

# Meals for Moms (and Dads!)

Anyone who has welcomed a new baby into his or her family knows how hectic and overwhelming the first weeks after a birth can be. In a behind-the-scenes ministry in our church, a number of volunteers take turns preparing a meal for new parents. Usually the volunteers are young couples (friends of the new parents) or young parents themselves (who remember what it is like to have a new baby in the house!).



of the congregation who would like a concrete and tangible way to bless the arrival of a new baby.

If you are able and willing to prepare and deliver a meal for one of the expectant families when their time comes, please contact Andrea Sheridan at (905) 544-7354 or e-mail tasheridan@juno.com. By the way, one perk of volunteering in this ministry is that there is often opportunity to see

For 2006, we know of at least nine new babies who have been born or are anticipated among our church family. We are extending an invitation to all members

and admire the new baby! Thank you for considering how you can be involved—and thank you also on behalf of the new parents in our church!

## Thank You!

In the former issue of First Family Ties we began a new corner, named THANK YOU!

This time we want to thank all the volunteers who make it a point to be in the Gathering Hall every first and third Wednesday morning of the month to welcome those who are looking for that hot cup of coffee, a piece of toast, a kind word, and on the third Wednesday, a gift of bread and milk on behalf of you, our congregation.

## Invitation

Do you have ideas to share? Do you like to write? The Newsletter Committee welcomes submissions, including committee updates, responses to a sermon or to something you've read, or just some thoughts that you would like to share. The newsletter exists to "Provide a forum for sharing news and for building community at First CRC." We invite you to participate. We would also like to know if you like to write and are willing to take on an assignment now and then. Submissions can be placed in the newsletter mailbox or e-mailed to Dawn Berkelaar at berkelaar@sympatico.ca.

# FIRST Family ties

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## Inside:



## Membership Matters

By Andrew Zantingh

After a recent Sunday night service, I received an email from a thoughtful church member. This member was perplexed about the presentation on core ministry value number two called *Accountability*. In that presentation, I had elaborated how our commitment to a missional church has led us as a leadership to commit ourselves to having a high threshold for membership at First CRC. In connection with this, I also explained the new membership pathway, which includes a requirement that *all* incoming new members make

a public profession of faith or a public re-affirmation of faith. The e-mail expressed concern that this requirement might pose a barrier or an affront to incoming members and discourage them from joining us.

Allow me to attempt a brief explanation about these membership matters.

As you know, our church has been receiving many new members over the last five years. Some have been children growing into adulthood within our community. Others have been transfers from other CRCs. Some have been committed Christian couples, with one person...

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# Mission and the “Other”

By Tim Sheridan

Mission almost always involves crossing boundaries. In the past, those boundaries were understood to be primarily geographical. Mission is what happened “over there” as Western missionaries took the Gospel to non-Western people in hopes to convert them and “Christianize” them. Why mention this in an article for the First CRC newsletter?

God has placed us in an increasingly diverse and changing neighbourhood and downtown. We have to become much more intentional in facing the challenge of the many boundaries we will need to cross in order to impact our city. For us, these boundaries are not geographical ones, but rather boundaries of ethnicity, culture, and class; boundaries where it is all too easy to perpetuate an “us” vs. “them” attitude in our hearts. We are grateful that the Lord is increasingly making us a more diverse body, but we need to intentionally face the challenges in the “boundary-crossing mission” which is ours at First.

The challenge we face in

moving ahead is pictured well in the image of some new church curriculum being developed by Steve Kabetu, the CRC’s new “Race Relations Coordinator” in Canada. This new curriculum, used in CRC churches in classis Toronto, is titled “Widening the Circle: Opening to Diversity and Undoing Racism.” It explores how we can become more *self-aware* of how we tend to exclude others simply because



they are “other” than us, different. It explores how we can become more *intentional* in practicing the embrace of others in their differences and move toward diversity in our churches—“widening the circle” in our churches.

In the words of Miroslav Volf, we need to pray for the Lord to work in all of us

a “catholic personality.” “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation,” Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17. Volf suggests, “The rebirth of a person by the Spirit is nothing less than an anticipation of the eschatological new creation of God, a gathering of the whole people of God and of all the cultural treasures that have been dispersed among the nations.” The Spirit puts us on the road of developing a “catholic personality”—opening space in our hearts for those who are “other” than us and leading us to embrace them so that our own identity would be enriched by their “otherness.” You see, we are called now to be a foretaste of that new day, that day when a great multitude will be gathered from every nation, tribe, people and language and together we will stand before the throne of the Lamb. May God make us now that richly diverse people that we will one day become!

Image: a picture of the sculpture by George Segal entitled, “Abraham’s farewell to Ishmael.” This picture is on the cover of the book “Exclusion and Embrace,” by Miroslav Volf. Tim mentions Volf in the article.

# They Pay You to do That?

By Beth Terpstra

As the new Worship Coordinator at First CRC, I’m still getting used to the routines and rhythms of this church! Since mine is a new position for this church, I thought it might be wise to share with you a little about how I spend my 15 hours/week here at the church.

My job has two emphases: Worship Coordinating and Worship Planning.

I coordinate a lot of volunteers who are involved in each Sunday’s worship services. Each service takes a lot of dedicated volunteers who give up their time to prepare for Sunday’s worship services. I try to coordinate with all these people, including:

- The people who prepare and give the Children’s Messages
- The guys (and girl!) who run the sound system
- The people who read the Scripture passages in the services

I also coordinate worship teams and groups of musicians for both services each Sunday. This includes working with:

- Organists and pianists
- Music Makers
- The Service Choir and their director, Laura Moelker)
- Our different worship teams and their leaders
- Special music: soloists, guitarists, pianists, etc.

The second part of my job is Worship Planning. I begin by planning and brainstorming on a weekly basis with people like Pastor Andrew, Pastor Henry Wildeboer, and Tim Sheridan (depending on who is preaching each week). I need to know the theme and text of the service before I can start planning anything.

After this initial meeting at the beginning of the week, I start creating a liturgy. This includes:

- Choosing songs
- Writing prayers, litanies, or responsive readings
- Carefully deciding the order of each element in a service
- Choosing Scripture passages for the Call to Worship, Call to Confession, etc.

I also plan and coordinate worship teams for special events:

- Occasional Prayer/Potluck evenings
- Council and Congregational Retreats
- World Day of Prayer service
- African drumming service

I am always on the lookout for new musicians, readers, prayer warriors, and artists who are excited about contributing to our worship services. I’d love to encourage you to bring your gifts and talents to aid with our worship services, all for the glory of God!



# Getting Fit In a Godly Way

By Damien Kanev

The Christmas holiday season is past. The new year has started. And lots of people make a new determination to become a little bit fitter. So, they act accordingly by buying gym memberships or exercise equipment. January is such a good time for the owners of fitness facilities! Such a good time that if someone asked me for a modern version of the saying "Make hay while the sun is shining" I would unhesitatingly say "Start up a fitness business in January"!

Although I think that most members of First CRC will not join a health club just because everyone is doing it, I believe they still highly value physical activity. I cannot forget the "Sea to sea biking tour" as a way to celebrate the 100 years of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. When I told my former pastor and some friends from our church back in Bulgaria about this event, they said I must be happy to be among brothers and sisters who are much bigger fitness enthusiasts than me. Of course, I agreed.

I also add that health

consciousness is a logical consequence of the stewardship emphasis of the church's teaching. We are not preparing to escape from the earth. We are about to be coworkers of our Lord Jesus Christ in the expansion of His Kingdom. This is why we start with ourselves – led by the Holy Spirit, we want to be



faithful in the little things. One of these little things is care (as far as it depends on us) for the health of our bodies through proper nutrition, rest and moderate physical activity.

Unlike some in our culture, we do not worship fitness. Nevertheless, it is a good thing. In this regard the Bible teaches a concept that I call "vocation related fitness". Some examples – David was a king and a military leader, so he mastered certain weapons, horseback riding and running.

Peter was a fisherman, so his exercise program consisted of swimming, rowing, sailing and pulling fisher's nets. And, my wife's favorite example – the virtuous woman who .... pumps the iron! "She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms" (Proverbs 31:17).

It may sound shocking, but the Bible has a lot to say about the motivation, the method and the purpose of exercise. In brief, we are moved to exercise by our desire to be faithful stewards of our physical bodies, entrusted to us by the Lord. We choose exercises that strengthen and make us more agile or skilled for the vocational work we do (including exercises that may prevent job related injuries). Another goal of exercise might be to rejoice and to glorify our God through dancing. And finally, exercise according to Biblical truths can serve to bring people to Christ.

*Damien and Margarita lead an aerobics class at the church on Saturday mornings at 10:30. All are warmly welcomed to join!*

# Meet a Charter Member: Martha Tigchelaar

*What brought you to First CRC?*

I was here before First CRC existed! My family was one of the few founding families of the church. I was nine years old when First CRC was established in 1929.

*What is your vocation?*

I have had a busy and fulfilling life as a wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother (my latest great-grandson was born February 12). I have many children and am now experiencing the blessing of seeing their children's children. I have been involved in the church in numerous ways through the years, including as a member of the choir; as an organist and pianist; and by participating in Coffee Break.

*What book/movie/music have you enjoyed recently, and why?*

Pat Gordon and I read books together. We have read "Jesus Among the Gods" by Ravi Zacharias, and "Here Comes Ishmael" by Faisal Malick. The latter is written by a Muslim who became a Christian. He suggests

that God will turn Ishmael (ie Muslims) to Christ, then use them to convert Jews. Currently Pat and I are reading "Twelve Exceptional Women from the Bible" by John MacArthur. Pat reads while I knit. We both enjoy it.

I have loved good music all my life, and have recently enjoyed some local concerts.



Last spring I enjoyed the concert put on at First CRC (most participants were from our church). Just before Christmas I heard a breathtaking Christmas concert by a group of nine singers. Music touches the soul much like a really good sermon does.

*What talent, hobby or quirk do you have that others may not know about?*

I have always loved to write, and have a good memory for details. I love to tell stories to my children and grandchildren, and to others in the church (often the stories I share are about their dads and moms when they were little). A hobby of mine is knitting; my knitting bag goes with me wherever I go. I have been knitting and crocheting since I was very young.

As far as quirks, there is a certain stubbornness in my nature. Stubbornness is okay if you are defending truth and right, but causes grief if you are wrong.

*What do you love about this church?*

My church has always had the love of my heart. In our home we pray regularly for her pastors, elders and deacons. First and foremost, I love hearing the unadulterated preaching of the Word. But I also love the things that frame the Word, especially the music. May we go on being the "singing church"! I also appreciate the prayer groups, and seeing the church filled with people.



...CRC and the other non-CRC. Some have been Christians from other traditions. And still others have been new Christians with no churched background. In an effort to build upfront consensus among the elders on how to deal with the diversity of new members and to bring consistency to the membership process, consistory put a unified pathway in place. In this membership pathway, all people will be asked to attend a "membership orientation class." This class, offered quarterly, is organized around three essential commitments that we are asking our members to make:

- To commit themselves to following Christ in the context of the **biblical story** (its worldview and its mission).
- To commit themselves to following Christ in the context of the **Reformed tradition** (its theological heritage and its mission).
- To commit themselves to following Christ in the context of **First CRC's mission and vision**. (its community and its mission to the broader community).

The emphasis here is on commitment, specifically a commitment to follow Christ—that is what determines church membership. But there is always a context in which we follow Christ—and three contexts are identified as being significant for our community. After the class, people who wish to move forward in the membership process will be visited by an elder to personally hear about their faith, to answer any questions, and to ask if they are willing to make a public profession of

faith or re-affirmation of faith as a way to express their commitment to covenant with our community in Christ.

But why then the need for a public profession or re-affirmation of faith? Well, here is exactly the response I sent to this thoughtful member:

*"Increasingly we have more people joining us from more diverse backgrounds. We (elders) feel it is important for them to affirm their faith with us as they join--and to hear so publicly, not just privately. We may have other nominal Christians seeking to join, and this expectation may give them pause. It raises the bar in a helpful way to have people really [assess] whether or not they are willing to follow Christ and join our church on its mission. For other CRC or Reformed folk joining us, it allows them to covenant with us in our Reformed faith and in our local mission. And it encourages a culture in our church where professions of faith are not a one-time thing, but a more natural and regular occurrence. We also do not want people joining our church just because it is "the place to be at the moment" or because they like one aspect of our church (the music, the preaching, etc.). We want them to be committed to our mission and offer themselves in their giftedness. Yes, this will cause some people pause, and it raises the bar. But raising the bar, not lowering it, is what keeps church commitment high and membership valued."*

The concerned member responded by saying just how much this response helped. I hope it has also helped you see how much membership matters to us and to those who join us.



**Cherilyn Vanderzwaag** comes to us from Calvary CRC in Flamborough. She now lives very near the church and enjoys being part of us. Cherilyn has the hobby of puzzling- and she loves painting by number, which takes much patience.

We also want to introduce to you her boyfriend **Gilles Groulx**.

Cherilyn and Gilles, we trust that you will feel at home with us.

Via many detours, **James Forbes** has found a church home in First Hamilton. Many of you will remember how joyfully he professed his faith right here in this church in June of last year. In his own words: "I have visited many churches, searching, searching. I want to be here, because this congregation has treated me like family".

Well, James, that's what you are!



**Damian and Margarita Kanev** are already familiar to us because of their initiatives regarding the fitness club and familiarizing us with their church back home in Bulgaria.

But in case you have missed them thus far—here is their picture. Damian and Margarita, we are so glad that you feel at home with us.