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NEWS

Dies Natalis

CTS Celebrates Another Birthday

by **Alex Snider**

On Monday, March 15, students, faculty, and staff joined together in the Student Center to celebrate Dies Natalis, Calvin Seminary's birthday. The festivities started with a delicious breakfast catered by the college. After breakfast the MC, Adam Nordyke, introduced the part of the morning which everyone was looking forward too: the skits.

The program began with a choir of Korean students beautifully singing Prayer of Peace. After that there were a few skits by the newly formed improv team, the highlight of which (in this author's opinion) was Kyle Brooks portraying Professor Bosma. The next skit gave Professor Glassford a hard time. We then learned that the people's choice for the next seminary president was none other than Libronix.

After a well put together weekend update and a bumper sticker quiz, awards were given out. Professor Nydam took home the coveted Carl Bosma Tree Killer award. Professor Young Kim was awarded the Dean Deppe Fashion award. The two new awards this year, Best Professor in a Supporting Role and Best Original Hand Gesture went to Professors Rottman and Weima respectively. After the awards Professor Bierma was forced to re-live his oral comprehensive exam. He was followed by a stunning parody of Aretha Franklin's Respect entitled R-E-F-L-E-C-T.

Concluding the show was a game of Jeopardy with contestants portraying students from each year of seminary education. Music between the acts was provided by The Removable Nu-s, a band made up of first year students lead by Bryan Van Soelen. All together it was a great morning and I want to, once again, wish the seminary a very happy birthday.

NEWS

Superstar Message

Ridge Point Community Church produces Jesus Christ Superstar

by **Kory Plockmeyer**

When Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice joined forces to produce the rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar in 1971 the results were instantly controversial. A masterful work of art and music, the show focused on a human portrayal of Jesus' passion week. The show dramatizes the last week of Jesus' life, including the unrest caused by his preaching and popularity, his betrayal by Judas, his trial before Pontius Pilate, and his crucifixion. Many Christian groups denounced the show, claiming that it was too sympathetic to Judas and denied the divinity of Jesus. Nearly forty years later, one local church has decided to take a different approach to the show.

Ridge Point Community Church in Holland is producing Jesus Christ Superstar in their 1500 seat auditorium. Ridge Point has a history of dedication to the arts, including past performances of Fiddler on the Roof and Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. The church aims for more than entertainment, however. Scene Director Steve Childerston hopes that the show will drive people to ask tough questions: "Our prayer is that through the presentation of this rock opera it will drive people into God's word to seek answers themselves and to answer the question, 'Was Jesus really who he said he was?'"

The church hopes that the show can be used for outreach into the community. Even the casting of the show was not limited to the Ridge Point community. "We are using this as an outreach mechanism within the artistic community. The relationships that are being built within this three month journey have been very powerful," Childerston stated. He was also glad to see that because of these relationships "a lot of discussions have taken place about Jesus Christ that would not have taken place otherwise."

The cast includes local performers and newcomers to the stage from the Ridge Point community. Jesus is played by Broadway veteran and Grand Valley theatre/dance major Josh Zoerhof, whose professional credentials include national tours of Cats and Singin' in the Rain. The show runs March 18-28. Tickets are \$7 for a Thursday performance and \$12 for a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday performance and can be purchased by calling 616-395-2600.

The production team behind Jesus Christ Superstar knows that the show might be controversial. For Childerston, at least, this is a risk he is willing to take: "I think sometimes God calls us into taking well-thought out risks. We know that this is not as easy as doing a 'Christian' show but if all that happens is entertainment then I'm not really interested in it. But, if it leads to people seeking answers, then I think it's been a risk well worth taking."

RECIPE

Peanut Butter Bars

by Sara Bosscher

Melt-in-your-mouth goodness. (well unless you're allergic to peanut butter...). A recipe great for parties, these bars taste like Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and always go fast.

- 2 sticks melted butter/margarine
- 1 lb powdered sugar (3½ cups)
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 pkg. crushed graham crackers (usually two come in a box)
- 12 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips

Thoroughly mix together all ingredients except chocolate. Spread in a 9x13 pan. You'll most likely have to use your hands. Melt chocolate chips in microwave and spread on top with a knife or spoon. Refrigerate until fully hardened. Let sit out a 15 minutes or longer to make cutting easier.

How to melt chocolate:

- > Make sure you use a dry bowl, any water can mess up the final consistency. Set the microwave on 50 percent power. This is important because the chocolate can burn when cooked on full strength. Microwave chocolate chips 40 seconds at a time stirring well after each time and scraping the sides of the bowl. Only do this until it is just melted.
- > After those warnings about too much heat and keeping water out of the chocolate you see it is very important (otherwise the chocolate will be dull, grainy, and a solid mass). However, if either does happen and you are suddenly out of chocolate ships, beat in a tablespoon of water, oil, or melted shortening and heat some more over a very low heat, stirring often.

COLUMN

Who is Responsible for Poverty?

by Micah Schuurman

W

We all have met beggars. Grand Rapids has a few. Larger cities like Chicago seem to have a beggar every ten meters. What is the source of this phenomenon? More broadly, what is it that makes some people rich and others poor?

There are dozens of possibilities: parenting, personal choices, race, gender, injustice, the government, God, drugs, alcohol, education, one's personal work ethic, sin, etc. What I propose is these factors fall into three broad categories: factors that emphasize the responsibility of the individual, factors that emphasize the responsibility of society, and factors that emphasize more macroscopic elements such as nature or God.

The possible factors impacting wealth and poverty do not always fit well into these categories. For example, alcoholism as a cause of poverty could be described solely in terms of the poor decisions of the individual or solely in terms of a natural predisposition to alcoholism. However, this way of categorizing has the benefit of being complete. It is hard to think of something that does not fall into one of the three: the individual, society and larger elements.

The focus of this essay is on the first two categories. God's providence plays a truly incalculable role in our lives. But, most of the following will focus on the other two because they are under human control and much more tangible.

The various ideologies of our day tend to emphasize one category over another when it comes to the issue of poverty and wealth. Capitalism tends to emphasize the responsibility of individuals. It can be seen in some of the slogans of the Tea Party movement. At the core of this movement is the rejection of high taxes. "I'm not going to let the government take away my hard-earned money." This statement is rooted in a perspective based on individualism. "I earned my wealth. I am responsible for my economic position in life." Many who

talk like this may indeed have a very complex understanding of the ultimate source of wealth. However the language used in political discussions of this type rarely mention other societal factors that contribute to one's economic position outside of the control of the individual: family, educational opportunity, health, and God's providence.

On the other extreme are those who only talk about the societal factors which create the wealth gap. These are not necessarily the people who are currently arguing for universal healthcare in the United States. Rather, these are the people who advocate full-blown state socialism in which a free market plays no role and in which the government decides every aspect of the individual's life. These people talk about the responsibilities of society without any mention of personal responsibility.

As with most things in life, very few people fit perfectly into the two paradigms mentioned above. Most of us lie somewhere in between the two. Yet, it is clear that our culture is leaning towards the individualist side of the spectrum. People are labeling President Obama a socialist (intended as an insult) for the mere fact that he is trying to use the government to alleviate some of the negative consequences of poverty. The idea at work here is that individuals alone are responsible for their own fate and that the poor are perfectly capable of fending for themselves as long as the government does not create dependency. This, say the individualists, actually contributes to poverty by taking away the incentive that the poor otherwise would have to get themselves out of poverty.

In short, a person who merely mentions the structural, communal causes of poverty immediately receives the derogatory label of "socialist" while a person who insists upon the sole responsibility of the individual receives the esteemed title of "capitalist." As a culture, we clearly favor individualism.

This tendency towards individualism has some terrific benefits. It fosters efficiency and a good work ethic. When one views oneself as the sole entity responsible for one's place in life, one is more likely to take action out of self-interest. However, it also has some drawbacks. Extreme individualism is not conducive to equality. I'm not speaking of absolute equality in which everyone has the exact same amount of wealth. Rather, I'm talking about equal opportunity, the idea that the playing field ought to be relatively level.

Naturally, equal opportunity will never become a full and actualized reality. The children of wealthy parents will always have more opportunities than the children of poorer parents. However, the government does play a role in creating a baseline of equal opportunity. Our government runs schools, fire departments, police departments, libraries and the military among other things for the sake of benefiting all people, both rich and poor. In practice, the services provided by the government are not perfectly equal. For example, public schools in the suburbs are usually much better than those in the inner city. However, a bad public school is significantly better than no public school at all.

While these government-run attempts at creating equal opportunity fall far short of the ideal, they remain beneficial. I'm glad that I can call the police to come to my aid. In other words, I am glad that the society as a whole has taken upon itself the role of protecting the people rather than expecting people to protect themselves.

Indeed, the government can take meaningful, concrete steps to create a baseline of equality for all of its citizens. A strictly capitalist/individualist approach to these issues would involve people defending themselves from invading armies and putting out their own house fires. Given this absurd mental image, most of us can

agree that there are ways in which society as a whole can and should take responsibility for the welfare of individuals.

One can find this same idea in the Bible. God commands his people through the prophets to care for the widows and the orphans, that is, the disenfranchised, those unable to help themselves. Notice that God does not go to individuals and tell them to make the personal decision to give a portion of their wealth to the poor. Instead, God tells all of the people (i.e. society) to take care of the poor and defenseless. This command is not personal. It is to society as a whole. Amos spoke to the entire people of Israel, not just particular individuals who were ignoring justice. Furthermore, the judgment of God fell upon the entire people of Israel, the just and the unjust.

But, this is not the only trend found in the Bible. The story of Nathan's prophecy to King David after the death of Uriah the Hittite illustrates this. Nathan doesn't say to David, "Poor you, look how society made you this way." Instead, after David declares that the rich man in the story ought to die, Nathan says, "You are the man!" Nathan puts the responsibility for Uriah's death squarely on the shoulders of David.

Clearly, one can find themes in the Bible that emphasize personal responsibility as well as communal responsibility. This means that we should never emphasize personal responsibility in such a way as to negate communal responsibility. Conversely, we should never emphasize communal responsibility in such a way as to negate personal responsibility. Our culture tells us that we are fundamentally individuals and that we are the masters of our own destiny. We must challenge this philosophy and supplant it with a more holistic approach to the issue of poverty.

EDITOR'S CORNER

Easter Hope

by **Kory Plockmeyer**

Easter morning is nearly upon us. Easter morning promises us hope - hope of a resurrection, hope of eternal life, hope of forgiveness. We remember Easter morning every April and celebrate our hope once more.

Yet, I cannot help but ponder what Michigan is like in April. If we were to celebrate Easter morning in July or August wouldn't that reflect the mood of the day much better? Some years we have snow on Easter, some years we have rain. Some years it is bitter cold, others it is blistering hot. Some years, the hope of Easter morning simply seems completely incongruent with the world around us.

Then again, isn't this the true hope of Easter? In the midst of our pain, suffering, and darkness, Easter morning comes. In the middle of the snow, rain, cold, and heat of our lives, Easter morning promises us hope. Just as April comes year after year with shifting temperatures and weather, the hope of Easter morning lives in us each day, no matter how blustery our lives may be.

LETTER

It's good to read a more balanced presentation about the Israeli-Arab conflict coming out of a CRC institution.

Everything that is coming down from the Pentagon is taking an anti-Israeli turn - see the latest article "BOT Members Sign Hope Equals Wall" <http://crcna.org/news.cfm?newsid=1821§ion=1>. What a coercive action, to put the wall in your face right outside the BOT meeting. The article mentions that "the CRC is a member of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), a coalition of 22 Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant

national churches and agencies.” Now if you look at their website www.cmep.org and their partners <http://www.cmep.org/partner/cmeppartners.html> - you won't find evangelical churches. The CRC has taken a turn toward Mainline Ecumenical political advocacy. Its' a sad turn of events. Even World Missions new initiative is politicizing World Missions.

-Dave Watson
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