



Worship Evangelism

by Ryan Pelton

MINISTRY

The last couple of years have been a journey of exploring, praying, reading, and having many conversations about **worship as evangelism**. Before coming to seminary I had the opportunity to be part of a church (The River CRC, CA) that had grown from a couple hundred worshippers on a Sunday to about a thousand worshippers in a six-year span. Our church was not growing because of transfer members, though there were some. The church was growing with people that had been zapped by the Holy Spirit and now wanted to follow Jesus. This was new for me because the churches I was apart of growing up didn't see many people come to Christ. This new experience caused me to think deeply about worship as evangelism in ways I had never done before.

Did you notice I said, "Worship as evangelism"? That is what I was experiencing at The River CRC.



Sally Morgenthaler in her book, "Worship Evangelism" was a good dialogue partner to have when I was thinking about these issues of worship as evangelism. She wrote this book in the late 90's at the tail end of the "seeker sensitive" movement coined by churches like Saddleback and Willow Creek. **These churches designed their Sunday gatherings around evangelism, not worship.** They used drama, music, images, and teachings, which were geared purely for unbelievers in the community. God has used these churches to reach thousands of people that may have never stepped foot in a traditional church setting.

The problem with this strategy of church is that **it assumes that unbelievers are not interested in Christian worship** and can't experience the bigness and the nearness of God in a

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The Line Dancing Church

by Margaret Jenista

FORMATION

A year and a half into my seminary education, I'm learning a new definition of self-discipline. Discipline is choosing a nap on Sunday afternoon instead of looking over Greek paradigms "just one more time." **Discipline is resolutely closing my copy of *The Institutes* on Friday night to go country line dancing.**

I grew up in the church. I definitely did not grow up line dancing. The church, The Institutes and, on a good day, the Greek are my comfort zones – I'm familiar with the expectations, my knowledge and limitations. Line dancing is a counter-cultural adventure and, in advent of the Worship Symposium, **I think we who are overly worship-exposed and overly worship-learned can pick up a few steps from line dancing.**

Nothing but a friendship with someone who insisted that this was "just my thing" would have induced me so far outside my own experience. With her patient coaching, I prepared a few basic steps and, more generally, relied heavily upon her enthusiasm and comfort. Once inside the swinging doors of the saloon, I was inundated by

unfamiliar music and the general joviality of the crowd (what a crowd!). I was excited but mostly frightened that I would *heel-toe* while everyone else *do-si-doed*. I planned to sit out the first dance, but such an approach is foreign to the communal nature of the line dance. Everyone appeared to know what they were doing as the dance floor ebbed and flowed seamlessly in time with the music.

My friend pulled me up to the outskirts of the dance floor, knowing **the experience wouldn't really be mine until I participated.** Up close and personal, standing as one of the crowd, I realized that the venture wasn't as polished as it had first appeared. I was enveloped by the crowd. With their encouragement and sometimes even their shouting the next step over their shoulder to me, I fumbled through. I started moving and, before I knew it, I was tentatively gaining ownership. To my astonishment, by the harmonica's outro, I was following the steps with a modicum of something resembling grace. **The dance began long before I**

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worship gathering. The post-Christian world in which we live seems to crave spirituality like never before in history. Maybe people that are not followers of Jesus have never seen heartfelt passionate worship of God? Maybe what happens in our churches on Sunday's needs to be evaluated? **What is the goal? Is it God, or growth?** Is it evangelism, or some other purpose? These questions need to be asked.

Let me give **some suggestions** of how our worship can fuel evangelism and have huge impact individually, as a community, and for the watching world. **We need to become worshippers like David.** David's entire life was worship filled with up's and downs, victories and defeats. His worship took on four qualities:

First, David's worship was *a kind of life*. His life was full on for God, for His purposes, and for His glory

(Ps. 89:15). It was a kind of Pauline worship, "worship as a way of life" found in Romans 12. It was **not a Sunday-morning-only kind of worship**. It was all the time, all the way.

Second, David's worship was *uncompromising*. It could be said that his worship was **not half-hearted and small**. David tells us what was in his heart and his own experience in Psalm 27:4. Jesus reminds us of this kind of uncompromising worship in Matthew 22:37-40. That is the heart of why we are created and why the church exists.

Third, David's worship *witnessed* (Ps. 40:3, 57:9). When we are full on for God **the world will sit up and take notice**. This is the heart and soul of worship evangelism. The New Testament Church (Acts 2:42-47) was so attractive to the world because worship was the priority.

Fourth, David's worship was *first priority in his life*. **David's life was an overflow of the love he had for**

God. The entire Biblical narrative can be summed up as an invitation for all of humanity to become worshippers of God. That is our highest calling as followers of Jesus, and what we were created for! What is your first priority in life? What is the first priority of the church?

Make worship a priority in your church and in your life. Why? Here is what might happen: First, **God will get the glory** he deserves. Second, when worship becomes a priority, **evangelism happens by "accident."** People around us begin to see an infectious love of God coming through our lives. Worship will in turn; drive evangelism, not the other way around. Third, when the church makes worship first, **God becomes the goal**, not growth. Oddly, **growth usually happens when people get desperate for God** (see Acts 2). God is inviting all of us to join him in the ranks of true worship (Jn. 4: 23-24). K

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showed up and it would continue long after I'd gone home. But, for awhile (a miracle of Kenny Chesney proportions!), as the dance floor continued to ebb and flow seamlessly in time with the music, I got to add my cowboy boots to the collective scuffle.

Learning to line dance taught me that it was OK and, in fact, even expected that I wouldn't "get it right" the first time. **No one rolled their eyes or huffed away when I went left against everyone else's right.** They smiled good-naturedly when I inexplicably ended facing backward with everyone else facing forward. I quick righted myself and we all kept dancing. I'm grateful that the music didn't grind to a halt, the band didn't confer among themselves and decide that, since there was a novice in their midst,

they would keep their music to an electric-slide-for-dummies. They kept going at a reasonable pace, acknowledged my presence but didn't stop to instruct me on the art of line dancing with playcharts on a whiteboard. They just let me stay half a beat **behind them, and encouraged my fumbling attempts.**

So, wonder with me how line dancing compares with worship practices:

Are our parishioners equipped to teach their friends the basic steps? Are they emboldened to invite their friends into the dance? When people watch the Church worship, does it appear to be a seamless corporate ebb and flow or do we tend to showcase only our best talent? Are we making room on the outskirts of our dance

floors for those with two worshipping left-feet? On the other hand, are we so eager to make the dance novice-friendly that we never challenge ourselves with a more complicated jump-cross-turn? Do we instruct our congregations in worship or do we worship together and keep a nurturing eye on the dancers who are one beat behind? The essential truth about worship is this: **the church began long before we showed up and it will continue long after we've gone home.** But for awhile (a miracle of Christian proportions!), as the 2000-year-old dance continues to ebb and flow seamlessly in time with the rhythms of the Holy Spirit, we get to add our praises to the collective scuffle. K

"The Worship Institute? You do Symposium, right?" Or, "You publish worship music, right?" People ask this all the time about the **Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (CICW)**. The answer is always "Yes, *and ...*" While Symposium and music are crucial parts of CICW's work, they just scratch the surface of what goes on in CICW's central office across from the Calvin library, and in its satellite offices in the Seminary.

With over a dozen staff members, including several CTS students, a fleet of publications and events, grants to congregations around the continent, and a vast website, the interdisciplinary CICW has much to offer, and not just to church musicians:

-For Worshipers: resources and reflections on preparing to worship and perspectives on worship from the pew.

-For Students: events, courses, fellowships, and other opportunities to be mentored in worship leadership and theological education.

-For Artists: multimedia resources and conferences on how the arts relate to theology and worship.

-For Pastors and Worship Planners: worship planning guides and sample worship service outlines.

-For Scholars: documents and studies for interdisciplinary research

The best way to get a taste of what CICW does is its website, www.calvin.edu/worship. With over 1,000 pages (and growing each week), the site merits multiple visits. But here are some highlights of what you'll find there:

-Vital Worship feature stories: in-depth articles about how worship renewal is happening in congregations.

-Teaching Worship: resources for teaching congregations, committees and classes about worship.

-Campus Worship: a series of studies on and information on worship and campus ministries around the conti-

nent.

-Worship Worldwide: a collection of slideshows and recommended resources organized by continent.

-Audio Resources: an index of audio files of lectures, interviews, and sermons, and a weekly podcast.

So where does CICW get the money to do all this? In addition to funds provided by Calvin College and Seminary, CICW receives generous grants from Lilly Endowment, Inc. in Indianapolis. With a variety of grants, Lilly supports congregational research, theological education, and worship renewal throughout North America, including the *Making Connections Initiative* and *Sustaining Pastoral Excellence* at Calvin Seminary. Lilly has given CICW grants since the late 1990s. In turn, CICW awards over 50 grants each year to congregations who have proposed projects to rediscover the meaning of worship and stimulate worship renewal.

CICW maintains close partnerships with the college -- including collaborations with many college faculty and staff -- and the Seminary, by supporting Continuing Education events, partnering with the Center for Excellence in Preaching on several projects, and having some CICW staffers keep offices and teach at the Seminary.

Is CICW a CRC organization?

Again, the answer is "Yes, *and ...*" CICW is not a denominational agency, but it keeps close partnerships with CRC Publications (which publishes *Reformed Worship* magazine) and CRC congregations. It is also thoroughly Reformed in its perspective on worship, its research, and its publications. But CICW is also the center of an ecumenical conversation about worship, connecting through its events and grants with worshipers, leaders, and authors in Presbyterian, Lutheran, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Pentecostal, Episcopal, and Roman

Catholic worshipping communities.

So what can a Seminarian gain from what the Worship Institute has to offer?

-Visit the website each week for new resources.

-Use the *The Worship Sourcebook*, a CICW article, or worship service outline to help plan a worship service or sermon.

-Attend a CICW lecture, conference, or the annual Symposium on Worship.

-Ask a CICW staffer for help with your research.

-Read a CICW-published book.

-Apply for a Worship Renewal Grant once you enter the ministry.

-Use CICW resources to start good conversations about worship, going beyond questions of worship styles to talk about the meaning and purpose of worship. **K**

Schedule of Events

*** 3rd Drop/Add deadline:**

Fri -- January 20, 2006

*** Reading Recess**

Mon -- January 23, 2006 to

Tue -- January 24, 2006

*** Oral Comps**

Mon -- January 23, 2006 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

*** Forum - Eugene Petersen**

Student Center

Wed -- January 25, 2006 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm

*** BIBLE KNOWLEDGE EXAMINATION**

Wed -- January 25, 2006 4:00 pm - 6:00

pm, Computer Lab

*** CALVIN SYMPOSIUM ON WORSHIP**

01/26/2006 - 01/28/2006

(NO CLASSES on Fri -- January 27, 2006)

*** REGISTRATION:**

SPRING QUARTER

01/30/2006 8:00 am - 01/31/2006 3:00 pm

*** COMPREHENSIVE EXAM: GREEK**

Wed -- February 1, 2006

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm

*** FINAL DAY OF CLASSES**

Wed -- February 15, 2006

*** READING PERIOD - NO CLASSES**

Thu -- February 16, 2006

*** EXAMINATIONS: WINTER QUARTER**

02/20/2006 9:00 am - 02/24/2006 4:00 pm

THE FOUR HORSEMEN
OF MARRIAGE
BY JOHN GOTTMAN

“Certain kinds of negativity, if allowed to run rampant, are so lethal to a relationship that I call them the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.”

Criticism

“A complaint focuses on a specific behavior, but a criticism ups the ante by throwing in blame and general character assassination. Here’s a recipe: To turn any complaint into a criticism, just add my favorite line: ‘What is wrong with you?’”

Contempt

“Sarcasm and cynicism are types of contempt. So are name-calling, eye-rolling, sneering, mockery, and hostile humor. In whatever form, contempt—the worst of the four horsemen—is poisonous to a relationship because it conveys disgust.”

Defensiveness

“Defensiveness is really a way of blaming your partner. You’re saying in affect ‘the problem isn’t *me*, it’s *you*.’ Defensiveness just escalates the conflict, which is why it’s so deadly.”

Stonewalling

Where criticism and contempt lead to defensiveness, eventually one partner tunes out. Rather than confronting, one disengages. By turning away, one avoids a fight, but also avoids the marriage.

In the most recent issue of the *Kerux*, Henry Reyenga laments the **scarcity of debate and honest dialogue** surrounding the issue of the ordination of women in ecclesiastical office. His assertion that the conservative points of view on the matter have been reduced to whispers was puzzling to me, because I don’t think that it’s true at all. It seems that **every two or four months**, I encounter the tired elephant metaphor in the *Kerux* or in passing conversation (in fact, we’re no longer beating dead horses here at CTS, we’ve turned our fists to a larger mammal). This fact, combined with the general aura of **uncritiqued patriarchy** that pervades the seminary causes me to believe that matters of gender are not at all relegated to the margins. In fact, I would assert that few issues are so prominent.

In light of the patriarchal disposition of the seminary, the trepidation to speak on the part of those on the conservative side of this issue seems undue. When **the culture at large is predominantly male**, and when the denomination as a whole mostly tows the conservative line (as Mr. Reyenga notes), it seems that conservatives have an overwhelming amount of allies on their side. This makes the fears of these “poor souls” resemble those of an elephant who is afraid of a mouse (oops, there’s that mammal again). If conservatives still feel uncomfortable in spite of the cultural and theological capital afforded by CRC demographics, perhaps they can treat their discomfort as an opportunity to **stoke the fires of empathy** in their hearts. **Through their discomfort they may receive a small taste of what it is like to be socially object**, even though they most assuredly are not.

Mr. Reyenga also calls for the cessation of *ad hominem* attacks, and the divorce of ideas from those who espouse them. In this matter, such a request is impossible to fulfill. While it

might be the height of presumption for me to place words in the mouths of my sisters at the seminary, I think that many of them would concur that **this issue is so intensely personal that arguments about it cannot be made dispassionately**. For the women here, conservative arguments are not merely one side in an abstract theological debate, but have much to do with the **legitimacy of their very presence** at CTS and the legitimacy of their call from God. In this light, it is plainly obvious that **the very existence of this debate is personal in a way that most men here cannot even fathom**, and the conservative arguments are fundamentally *ad hominem*.

Mr. Reyenga enjoins his colleagues to develop “thick skin,” in order to (I presume) allow the debate to proceed in an orderly fashion, without the unwanted intrusion of messy emotions. Perhaps the problem here is not the lack of thick skin, but that the skin on some of our hides is entirely too thick. The male privilege enjoyed by many in the conservative camp affords them a tough hide indeed – perhaps a more apt metaphor would be “armor plating.” **The armor of male privilege lends a sense of invulnerability to those on the conservative side** of the debate; they can argue their position without fear of a genuinely harmful reprisal, such as threats to their status in the denomination, or their place at the top of the socio-cultural heap. The armor of male privilege allows the conservatives to venture into the theological fray and emerge more or less unscathed. Such a luxury is not within the grasp of the women seeking ordination through this seminary. In order for the debate to proceed in a healthy fashion, men need to shed their armor of privilege. Doing so will allow them to be vulnerable in a way that can lead to empathy, and give them the appropriate sensitivity to help discern how seemingly innocuous words can hurt others deeply. K

I'm female. Although that fact doesn't define me, it definitely affects how I see the world. I get tired of having too many discussions about what I think and ignoring how I feel. When the topic of abuse comes up in class, the "victims" aren't abstract concepts, but rather women I know who aren't all that different from me. And when the topic of women in office comes up, it seems that the answer I'd have would be obvious. Except it's still not. **I'm not convinced that the Bible says that women should be pastors and/or elders. However, I'm also not fully convinced that women are not allowed to be.** And those lack of convictions have led to enough awkward painful moments over the years that **I wish we would stop talking about it so much.**

Just because women in office doesn't come up in arguments in class or in the Student Center doesn't mean it never comes up. For many of the females who are here seeking ordination, **the issue comes up all too often – we live out the issue.** It comes up with every thought of a future pastorate. When male students put their requests in for summer assignments, they go by location and timing. When female students put in their requests, we pray that somehow the number of churches that are okay with students of both genders will be greater than the number of female students needing places to preach. And as we try to explain the decision to go into ministry to family and friends who are hostile to women in office, the whole debate gets old and painful. Never mind the pain that too many females have lingering on them when we arrive – pain of be-

ing rejected by classes for money, of having opportunities denied, and of having to fight to be allowed to use God-given gifts and follow Him.

I struggled with whether the paragraph above was about 'we' or 'they.' I feel absolutely no call to be a Minister of the Word, so the paragraph was about those who did – them. Except I'm a female in the M. Div. program, so it's about me, too. When I receive money for being female, **I worry about being merely a cause instead of a person trying to follow God faithfully.** Sermon writing tears me up inside; I feel pushed into something I don't know if I am allowed to be. When I receive comments that seem focused on how nice it will be when God enlightens everyone to see how women ought to be in office, I'm not sure whether to be mournful, hurt or angry. Am I being misunderstood or am I the one not understanding? **How do we hear God rightly on this issue and still show grace to those who disagree** on something that questions our ability to hear God?

And I don't know how exactly to do that. For the sake of the females who have too long been the issue, instead of merely having to live with the questions raised by it, is it fair to ask that those against women in office be less vocal? But can you limit the voice of one side without it becoming the position held by all those 'in the right'? **The questions come down to how we can be hospitable** to both sides and those of us in the middle.

Intermingled with the women in office issue is that of females being a minority at Seminary, a minority that has historically been considered the

lesser sex. The gender issue, as it is intimately tied to the women in office question, needs to become part of the hospitality question, while also seeing that it raises other questions. Sexist comments made by those who are for women in office are as inappropriate as believing that being against women in office makes one a male chauvinist. **But in a world that struggles with too much abuse and too much white male-bashing, sometimes it's hard to know what's good clean fun** that reflects a healthy perspective on reality and what's inappropriate.

Sarah Sumner, in her book *Men and Women in the Church*, quotes a female talking about Seminary: "I don't want to enter the world of theology; I'm afraid of what it might do to me. So many women in seminary are angry, and I don't want to be like them. I wish it wasn't like this because I lose out no matter what choice I make. If I seize the opportunity, I lose out big time by becoming embittered at Christians who refuse to accept me. If I forgot the opportunity, I lose out even more by missing God's call on my life." (23-24) The issue, as much as I want it to be merely about how I feel and what I believe, is a lot more complicated and painful and unfair than I wish it were.

So maybe I'm not tired of talking about it all the time, so much as I'm tired of having to live with it. I know that being female is something to delight in, but sometimes it raises so many questions and complications that it clouds over that male and female were created in God's image. Together we are called very good. And commanded to follow God faithfully. K

OVERHEARD IN THE HALLWAY

"Do you think we won't have any memory of the former world in the new creation? I don't think so! I suppose maybe when we've been there ten thousand years, blah, blah, blah."

- Prof. Cooper

How is it that **'orthodox' has become a derogatory term?** Who decided that the faith of our fathers might have been good enough for them but is grossly inadequate for modern humanity? Why has our denomination lost faith in our faith, and fallen into an anemic apologetic for what our creeds and confessions proclaim with such beauty and power and confidence? When did we begin to equate change with progress? What has happened to the power of the gospel? Where is the twenty-first century church to look for hope against such a potent and pervasive secular society?

The answer, many claim, is in us. We need to be more creative, more ingenious, more imaginative. **We need to get with the times and use contemporary tools, contemporary techniques, and contemporary models** to reach a contemporary mind. Yet the church continues to falter in the West, continues to dwindle, continues to shrink into itself. We have become obsessed, not with the victory of the church, but with the survival of our congregations or denominations. We have busied ourselves with the work, not of building the kingdom of God, but of building our own kingdoms, our own congregational success stories, our own denominational empires. The church reels under its own uncertainty, covering beside the giants of Evangelicalism, mega-churches, para-church organizations, the health-and-wealth gospel.

What can we do against such odds, against such competitors? What do we have to offer? How can we make a difference? What can one pastor, one person on a ministry staff, one professor do against these forces? We simply aren't smart enough or clever enough or dynamic enough or sophisticated enough or motivational enough. We just can't be what contemporary church culture tells us we must be if we are to be 'successful'.

So we retreat. We grow apathetic to the larger issues of Classis, of Synod, of ecumenical dialogues. We believe that God has called us to preach the ancient gospel, to take care of the flock which God has appointed us, to understand and preserve and proclaim the orthodox faith to each generation anew, to teach our children what has been passed on to us, we now want to huddle in a corner, taking care of our congregations but despairing about the larger body. We hold on, but have lost the energy to fight. Liberalism, led by those who equate contextualization with syncretism, change with progress, spiritual relevance with worldly appeal, is too powerful, too well organized and too pervasive even in our little denomination. So we minister faithfully in local pockets, waiting for the inevitable day

when the boat is almost under water, and we can hold on no longer and at least flee for safety, calm in the fact that *we* at least were faithful to the end.

But is this the only way? Is the faith of our creeds and confessions, the orthodox Reformed faith, the orthodox Christian faith really doomed to become a relic in our post-Christian society? Is there really no hope? Is the only answer to do as some in the emergent church movement have done and simply adapt the styles and techniques and desires of the modern world into a Christian mold and hope that we can compete for a time with sports illustrated and MTV? Or is there another possibility? Is there another road? Do we really have to speak from within culture, by its rules, in order to speak with hope to our culture? Karl Barth didn't think so. Noting this very trend years ago, he said, "The church would be a bad servant of the world if out of consideration for the real or assumed desires of the world and its demand for drama, psychology, etc., she desired in her service anything but obedience. **What the church does owe the world is not her own cleverness or adaptability or the attempt made in all lands at all times to suit the people's wishes, but the gospel of Jesus Christ.**"

Could it be that the things which we have become ashamed of are the very things which offer the greatest hope for the world? Could it be that, in our attempt to reach the world, we have put aside the only things which have the power to reach deep enough to really change them? In 1st Thessalonians, **Paul speaks about this very issue.** Paul too lived in a culture full of many words, full of great orators who could sway the people with their fiery rhetoric and powerful personalities. He too lived in a culture hostile to Christianity. However, in the face of these challenges, Paul, the greatest evangelist of all time, had one simple tool with which he worked miraculous changes throughout the ancient world: the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Apostolic faith, the orthodox faith proclaimed in and through the Holy Spirit.

But some will say, 'but it was Paul's great personality and rhetoric, for did he not say that he became all things to all people in order to win some? That's what we are trying to do too! We do whatever it takes to get people in the door, whatever it takes to keep them in the church.' But Paul refutes that idea directly in chapter two. He assures us that **he did not use flattery, did not try to trick people, and did not say things** to please humans. That isn't his secret. No, he tells us the secret of his success in the first chapter, in

verse 5. He says, "our gospel came to you not in word only, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with much assurance." **It was the content of his message, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which had the power to transform so many.**

It is this gospel, this message, this faith that is **the only weapon we have with enough power to change lives today. The faith of the apostles and early church fathers, the faith of the Reformers, the faith expressed in our confessions by deBres, Oleivianus, Ursinus and the fathers of Dordrecht, the ancient faith, the orthodox faith, it is this faith and this faith alone which can, through the work of the Holy Spirit, change not only someone's exterior actions but also their interior disposition, change not only their Sunday habits but their eternal destination, change not only their ignorant minds but also their hard hearts. It is time we stopped apologizing for the Reformed faith. It is time we stopped retreating** into secluded corners. It is time we stopped being afraid.

God has promised that his church, the one holy catholic and apostolic church to which all who are in Christ belong, will never be destroyed. **The day may come when the Christian Reformed Church falls into abject heresy and unbelief and ceases to belong to that eternal body, but today is not that day.** The day may come when the time to fight for the orthodox faith within our denomination, to fight for the faith of our confessions, becomes an act of futility, but today is not that day. The day may come when all those who are faithful to Christ must flee to the safety of more orthodox branches of the Reformed church, but today is not that day.

Today is a day to stand up for what we believe. Today is a day to rely, not upon our own cleverness, but upon the power of the gospel to transform even the lowliest of sinners into the most glorious of saints, saints which one day will shine like the stars in the sky and rule over all creation alongside our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Today is a day to stop hiding and to start fighting for the truth, the truth which is the only hope for the human race. Today is a day when all those who believe that the orthodox faith of our fathers is living and powerful must band together and, as one body, with one mind and a unified strategy, continue to run the race and fight the good fight.

The time for apathy is over, and the time for action is at hand. Let us, who are preparing to go forth to lead God's people in the CRC and throughout the universal church,

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Music blares through the house at a deafening decibel, breakfast dishes are scattered around the kitchen, the dog barks ferociously by the door, children (dressed only in underwear) dart in and out of rooms yelling—“You’re it!” I look at the clock—only 10 minutes ‘til worship starts! **At these moments, I find myself asking God why He decided to give me a Pastor as a husband!** Doesn’t He know I would like my husband available Sunday morning to help get everybody dressed in pretty apparel, with ribbons in hair and cowlicks gelled over? What exactly does my pastor-husband do at the church so early Sunday morning anyway??

Many people who find themselves married to a Pastor have told me that Sunday is the worst day of the week for them. Not only is it difficult going “solo” before church, the entire day is one of single parenting, or just being *alone* if you don’t have kids in your family. I entirely understand that thought, but can’t help feeling sad when I hear those words. For me, despite it all, **Sunday is still my favorite day of the week.** Ask my three girls—I wake them most Sunday mornings with the words “Get up! It’s the best day of the week!”

Despite its apparent difficulties, there is still hope on Sunday for ministry families. My husband, Darren, has been in the ministry seven years. By the grace of God, we’ve kept our minds free from the bitterness that can so easily entangle our hearts and turn us away from the enjoyment of Sundays. Allow me to share some of our family’s strategies for keeping Sundays delightful.

Traditions promote togetherness. One of our family’s favorite Sunday morning traditions is a special breakfast. *Everybody* wakes up early prior to Dad’s departure. Favorite praise music greets our children’s ears as they stumble to the table. Candles light the kitchen and create a cozy, tranquil environment. Pastries—such as cinnamon rolls—take

the place of the usual breakfast of cold cereal. Small touches send powerful messages that there is something different about this day...something Holy! This family time together counteracts the all too common occurrence of a Pastor gone to church early, spouse waking up alone, everybody eating separately, all resulting in a bitter attitude.

Connect before worship. After a short separation (this is when the kitchen clean up, dog barking, kids not ready on time difficulties occur!), our family *makes sure* we reunite in the church foyer, give a hug, and find a spot to sit together—with Dad.

Seize every ounce of worship time together. Worshipping with the people you love most is one of the greatest gifts we receive from our Lord. There’s no better feeling than to snuggle under the arm of your spouse as you sing your favourite hymn or holding your loved one’s hand while receiving God’s greeting. However, families that have a spouse on the pulpit during this hour often miss that blessing. In order to maximize our time together during worship, Pastor Darren sits with *us*, his family, every moment that he is not on the platform. Some Sundays he is doing a lot. However, there are Sundays when he is not leading worship and has to get up to do only God’s greeting and the message. Cherish and hold on to every chance you have in the pew together.

Keep the kids with you in the pew. As our girls have been getting older, they have been asking more and more to sit with their friends in a different row, separate from us at worship. Our answer is generally the same, “No.” Again, our family seizes every ounce of worship time *together*. There may be a temptation to grant them their wish of sitting with a friend. It may even seem easier to have one less kid to take care of. But stand firm! Some of my most treasured moments with my daughters have been in *worship*. There is a closeness during that hour that is divine.

Pray for your spouse! Prayer has kept me from the bitterness of being a Sunday Morning Widow. I pray for my husband constantly throughout the week, praying even more fervently for him on “sermon day” as HE seeks to deliver God’s words to us. The last words I say to Darren as he leaves my side in worship and steps towards the pulpit are “I’ll be praying for you.” Prayer keeps me connected to him while we are apart, even though he is not beside me to hold my hand, we are adjoined by my constant, humble mutterings to our Lord God Almighty.

Make certain that vacation Sundays stay a vacation. We absolutely love the people of the church we presently serve. However, if Darren has a Sunday off, we make it a point not to worship with them! We live in an area with an abundance of churches and take advantage of the opportunity to spend non-distracted worship and fellowship time with one another. Going into another church also allows Darren the anonymity to focus solely on God and his family! After all, even on a Pastor’s days off, parishioners want to discuss spiritual issues!

With a spouse as a Pastor, Sundays are not the easiest. There will be some loneliness, some anxiety, some chaos in the home, but hold fast. Adopt some approaches that work for your family, keeping bitterness away and drawing you closer to one another and the Lord. You may end up leaving the house a mess, taking children to church without ribbons in hair, and even forgetting to put your own shoes on. (Yes, amidst chaos, I have, on occasion, ended up at church with slippers on.) However, Sunday can still be the best day of the week!

Beverly Roorda ministers with her husband Darren at Bellevue CRC in Bellevue, Washington

K

**CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

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The *Kerux* is generally published tri-weekly, but depends on submissions and the workload of the editors. It is funded by Student Senate and CTS.

Submissions are due a week after the current publication. Anyone may submit an article, but members of the CTS community are given first priority. Submission does not guarantee publication. Editors reserve the right to edit submissions for content and propriety.

Anonymous submissions will not be published.

There is no remuneration for submissions.

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**And he said to them,
"Go into all the world
and proclaim the good news
to the whole creation." Mark 16:15**

(Continued from page 6)

prepare together for the turning of the tide. Let us, who are even now ministering to the body of Christ, pledge together to **rely not on our own cleverness or the machinations of some religious entrepreneur, but rather on the solid foundation which our forefathers have laid.** Let us, whom God has called to shepherd the flock which he purchased with his own blood, promise together to stand side by side in this battle, to encourage each other, to watch over each other, to pray for each other, and so, by the grace of God, faithfully and obediently to proclaim anew for our generation freedom for the captive, sight for the blind, comfort for the widow, and hope for the down-hearted in the name of Jesus Christ. **Christianity does not need to change in order to prevent death, it must hold fast in order to remain alive. Let us remember that our calling is not to invent a new faith,** but to proclaim an old one. Let us revisit orthodoxy, and thereby not only believe in God, but also believe him and all his promises. **K**

"Welcome! Come in!"

"It's so good to see you!"

"I'm glad you're here with me."

"I'm sorry we've been gone. It's been hard."

"It's OK. I know it hurts, but I can make it better."

"Thanks for caring so much!"

"I've got some things to tell you."

"Great! Help us understand the situation. "

"Here's the story...."

"Good story! I can relate."

"May I offer you a bite to eat?"

"Thanks! You have given us so much already.

What can I do in return?"

"Use my gifts. Go with my blessing!"

"Thanks again! You're awesome!"

ATTENTION POTENTIAL CANDIDATES! CANDIDACY APPLICATION

Qualifying persons who wish to apply for candidacy for CRC ministry in 2006 should **email Karlene Werner**, administrative assistant to Vice President Duane Kelderman, at kaw5@calvinseminary.edu, and inform her of your desire to apply for candidacy.

As soon as you notify us that you wish to apply for candidacy, you will be **assigned a text for your Board of Trustees sermon.**

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