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## DeVries, Michael Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with  
Michael De Vries

(unedited)

Conducted November 17, 1997  
by Carol Haverdink

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project  
"150 Stories for 150 Years"

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project  
Interview with Michael De Vries  
November 17, 1997  
Interviewer: Carol Haverdink

CH: My name is Carol Haverdink. Today is November 15, 1997. I'm interviewing Reverend Michael DeVries.

MDV: I'm very pleased that I can have this interview with you, Carol. Let me tell you a little bit about myself. Perhaps one way into it would be let me simply tell about my first name a moment, if I may. I'm now called Michael DeVries, but I was born in Laywarden, Vriesland, the Netherlands, [date removed], 1935. I'm a twin; I have a twin sister. I have five brothers and two sisters, so I'm out of a big family of ten. My birthname is a Frisian name--Minne. It's a typical Frisian name, something like Mino in Dutch--Mino Simmons, for example. We immigrated to Alberta, Canada. We were sponsored by a Canadian farmer. We had to sign a contract in which we promised to work in the sugar beets for a minimum of two years. We arrived in Tabor, Alberta; which is about 30 miles south of Leftbridge. The farmer had not expected a large family of ten. So, he had an extremely small, little home for most of the family, except my brothers and I had to sleep in the barn. It was a rough, rough time. We arrived, fortunately, in May when the weather in Alberta is warmer and it's improving. But I recall well the winter scenes, but I'll come back to that in a minute.

But during the winter, we were expected to go to school. I had finished my first year of high school, I was a teenager. I was 15 years old. I arrived at a

school in Tabor, Alberta. The principal had no clue where I belonged. I knew hardly any English at all. He said, "Well, we'll put you in grade eight." So as a 15 year old, I was placed in grade eight. The first or second day of school, the teacher looked at my name, Minne; he said, if I recall right, "It reminds me of a minnow, and I'm going to call you Mike." Henceforth, I was called Mike. Interestingly enough, if I may continue on the name a minute, in the fall of 1954, I came to Calvin College planning to become a minister. I was in Henry Van Til's Bible class. He took me aside one day and said, "Mike, I don't think human beings should be called after angels. I wish you would call yourself Marvin." So I said, "Okay." So, I was called Marvin. Then, at the end of Calvin, 1957, I met my wife Marianne Feenstra, who immigrated from the Netherlands as well, moved to Goshen, Indiana--we met at Calvin. She said, "I like the name Michael." So since then, my name has been Michael.

CH: In a round-a-bout way.

MDV: In a round-a-bout way. But now to go back. My mom and dad decided right after the second World War, with the economy the way it was--there was a slight fear of communism looming in hearts in the early 50s, that my mom and dad thought it would be wiser for the well-being of the kids to immigrate. That accounts for the fact that we immigrated to Canada. We had hoped to go to the United States, but it was easier to get into Canada if your had a farmer sponsor you. So that's how we got into Canada. After two years on they farm, extremely hard work--we were really farm hands--inexperienced. I recall well when we as a whole family,

everybody included, would go into the sugar beets at sunrise, split them apart 12 inches each. We did the weeding in the summer and then harvesting in the fall--pulling them out of the soil, cutting off the tops, throwing them in a ditch. The farmer would pick them up by truck and loader, usually in September, harvest time, the first snowflakes start falling. I remember just talking about it, having cold hands and pure misery. Then at night, sleeping in a cold barn where mice were a constant companion. It was unreal, but because we were so tired, it mattered none whether there were 100 mice around or 2. They would all walk over our legs and over the blankets. So those are some early reminiscences of tough times. We were not really cut out to be on the farm. When the contract was complete, Dad said, "We better go to the city again." Vriesland is the capital city of the northern province. We were city folk, so we were pleased to go to Calgary, Alberta, where we all settled in. I worked in the bank of Nova Scotia for nine months as a messenger boy, delivering checks to all the various branches. Suddenly, one day I came home to Mom and Dad and said, "I would love to become a minister." They were pleased. I hardly knew what that entailed. I did know it meant going back to school, which was fine with me. So I enrolled at the Public High School in Calgary, Alberta. The principal thought I could start grade 11, but had no idea of the make up of my education. That went extremely well. I graduated from grade 11, with honors, the first year. Worked hard with my little Dutch and English dictionary. Then into grade 12.

CH: Where you 18 then?

MDV: Yes, exactly right. Then in 1954, I joined Calvin College--Classis of Alberta and the Christian Reformed Church supported me in part financially. Got some part-time jobs in Grand Rapids--every job under the sun: cleaning homes for elderly people, doing lawn work, worked in a shoe store for a little while. In the summer time, I could go back to Calgary, Alberta. I became an orderly at a Catholic hospital every summer. A job was waiting there for me the second day after my arrival from Calvin. I had a job until the new season started. That's how I carried on. Then I met Marianne and got married the first year at Calvin Seminary. After the first year, I went back to Alberta for a summer assignment. Then graduated from Calvin Seminary in 1961; got a scholarship to go to Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia where I got my masters degree in one year under John Murray. So in 1962, I was married, had one son by the name of Jim, moved to Surry, British Columbia, a suburb of Vancouver. My first congregation where I still had to preach Dutch and English, although English started being the most dominated usage for church services. 1965-1972, I was the pastor of the Rehobeth Church in Toronto, Ontario--city suburb and church, about 150 families. During this time, the church gave me a one year leave of absence for study. So my wife and myself, we had two children at that time, a son and daughter, we moved to Bothuvadort, the Netherlands, close to Amsterdam, where we lived for twelve months. I did post-graduate study at the free University. I got my Doctor Roundus degree--DRS. That means all the residence work, except for the dissertation on the professor Jacob Firet. We became friends. He and his wife kept up contact all

these years; he died a few years back. He would come to us in Canada and here in the United States, including the city of Holland. And we would often visit with them back in the Netherlands. After Toronto, went to York, Ontario, close to Hamilton, smaller congregation where I intended to do pastoral work and finish my dissertation. The goals were noble, but the work too hard. It required too much work. I still have about 180 pages of manuscript in my drawer. And it is still incomplete and probably will remain that way. From York, Ontario, we went to Los Angeles--the Arcadia Christian Reformed Church close to Pasadena. It's a small congregation close to Fuller Seminary where I attended some classes, taught a course at the International Theological Seminary which was mostly Korean students--and quite interestingly enough, I would sometimes use Dutch resources for myself, lecture in English, and I saw the students writing in Korean. I found that interesting. I quite often knew whether I was communicating or not when I would tell a little anecdote that nobody was smiling, I thought I need to change my use of language. After my stint in Arcadia, California, we're now up to 1980. I accepted a call to Harderwyk Christian Reformed Church on the north side of Holland, located on Lakewood Boulevard. A church of about, if I recall right, 160 families. Incidentally, in between there we still have a third child, who was born in Toronto, by the name of Jennifer. So we have three children: Jim, Kathy, and Jennifer. Anyway, we came to Harderwyk in 1980 where I stayed until 1993, at which time I resigned from the Harderwyk Christian Reformed Church. Pressures were mounting, there were conflicts within the Council, a few whom I would call "power

players" felt they needed a change, they wanted a new direction. It was really an issue related to what is the church, what ought the church to be, whether my leadership style fit their needs or not. It became problematic. I thought for my well-being and theirs, it was best that I resign, which I did, causing considerable controversy within the Harderwyk Church. Many families left; there is still aftershock noticeable in the Harderwyk Church now, we're talking 1997. But they're healing. I'm happy that Pillar Christian Reformed Church, the oldest church in our denomination, came forward and were interested in me. I thought it could be a beautiful combination; they needed a pastor who was acquainted with the history, the Dutch culture, I felt that this might be a good combination, a good marriage. So in October of 1993, I became the senior pastor of Pillar Church, and my plans are, the Lord willing, to keep going for another two and a half until my retirement. My impressions of when we came to Holland and my feelings about the city of Holland at the moment...When we arrived April 8, 1980, my wife and I and two children came into the city of Holland. We drove down Lakewood. It was April 8 and snow had fallen; not much, but it was two or three inches. And here we had just come from California--warm, 80 degree weather, lots of sunshine. Our first impressions of Holland were, "Wow! This is a gray looking city." The clouds were hanging low, no foliage, no leaves on the trees; they looked stark and barren and cold. My wife said, "Is this where we are going to settle?" Her instant feelings were, I think, rather negative because things looked so stark and dull. The homes, the way people were dressed, obviously in heavy clothes. You compare it to California where



women would be nicely dressed in colorful dresses, high heels--suddenly men and women in heavy coats and boots. So our first impressions were, "I think this is not a very warm place to come to." Obviously, once we settled in we quickly got acquainted with people. We recall well how Larry Westenbrook and his wife, Nell, said, "We need to show you the city." They obviously were proud of the city--they drove us through the whole city. We nodded in agreement, but at the same time we felt some of the highlights he was showing us were not very exciting. He drove us past the Padnos place and we saw all those heaps of old cars behind a sagging wall--hardly looked attractive. Then he said, "One of the highlights will be, Michael and Marianne, we're now going to take you to one of the famous restaurants of Holland." Obviously, that was Russ'. The food was good, the price was right, the waitresses were pleasant; but our impressions again were rather commonplace and dull--even the way the place was decorated appeared to us to be rather dull. Everything, if I recall right, was in brownish color, dark colors, and we had be used to, for several years, to that which was white, yellow, bright. So that again confirmed to us that this was dull. Once I settled in and became the pastor of Harderwyk Church, it struck me that the people were indeed what we felt--warm-hearted, caring, highly religious. Our impressions were somewhat conservative. Many people had lived here lifelong; which to us is mind-boggling. My wife and I had been transferred so often; we had gone through the immigration, we crossed the ocean many times, and here were people who said they lived in the same home where they were born, went to the same church where they were baptized, did

profession of faith, seldom went elsewhere. Extreme loyalty is what struck us. Another thing that struck me the first funeral I had, how many people attended. I had had funerals in Los Angeles where there are few people connected to one another. I've had funeral services where there were maybe five or ten persons present. At my first funeral service here in Holland, Michigan, was attended by, I would judge, a couple hundred. That stands out in my mind. Family connections, rootedness. After a little while, my wife looking for work in a new place (she had been a kindergarten teacher and director in Arcadia), she found it difficult to connect finding a new job in the city of Holland. She could have had some jobs maybe at the check-out counter at Meijer, for example, but she felt she wanted to do something else. So she decided to go back to school at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo to get her masters degree in social work, part-time, travelling back and forth from Holland to Kalamazoo, which she did within about seven years. She became a full-fledged family therapist and has been working most of the time at Pine Rest office of Holland, where she is still now part-time employed. So settling in at Holland, our first impressions were dull, drab, dreary. Not much color. Churches rather functional in architecture. Pragmatically oriented - this is useful, this will be okay. No adornment, no sense of the colorful, the artistic. However, we did find that the people were very warm and outgoing once you get to know them. But typical, we believe, of a small town mentality, it takes awhile to include you. For a little while we felt like we were on the periphery of society, where we were not immediately embraced as newcomers. Sometimes

laughingly I have said, even after twenty years, some of them still feel I am new to the city of Holland, which probably says something about our culture, our make-up. I don't think it scenophobia, it's not fear of strangers, but one might get that impression at first. Us and them, we and they. I've had one, for example, sad story where one clergyman (I will not identify him) visited with us, and he said, "Our community is changing, Michael." I said, "Alright, in what way?" "Well," he said (and this is an actual quote), "we are now getting an unwanted element among us." Which confirmed in my mind again, oh, there is that ingrown mentality here to refer to others as "the unwanted element." And I surmise that he probably meant the Hispanic population that began to enter into our city, which now, in 1997, makes up about 14% of our population. For me, having been used to all these different races and ethnic groups, and colors in the Los Angeles area, having been brought up in the Netherlands where we are extremely tolerant, we felt there was something here in the community that was too ingrown. I still feel at times that that is among us. It's no longer expressed as blatantly as this one minister did, but when you talk awhile, occasionally people will mention to me, "Pastor Michael, our community is no longer what it once was." The underlying current is, "We were all Dutch once, now we are no longer all Dutch. We have Vietnamese and Cambodian, and we have a black population plus the Hispanics. We are no longer the dominant Dutch culture we once were." To me, my reaction is: I welcome it. The city of Holland has grown since we arrived in 1980. I see growth in terms of population; buildings are going up left and right; this is a culture where people are well-off,

speaking out globally even nationally; the average person by world's standards is rich. I, for example, went on a two-week trip to Sierra Leon, sponsored by the Christian Reformed Church in 1987, and for two weeks I lived with missionaries in one of the poverty stricken countries of the world, underdeveloped. Walked with them, talked with them, met with the people in various villages. I returned back to Holland, and I thought what a contrast between the city of Holland and Sierra Leon. That's why I dare say the city of Holland is rich. I know even within our own city there are very wealthy and very poor, many in-between, yet it's amazing how well off we are in this city at this moment. Where unemployment is maybe 3%--virtually everybody, at least in my congregation, is employed or could be employed. Sometimes, of course, for various reasons they may have to be on welfare--for example health reasons or disabilities, and I'm very sympathetic towards that. But people who want to work and are able to work, can work within our culture here. That struck me. Coming back a little bit now to my feelings about the city. I welcome its growth; I welcome the people changing in attitude. Certainly I hear of less racism than I did in 1980. I think there is a greater awareness, a conscientious effort to say they are all God's children, we must love them; their image bearers of God. I preach it, and I hope that people take note. But at least I feel that there's a gradual change. This past year, my involvement in the city of Holland has been very, very active. I was asked by the Mayor of the city, Al McGeehan, to serve on the Mayor's Sesquicentennial Committee, which for me has been very exciting. I love being part of this committee; we meet monthly, sometimes bi-monthly. We

have had various activities this past year starting in February with the Settler's Walk--that was exciting to work on. My wife and I dressed up like Dr. and Mrs. Raalte; made me go back to do a little more reading about Dr. Van Raalte--his letters to his wife I read--and his attitude to people here in the colony. Dr. Van Raalte, of course, was the founding pastor of the Pillar Church. I'm the nineteenth pastor in the line of Van Raalte, so I felt what a wonderful time to be part of this historic moment, not only of the Pillar Church, but of the city of Holland. So I've been actively involved in making this a happy year of celebration. We have much to celebrate, we have much for which to be grateful. Reading about the early settlement here in 1847 is horrendous in terms of their determination, their tremendous courage, their childlike faith. They felt by God that this was their new dwelling, their new place, their new beginning--in spite of disease, cholera. I stand back in amazement and in appreciation that these early settlers started here in the forest and made of the city what it now is. And even in 1871 when virtually our whole city burned, right away after encouraging words by Dr. Van Raalte, to say with our Dutch determination and faith, our American know-how, we will rebuild. And obviously they did. You can sense I have a feeling of history and a feeling of appreciation. So this past year has been interesting as the Pillar Church was chosen as a church that could start a Synodical Work Service of the Christian Reformed Church, which is the highest governing body of our denomination. We had the opening worship service here at Pillar. To my surprise and delight, I was chosen to be its president. The opening worship service here was a great success; many

people sang in the choir; many people attended--the church was packed. It was an exciting service of praise and celebration. Another highlight this year was how the city was favored with a visit of royalty from the Netherlands. On three or four different occasions, I met with Princess Margriet and her husband, Pieter van Vollenhoven. We had a twenty minute ceremony at Pillar Church on October 3. We had the Christian High School choir singing--thirty young people sang a beautiful number based on Psalm 90. These are just a few of the highlights. We're going to close the ceremonies on December 14 in the Centennial Park, which is now graced with the beautiful statue of Dr. Van Raalte. He was only 5'3" tall; the statue is nine feet tall, so we are giving him great recognition--belatedly so, I think, but I'm pleased it happened also in this sesquicentennial year. Beautiful donation, expensive statue given to us by the Huizengas from Chicago. Now he stands proudly in Centennial Park, facing Pillar Church, facing Hope College in which he had such a strong interest. He favored education, especially with emphasis on Christ and the scriptures. So these are some of the highlights of 1997 which I will always remember.

Another thing that strikes me about the city of Holland--it did when we came, did even more so after we became acquainted with the actual city and its surroundings--how church steeples are everywhere. Everywhere! It conveyed to me strong religious roots, strong heritage, many churches (I believe 40 or 50 total are either Reformed Church in America or Christian Reformed). And then you have all the other denominations and independent churches. That conveys to me that people

want to worship God, recognize the significance of worshipping together, making Christianity relevant in their daily living--which I sense in the homes, business, in culture. However, the negative side also strikes me, and I like to mention that as I look at all these churches, I do get somewhat disconcerted and I ask myself sometimes--what would Van Raalte have said, looking at the Holland of 1997? Knowing a little bit about where Van Raalte came from, he never was really in favor of church splits. He urged the early settlers not to take with them issues from the Netherlands, introduce them here on new soil in a new culture. Look at the Reformed Church in America, not as you remember from back home, the state church, but as the church now is in a new land, in a new state, in a new city. But despite all his arguments in favor of church unity, he was grieved. It pained him. He felt deeply hurt when at such an early juncture in settling here in the woods with all the tough times, that so soon, really ten years after their arrival, we had the church saying we've got to go our own way. In April of 1857, the Christian Reformed Church was born. It had its beginnings for reasons which we now look back and say, were they really that valid to warrant a walk-out from the Reformed Church in America which had done so much for the early settlers--financially, emotionally, spiritually. So looking back, personally even though I am a Christian Reformed pastor, I can sense how Van Raalte grieved. And looking back, one can still rightly ask, what drove them to that split? And what could have happened had we not had the split of 1857? So when I see these churches, I'm not talking first about Christian Reformed or Reformed, my personal hope and prayer is, and I've

been vitally involved in ecumenical activities, to say what would it take eventually to be reunited. During these last seventeen years in the city of Holland, I've been both encouraged and discouraged. I've been encouraged by many of the laities saying, "Oh, but there's a lot of intermarriage already, Reformed and Christian Reformed. Young men and women meet each other all the time, fall in love, marry, and make a choice of either denomination without a big deal." So among the laity I sense it's not a big deal. Were we to get together eventually, for most of them that would be okay. So that has been encouraging to me. Many of the clergy feel as I do; we should have never split in 1857 for the reasons we did. To be sure, changes have occurred over these years. Reformed church has gone one way, Christian Reformed another. To be sure, there are differences, but that which unites us outweighs by far that which divides us. So, I'm encouraged. However, I'm also discouraged because there also is a nucleus of laity, but especially in the higher echelon among elders, deacons, and clergy who say, "No, we must never unite. That which divides us outweighs that which unites us." The issues mentioned are among some: women in office, Christian education, second worship services on Sunday night, belonging to the World Council of Churches. Seems to me these are four recurring themes that I hear from time to time. So it depends when you ask me, "Will we ever unite?" One day I will say, "Oh yes, it's going to happen in my lifetime." Other times were you to ask me, I would say, "It will not happen in my lifetime; more needs to be changed." So I'm discouraged by this disunity. I'm also disheartened that more and more churches come on the scene. Independent churches. Their attempt is to say



we need to do missions and evangelize and promote the gospel, and I say amen to that. My question is, is that the only means to achieve the goal? And I always hear Christ Jesus saying, "I pray to my Father in heaven, that they may be one, so that the world may know that you are my disciples." So that to me is an element of discouragement in our community--that we have so many churches. The other day I counted, and I believe we have about 130 churches within our small town of 60,000 people. That is really an amazing phenomenon. One can only stand back and wonder, is that the best way to do the work of our Lord? So that's a few impressions I have about the churches in the city of Holland. To come back, however, to the Mayor's commission and my involvement in the city. We had a splendid ecumenical service in the Holland stadium at the end of July, where, indeed, many Christians from various stripes, different denominations, and independent churches came to sing together, to pray together, to worship together. Many said afterward, "Yes, this is wonderful--a church without walls, where we can unitedly praise God together in this stadium." The question has already arisen whether we should have more of these, and most likely I'm going to be on a small committee working toward services of that type in the future. In the back of my mind I have the feeling, "Could this be a new beginning toward accepting one another with openness and tolerance and appreciation? Could it be?" I'm only asking whether it will, but only God knows how this might be used as a means toward greater unity within our city.

About myself, my life story in terms of suffering and pain: Earlier I had

already mentioned that for me a painful thing was the uprooting from the Netherlands to the prairie of Alberta. As an almost fifteen-year old, to readjust, isolated from former friends and all the family, the pain of isolation, learning the language. I recall well, my mother often utterly depressed, epileptic seizures, often saying in Frisian, "If I could crawl back to the Netherlands, I would. But we can't afford to go back." Those are painful memories of feeling isolated, virtually abused because of the housing situation, the income. So that was one painful moment in my life that I'll always remember. I think it has left some trauma in my personal life. I can now identify with these Mexican farm workers coming in the summer here in the blueberry patches. I see them slaving away from dawn till dusk, and I can identify because I figure that's how I was once, and I wish them well. A second painful thing in my life is that within my family history there is a lot of cancer. I mentioned earlier my twin sister, Tina, died of breast cancer in 1987; my father died of prostate cancer; my oldest brother has incurable cancer; and I have had cancer twice. In 1989, I was operated on; I had a prostatectomy--the prostate was removed. Then in the spring of this year, it came back; they found another tumor in the prostate bed. I've had 33 radiation treatments and the prognosis is now good again. I am re-energized, able to do my work. But because of that personal history I mentioned, I can identify closely with people who are lonely, who suffer. So I decided, requested by the Holland Hospital, to be an attending clergy association executive. They've asked me to be part of their cancer support group. So many a time, I've been giving little speeches to support groups, at which time I discovered

something about our culture again, which I'd like to mention briefly. I would say there are at least three schools of thought among us. One, I'm not altogether sure where it comes from, but I call them the minimizers--they minimize other people's suffering. Perhaps it stems from a bit of a stoic attitude that is so dominant among many of our people here with Dutch background. Stoic in nature, they minimize someone else's suffering almost as if to say, "I don't want to hear about it," or "It must not be so bad," "stiff upper lip." I noticed among our people that tears don't come readily; if they do come, they quickly brush them aside and say, Well, others suffer more than I am. I call them the minimizers. There are, of course, always some people who are the maximizers. They catastrophize, and they quickly will fill you in on all the catastrophes that have occurred in their lives. But I see more of the former. Thirdly, I see the moralizers among our people, and that too, I think, has theological roots. By moralizers, I mean the people who quickly will say, "Well, this was God's will. God willed it that way." A little child dies accidentally because of a drunk driver, and it would not be uncommon for some of our people to say, "Well, God wanted that child to be in heaven. It's all God-willed." I call this moralizing which probably has roots within our theological training and upbringing which is characterized by stoicism, too quickly in my view to say it's God will. Thirdly, we've got to carry on no matter what. There's little appreciation among some of our people for pain and grieving--after 2-3 weeks, a widow should be able to get over it, and there's little feeling of no, this is going to take a lot longer. And after two months it's not uncommon to sort of forget, not to ask about that spouse

anymore, life has to go on. So in the support group, it strikes me that these moods are evident among us, whether it is more so in the city of Holland than elsewhere, I dare not say. But my inclination is to say yes. One wonders where does this come from; from the early settlers who had such a hard time and were so determined to do God's bidding, that that has been passed down through the generations, I dare not say. But I do feel that among our people. And that has two sides to it; the good side is that people have tremendous coping skills and strength, (tape interrupted) positive and negative. In my view, the negative is not enough appreciation for the fact that after all, we are human beings. As image bearers of God, we are human beings--meaning we are holistic, and we need to appreciate how God made us. That means we have emotions, we have a mind, we have a will, and sometimes these three are not in harmony and sometimes we suppress the emotional aspects of our lives as if somehow they are less real or not to be acknowledged. God made us as we are. Feelings as such are neither good nor bad, God made us that way. So feelings are okay. The will, the mind, very important in our Dutch culture. The mind and the will, but sometimes we perhaps, negatively speaking, have not left enough room for the feeling. That sometimes creates problems in the long run. I like to say you can put a dog in a basement, but eventually the dog will bark. So these feelings will start barking in due time because they need to be felt and acknowledged. The positive aspect of it is--I'm always amazed that people, in spite of horrendous loss--within my own congregation I can mention many people who have had tremendous losses, and yet are functioning as well as they are--and to me

that conveys that they have a deep sense of "I don't fully understand what happened, but I trust God is with me." And that is the positive--that God is not the giver of evil. I don't believe we must ascribe to God that which is evil. A cancer cell is evil--it ought not to have been in God's creation. It is there because we live east of Eden, we live in a sinful world. Without fully grasping it in my own family, there are cancer cells we need to acknowledge and deal with. But I refuse to say they are given by God to teach us a lesson or because somehow we deserved it and others didn't. And you're back among the friends of Job. So rather than quoting Romans 8:28 in the King James version, I prefer to quote it in the New International version, and there's a big difference. In the King James version it says: "All things work together for good." However, the better translation in my view says, "In all things, God works for good." That way you do not ascribe to God that which is evil, but you're saying, thankfully, God is with us IN all things. If you notice here on my office wall, my wife gave me a painting that shows a stormy scene with the sun shining through the clouds, the waves are beating the hard rocks, it's an imagery of life--sometimes turbulent, yet hopeful. And underneath, one of my favorite texts, "Though foaming waters roar, God is our refuge and our strength," based on Psalm 46.

(end of interview)