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Clarion



The logo for 'Clarion' features a stylized figure in a white robe holding a staff with a cross, standing on an open book. The text 'Numbers 16:1-10' is written on the book. The word 'Clarion' is written in a large, gold, serif font with a 3D effect.

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REV. W.W.J. VANOENE 1920-2013



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The Passing of the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene (1920-2013)

The ancient Psalmist once remarked that the righteous “will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green” (Ps 92:13). In so many ways these words can be applied to the life of the Rev. W.W.J. VanOene. In the year 1985 he retired after serving more than forty years in the ministry of the Word. Together with his wife Ieke, he moved from Fergus, Ontario, to Abbotsford, British Columbia, and there he continued to “bear fruit” and “stayed fresh and green.” He preached regularly, kept on writing, learned how to go online, made money for his favourite charities, and travelled regularly to Ontario. He barely slowed down.

Many years later on Sunday, September 8, 2013, he climbed the pulpit once again in the first congregation that he served in Canada, namely the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church, Surrey, B.C. (formerly, the Canadian Reformed Church at New Westminster, B.C.). He was even privileged to administer the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

It would, however, be the last time. The following week he became ill, was taken by ambulance to the Abbotsford Hospital, and was diagnosed as having a number of serious medical issues. Taking into account his wishes, the family decided that drastic medical intervention would not take place. On Monday morning, September 23, 2013, at the age of ninety-three years, he breathed his last and was taken home by the Lord. Thus the earthly journey of this faithful servant of the Lord came to an end.

The Early Years

Still, there is more that needs to be written. William Wiechert Johannes VanOene was born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on March 6, 1920. He was the oldest of three brothers. In due time the Lord caused a desire to preach the gospel to grow in his heart and thus he

went to Kampen and attended the Reformed Gymnasium (High School). Later he entered the Theological College of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Once there he proved himself to be a diligent and able student as he completed his studies in record time.

At the end of his studies, he did two very important things. First, he found in Ietje (Ieke) Raap a lady of noble character and proposed to her. She accepted and on November 2, 1943, they were married. In the following years the Lord blessed them with three daughters (Renee, Joanne, and Irene) and one son (Rick). Second, he accepted a call to the Reformed Church at Oud-Loosdrecht and began his ministry on November 7, 1943, in the midst of the war years.

After experiencing the Liberation in Oud-Loosdrecht and serving there for more than four years, he accepted a call to Schiedam in January of 1948. There he served alongside the well-known and highly esteemed Rev. C. Vonk, the principal author of an influential series of books called *De Voorzeide Leer*.

Moving to Canada

In the year 1952 the world changed forever for the VanOenes when they received a call from Canada and accepted it. On November 23, 1952, the Rev. VanOene was installed as the first minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at New Westminster, B.C. There he joined the ranks of pioneer ministers in a new federation, along with the Rev. J.T. VanPopta (Edmonton, July 1, 1951), H. Stel (Neerlandia, August 25, 1951), W. Loopstra (Georgetown, November 25, 1951), L. Selles (Chatham, August 3, 1952), and G. Ph. Pieffers (Coaldale, September 7, 1952).

It has to be said, however, that those early years were tough years. On an almost daily basis new immigrants were arriving, and who did they often contact? The local

minister, of course. As a result, the Rev. VanOene, as well as his colleagues across the country, found themselves serving as taxi and school bus drivers, employment agencies, financial counselors, ambulance attendants, and in a host of other capacities. In addition, they often became the lightning rods for all manner of frustrations and discontent that welled up among those immigrants who were having a difficult time adjusting to life in a new land. Financially too, life was hard. What little money the church received in donations could barely support a minister and his family. So, all in all, today's generation owes a huge debt of gratitude to these workers of the first hour.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Remembrance Day is approaching us once again. And in this issue we remember someone special to us at *Clarion* and in our federation: Rev. W.W.J. VanOene. Both our editor and publisher write about Rev. VanOene in this issue – his contributions to our churches as minister, writer, and editor. We are thankful for his many years of service and extend our condolences to his family.

Rev. VanOene contributed many articles to *Clarion*, and we are pleased to bring our readers an article that was originally printed in 1994. This article is Rev. VanOene's personal recollections of the journey to establishing our Theological College. At the time of writing, the college had already been in operation for twenty-five years.

In this issue we also have an article from Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer: "Why Should I Read the Acts of Synod?" Keep reading to find Rev. Holtvlüwer's top five reasons.

Issue 22 includes a Treasures New and Old meditation, a League Day report from Carman, MB and the conclusion to a three-part Education Matters article. We also have two Press Releases.

Laura Veenendaal

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This can especially be said of the Rev. VanOene. It did not take long and he began to have an influence on the churches. He regularly preached in vacant churches and thus would lead three or four services on the Lord's Day. He taught catechism classes throughout the Fraser Valley and thus impacted a new generation. He was delegated often to major assemblies and served in many positions of leadership, including chairman of a number of general synods. He was frequently asked for advice in both church political and pastoral matters.

Yet of all the causes that he championed, two in particular stand out. The first is the *Book of Praise*. Together with the Rev. G. VanDooren, Br. M. DeGroot, and others, the Rev. VanOene was convinced that the churches needed to have their own songbook and so he became deeply involved in the translation and publication of the Genevan Psalter. The second cause has to do with the need for the churches to have their own training for the ministry. The Rev. VanOene was chosen to be the chairman of General Synod Orangeville 1968 and this matter dominated its agenda. Together with others, he convinced the members of Synod of the need to launch out in faith and establish such a training. As a result, the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches was born and has served the churches in a most wonderful way ever since.

Going East

After more than seventeen years in New Westminster, the VanOene family did something really difficult. They said "farewell" to the West. The Rev. VanOene had received a call from a combined charge in Ontario, the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church at Fergus and the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church at Guelph. The Lord led him to accept this call and on January 18, 1970, he was installed as their new minister. Four years later the church at Guelph decided to launch out on its own

and the Rev. VanOene could concentrate all of his attention on one congregation.

Only that is not all he did. For once in Ontario, the Rev. VanOene decided to go back to school. He applied and was admitted as a graduate student at Knox College (today a college of the University of Toronto). He applied himself to further studies in the area of church polity. The result was that in 1973 he graduated with a Master of Theology degree. The subject of his thesis was: "Church Polity in the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Christian Reformed Church: A Comparative Study of Two Dutch Immigrant Churches."

Later this study would serve him and the churches well. In 1979 he was appointed to lecture on a temporary basis in church polity at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario (now known as the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary). In 1981 he was made the Lecturer in Church Polity, and served in that capacity until 1985.

Taking up the pen

Another highlight of the Fergus years was the writing and publication of *Inheritance Preserved: The Canadian Reformed Churches in Historical Perspective* (Winnipeg: Premier), 1975, 280 pages. Prior to its appearance a few brief things had been written about the origin and character of the Canadian Reformed Churches; however, this was the first book that told the story in detail. Since then many have profited from reading it, and not least are the countless students enrolled in catechism classes throughout the continent.

One more thing about the years in Fergus deserves our attention, and it has to do with the role the Rev. VanOene played in the editing and writing of the *Clarion* magazine. As such the Canadian Reformed churches do not have an "official" magazine, although many would say that *Clarion* comes close to being in that category. In any case, the Rev. VanOene spent countless hours doing his best to fill the pages of this magazine.

Of particular note was the fact that he also wrote a regular column called "News Medley." In it he would quote from the many bulletins that he received from churches in both Canada and the United States. Only he did more than just quote, he would also add his own comments. And interesting comments they were, as well as controversial at times. More than a few churches and ministers found themselves on the receiving end of some unsolicited, and at times, critical and perhaps needed advice. Whatever opinion one had of "News Medley," there is no doubt that when the *Clarion* arrived, this was the first column that many readers turned to, read, discussed, and debated.



Retirement

In the year 1985 the Rev. VanOene reached the age of sixty-five, which at that time was the commonly considered age of retirement. Having preached the Word of God faithfully for more than forty years and having always led a busy life, the Rev. VanOene and his wife decided that the time had come to retire. In addition, they also decided that they would move back to their beloved Fraser Valley of British Columbia. Abbotsford became their new home and there they lived for many more years together.

And productive years they were as well! The year 1990 saw the appearance of yet another book from the pen of the Rev. VanOene. It was called *With Common Consent: A Practical Guide to the Use of the Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches* (Winnipeg: Premier), 1990, 365 pages. In it he tried to do what VanDelden and Monsma had done for the Christian Reformed Church and what H. Bouwman, Joh. Jansen, and F.L. Rutgers had done for the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, namely supply a commentary on the Church Order of Dort. In this he succeeded admirably for still today *With Common Consent* remains a standard text when it comes to Reformed church polity.

Having published this last book at the age of seventy years, you would think that the journalistic efforts of the Rev. VanOene had come to an end. Wrong! For nine years later, he surprised us again with another book called *Patrimony Profile: Our Reformed Heritage Retraced 1795 – 1946* (Winnipeg: Premier), 1999, 445 pages. In this book VanOene gave a detailed description of those major events in recent Dutch Reformed church history: Secession, “Doleantie,” and Liberation. He also included some documents that appeared for the first time in the English language, thereby making this a valuable resource.

In summary, then, the literary efforts of our brother, as well as his views on church polity, have played a major role in the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches. He laboured hard and long for the churches and we owe him our deepest thanks. He will be missed!

It’s hard to say “good bye”

At the same time there is no doubt that he will be missed most by his wife of almost seventy years. Sr. Ieke VanOene is known far and wide as a lady of gentle and caring disposition. She always stood by her husband and supported him. They enjoyed a long, full, and blessed life together, but now that joined life has come to an end. She must go on without her loving and care-giving husband.

Sad, and yet there are some things that soften the blow. We know that there comes a time of parting for all of us, but thankfully, and by God’s grace, it is not forever. Confidently we can say “until we meet again.” As well, we know that the same God who watched over the Rev. VanOene and his wife all of these years is faithful and will not abandon her in her widowhood. He will remain her rock and her hiding place.

The same applies to our brother’s children, his many grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren. The Lord God will comfort and strengthen them too. In this life he blessed them with a much-loved father, grandfather, and “opa.” What a joy to have had a father and grandfather who has always greeted you with a ready smile and with some fitting and friendly words. Such memories are nuggets of encouragement in days of sadness.

Indeed, the Rev. VanOene was always a gracious and welcoming host. Some who knew him only by what he wrote in print or online received a somewhat negative impression of him, but it was not the real one. Let me illustrate this by saying that there were times when he did not agree with something that I said or wrote or did, but he never allowed those things to become personal. Whenever my wife and I visited the VanOenes, we could always be sure of two things, a fine visit and a brief email afterwards expressing deep thanks for our visit. Such was William Wiechert Johannes VanOene!

His passing will leave a large hole in the life of his wife and family, as well as in the life of our churches. At the same time our grief is softened by the sure knowledge that he has finally entered into the reward of his Master. And there, as the Psalmist reminds us, he will be filled with joy in God’s presence and with eternal pleasures at his right hand (Ps 16:11).





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God's Promise of Peace for the Last Days

"He will judge between many peoples, and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. . . ."

(Micah 4:3)

There has always been this notion that world peace is achievable through human effort. As Christians and also as Canadians we do strive for peace, but we know that lasting, true peace will not be seen in this present world. Yet someday there will be global peace again, and Micah 4:3 speaks of this. Micah says that these things will happen "in the last days." That's a reference to the distant future, the time of a new heavens and new earth. We see signs of this age emerging already now after the first coming of Christ. But it is only with his second coming that this age appears in its fullness.

In these latter days described by Micah, there will be a temple. Many nations will be drawn to this temple. In the new creation there will be great ethnic diversity. Today already, we are aware of the huge variety of peoples being drawn into Christ's church. They come from every ethnicity. They're all being gathered into the church by Christ. We see all of that now and it's a sure sign of what is coming.

In the new creation there will be God-given peace among all the different ethnic groups. Even among Christians there can be disputes on the political front. Even Christians from the same nation don't always look at political issues the same way. This can even lead to war. God promises that in the age to come, he will put all these disputes to rest and nations will be at peace.

This reality is portrayed with what happens to their swords and spears. These represent the entire military arsenal of the nations. These destructive weapons will become constructive. The nations will take their swords to the blacksmith and he will turn them into plowshares. The plowshare is made out of metal, and is part of the sharp end of the plow. Instead of being used for destroying human life, the metal in those swords will be used for supporting life through agriculture.

The same is true for spears. Trees and vines need to be pruned for maximum productivity. For that, people working in orchards need pruning hooks. The nations are going to take their spears to the blacksmith and he will convert them into pruning hooks. Instead of being instruments to draw blood, they'll become instruments to promote life.

If you read some commentaries written after World War I and before World War II, you will find some scholars who thought this prophecy was being fulfilled in their day. There's at least one commentator who thought that Micah 4:3 was fulfilled by the League of Nations. After World War II, we find these prophetic words hijacked again. Today if you go to New York and visit the gardens at the United Nations, you'll find a sculpture entitled "Beating Swords into Plowshares," and depicting a blacksmith doing what's described by Micah. The

message seems clear: the United Nations is bringing this to reality.

If there is any place on the earth right now where this is really beginning to happen, it is in the church. This is where people have peace with God. We were at war with our Creator. We each had a dysfunctional, adversarial relationship with him. Now through Jesus, we have a personal relationship of peace with our God.

This reconciliation also shapes our human interactions. Because we have peace with God through Christ, we also pursue peace with one another. We're not to be people who enjoy conflict and strife. Our Saviour taught in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." The pursuit of peace in our human relationships and also on the larger scales of ecclesiastical and national life – all of that – is a fruit of our faith in Jesus Christ, our great peacemaker and peacekeeper.

The day is coming when the signs will fall away and the reality will be present. It's not going to happen through human efforts. There will be global peace, but it won't come because of the United Nations and its philosophy. It will come because our God has promised it. Global peace will come because our God means what he says and is always faithful to carry out what he says. Don't ever forget that!



The Road Towards Our Own College

This article was originally published on the pages of Clarion on September 23, 1994.

The time has not yet come to write an exhaustive history of our Theological College, even though it is almost twenty-six years ago that the decision was taken to establish it, and twenty-five years ago that it was opened. Yet this fact may not go unnoticed, and some aspects of the history should be related at this occasion. The purpose of this submission is to give some particulars of the history leading up to the establishment of our own Theological College or Seminary.

It will be understood and undoubtedly also accepted that I do not write as an outsider, but as one who was involved in the matter of the training for the ministry from the very beginning. What follows is a record of personal recollections, and for this reason I shall not quote many official decisions literally. Our readers can find them in the Acts of the various general synods held since 1954. By these official decisions they can also judge the correctness of my recollections.

The first synod

For the first years after the immigration we felt ourselves more or less still one with the federation of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. We all came from there, the services were conducted in the Dutch language, the ministers had received their training there, and we received advice and support from the old country.

From the outset, however, the ties with the Netherlands were stronger in the East than in the West. Whether this was a result of distance and separating mountain ranges or of the spirit of independence and autonomy which has characterized the West from the early days on, who can tell? A fact is that the Eastern churches were more oriented towards the Netherlands than those in the West.

This became evident also from the proposals that reached the first general synod, the one held in Carman in the fall of 1954.

From the East came the proposal to accept the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in Kampen as our own institution for the training for the ministry, and to request the churches to have two collections per year for that institution. Further also, to appoint some deputies to investigate the possibility of having our own institution.

Classis West of November 11, 1953, however, proposed to ask the churches for a non-specified number of collections per year to form a fund for our own training for the ministry. Part of the monies thus collected should be used for the setting up of a library. Not a word about the Netherlands.

What did the 1954 synod do?

It decided in the first place that a degree from Kampen would be required for admission to the ecclesiastical examinations, and that the committee to be appointed should contact the Board of Governors of Kampen about the requirements for admission. Then already it was realized that the differences in high school education would cause difficulties for our students.

Collections for Kampen? If any church was eager to have such a collection, they would be most welcome to have one, but a general synod has no right to ask the churches to have collections for an institution not our own.

Another proposal

There was still another proposal from the East. It concerned the support of needy students.

Classis East of April 28, 1954, proposed to ask two collections per year in preparation of the execution of Article 19 C.O. "and to charge (Brrr! VO) each classis with the administration of these monies and in the further execution of Art.19 C.O."

To this proposal Synod replied that it had no right to charge the churches with anything regarding Article 19 C.O.

As for the proposal to have collections in preparation of the establishment of our own seminary, Synod decided to ask for four collections per year for this purpose and to appoint deputies to administer the fund and to be diligent in the whole matter of training for the ministry.

The second synod

The matter of training for the ministry was again at the synodical table when the second synod was held in 1958, again in Carman, Manitoba. In the three-and-a-half years that had elapsed since the first synod it became evident that the requirement that a degree be obtained from Kampen could not be maintained. It was rescinded by the synod of 1958.

It also became increasingly clear that the high school instruction in Canada differed considerably from the one in the Netherlands, at least as far as the classical training was concerned. Additional study would be required before one could be admitted to Kampen.

Another factor was that traditionally the whole course of theological studies in Kampen was mainly oriented towards Germany and not towards the English-speaking world. It was considered necessary that our students be well-informed about theological trends and theories on this continent.

A further argument was that an absence from Canada for four or more years put an undue strain upon students and their families. This, it was felt, was a burden the churches had no right to impose. Besides, such a lengthy absence would unavoidably cause some alienation, and this would be harmful.

What then to do about the requirement necessary with respect to the ecclesiastical examinations?

This was the solution: Until we shall have our own Seminary, a degree of Candidate of Theology, or a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Divinity degree would be the prerequisite. If such a degree had not been obtained from the Seminary of our Netherlands sister churches, complementary study would be required covering Reformed Dogmatics, Reformed Church History, and Reformed Church Polity. What was required for this study was to be formulated, and examiners were to be appointed.



The synod of 1962

Was it a solution? For the time being, yes. But at the synod of 1962 it was pointed out that there were already young men who were asking for training! It became more and more difficult to call ministers from the Netherlands, seeing that the English language was being used more and more exclusively. And also the present ministers were growing older, so that the need for new ministers became more pressing.

However “primitive” such a training might be at first, it was the conviction of the brothers that steps should be taken to provide this necessary training.

Synod did not consider it justified now already to appoint two professors and four lecturers. This was one of the options mentioned in the report of the deputies appointed by Synod 1958.

Other options were: make use of ministers, who continue their regular task but besides that give lectures to prospective students. Or: students travel from the one minister to the other, while occasionally lectures are given in a more central location.

When the choice had to be made between “full-time professors” or “part-time instructors,” Synod 1962 chose for the latter set-up. It appointed nine ministers as part-time instructors, as also a Board of Governors with the mandate to start with the theological training as soon as one or more students would present themselves for it.

For admission to the training for the ministry a Bachelor of Arts degree or its equivalent would be required.

Synod also authorized the Board of Governors to purchase a specific property in Burlington, ON, if it appeared that a college of our own could be affiliated with a university without being located in the same place as the university.

The need for the build-up of a library was clearly seen. Thus Synod decided until the next synod to allow the Board of Governors an amount of \$3,000 for the library.

What about collections? No collections were asked any longer. In their stead came the decision that it was necessary for the execution of the decisions made that, until the next general synod, the churches should contribute \$1.00 per member per year.

Then came the 1965 synod

There it appeared that the money put at the disposal of the Board of Governors for the library by the previous general synod had not been used. The Board of Governors decided to make available for the library \$300.00 per instructor, stipulating that the instructors should choose only such books as were strictly needed for the training for the ministry.

This gesture did not mean much. It was to be expected that the instructors who, we may trust, had been chosen with a view to their demonstrated interest in a specific field of study, already had such resources as they considered necessary; and as there was as yet no place where to bring the books together while, besides that, the students were to go from the one minister to the other, there was no urgency to purchase any works. Possible students could borrow them from the instructors.

All in all, not much progress was made in the period between the synods of 1962 and 1965. No meeting of the complete board of governors or of the instructors took place. No authorization for any such meeting had been given by the 1962 synod. We were still groping for our way, so to speak.

Mr. C. VanSpronsen was accepted as a student. He had commenced his studies at Kampen, where he passed the propaedeutic examination and had been admitted to the theological studies proper. With a view to the work done by him in the Netherlands it was felt that two more years of study would suffice for him. We all know that our brother successfully completed these studies and has served the churches in various capacities already for more than twenty-five years.

It was also realized that his admission meant that our own training for the ministry had started. The Board of Governors stated this expressly in its report to the 1965 synod.

For this reason it is the more incomprehensible that the Board of Governors expressed as its opinion that “Probably it would be wise if the Synod instructs the Staff to examine in the next three years whether, and if yes, where the Theological Seminary should be established.”

“Whether” a seminary should be established? But did not already the 1958 general synod point to the necessity of having our own Seminary, when it decided about the documents to be submitted for the ecclesiastical examinations, that this should apply “until the moment when our churches can be provided with candidates that received their training at our own institution for training for the Ministry”?

And now, in 1962, appoint a committee to advise *whether* such an institution should be established?

Synod’s decisions

What did Synod 1965 decide?

In the first place it made \$6,000.00 available for the library. This amount included the \$3,000 that the previous synod had set aside for the purpose, but that was not used.

Further it decided that students older than thirty years of age could be admitted upon successfully passing an admission examination. As “mature students” they would be exempt from the obligation to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree first. Later this possibility was removed from the regulations. At present a qualified Bachelor of Arts degree is required of all who seek admission to the College.

The Board of Governors was also authorized to purchase property in the Province of Ontario. Among the conditions to be met, we find that there should be room for expansion, and that affiliation with a university should be possible.



This shows that Synod did not accept the suggestion of the Board of Governors to have it investigated “whether” a seminary should be established. If one is still uncertain “whether” (or not) one should do a certain thing, one does not authorize purchase of property for the purpose, does one?

The charge to the Board of Governors “to investigate the whole matter of a Theological College in all its aspects” and to report about it to the next general synod can, therefore, not be understood as including the “whether,” but only as referring to the “how.”

The same synod adopted the following rule for the Board of Governors: “The Churches take care of the Training for the Ministry by means of Governors who are appointed and instructed by the General Synod.” This, too, refutes any thought that it was still up in the air whether a seminary should be established.

Up to Orangeville

For fourteen years the matter of our own institution for training for the Ministry had been under discussion. It was time for action.

During the years between the synods of 1965 and 1968 the Board of Governors investigated various possibilities.

Affiliation with a university appeared practically impossible. Establishment of a College under Charter by Private Bill was almost equally impossible, due to technical and legal complications and the cost involved.

Another possibility would be Incorporation under the Corporations Act and this without affiliation. But the Board of Governors did not come with any proposals in that direction either.

One of the biggest difficulties was that the College still had to be established, that as yet there was no library, and that the authorities were very reluctant to offer any encouragement because many young people “are herded into institutions with the idea that they are going to receive a recognized degree, but they find out too late that in many cases they are not able to continue their studies at another College or University.”

The end-result was that the Board of Governors proposed that it be instructed “to advise the next General Synod whether it is warranted to proceed to the establishment of a Theological College under the Corporations Act, with a view to the need and the possibilities of such a course of action. Deputies are concerned that, at the present time, such a procedure is unwarranted.”



Adoption of this proposal would mean a delay of another three years at least.

Would this be warranted?

The Board of Governors informed Synod that:

- a. One student is studying at our own Training for the Ministry;
- b. Two men of over thirty years are preparing for admission examinations;
- c. Four young men of our churches are registered at another institution of learning.

In particular the last-mentioned reality caused concern with many.

No, their concerns were not with the brothers who did register at other institutions. Although the possibility was there to be guided in their studies by the instructors appointed in 1962, who could take it ill of them that they chose an institution whose degree would enable them to continue their studies for a higher degree?

It was realized, however, that, if there were more that had to follow this route because the churches failed to provide the necessary scholarly training at an institution of their own, the whole future of such an institution would be doubtful.

On our way

When it was time to travel to Orangeville, I visited the Rev. J.T. VanPopta in the hospital. At that time there was still good hope that he would recover speedily from his operation. During this visit we discussed various matters that would be dealt with at synod, and the point of a theological college occupied an important place in these discussions. We were both convinced that further delay would be detrimental, and were specifically concerned about two proposals found in the provisional agenda.

One church was of the opinion “that there are better and more appropriate possibilities. Also more realistic and responsible” than “to expand the existing training

facilities to a full-fledged own and independent Theological Seminary with professors, lecturers, and other staff required, as well as a building and library.”

Another church came with the suggestion “to investigate whether there are other Theological Schools or Colleges where a reformed theological training can be obtained.”

This, we felt, would torpedo the whole striving for a College of our own. It would compel our young men to go to institutions over which the churches had no control whatsoever, exposing them to possible influences that were detrimental to a thoroughly Reformed stand. We did not understand it how churches could come with such proposals. It would mean a complete reversal of the course followed thus far.

Before I left, Rev. VanPopta urged me most earnestly to do whatever was in my power to counteract any such efforts and to promote the cause of an institution of our own. He was aware of the risks and dangers of a different course.

It goes without saying that I gladly gave him my promise to that effect. It was completely in the line of my own conviction.

At Synod 1968

The unanimity of which I spoke above was also found within our advisory committee at Synod. The matters concerning the Training for the Ministry were entrusted to a committee consisting of the brothers J. Bareman, J. Medemblik, Rev. H. Scholten, and myself. It was a pleasure to work within this committee. All four of us were wholly convinced that, if no decision to establish our own Theological College were made now, this might mean the end of our own training and, possibly, of the future of the churches as truly Reformed churches. We learned from history that usually the universities and the seminaries were the places from which deviating theories and unscriptural doctrines penetrated into the churches, and such with detrimental effect.

Our readers can find the final advisory report on pp. 92 ff of the Acts of Synod Orangeville 1968.

One of the primary questions to be answered was: “Whether such measures ought not to be taken which will give us, also in the future, ministers trained in the sound doctrine.”

Let us examine some of the arguments brought to the fore in light of further development.

It was calculated that within the next fifteen years some ten new ministers would be needed, apart from the need for missionaries and/or the establishment of new churches.

We are twenty-six years later now. In those twenty-six years some twenty new churches have been instituted, and well over forty ministers have joined the ranks. Not all of these more than forty studied at our own College, but more than thirty did. This shows that the 1968 estimate of ten was on the low side, to put it mildly.

Another argument was that a College of our own might also be of benefit to others. Experience has borne out the correctness of this point as well. Not only has our College provided the necessary instruction for members from our Australian sister churches, it has also been utilized by members of the Christian Reformed Church and the Free Reformed churches. This in itself would not have been a valid reason to establish such an institution, for the churches came first and always come first, also now. But it was a valuable added incentive.

Financial consequences

It was realized that the financial obligations would be increased considerably. But can the value of the preservation of sound doctrine be expressed in monetary terms?

There was also a strange submission by two churches regarding the contribution asked from the churches for the training for the ministry.

Synod 1954 had not taken on the matter of training for the ministry, on its own. There were proposals made by the churches.

Even a matter that belongs to the churches in common may not be taken on by a general synod unless proposals to that effect have been put before it by the churches. From then on it becomes a regular item on the synodical agenda, and no further proposals by the churches are needed.

Thus Synod 1954 was authorized to deal with this matter. It decided to ask two collections per year for the purpose.

Synod 1958 increased this to six collections per year. An attempt by the Rev. H. Scholten to make it eight failed to receive the required majority.

Then came Synod 1962. It decided to request \$1 .00 per year per member until the next synod. This met with no opposition.

But when Synod 1965 set the yearly contribution at \$7.00 per communicant member, two churches approached Synod 1968 and stated that Synod 1965 had lorded it over the churches by increasing the yearly contributions. . . .

No one complained when Synod Orangeville 1968 was compelled to fix the yearly contribution at \$14.00 per communicant member.

A college established

As for the place where the College should be established, Synod accepted the recommendation of the Board of Governors to choose the city of Guelph, ON as the location for the Theological College.

We know that this decision was not honoured. A building was purchased in the city of Hamilton, first on Queen Street, and later on, when expansion was necessary, on West 27th Street. But this is something belonging to the later history.

For a College professors are needed.

Once the decision was taken to establish the College, the Board of Governors was asked to meet and to come with nominations for the various positions. Five names were requested: three for an appointment as professor, and two to fill the lecturers' positions.

The Board of Governors came with a nomination, and Synod appointed the nominees: Rev. J.T. VanPopta for Systematic Theology and related subjects; Rev. J. Faber of the Netherlands for Old Testament; Rev. L. Selles for New Testament; Rev. H. Scholten for Ecclesiology; and Rev. G. VanDooren for Pastoral Theology.

During Synod the Lord took Rev. VanPopta unto himself. This brother never learned of his appointment, and his passing on necessitated a new nomination. The Board of Governors then proposed to appoint Rev. J. Faber to the chair of Systematic Theology and the Rev. F. Kouwenhoven to that of Old Testament.

All accepted their appointment, and when the College was opened on September 10, 1909, two of the brothers who had commenced their studies at another institution came to continue and complete them at our own College. One of them, Dr. C. VanDam, now serves as professor of Old Testament at his alma mater.

One brother began his studies in the year the College opened and was the first one to graduate as having received his complete training there: Dr. J. Visscher.

But since we intended only to relate some of the history leading up to the establishment of our own Seminary, we have to leave the rest to others.

The position of the professors

Rests one thing: What was the ecclesiastical position of the professors to be?

There was no problem at all as far as the lecturers were concerned. They just continued to serve their congregations and taught part-time. Matters were different in the case of the professors. They were full-time teachers and did not have time to serve a congregation in addition to their daily task. Were they still ministers of the Word

or had they entered upon another vocation so that they ceased being a minister of the gospel?

Rev. L. Selles stated emphatically at Synod that, if he could not remain a minister, he would not accept his appointment at the College!

When a minister is appointed as professor at the Theological University of our Netherlands sister churches, it is customary that he is declared to be "minister-emeritus," as mentioned in Article 13 C.O.

At Synod Orangeville we were convinced that this would be wrong. The brothers were not at all "incapable of performing the duties of their office." If that had been the case, we would never have appointed them at our College!

Synod started from the fact that the professors served the churches in general, and it was concluded that they should remain the minister of the church they were serving, but that this church would be requested to release them from their obligation to do the work of a minister in that church, so that they might be able to give themselves completely to their task at the College.

In case a minister from another country was appointed, the church in the place where the College was to be established would be requested to call him, have him installed, and then release him for the work at the College.

This was in accordance with Article 6 of the Church Order.

And this is still the rule.

Conclusion

Looking back after twenty-five years, we are grateful for the good hand of our God upon us, also with respect to our Theological College.

We, his servants, arose and built; but the God of heaven made us prosper.

May he continue to bless our College and cause it to be a blessing for the churches themselves and for many others who come to share the blessings we have received. **C**



Rev. W.W.J. VanOene (1920-2013)



From the Publisher

With thankfulness we remember the friendship and service of our late brother, Rev. VanOene. By God's grace, his contributions have spanned generations in the church and also in our business.

A lifelong friendship with our founder, Gerry Kuik, was born out of the difficult situation of the deposition of Rev. C. de Haan in the mid-60s. When the Winnipeg congregation had to go to court to retain church property, Rev. VanOene successfully argued the right of the congregation on the basis of the Church Order.

Thereafter – almost annually for thirty years – Rev. and Mrs. VanOene were regular visitors at the Kuik home, on the Winnipeg pulpit, and among the members of the Winnipeg congregation during their cross-country trips. The VanOenes were very rarely idle. Some summers found Rev. VanOene working as a labourer in our printing shop, or re-binding the damaged spines on old copies of the *Book of Praise*. He was loath to waste paper in the least, and often left with many boxes of scrap paper for himself and the schools.

Rev. VanOene strongly desired that those with gifts and knowledge would share of them in the form of writing for the benefit of the whole community. So it is that he himself became an editor when the *Canadian Reformed Magazine* became *Clarion* in 1972. We remember his dedication in ensuring the magazine was filled, even if that meant augmenting an issue by writing early into the morning.



His literary gifts were also shared in the form of books, including *Patrimony Profile*, *Inheritance Preserved*, and *With Common Consent*, which we were happy to publish. Generations after the difficult and foundational years from the Secession to the establishment of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the 50s, we are equipped, in no small part by the pen of our brother, to know in what way the LORD brought and established us here.

So it is that Gerry Kuik and Bill Gortemaker enjoyed a fruitful and cooperative relationship with Rev. VanOene both personally and in our business over many years, even into his retirement.

I remember as a young boy seeing this preacher ascending the pulpit in his preaching gown, and after the service seeing a twinkle in his eye as he reached out for a pinch of the nose while walking out with the elders.

And that is what is most difficult about our parting on this earth. For all his work and contributions – including as editor of our magazine for twenty-two years – it is the jovial, energetic spirit and the warm, loyal friendship of our brother that we will miss most.

To our Sr. VanOene and your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, our heartfelt condolences. With you we are comforted that by God's grace this good and faithful servant has entered into the joy of his Master.

W.J. Gortemaker



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Why Should I Read the Acts of Synod?

That's a good question. After all, the *Acts of General Synod* are not exactly riveting reading. They won't win the Giller, Nobel, or Booker prize and they definitely won't be on the New York Times Best-Seller list. The *Acts* are not a novel with characters you can relate to or a short story which might grip you. They aren't even like a Wikipedia article which explains something of general interest. What they are is a series of decisions made by the broadest assembly of our church federation (try not to yawn). They are – let's be honest – a dry read. Very dry, at times. So why should an average church-going person like you read them?

Well, sometimes it's important to force ourselves to read things which may have little natural appeal and this is one of them. Let me give you my top five reasons why you should put the *Acts* on your Kindle or your side-table and work through them. In descending order, they are:

#5: To keep your promise

When your church makes promises, you make promises. The church is, after all, you plus all the other members together – not just the consistory. You are part of that local family of God and that family has made a number of promises. I'm referring to all the agreements each church voluntarily makes to work in harmony with all the other churches in the federation.

These agreements are spelled out in the Church Order (see the back of the *Book of Praise*). In Article 44, we promise to honour “the decisions of the major assemblies.” That means we are committed to abiding by them (unless they need to be appealed – see #3 below). Our promise implies that we have to make ourselves aware of those decisions and put them into practice.

#4: To engage yourself in church life

When you made public profession of faith, you promised to be a “living member of the church.” A living member has to know what's going on in church, what is being discussed, what is in under consideration, what

may be in the process of changing. For example, over the last twelve years, general synods have mandated the testing of new hymns as well as new rhymings for the psalms in the *Book of Praise*. Testing involves seeking feedback from individual members (to be submitted to your local consistory) and consistories alike. In order to give that feedback or make suggestions for new hymns, you need to know the criteria and principles for hymn selection decided upon by a past general synod (i.e. Synod Chatham 2004). Synod Carman 2013 has since changed the method for how to make new suggestions for change to any part of the *Book of Praise* – but you need to check out the *Acts* in order to know how!

Let me give a couple more examples. In 2007, Synod Smithers approved a new Bible translation for use in the churches. Would you or your church be interested in using it? You'd only know of it by reading the *Acts*. In that same year, we entered into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with two more Reformed church federations. Knowing this gives you opportunity to praise God for developing unity among God's people as well as to pray for these new sister churches. Also, this knowledge opens prospects for further fellowship and just might affect your travel plans (i.e. choosing to worship in one of their churches on a Sunday away). These sorts of synod decisions (and many others) have a direct impact on local congregational life and call for the awareness, discernment, and involvement of all members – you included!

#3: To prevent error or abuse

General synods, like all meetings of human beings, can and do make mistakes. Though great care is taken and usually much caution is exercised, sometimes synods get decisions plain wrong – either against the Bible or against the agreements pledged in the Church Order. If church members don't read the *Acts*, these errors may go undetected and, worse, uncorrected! Article 31 of the Church Order points out our obligation in this respect, for there we promise that “whatever may be agreed upon

by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.”

Once a general synod (or, for that matter, a consistory, classis, or regional synod) has completed its agenda and published its decisions (*Acts*), it is up to the members to review, study, and test those decisions according to the criteria of Article 31. If concerns are raised in your mind, invite your elders over to discuss them. If it becomes clear that those concerns are indeed valid and weighty enough, then formally approach your consistory with a letter providing a clear argument as to how one (or both) of the grounds in Article 31 was violated by a particular decision and urging consistory to launch an appeal.

Synod decisions have a direct impact on local congregational life

Although only a consistory may make a formal appeal against a synod decision (unless such a decision involves someone’s personal situation), members may and should give input and direction to the consistory about such things. We all need to be watchmen on the wall of Jerusalem – not that we go looking for trouble but rather that we humbly seek to prevent it. Elders will be well served by a respectful, clearly written letter which reasons out for them why it is necessary to make an appeal.

#2: To educate yourself

Our general synods are made of Reformed men – ministers and elders – who spend much time thinking through the issues on the agenda. Many of these men have been formally trained in Reformed theology and many have trained themselves in it through their personal reading and study. Collectively, they have a great deal of experience in these matters. Further, the churches which offer submissions to the synod on committee reports (and many, thankfully, do write such letters) also take their time deliberating in consistory/council in order to arrive at biblical, Reformed responses. Every church assembly prays for God to provide wisdom and guidance by his Spirit. The end result is that the decisions of the general synod often distill and present the best of Reformed thinking on the topics at hand – and we can learn from that reflection.

The decisions of the *Acts* are set up in a simple four-part format: Materials – Observations – Considerations – Recommendations (i.e. Decisions). “Materials” is simply a listing of the documents (usually committee reports and letters from churches) from which all the basic information which follows is taken. “Observations” is a straight-forward listing of facts taken from the documents. These facts often include statements or arguments made by a committee or church. Here you can begin to see the issue coming to light. The most important part is “Considerations,” which is what the synod itself thinks about the issue. “Considerations” is a list of arguments which lead up to the decision(s). Under this section you can see the synod weighing the various facts and arguments presented under “Observations” and arriving at its conclusions. “Recommendations” is the conclusion of those arguments and contains the actual decision(s) of the synod. Reading through these arguments and rationale can train our minds how to think in a richly biblical, Reformed way – a valuable education!

#1: Because you love the bride of Christ

If you love Jesus Christ then you must love his bride too, which is the church. A true Christian cares what is happening in and to the bride of Christ. Reading through the *Acts* keeps us abreast of developments within the church where we hold membership. It makes us aware of concerns as well as beautiful developments, both of which we may bring to the Lord in prayer. The *Acts* also give much information on the church-gathering work of Christ in the rest of the world (many articles deal with inter-church relations), as well as on our humble efforts as a federation in working toward unity with some of those churches closest to us. If you read the *Acts* from the point of view of what the Lord Jesus is doing among us and in the rest of the world, you may even become excited and find reason for great joy!

Conclusion

So, there you have it – five good reasons to download or pick up the *Acts* and read! The *Acts of Synod Carman 2013* contain 199 articles (of varying lengths, to be sure). If you take fifteen minutes and read just ten a night, you could read through the *Acts* within three weeks. Really, it’s not that bad! For the sake of the preservation and building-up of Christ’s church, I urge every communicant member to become informed and get involved!



Carman East Hosts League Day

Saturday, September 21, 2013 dawned bright and clear as ladies in Manitoba gathered together under a big, blue prairie sky for a day devoted to the study of God's Word.

We began our day by raising our voices in praise to God by singing Psalm 67:1-3. Our League Day leader, Mrs. Joanne Termeer, then welcomed us all. Guests were in attendance from Carman and surrounding area, Winnipeg, and even a visitor from faraway Ontario. (And two from Brazil. . . when you include our guest speaker and his beautiful wife!)

Joanne read from Psalms (96), Luke (24:45-49), and Acts (1:7-8) in preparation for the speech. She then led us in prayer. Mrs. Chris Vanderveen stepped forward to extend a hearty welcome to Rev. Julius VanSpronsen, our guest speaker.

Rev. VanSpronsen presented his speech under the topic: "God Commands His Church to be Active in Mission and Evangelism."

Love for the gospel and compassion for the unbeliever, the misled, or confused is what mission and evangelism is. Every church has its own responsibility in the first place in its own country. Evangelism is thinking about and loving your neighbour.

Mission and evangelism are not driven by a goal of growth in numbers, but rather, the goal is to spread the truth that God is King. We cannot be ashamed or hide the beautiful truth we know and have.

Rev. VanSpronsen showed us with examples from the Old and New Testaments that it is God who wants his message of salvation to reach all nations. It is his will and his plan and he will not fail. We pray that he will make his desire to have the gospel reach all nations (Matt 28:19) become our desire as well. We pray that he will use us in his plan and that in obedience to him we will become more and more willing participants.

Rev. VanSpronsen also showed us that as women of God's church we must all shine and reflect God in the world we live in. We should not rush out of our homes, away from our families and responsibilities, for the sake



of doing "kingdom work," but rather do God's work to his glory in the position he has placed us. We are all daughters, or mothers, or sisters, or wives, or friends, or neighbours, and we must be faithful in our adoration of Christ. We often feel ill-equipped for evangelism, but Rev. VanSpronsen reminded us that we may not be equipped to be debaters or answer hard questions, but we know the truth, so we know a lot! We must bring the message, announce Christ, present the truth. That is how God uses us. His Spirit will change hearts and convictions as he wills.

In our day-to-day lives we have many opportunities to speak our true Christian love. It won't necessarily be by debate or even knowing "the right words to say," but if we are living our lives as joyful, thankful Christians, lovers of God and his will and Word, then our lives will speak the greatest evangelism.

Rev. VanSpronsen stressed that prayer is the strength behind mission and evangelism. We must pray that God will keep us from becoming arrogant, causing us to realize our own humble heathen beginnings worked by his

grace and Spirit. God is not limited to one race, country, or place, and he will shun no one who comes to him broken and contrite, begging for Christ's forgiving blood. We must pray that God will graciously prevent that we become complacent about the gospel message. We must pray for courage and zeal to witness openly about his greatness. We must pray that we do not forget that it is the Spirit and Word that has through grace changed our hearts in his wonderful truth.

He encouraged us not to think "evangelism" or "mission," but to think "I love the Lord and his truth and I don't want to hide it!"

Rev. VanSpronsen was given an opportunity to answer any questions that had come up among the listeners of his speech. He was then thanked for his time and effort and encouraging words.

We prayed together before our delicious lunch, which was followed by an entertaining game of "Something in Common," where each table found something each lady seated shared in common, and then compared that to what other tables had discovered about their occupants. A fun and lighthearted way to get to know one another!

Our afternoon session began with us singing our League Day Song: "Sing God's Glory."

Joanne then shared with us an article/blog post called "Content to be Needy" by Nancy Wilson, which reminded us that "when we are needy we are more eager to get grace, more apt to get in God's Word, and that is good." It also comforted and reassured us that "we have a Saviour who is taken up with our neediness; a Saviour who is a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He knows. That's why we must take all our needs, real and

ORDINATION EXAMINATION SUSTAINED

Examined by Classis Pacific West of October 8, 2013 and granted permission to be ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments:

Candidate Ben Schoof

CALL EXTENDED

Called to serve as co-pastor of the Langley, BC Canadian Reformed Church:

Rev. J. Folkerts

of Faith URC of Telkwa, BC

CALL ACCEPTED AND DECLINED

Accepted the call to the Free Reformed Church of Southern River, Western Australia and declined the call to the Free Reformed Church of Bunbury, Western Australia:

Rev. D. Poppe

of Coaldale, Alberta

CALL DECLINED

Declined the call to serve as co-pastor of the Cornerstone CanRC of Hamilton, Ontario:

Rev. D. Wynia

of Lincoln, Ontario

CHURCH NEWS

imagined, to him. That's where we will find all of our needs truly met" (quotations taken directly from blog).

We then sang in closing Hymn 24:1 and 4. Joanne thanked all for coming out to another League Day and made special mention of the many volunteers it takes to "get the League Day work done," and closed in thankful prayer.

What a blessing to be able to spend a day together as women of his church devoted to reflection on the rich promises extended to us through our Lord and Saviour. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." C





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Provoking Reflection on the Christian and Sports (Part 3)

Some final questions

Is it appropriate to celebrate in a special way when your opponent errs? What message is behind the celebration? What other messages might be perceived by others? What standard are we to hold to?

For non-volleyball fans, an ace is when the person who serves has his serve hit the ground on the other team's side without that team touching the ball. It is usually the result of an error by the defending team.

I think celebrating an opponent's error is inappropriate. Regardless of your motivation for doing it, the end result is that the other team, or at least one player on the other team, will definitely have had their faces rubbed into the mistake. That violates the commandment to love your neighbour. I like the encouragement the students give to each other on the court, but celebrating an ace or any player's error is simply not fitting in the context of Christian living. It does not build up your neighbour.

How should we cheer as Christians during a game? What state of mind and heart should we be cultivating when we sit in the stands and watch our teams play? What message about your beliefs/worldview does booing or negative comments in the stands send to people?

The short answer is appreciation for good play and best efforts. Train our eyes to see and our hearts and hands to applaud good plays regardless of which team makes them.

This to me is a very visible way to witness our faith. As parents attending the games our children play, we do so in a community that watches. Just as we see a coach or a team doing something we think is inappropriate, so others are watching us. When we question the refs call even just among ourselves, when we cheer only for "our team" what message are we sending? The same applies when watching games at home or school, in PE class, etc. When Jesus tells us that we are the light of the world, he means what we

do shines forth to the world. You cannot be hidden. So be careful to shine in a holy manner (Matt 5:14-16).

What should a player's, coach's, parent's response be to poor calls by the referee? Why?

All of us have to have the game face of love on. When we do we might be surprised by a poor call but we will not have the reaction of, "What are you thinking? Do you have eyes?!" As a spectator the response to a referee should be to thank them and to encourage them in their task. Express your appreciation for the work they did and if they start to apologize for a call assure them that you understand it is hard to referee and that mistakes are bound to happen. The designated player on the team may thoughtfully and respectfully approach the referee, but the rest of the players and fans better not be rolling their eyes, shrugging their shoulders, holding out their hands, looking at each other with the clearly theatrical sort of looks that are intended to make the referee think he must be wrong. Once again, all of this is to be driven by the greatest commandment.

Under what conditions might a player spend more time on the bench? Is there a limit to how much bench time any one player should get?

Playing on a team comes with responsibilities. If a player skips practices, has a poor attitude, does not try his best, is a poor team player, then bench time is appropriate and in some cases absolutely necessary. Ideally, the coach would initiate a conversation with the parents when there are concerns of these types. Parents should know their children and be honest about their strengths and weaknesses in terms of effort and attitude. This may be a time to help your child's growth in self-awareness, faith, and holiness. Parents who see their child spending what seems like a disproportionate amount of time on the bench can approach the coach at an appropriate time and respectfully – and maybe even after prayerful preparation – ask why.

I think that any player who spends more of their time on the bench than on the court/ice/field should have it explained to them why that is so. There is nothing wrong at upper levels of competition to have “benchwarmers.” Professional hockey teams and baseball teams always have backup players, and that is accepted. At most school levels of play, if the goal is to have each person doing his or her best, then a lot of the pressures around this concern will be addressed. There is no doubt that the player with a lower level of skill will cause a higher incidence of errors and poor plays, but that can be viewed as a challenge to cause the rest of the team to work on supporting and strengthening the weakest link which may not be the player but the heart of the other players, their parents, and / or the coach. This strengthening will not happen if the weaker players are simply left to sit on the bench.

When a school has tryouts for a team, some children will be told they did not make it on the team. Some may interpret the coach’s decision as a judgement on their worth. It is critical that the coaches, players, parents, and the cut student all see and communicate that it is not a judgement. It is simply a statement that the coach lovingly and carefully delivers, and that he shares to the cut student that maybe his talents lie elsewhere and/or maybe his heart’s desires or his self-discipline needs re-direction. This may be cold comfort for the child or the parent of a child who really wants to play on the team and who willingly gives his best but is simply not skilled enough or temperamentally controlled enough relative to the other players.

What impact does technology have on our attitudes towards sports? (i.e. television and Internet making viewing so easy and so many hours of viewing possible.)

Watch your young kids play sports that they have watched professionals play. The children often mimic the dress; they try to mimic the plays and unfortunately the attitude, aggression, and fighting often. For too many kids the sports become disproportionately important to them. They seemingly effortlessly memorize the names of players, names of teams, remember game schedules and starting times, lengthy amounts of statistics, etc., while not being able to reliably recite something simple like the Lord’s Prayer, their upcoming memory work for catechism or class, books of the Bible, the Ten Commandments etc.

What worldview is most evident in how professional sports is presented? What impact might that have on us and our children?

We should all be able to see and admit that professional sports is about winning for personal or team glory



and financial benefit. God is not the object of glory. Some players profess that that is their goal and it may well be. However, when their pursuit of that goal collides with God’s commands, then what should happen? We can admire Tim Tebow, but when we believe that Sunday is a day of rest and the day that our church calls us together to worship, what do we conclude about professional sports requirement that you play, travel, or practice on that day? We are not to judge other’s faith or salvation since those things are beyond us, but we certainly are to ask ourselves what we should do in that situation. I know personally that too many are led astray by this temptation.

Conclusion

As you read this article you may have thought to yourself that I am hopelessly naïve. I think that obedience to God will often be viewed as naïve and unattainable, but does that make any difference to what God expects from us? He expects us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. He expects us to take captive every thought, to be ambassadors of his. Put your intensity into doing that.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers’ Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Arthur Kingma akingma@ech.ca



Classis Alberta of October 1, 2013 convened by Barrhead Canadian Reformed Church

On behalf of the convening church, the church of Barrhead, Br. Marinus Helmus welcomed all to the meeting. He invited the assembly to sing from Psalm 71:1, 10. He read from Ephesians 4:1-16 and then led in prayer.

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. The classis was declared constituted.

The following memorabilia was noted: the impending retirement of Rev. W.B. Slomp; the calls that Rev. D. Poppe has to the churches of Bunbury and Southern River, Australia; the church at Barrhead has extended a call to candidate Calvin VanderLinde; Dr. T. van Raalte was recently installed as professor at CRTS. The passing on of Rev. W.W.J. VanOene was also remembered, as well as the health concerns of Prof. J. Geertsema, Prof. J. DeJong, and Prof. N.H. Gootjes.

The officers suggested by the previous classis took their respective positions: Rev. D. Poppe as Chairman; Rev. H. Kalkman as Vice-chairman; Rev. R. Aasman as clerk. The agenda was adopted.

The following reports were received: 1) A report from the church at St. Albert for the inspection of the books of the treasurer. The books were found to be in good order. 2) In closed session reports for the church visits to the churches of St. Albert, Taber, Coaldale, and Neerlandia were given.

Rev. R. Pontier, fraternal delegate from the URCNA, brought greetings and expressed thankfulness for the strengthening bond between the two federations. At this time the URC is in Phase 2 which is Ecclesiastical Fellowship with CanRC, OPC, RCUS, ERQ, and PRCNA. Rev. W.B. Slomp responded in kind.

Question period according to Article 44 CO was held.

The upcoming retirement of Rev. W.B. Slomp effective February 1, 2014 is approved. Classis thanks Rev. W.B. Slomp for the work he has done in Classis Alberta as well as in his congregation. The sentiment was expressed that Rev. W.B. Slomp and his wife may enjoy their years of retirement. Rev. W.B. Slomp responded with some appropriate words, including that he is more than willing to serve Classis with any help that they might require. The chairman read Psalm 92:12-15.

A letter is received from deputies for Regional Synod West providing concurring advice to Classis supporting the proposed retirement of Rev. W.B. Slomp.

In light of the upcoming vacancy in the church at Edmonton-Immanuel, Rev. W.B. Slomp is appointed as counsellor with Rev. R. Aasman as alternate. Starting after the

time of retirement of Rev. W.B. Slomp pulpit supply will be given to both Barrhead and Immanuel once per month.

Rev. R. Aasman was appointed to represent Classis at the retirement of Rev. Slomp.

The date for the next classis is set for December 10, 2013 with March 11, 2014 as alternate date. The convening church is the church at Calgary. Suggested executive officers for the next classis are as follows: Rev. M. Jagt for Chairman; Rev. D. Poppe as Vice-chairman; Rev. H. Kalkman as clerk.

Appointments are as follows:

- 1) Treasurer: J. Buitenbos.
- 2) Church to audit the books of the treasurer: St. Albert.
- 3) Church for care of the archives: Edmonton Providence.
- 4) Church to inspect the archives: Edmonton Immanuel.
- 5) Church Visitors: Revs. R. Aasman, J. Louwerse (convenor), W.B. Slomp, H. Kalkman, M. Jagt, and D. Poppe. Rev. A.B. Roukema is to take over from Rev. W.B. Slomp when he retires.
- 6) Committee for examiners: Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. W.B. Slomp.
- 7) Examiners:

1) Exegesis Old Testament	Rev. R. Aasman
2) Exegesis New Testament	Rev. J. Louwerse
3) Knowledge of Scripture	Rev. A.B. Roukema
4) Doctrine and creeds	Rev. W.B. Slomp
5) Church History	Rev. H. Kalkman
6) Ethics	Rev. D. Poppe
7) Church Polity	Rev. H. Kalkman
8) Diaconiology	Rev. M. Jagt
- 8) Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Churches: C. DeBoer, W. Noot, J. Vanderdeen.
- 9) Deputy for contact with the provincial government: Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar. He is requested to submit an annual written report each spring.
- 10) Appointment of Observer to RCUS: Rev. H. Kalkman, alternate Rev. D. Poppe.
- 11) Appointment of Observer to URCNA: Rev. A.B. Roukema.
- 12) Since there will be no Regional Synod this year, no delegates were chosen.

Question Period was made use of.

The chairman noted with thankfulness that brotherly censure was not necessary.

Acts and press release were read and adopted.

The chairman Rev. D. Poppe closed the meeting. He asked that Psalm 92:1, 6, 7 be sung and then led the delegates in prayer.

For classis, Rev. H. Kalkman, Vice-chairman

Press Release Classis Pacific West October 8, 2013 held in Surrey, BC

Classis was opened by Br. John VanderStoep on behalf of the convening church, Surrey-Maranatha. He led the gathering in devotions and welcomed some special guests. Rev. Joe Poppe and Rev. Bill Wielenga were in attendance as deputies for Regional Synod in relation to the peremptory examination that was on the agenda. He also welcomed Rev. Paul Johnson of the North-West Presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church who was attending as a fraternal delegate. Also acknowledged were Candidate Ben Schoof, who had accepted the call of Surrey-Maranatha, here for the peremptory examination, and his father who had come from Australia to witness it. Significant events amongst the churches that have taken place since the last classis were also remembered.

The credentials were examined by the convening church of the previous classis, the church of Smithers. All churches were represented by their primi delegates. The following brothers were appointed as moderamen: Rev. Carl VanDam as chairman, Rev. James Slaa as vice-chairman, and Rev. Ryan DeJonge as clerk. After Classis was constituted, the agenda was finalized. Rev. Paul Johnson of the OPC was invited to come forward and sit at the table as a fraternal delegate.

The first item was the peremptory examination of Br. Ben Schoof, minister-elect of the Maranatha congregation. Rev. Joe Poppe and Rev. Bill Wielenga were invited to participate. The necessary documents per Church Order and regulations of Classis were submitted by Br. Schoof so that Classis could decide to proceed with the examination. Br. Schoof delivered a sermon on Matthew 9:1-8. After discussion, Classis deemed the sermon sufficient to continue with the examination, and the deputies of Regional Synod concurred. Classis then proceeded to examine Br. Schoof on the following topics: Exegesis Old Testament (1 Samuel 8 and Psalm 137), Exegesis New Testament (Matthew 4 and James 5), and Knowledge of Scripture. Classis then adjourned for lunch.

Following lunch, Rev. Paul Johnson of the OPC addressed Classis. He expressed joy at being able to attend Classis, for the brotherhood and fellowship we can enjoy, and for the unity that we share. He brought news of important events and happenings in the Presbytery as well as the OPC federation as a whole. Rev. Theo Lodder responded on behalf of Classis with words of thankfulness for his attendance, and expressed that it truly was a blessing to have Rev. Johnson in our midst.

The examination of Br. Schoof resumed, at which time following topics were covered: Doctrine and Creeds, Church History, Ethics, Church Polity and Diaconology. When the examination was completed (at 3:15 pm!) Classis went into closed session to discuss it. With thankfulness,

Classis decided that Br. Schoof sustained the examination, and the deputies of Regional Synod concurred. Therefore the way was opened for Br. Schoof to be ordained as minister of the Word in Maranatha-Surrey CanRC. The call was approbated. The Surrey church informed Classis that ordination is set for October 27, 2013 in the morning service. Rev. Theo Lodder was appointed to represent Classis at the welcome evening later that day.

Classis granted honourable release to Rev. T. VanRaalte with respect to his duties at Classis, as requested by Surrey-Maranatha CanRC. Rev. VanRaalte, who has accepted the appointment as professor of Ecclesiology at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, keeps his ministerial credentials with Surrey.

Reports were read of church visits made to the churches of Langley, Willoughby Heights, Prince George Mission Congregation, Houston, Smithers, and Cloverdale. They were received with much thankfulness, as they testify of the Lord's work in the midst of his churches.

Rev. Theo Lodder gave a report on a visit he made to a gathering of the North-West Presbytery of the OPC (September 24-26). Part of that visit involved a day-long pre-presbytery conference on the doctrine of Republication of the Covenant of Works. Unfortunately, Rev. Lodder had to return home early, before the regular Presbytery meeting, due to the passing away of Rev. W.W.J. VanOene.

One church sought the advice of Classis on a matter of discipline. Another church asked for advice on the matter of renting the church building to other "religious" groups. Advice was given.

The churches also apprised Classis on the mission activities in their various congregations.

The convening church of the next classis is Willoughby Heights, on December 10, 2013, with alternate date, April 8, 2014, in the Willoughby Heights church building. Suggested officers are chairman: Rev. Ryan DeJonge; vice-chairman: Rev. Theo Lodder; clerk: Rev. James Slaa.

Due to Rev. Ted VanRaalte's departure, as well as the retirement of some elders from office, some appointments had to be made to various committees of Classis, even though this normally takes place at the April classis. The following appointments were made: Appeals Committee: Rev. Anthon Souman (convenor), Br. Len Stam, Br. Albert VanderHeide; Alternates: Rev. Ryan DeJonge, Br. Pete Schouten, Rev. James Slaa. Church Visitors: Revs. Lodder, Slaa (convenor), Souman, and VanDam. Deputy for Co-ordinating Ecclesiastical Contact: Rev. Theo Lodder.

Opportunity was given for personal question period. The chairman deemed that censure according to Article 34 C.O. was not necessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved. The chairman led in closing devotions, in which thanksgiving was given to God for all his blessings and supplications were offered for various needs.

For Classis, at that time, Rev. James Slaa 