throughout the year ahead. May God truly bless each of you as you seek to serve him!

Be the Church

by Ken Hekman

I've seen a preacher now and then
With arrogance and double-chin
And habits that remind me of
A cross between a hawk and dove.
He chooses whom he loves and hates
With passive and aggressive traits,
While calling from his lofty perch:
"Care to join us? Be the church!"

I've heard a thousand tales unfold
Of places where you fit the mold,
But seldom does the church take aim
To serve the poor and aid the lame.
When needs are greatest, who is there
To offer more than pious prayer?
Will Christians end the desperate search,
And will they dare to be the church?

To be the church is so much more
Than opening the massive door,
Or calling to a passing soul
How Jesus' love can make them whole.
It's more than prayer, more than songs;
It's taking chances, righting wrongs,
Getting dirty, shedding tears,
Helping people face their fears.

Prayer Concerns

By Mike Hooegeboom

I always find it difficult to begin a journey. This is not a good thing as I've had to face an overseas journey about a dozen times. As I approach the airport my stomach begins to work itself into a knot and my throat gets dry.

I have no fear of flying and the good-byes, though difficult, have gotten to be part of the routine of flying overseas. It is the journey I dread; the short sleepless night, the long layover, passing through customs and haggling with taxi drivers. My most relaxed journeys have been the tours. In those cases I rely on my guide to show me around.

This year promises to be another journey of new experiences and growth for all of us. For my part in this journey, I will do what I can to keep the prayer concerns of our community before all of you. I have been reading *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer* by Eugene Petersen and will share with you the insights that he points out.

In his first chapter, Petersen explains that the Psalms are the responses of people who have heard God speak to them and feel compelled to respond. Sometimes our responses to God are private. Sometimes our prayers come out as sighs and groans that the Spirit translates for us. But at other times, we need to pray in a worshiping community. "Prayer is the primary means by which we develop our lives in these communities before God, and the Psalms train us in it" (p. 19).

This year, let's train ourselves to become a praying community through our prayer groups, chapels, the "Prayer Requests" sheet and by praying our way through this column.

Thanks and Praise

†That Al Danks' grandmother is doing better after her near-fatal illness.

†That Floyd Aukema's son is doing well after his surgery.

†That Thelma Koens is home after surgery and is doing as well as can be expected

Prayer

☪ Pray for Beth Guikema-Bode and her family as doctors will attempt to remove a lump from her mother-in-law's breast this week.

☪ Continue to pray for the Ponsen family who feel the loss of a wife and mother and deal with injuries sustained in the car crash.

☪ Pray for Professor Bosma and others who are dealing with the flu.

☪ Pray for complete healing for Thelma Koens as she recuperates at home. She is expected to be home for a month.



If you need prayer support please call 261-5929,

From the Registrar

by John Vander Lugt

You may be interested in the following enrollment statistics for the fall quarter. We have 270 students, very similar to last fall when we had 273 students enrolled. They are in the following programs:

M.Div.		
	Juniors	52
	Middlers	28
	Seniors	28
	Interns	9
M.A.		
	Educational Ministry	23
	Missions and Church Growth	9
M.T.S.		26
Th.M.		37
Ph.D.		29
Programs for Ministerial Candidacy		11
Unclassified		18

We have 54 female students (50 last fall), 64 international students (66 last fall) from 21 countries and 97 students who are members of churches other than the Christian Reformed Church (96 last fall). Get to know one another well!



Announcements

ATTENTION ALL M.Div. STUDENTS!!!

It is seminary policy that M.Div. Students who plan to fulfill field education requirements through a one-year internship take that internship after their second year of residency. Another way of stating this policy is that a one year internship may not be taken after the final year in residency unless an exception is granted by the academic dean. Students in their second year of residency who want to request that an exception be made for them must submit their request to Dean Bekker no later than November 15, 1999. Questions? See Dr. Van Harn or Dean Bekker.



FIELD TRIP ANYONE?

CTS will hold a **SPECIAL INTEREST DAY** on Thursday, October 7. Beginning at 9 AM Prof. Robert De Vries will lead a discussion on grieving. Following the discussion and coffee break, participants will go on a **FIELD TRIP TO ZAAGMAN FUNERAL HOME** for a presentation and tour by Bob Zaagman. Prof. Ron Nydam will conduct a question and answer period and wrap-up.

EVENINGS IN THE CHAPEL

Calvin College welcomes Tom Key to its Evenings in the Chapel series. Under the theme of "Millennium Madness?" Key will present a one-man dramatic version of *The Revelation of John*. The free production will take place Tuesday, October 5, at 8 PM in the Calvin College Chapel.



GRAND RAPIDS MISSIONARY UNION

The Grand Rapids Missionary Union invites all seminarians to its meeting on Tuesday, October 12, at the Westview Christian Reformed Church from 9:30 AM to noon. Representatives from each of their mission agencies will speak. The church is located at

KERUX

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The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor, the faculty, the staff, or a majority of the student body.

All published material is copy-

Calvin Theological Seminary Academic Calendar



Stob Lectures	Oct. 5-7	Tue-Thu
Greek Comp.	Oct. 6	Wed, 4:00 pm
Special Interest (no class)	Oct. 7	Thu
Drop/Add Deadline*	Oct. 8	Fri
Canadian Thanksgiving	Oct. 11	Mon (No Class)

*Last day to drop a course at 70% credit, 50% credit after this date until the third date.