



Jane Charmelo

OUT AND ABOUT

Christian Reformed Church turns 100

If you were to attend a Sunday church service at the Lombard Christian Reformed Church, the Rev. John Huizinga says the message you would hear is that being of the faith means not just attending church on Sunday, but living that faith each and every day—whether it be at work, at school or during leisure time.

“It’s everyday living for Jesus,” he emphasized, and it’s a similar message that has reverberated throughout the 100-year history of the Lombard church, which will be holding a celebration this weekend.

In a history of the church prepared by congregation member John Rice, he writes that the church, located at Meyers Road and 22nd Street, started out in a storefront on Chicago’s West Side, when it was “an ethnic-based church, dominated by Dutch-speaking members.”

Huizinga explained that the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) originated in the Netherlands, and is “along the lines of the Presbyterians.”

The CRC Web site, www.crcna.org, likens denominations to the trunk of a tree, dividing after some 1,000 years of growth into two major branches, or the Eastern and Western churches. The Western, or Roman, branch became divided into several new branches from the Protestant Reformation in 1517, further dividing churches into “several new branches.”



PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY KEVIN FISCHER
LOMBARD CHRISTIAN REFORMED Church is turning 100 this year. The photos above show various locations the church called home, including (from top left, clockwise) 12th Street (1912) and West Grenshaw (1913) in Chicago, the Cicero church (1925) and ground breaking in Lombard (1975). In the lower left photo is the Rev. John Huizinga, who has been at the CRC for four years. He is originally from Oak Park and spent much of his career in Alberta, Canada.

One was the Lutheran Church, under the influence of Martin Luther, and another developed through Ulrich Zwingli and later John Calvin. In Scotland this was the Presbyterian Church and Reformed Church in continental Europe, the CRC describes, adding that it was in the Netherlands where the Reformed Church thrived.

When some of those people moved to the United States in the middle 1800s, they formed the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Rice’s history of the Lombard church indicates that the 12th Street Church “had the radical idea of holding services in English.”

“That did not happen overnight,” the CRC Web site states, but at the same time, the shift enabled the churches to “forge relationships with other Christians.”

As the Chicago congregation grew, the church moved to a number of locations before building a church in Cicero in 1925. At the time,

Timothy Christian School was located across the street.

When the school moved to Elmhurst and congregation members began moving to the Western suburbs, the church decided to move as well, and began building the current church—on what was once farm land—in 1975.

The current church would go on to build the addition of a large Fellowship Hall, expanded the parking lot and purchased surrounding properties.

Rose Van Reken remembers the days when the CRC was located in Cicero, where she lived at the time. She and her family began attending church there because she liked the pastor, the Rev. Rolf Veenstra, remarking that it was “quite a big church.”

In fact, the church was so popular that churchgoers might find themselves sitting on chairs in the aisle “if you didn’t get there early enough,” she recalled with a chuckle.

When the church moved to

Lombard, Van Reken said, “We just drove all the time,” adding that her now-late husband was still a practicing doctor at West Suburban Hospital in Oak Park.

When he retired, the Van Reken moved to Lombard around 1985. She moved to Downers Grove just a few years ago.

All of her five children were raised in the church, said Van Reken; in fact, one of her sons, who teaches at the Calvin Seminary, will be participating in the 100th anniversary service on Sunday, Oct. 14.

“I enjoy the church very much,” Van Reken said emphatically, recalling that she led an adult fellowship after the morning service for 21 years, and adding that it was a very special time for her.

She also taught women’s classes and helped write memorials about congregation members who had passed away.

“I was quite active, really,” she continued. “I loved being involved with the church.”

Rice’s historical account indicates that even before moving to Lombard, the CRC “was also progressive in its music and its outreach to the community.”

In addition to recalling her days leading the adult fellowship, another of Van Reken’s fond memories was that “We had a beautiful choir,” under the direction of Neal Kickert.

She said his daughter, Virginia Folgers, was a longtime organist, and “She was a wonderful organist at our church for many years.”

As for community outreach, Huizinga said his congregation of about 400 is very civic minded, especially “in response to economic conditions in the last few years.”

The church offers a family-to-family-ministry, has volunteers for Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) in Lombard and Bridge Communities in Glen Ellyn, and offers a summer sports camp “that brings a lot of the community kids.”

The church also supports Timothy Christian School and at the

same time, “Christian Reformed relief work is a big thing for us; that goes around the world,” the minister said.

He said part of the church’s—and his—message is “to be a blessing to others [and] to bring the love of God into all aspects of life.”

He posed, “What can we offer? What can we give up for others? All of us have some sort of skill or a passion. We all have something [to share]” that can result in meaningful involvement.

He said that after growing up in Oak Park and then spending some 20 years in Alberta, Canada, when he got the chance to come to the Lombard CRC four years ago it was like coming home.

“I had always wanted to give back in the community where I grew up,” he said of the Western suburbs.

Upon returning though, Huizinga was disheartened to see “how many people are [often] on their own, alone.”

Therefore, he wants the Lombard church to be seen as “a safe place where you can be you.”

Just as the Dutch reformers began holding church services in English, “We’re supposed to be part of the community,” Huizinga reiterated.

In fact, one of his hopes for the future is that “the church remains as a community place, much like a library or fire station.”

Lombard Christian Reformed Church will celebrate its 100th anniversary with a banquet on Saturday, Oct. 13, after which there will be a program that includes interviews with former pastors and a slide show of the church’s history. The weekend will conclude with a special Sunday service.

Lombard Christian Reformed Church is located at 2020 S. Meyers Road, Lombard. Traditional church services are held on Sundays at 9:15 a.m., with a contemporary service at 11:15 a.m. For more information, call 630-495-3080 or visit www.lombardcrc.org.

Celebrating arts and humanities in Lombard

The state has designated October as Illinois Arts & Humanities Month, and the Village of Lombard is reaping some of the benefits.

The Lombard Arts Coalition (LAC) will be showing the work of various artists for all to enjoy, both at the Helen M. Plum Memorial Library and at the National University of Health Sciences (NUHS), noted Marj Placzek, LAC secretary and past president, in a press release.

The LAC is currently hosting its NUHS “Open” Fine Arts Show, which Placzek related is “our annual show where we invite [local artists]” to display their work at the university art gallery.

Placzek explained that the arts coalition—which she said “originally formed to help support the DuPage Theatre”—hosts a number of shows each year, including a member show in February and the open show in October.

Artwork at the NUHS art gallery, which is open to the public, changes at various times, including every two months in one wing and every four



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY MARJ PLACZEK
THE LOMBARD ARTS Coalition will be holding its annual “open” art show this month at the National University of Health Sciences (NUHS) in Lombard. The public is also invited to an opening reception Sunday, Oct. 14, from 1-3 p.m. at NUHS to meet the artists.

months in the patient wing, Placzek continued, adding that all the work on display is “wall” art.

She mentioned that the artwork includes “faces and places” and that members often have their own showing, or share it with another member artist, with names being

chosen from a drawing.

“It’s a great opportunity for our artists to show their work,” the secretary said, adding, “There’s always artwork there.”

In addition to offering the public a chance to see the work of local artists, each year the LAC also gives

residents a chance to try their hand at an art project, in cooperation with the Lombard Park District, Placzek outlined, adding that most recently the theme was Mexico’s “Day of the Dead,” in which workshop participants could make skulls and Mexican flowers, to be displayed at the Helen M. Plum Memorial Library during the month of October. Also as part of the display are some paintings from LAC member Blanca Campos of Westmont.

“Past exhibits have included masks, mosaic pots, banners and found-object art,” Placzek described in the press release, which stated that the display can be viewed during library hours.

“We do our best to offer a free workshop to the public each year,” she said, adding, “We supply the supplies. We teach them to do it.”

As for the display at NUHS, “Illinois Arts & Humanities Month is a big time for us,” stated coalition President Eve Reed in the press release. “We love it because it gives our members several opportunities to show what they can do.”

She also said that the showing

offers the public a chance to view some art for free that they might not normally see, it offers a neighborhood feel and may just prompt someone to join the LAC.

This year’s open show is running now through Dec. 3 at the NUHS art gallery. The gallery is free and open to the public during clinic business hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday; and from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday.

In addition to the art display, the LAC will be holding an opening reception at the gallery on Sunday, Oct. 14, from 1-3 p.m., where the public can view the artwork and meet the artists. Refreshments will be served.

“It’s a great time to meet and greet,” Placzek concluded.

The NUHS art gallery is located in the Health Sciences Clinic, Building B., 200 E. Roosevelt Road, Lombard. For more information about the gallery or the LAC, call 331-645-3992 or visit www.LombardArtsCoalition.com.

For more information on the Helen Plum Library, call 630-627-0316 or visit www.helenplum.org.