

## Shepherd's Staff

March 2013

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

**"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"**

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m. ~ Life Plus Wed., 6:30 p.m.

### Crosses and Crowns

At Easter we are reminded of the high cost of our salvation. We see signs almost everywhere in the cross being displayed in churches and homes. While this symbol is appropriate for the season we often forget that the crown is also a part of the Easter theme. Not just the crown of thorns that Jesus wore but also the crown of victory.

The cross is important in helping us to remember the amazing cost that was paid for those who believe. The process of believing is also tied to the realization of need for the salvation. In the pre-Easter time of Lent we are called to pause and consider anew the great need we have for a Savior. Our fallen condition is indicative of the life we live in spite of our attempts to live righteously on our own. We, like the Apostle Paul, continue to "do the things we **do not** want to do and not the things we **do** want to do." (Romans 7:15) We give names to these two as sins of commission and omission.

It does not take a stretch to see the need we have and to come in humility to the One who is able to help us in our otherwise hopeless situation. In the Gospels we are called to come and lay our burden at the foot of the cross and leave it there. We come being freed not only of the sin itself but also of the guilt that often accompanies the sin. The completeness of forgiveness in Christ Jesus covers our full need.

Yet we rejoice in the good news that Christ is not in the tomb. He has done what the song claims, He rose triumphantly! The victory is real. It is complete. We lack nothing when we place our hope and trust in the sanctifying work done for us on the cross. Because the tomb is empty we have confidence that our atonement is assured. Death lost its sting when the stone was rolled away revealing its emptiness. Life now reigned where death had once claimed victory. Now the crown, no longer of thorns, is upon the Savior. His place of glory at God's side assures us we have an advocate in heaven.

The crown is our hope as the King of kings is our Lord, our brother, our God! He is able to take our sin, our guilt, and our shame and free us from these burdens when we believe. While it is good to pause at the cross and remember our great need, we must not forget the crown of glory that Christ now wears. The glory of the Son of God who died but now lives victoriously as our Savior and mediator. Easter's two sides go together so we can have the peace that God intends for His children.

Pastor Rus



**Howdy Ladies & Gents!** Did you see the two notices in the bulletin about the Annual Sunshine Circle Hostess Supper?



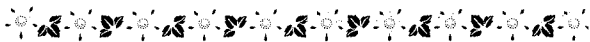
Here are a few more details about the event. It will be held in our church fellowship hall on March 10<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. We are planning a western-themed chuck wagon meal. There are two sign-up sheets on a table in the fellowship hall. One is for you to sign-up to attend and the other is for signing up to bring some of the food items for the chuck wagon meal—items like potato casseroles, baked beans, rolls or biscuits, and fruit cobblers. Please bring the food items Saturday if you can, but the potato casseroles and cobblers can be brought Sunday night.

Our special entertainment will be the Double J Wranglers from the Waverly area. They will be playing country western music and are comedians. So get ready to laugh and tap your toes.

Did you find something western to wear? Of course, a western outfit is not required, but there just might be a prize for the best get-up!

The Sunshine Circle thanks you in advance for your willingness to help us support our missionaries for another year. Both Larry and Ann Vanderaa along with Mike and Victoria VanDerDyke need our financial support as well as our prayers as they witness on our behalf.

We are looking forward to seeing you on March 10<sup>th</sup> for an evening of food, fun and fellowship. Y'all come now—we'll have a good time!



### Easter Bible Trivia Quiz

1. What do we call the day Jesus was crucified? \_\_\_\_\_
2. "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Is spoken by Jesus in what book?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who did Jesus first appear to after he had risen? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What was the name of the garden where Jesus was praying before the soldiers came to get him?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Who betrayed Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who denied Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_
7. "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots" was written in which book?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What did Jesus ride triumphantly into Jerusalem on? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Who was the Roman King at the time Jesus was crucified? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Who said "I will not believe until I put my finger into the marks of the nails?" \_\_\_\_\_
11. On what day after Jesus was crucified did he rise? \_\_\_\_\_

(Answers can be found on page 4 after Music Has a Way of Touching One's Soul.)

## March Birthdays/Anniversaries

### Happy Birthday

3/9	Michael Stirling
3/11	Kathleen DeGroot
3/15	Kay Swanson
3/18	Greg Allspach
3/24	Lauris Frerichs
3/24	Teresa Hay
3/25	Brenda Brown
3/26	Naomi Allspach
3/28	Rhonda Meester
3/29	Jennifer Meether

### Happy Anniversary

3/19	Pat & Deb Prier
3/20	Mike & Wendy Mulder
3/21	Don & Annie Allspach

# SPRING



**Reminder:** If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Mulder by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.

	<i>Greeters</i>	<i>Ushers</i>	<i>Coffee*</i>
3/3	Ken & Nancy (N) Marlyn & Marcia (S)	Mark Kramer	Arnie & Kay
3/10	Ken & Janet (N) Don & Annie (S)	Clarence Karsjens	Gaylen & Carla
3/17	Dennis & Sharon (N) Pat & Deb (S)	Gerald Haan	Paul & Darlene
3/24	Henry & Kathy (N) Mark & Lanae (S)	Ken Johnson	Ken & Rhonda
3/31	Delbert & Sharon (N) Ken & Nancy (S)	Mark Kramer	No coffee due to Easter breakfast

\*If you are unable to serve coffee on your Sunday as listed, please find your replacement. Thank you.

## Music Has a Way of Touching One's Soul

### *In the Garden (1912)*

...she turned around and saw Jesus standing there... John 20:14

The art of meditating on Scripture involves using one's imagination. Instead of simply reading a passage, we must read it, close our eyes, and visualize the scene, perhaps even putting ourselves in the picture. That's what the author of this hymn did.

C. Austin Miles was a pharmacist who began writing gospel songs and eventually became an editor of hymnals and songbooks, as well as a popular music director at camp meetings, conventions, and churches. His hobby was photography, and he found his darkroom perfect for developing, not just his photographs, but his devotional life. In its privacy and strange blue glow, Miles could read his Bible in total privacy.

One day in March, 1912, while waiting for some film to develop, he opened the Bible to his favorite chapter, John 20, the story of the first Easter. Miles later said: "As I read it that day, I seemed to be part of the scene...My hands were resting on the Bible while I stared at the light blue wall. As the light faded, I seemed to be standing at the entrance of a garden, looking down a gently winding path, shaded by olive branches. A woman in white, with head bowed, hand clasping her throat as if to choke back her sobs, walked slowly into the shadows. It was Mary. As she came to the tomb, upon which she placed her hand, she bent over to look in and hurried away. John, in flowing robe, appeared, looking at the tomb; then came Peter, who entered the tomb, followed slowly by John.

"As they departed, Mary reappeared, leaning her head upon her arm at the tomb. She wept. Turning herself, she saw Jesus standing; so did I. I knew it was He. She knelt before Him, with arms outstretched and looking into his face, cried, 'Rabboni!'

"I awakened in full light, gripping my Bible, with muscles tense and nerves vibrating. Under the inspiration of this vision I wrote as quickly as the words would be formed the poem exactly as it has since appeared. That same evening I wrote the music."

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In addition to "In the Garden," Austin Miles is the author of several other gospel songs, including "A New Name in Glory," "Dwelling in Beulah Land," and "If Jesus Goes with Me I'll Go Anywhere."

Quoted from *Then Sings My Soul: 150 of the World's Greatest Hymn Stories* by Robert J. Morgan

#### Easter Bible Trivia Quiz Answers—How Many Did You Get Correct?

1. Good Friday
2. Matthew
3. Mary Magdalene
4. Gethsemane
5. Judas Iscariot
6. Peter
7. Matthew
8. Donkey
9. Pontius Pilate
10. Thomas
11. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Day

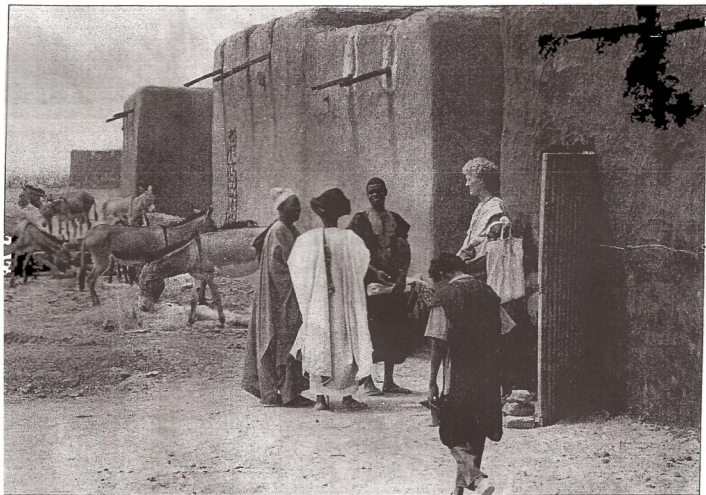


Sunday with the Vanderaas' was printed in a 1988 copy of *The Banner* found on the table with all the books in the fellowst hall. It's good information to read again 25 years later.

## SLICE OF LIFE

BY DICK EPPINGA

# Sunday with the Vanderaas



Larry Vanderaa talks to Nigerians in a town near his home village of Goudourou.

**S**and was on my face and in my mouth when I awoke on Sunday morning. Actually it was much finer than sand; grit had fallen from the roof of the thatch hut. My night's sleep had been a good one after almost three hundred miles of driving the day before, the last twenty miles over nothing more than tracks barely discernible in the desert at dusk. I had barely

*Dr. Dick Eppinga is the communication-finance director for Christian Reformed World Missions. He recently accompanied foreign director Rev. Merle Den Bleyker on a trip to the denominational mission fields in Mali and Liberia. Western Africa regional director Ronald Geertings coordinated their travel and participated in the Mali visit.*

noticed the barking of the village dogs, the screeching of the Vanderaas' cats, the lowing of the many cattle, and the incessant bleating of goats.

After months of anticipation I was finally a guest in the home of missionaries Larry and Ann Vanderaa and their children in central Mali, West Africa.

*Home* is three huts—each about twenty-four feet in diameter. (There is also a small building for toilet and washing facilities.) Six tree limbs, about fourteen feet above the sand floor, brace the domed, thatch roofs. The first four feet of the walls are mud. Intricate and colorful mats made by Fulani women line the insides of the domes. "We wanted to show them we appreciate their culture and art," said Ann, "so we put these mats on dis-

play rather than leaving them rolled up and out of the way." She added that now some of the villagers have fixed up their huts and have started displaying their mats too.

There is ample room in the three huts. "Actually they are built to the limits" allowed by this type of structure, explained Larry. "If I had to build them again, I'd make them smaller. These sag easily and need regular adjustment."

"Sleep in on Sunday morning," the Vanderas had advised. "You're tired. We have our church service at night. When we try to worship in the morning, we're interrupted constantly."

Nevertheless I was up early, eager to see my surroundings in the light. The village of Goudourou is small and the desert fairly flat. To state that vegetation is sparse is to be generous. Despite the fact that Mali is one of the hottest—and driest—countries in the world, the night had been unusually cold—about 50 degrees Fahrenheit—even for January, which is the coolest time of the year. I had on only a T-shirt and jeans as I greeted Joel Vanderaa, age twelve. He was playing for a few minutes with a bright-eyed boy a bit older than he, who laughed easily and whose name is "Baba," or Bob. Bob shivered uncontrollably as he inquired, through Joel, if I was cold. I answered that I was not. In my excitement I hadn't noticed the temperature. Bob's response was that I was "from America, where there are shots for everything. You have a shot so you don't feel the cold."

Breakfast was delicious and North American—French bread and butter, Cheerios (a Sunday treat for Joel, eight-year-old Anna, and seven-year-old Suzanne), and milk from cattle and goats that is regularly offered to the Vanderas, who boil it. We would have plenty of national dishes at later meals, Ann promised. At this and every meal there were prayers for Erica, fourteen, attending a Christian high school in the neighboring country of Ivory Coast. I asked whether God provides some special grace to help the family endure separation. The family answered quietly that he does.

I struggled to eat with my right hand—difficult for a "lefty." Among the Fulani

and, indeed, throughout much of West Africa, one does not eat, touch another, or offer a gift with the left hand, which is used for personal hygiene functions.

We, Larry told us, would see something unusual that morning in the nearby larger village of Nampala. Though it seemed to me that we were near if not at "the end of the world," within a hundred miles of legendary Tombouctou (Timbuktu), ironically we were also within three miles of one segment of the Paris-to-Dakar Rally (a motor race that is run in segments). This rally, now in its tenth year, covers almost 8,000 miles—many of them through the Sahara Desert and sub-Saharan regions at an average speed of a hundred miles per hour.

Two helicopters hovered low with media people videotaping us as we drove out of the desert into Nampala. We made an

*The villagers consider them rich because they have four kerosene lanterns and enough fuel to burn them whenever they want.*

unusual sight—eight whites (the Vanderas all blond-haired and blue-eyed, Larry and Ann in striking Fulani dress), the chief and a village elder, and three or four village children—all in the Vanderas' double-cab Nissan pickup. Another helicopter was on the ground. A couple hundred Africans lined one side of the road at the finish line. A few privileged whites (and our chief and elder) stood on the other side amid vehicles that had already completed this segment of the rally. There were also two huge barrels full of ice and cans of Coke—Coca Cola was the official rally sponsor. I noticed all the cans had pull-tops, outlawed in North America years ago.

I took a can for the chief, but unfortunately I offered it to him with my left

hand. He accepted it but didn't drink, though we were all thirsty. He gave it to a village child—with his right hand.

Dozens of motorcycles, cars, and monstrous two-engined, six-wheel-drive trucks roared periodically across the finish line—sometimes only inches from the line of Malians. Most vehicles were dented, and some were badly damaged. One truck was missing a windshield. The driver and the navigator, whose faces, everywhere except under their goggles, were a bloody pulp from desert sand, told me they had driven ninety-five mph by compass in a sandstorm with zero visibility and had rolled end-over-end off a sand dune. (Another team wasn't as lucky. I learned after returning to North America. A Dutch ten-ton, 1,200-horsepower DAF truck had hit a sand dune at over 100 mph, rolled, killed its driver, and critically injured the navigator. DAF then withdrew its other truck from the rally.)

Joel particularly wanted to see the only American in the race, the navigator of a Camel-team race car. We found the American and learned he was in fifth place. "This is madness!" he said. "People are being killed." (Nine people died in the rally, and there were many serious injuries.) "I detest smoking," he continued, "and here I am driving for a tobacco company. And, besides, the fastest car in the rally easily passes us any time the driver wants to, even when we're flat out at 150 mph." He added, in disbelief, "Every other night, helicopter mechanics rebuild that car and replace the transmission and suspension." He had heard that the cost was \$6,000,000. (Ironically, this same first-place vehicle, a turbo-charged Peugeot, was stolen and held for ransom two nights later in Bamako, Mali's capital. Because it was out of the race for this period, it was disqualified.)

On the way back to Goudourou, Ann was sad and Larry outraged. Six million dollars would drill three hundred deep wells for three hundred villages in central and northern Mali, which have not seen good rainy seasons in over a decade. It was wrenching to witness children risking their lives to dart across the race course in order to snatch a half-empty Coke can

or a half-eaten sandwich that a contestant had thoughtlessly tossed away.

Sunday dinner was a delicious rice-with-meat dish, in honor of our visit, with boiled chocolate milk and water, consumed around a small table only a foot above the ground. Family members and guests sat on low stools and boxes.

In the afternoon we paid a formal visit to the home of the chief and his wives. The latter remained in the background as the chief and the elders performed an elaborate tea ceremony for their guests. They served three rounds of tea from the same pot. The tea becomes progressively weaker, but sugar is constantly added until the solution is super-saturated. Guests drink first; then the others—all from the same limited number of glasses.

It took all of my concentration to use only my right hand, not to mention making the expected loud slurps and handing the glass back to the chief pointed in the correct sequence of directions. All the while I struggled to remain sitting uncomfortably on the mat without touching it with my shoes—an act of discourtesy. I noticed that while painfully changing his position, one of my companions placed his hand in a pool of spittle on the packed sand. Fulani spit constantly and everywhere.

Firewood is scarce, and an open flame is an extravagance. Coals are used only to heat tea or cook food, and then, as soon as the coals are no longer needed, they are either passed to another to use or smothered in the sand. I am certain I gaped the first time I saw people pick up glowing coals in their fingers and palms to sniff them in the sand or to hand the burning embers to others.

Larry then took us to millet fields a couple of miles from Goudourou. Millet is the Fulani staple; the "thump" of village women pounding it can be heard all day long. At home I feed it to the birds—the only use I have ever heard of for it in North America. The millet stalks in Larry's experimental fields were dead in the parched ground. "There was one rain too few this rainy season," explained Larry, "and that's happened for many years now."

Larry and Ann told us that they had decided their best opportunity for acceptance into Fulani culture was to live initially in a small village. Their village of Goudourou lies on one of the nomadic Fulani's annual geographical "cycles" of wandering in search of food and water. Currently the Vanderas are learning the language and culture, meeting the Fulani who trek past, and helping in any way they can. It appears God is blessing their strategy. The Fulani love the Vanderas and constantly present gifts of milk and precious meat. Some young men have asked Larry if they may be his disciples. These Fulani are in crisis: an epidemic killed many of their cattle; the drought is changing the course of their wanderings; and they resist education of their children and are therefore becoming increasingly isolated in the eyes of non-Fulani. The Vanderas believe God is using these crises to make the Fulani open to the good news.

Later in the week we visited a fair-sized city named Tenenkou—100 percent Fulani, according to the Vanderas, and the "ultimate objective" of their work. There we were greeted joyously by Fulani who knew the Vanderas or had heard of them. The Vanderas said, "We never could have begun our ministry in Tenenkou, but we have faith that at some point we will be able to move to Tenenkou and be welcomed."

Sunday supper was a hot, spicy meat dish (another meat gift from the villagers) with rice. There was also a doughy yam preparation from a common pot. We took a handful, dipped it into a broth, and attempted to eat it without dribbling. Supper was by the light of kerosene lanterns because the sun sets around 6:30 p.m. The Vanderas remarked that the villagers consider them rich—not because they have three large huts or even a vehicle but because they have no less than four kerosene lanterns and enough fuel to burn them whenever they want.

Finally we had our church service—one of the few familiar events (to me) that day. Eight of us gathered in the sleeping hut, read the Bible, sang lots of songs, and prayed. After a while the children fell asleep, and we talked at length with Larry and Ann.

They were grateful that Larry had been released. He had been placed in jail after the vehicle he was driving had struck and killed a pedestrian in Liberia. But it had been difficult to accept that God had allowed the tragedy to occur. Life in mud huts in Goudourou is not easy for the Vanderas, even under the best of circumstances. Their love of God and their love for the Fulani who are without the knowledge of Jesus keep them in Mali. Ann admitted softly that in her darkest hours after the accident it was only her love for her husband that made her stay.

Then Ann and Larry told us that their faith had been strengthened during their ordeal. They were moved to tears that thousands of people back in North America who did not know them personally had nevertheless prayed fervently for Larry's release.

In contemplating the future of the work of the Christian Reformed Church in Mali, the Vanderas' eyes sparkled in the lantern light. They have a vision of twenty or more missionaries living in circumstances like their own among the Fulani.

Larry and Ann believe that there are more singles, young families, and "empty nesters" who would be eager to serve than the CRC could ever afford to send. All that is required, the Vanderas assert, is for these people to be shown the need and to be challenged to serve.

Are there indeed more people in our churches ready to say, "Here I am; send me!" than there are positions? Then why are there so many unfilled openings—not only in Mali and Grand Cape Mount County but also around the world? I wondered.

Sleep came to me less easily Sunday night than the night before. I could scarcely believe how much noise goats make. I noticed that my hips, with hardly any padding between skin and bone, were sore from the previous night on the elevated platform made of sticks and mats. But mostly what kept me awake was my reflection about what may ultimately prove to be the most unusual Sunday of my life. What missionaries all along had been telling me about the mission fields was true: "Dick, you have to be there. You'll never be the same." ■