

A CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

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Clarion

Sphere Sovereignty: the Solution

The Four Governments

Farewell to the den Hollanders



Clarion: a trustworthy and engaging magazine, widely spread and read in Canadian Reformed households and beyond.

To equip God's people for his glory, in faithfulness to Scripture, as summarized in the Reformed confessions, Clarion adheres to the following core values:

Confessionally Reformed
Loving in manner
Attuned to current issues
Readable and Reliable
In Submission to Scripture
Open to constructive criticism
Nurturing Christian living

What's Inside

Welcome to our seventh issue of 2022! As it seems that governments across our land are lifting most restrictions related to the spread of COVID-19 (and this after two years!), it will be important for us to take time to reflect on our response as individuals (families) and churches. This experience has been totally new for most if not all of us, and trying to navigate the ins and outs of it has been far from easy. It will be good to learn from it so that we are better prepared for such things in the future. In this issue we have two articles presenting differing opinions on exactly this subject, one from Mr. John Roukema and the other from Mr. William Ravensbergen. Neither of these is likely to be the last word, but I do hope it will help us advance our understanding of these difficult yet pressing matters.

And I hope that *Clarion* can play a role in this. When there are differences of opinion on a matter, and those opinions are within the pale of the Reformed understanding of Scripture, then it is good to air both sides so that the best, most convincing, and ultimately most faithful arguments can win the day. An honest, respectful debate is helpful for all. As Christians we can and we ought to express our disagreement with each other

in a brotherly way and be open-minded to counter-arguments. And in the end, even if we remain disagreed, we maintain our unity in Christ. And if you would like to join the conversation, consider writing a letter to the editor (see clarionmagazine.ca for guidelines).

Dr. Van Vliet's editorial gently urges us to consider the health of the church in the aftermath of these last two years and what we can do to restore and build up the flock. Pastor Calvin Vanderlinde offers an uplifting meditation on being fearless in Christ, while in *Discipling the Nations* Pastor Tim Schouten shares with us the recent blessings that the Lord has poured out on the mission work in Prince George. Exciting missional things are also happening in Edmonton with the calling of a mission worker, details of which you can read in one of the press releases. *Clarion Kids* is back with a lesson on how the gospel of Jesus Christ was revealed all throughout Scripture. Rounding out the issue is a heartfelt "good-bye" to Pastor Rolf and sr. Liz den Hollander by the Grassie congregation, an article about the adventures and blessings of Denver Church Camp, and last but not least a letter to the editor. Enjoy!

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EDITORIAL

And a Time to Heal

Province by province, COVID restrictions are lifting. Depending on where you live and what you do for a living, your experience may vary. Still, we should be thankful to our Father in heaven for these positive developments.

And now what? The number of COVID patients in our hospitals may be decreasing, but an injured person lies in pain, right before our eyes. She needs care. Her name? The Bride of Christ. As the Preacher says, "For everything there is a season and a time." Maintaining health requires ongoing vigilance. After injury, though, we need "a time to heal" (Eccl 3:3). Working from God's Word, allow me to suggest three therapeutic activities.

Less posting, more visiting

During lockdowns we appreciated social media platforms, video calls, and messaging apps. Most of us used these digital tools before, but they quickly became somewhat of a relationship lifeline. When you cannot visit grandma for weeks on end, you learn to cherish a video call.

But now is the God-given season to step in a different direction. Long before WhatsApp existed, an apostle wrote, "Though I have much to write to you, I would *rather not use paper and ink*. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete" (2 John 12). Over the last two years, the church's joy has been frequently depleted rather than completed. Consequently, these inspired words speak with renewed impact. Though we have much to post and video chat about, we would much rather come to you and talk face to face. Our joy will be the fuller for it!

With whom should we visit, though? Dropping in on family and friends with whom we get along is natural. But going to see people that we do not commonly visit or that we may not agree with on COVID matters is therapeutic. To heal well, the Bride of Christ needs to drink coffee and share soup together. We can't do that over Zoom.

Less media, more mediator

For the last two years we have been glued to our screens. Many of us have spent more hours than we can count digesting news articles, blog posts, podcasts, YouTube and Rumble videos, medical studies, and political op-eds. Our brains are saturated.

Is it not time to switch the channel and focus more intensely on our gracious Mediator? More concretely, through Christ we, wretched sinners, are reconciled to God, completely and eternally. That is amazing but it also comes with a responsibility.

"Leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother" (Matt 5:24). The stresses surrounding COVID exposed the rawness of our sinful nature. At times *all of us* may have spoken too stridently, acted too insensitively, desired too selfishly, and pushed ahead too proudly. Now it is the time to go to those people we have hurt and alienated, saying, "I'm sorry. Please forgive me, as God in Christ has forgiven us" (Eph 4:32).

However, what if *they* have mistreated you and are not calling you to make amends? We can choose to overlook the offense (Prov 19:11). Or if the matter is too serious for that, our Mediator instructs us, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault" (Matt 18:15). Be Christ-like. Take the initiative to reconcile; don't wait for it to come to you.

Less livestream, more "let us go now"

The scriptural norm for public worship is clear: do not neglect to come together (Heb 10:26). Our Redeemer calls us to gather for worship in the same physical space.

Joining worship via a livestream is an exception, to be used only when necessity requires it. Carefully defining "exception" and "necessity" is challenging at the best of times, let alone during the last two years. However, let us ensure that an exception never becomes a convenience or a preference.

Instead, we focus on the norm. As our Lord leads us forward on the pilgrimage to the New Jerusalem, may Psalm 122 continue to shape our hearts and actions. We sing "Come Let Us Go Now" not "Come Let Us *Click* Now."

Another thought motivates us to encourage each other "all the more as we see the Day drawing near" (Heb 10:26). That Day, the eternal Sabbath, will not be livestreamed; you and I will need to be there in person. So, as we see that Day approaching, let us not neglect to assemble in person on our weekly sabbaths. Healing takes time, but this is the time for healing. Take heart: our eternal Husband is our risen, sovereign Physician. As we follow his Spirit-breathed instructions, he will make his Bride radiant and healthy for her great wedding day. 📺



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Resurrected Christ, Resilient Church

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.’”

(REVELATION 2:8)

What does a church need to hear when enduring persecution that is about to get even worse? Is it enough to simply express hope that it will soon be lifted or offer a nice thought to cheer them up? Or do they need lessons in survival and self-preservation, or instruction in how to take up combat?

Notice what Christ says to the suffering church in Smyrna (and her “angel,” whoever that is). His message is not fight or flight, but “be fearless” (“do not be afraid”) and “be faithful unto death” (v. 10).


But how? They were facing great tribulation and deprivation, and the future was bleak. On the one side there was pressure from society to pay homage to Rome and confess Caesar as Lord. On the other side hostile Jews were slandering them and desperately trying to prevent the Christian church from gaining traction in society. There was a steep price to pay for confessing Christ. It meant the loss of peace, possessions, reputation, and social acceptance. So what would strengthen these Christians to endure suffering even unto death?

The answer is found in how Christ identifies himself. He focuses their attention upon himself. As he does in each of the seven letters, he draws on elements of the glorious vision given to John in the first chapter. His chosen self-designations were not random or haphazard but relate to each congregation and their particular circumstances. So for the church at Smyrna he highlights his absolute sovereignty and his resurrection from the dead.

Christ declares “I am the first and the last.” He asserts his supremacy over all. Nothing happens which he did not see coming or permit to happen. Even great suffering and trial. By virtue of his eternal nature he also knows the end to which everything is headed; the end which he has planned. For a church about to experience greater persecution, how encouraging to hear that no power, however terrifying, is greater than God or can overwhelm or outlast him! Not Rome. Not the emperor. Not the synagogue in Smyrna. Not even Satan, who was operating behind the scenes (v. 9). Only Christ held claim to be the first

and the last. Only his throne will endure eternally, even after all his opponents are history.

The next phrase bolsters and gives the basis for this assurance. He describes himself as the one “who died and came to life.” He directs their attention to his resurrection, which proved his power and authority over death. This sets our Christian hope on the distant horizon beyond our troubles and suffering and pain. We have an otherworldly hope, which frees us to live in otherworldly ways. Even if we die, the “second death” will not touch us (v. 11). Like Christ, we will be raised imperishable. This means Christians will not be crippled by the fear of death or by any intimidating threat which can only kill the body but not the soul. Nor will we love our lives too much to shrink back from death or make self-preservation our fundamental purpose. As a result of the resurrection, the church will be resilient, for she knows that death is conquered and the worst anyone can do to us will not have the last word.

Resurrected Christ, resilient church. These cannot be decoupled. 

For Further Study

1. How has the church historically responded to fear of persecution or the threat of plague or powerful people? Consider Polycarp and note where he lived.
2. Has the church’s response undergone a shift in more recent times? If so, how so?
3. How is life changed when we factor our belief in the resurrection at the beginning of our considerations and actions?



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Sphere Sovereignty: The Solution

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We live in troubling times; this is an understatement, no doubt. The COVID-19 pandemic has kept us “hostage” for over two years now. Who is not sick of the endless mandates and restrictions!

Christians can reasonably come to different conclusions regarding what it means to be faithful to the Lord during times like this. Some Christians conclude that we must obey the government as it seeks ways to end the pandemic. Other Christians conclude that, since Christ is the head of the church, we must obey Christ (God) rather than men. For that reason, the latter group is willing to defy the government. They are willing to defy government because they perceive that to be the revealed will of God in Scriptures. I find this latter group’s interpretation very troubling, because I think it is *not* based on the revealed will of God. Allow me to elaborate.

“Sphere sovereignty”

The concept of *sphere sovereignty* has been brought to the fore by each group to claim justification for its respective stance. The latter group claims that the government has no right to restrict worship services because the church is under the headship of Christ. This is true, of course, but in the context of COVID-19,

it is a misplaced contention. We need to remember that the state (government) does have certain duties as to the *external* operation of the church.

For example, the state has every right (duty, as a matter of fact!) to intervene if the building codes are not met, or if the safety of the physical building is compromised. To suggest that what a government is requiring of us in the case of restrictions is overstepping the bounds of the church’s sphere sovereignty is misinterpreting what sphere sovereignty is all about. The church’s task is to proclaim the Word, to administer the sacraments, and to exercise discipline over her members. In regard to the church’s *internal* operations, the state has no authority; in that regard, the church is sovereign in her sphere. In regard to the church’s *external* operation, the state does have an authoritative role; that is, the state sees to it that all things are done in accordance with the laws of the land.

That is why I am of the opinion that calling upon our Charter of Rights is out of place as well. References are made to the Charter granting us religious freedom and that we should therefore be free to worship as we want. However, the Charter also implies that we are entitled to healthy and safe living. In other words, we are not free to imperil the health of others. This, I

think, the government is overseeing as that relates to the current plague. Romans 13:1-8 instructs us that government is there for our good. Today, that would also include the health of its citizens.

“Office” and “person”

The power of the government is for our good *if we do good* (Rom 13:2), but it is also as an avenger for wrath to him that does evil. I am fully aware that this text has been quoted ad infinitum, but I repeat it here to provide further context to this text. Paul is telling his readers to obey the government not because they do what is proper, nor even because they are devout. Rather, he tells them to obey governmental authorities *because of their office*. That office is of God, even though the office-bearer is of his father, the devil, as Jesus so sharply remarked about the Pharisees. This is what Jesus also referred to when he told Pilate that he (Pilate) would not have power against him, were it not given him from above (John 19:10, 11). The apostles Paul and Peter tell us to honour the king (1 Pet 2:13-17) and to be subject to every ordinance of man *for the Lord's sake* (1 Tim 2:1, 2). Cyrus, King of Persia can be called the Lord's anointed (Isa 45:1) and David spares Saul's life because he is “the Lord's anointed” (1 Sam 24). The responsibility of the government involves the maintaining of justice, yes, but more importantly, of maintaining *divine* justice. If we do not distinguish “office” and “person” we cannot grasp the meaning of these divine words.

Church, state, and kingdom

It would follow, then, it seems to me, that the church (the citizens of God's kingdom) is not the *exclusive* revelation of God's kingdom; it is merely one revelation of it. The state as well is merely one revelation of the kingdom. But so are other spheres of life, such as family, schools, marriage, and economics. Yes, we live in a fallen world, but Christ's kingdom is at hand. The sphere of the state is also a signpost of the “here-but-not-yet” kingdom.

For that reason, the kingdom can also be called *righteousness*. For it is through the reign of Christ according to the law of God that humankind is again restored to the proper relation to God and his/her neighbour (Rom 1:17; 3:22, 26; 5:21; 4:5; 14:13-23; Matt 6:33). That righteousness reveals itself to the disobedient, to be sure, as a judgment of wrath (Rom 1:18), but out of the kingdom of darkness people are daily being added to God's kingdom, to the congregation of those that are saved (Acts 2:47; Col 1:11-14; 1 Thess 5:1-11).

In the societal relationship of the state, the kingdom of God reveals itself as righteousness in an administration of justice, where those in authority establish human ordinances (1 Pet 2:13). A pagan (or secular) government, hostile towards God, must be obeyed *for the Lord's sake*.

Separate spheres of authority

To be sure, there is the difference between the sphere of authority of the church and that of the state: the state has the “power of the sword;” the church has the *keys of the kingdom*. The church does not use force; it does not recognize any power except that of the Word of the Lord. The church's task, its weapon, is preaching (Word and sacraments) and witnessing. The church does not derive its powers from the state, any more than the state from the church. The state must make room for the church to follow its calling. But the citizens of the kingdom (i.e., the church) must realize that the state's authority is delegated (conferred) by Christ just as directly as the authoritative offices in the church (Rom 13:1; Col 1:18, 2:19; Eph 1:21-23; 1 Cor 15:27).

Paul makes clear in Romans 13 that the administration of justice ought to take place *in the general interest*. All the church may demand in the public life is a recognition of its own *sovereign rights*. The government, in turn, must in *its own sphere* place demands on the church: to respect the rights of others (other churches, ideological groups, etc.), to take precautions against fire, to make provisions for the protection of health and life in public buildings, etc. The government may not allow that any religious group disturb the public peace. The government *rules* and administers *justice*; the church *preaches and witnesses*. In this way the functions of both can be distinguished. I think this is what Christ means with “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” The fact that Paul orders us to be submissive to all powers which God has ordained indicates to us that the appearance of the government for the maintenance of the order of God among humankind is most assuredly a work of the kingdom, i.e., the kingdom of *righteousness*: it points to the kingdom come.


Witness to the world

In that context, I could add that we should reflect on what the impact of the church might be on the world, not simply on herself. History typically records what Christians did in the face of diseases like smallpox, plagues, and other disasters, not in terms of their in-person worship practices, but in terms of what

they did for the suffering in their communities and the cost it had on them personally in terms of life and death. How will history remember the response of churches in our time? Will the world see us more interested in keeping our salt dry and our light under a bushel? Will it see us more fixated on rights of gathering than vitality of being church?

One wonders if our response had been more in keeping with the character and quality of our forebears that we would have the credibility to ask questions in the public square about our COVID response and not simply be seen as a self-interested

group solely interested in being able to have their rights for themselves. That "living in exile," so to speak, we would have sought and prayed to the Lord for the peace and prosperity of the city and, in so doing, be blessed and prospered as the people of God within that city. It seems that we have been taken in by the spirit of the age and are irretrievably entrenched in the politics and rhetoric of self-interest.

To defy government rules would not only be against the revealed will of God but also be a negative witness to the community around us. 

Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.

Guarantee of Rights and Freedoms

1. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Fundamental Freedoms

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association.

Democratic Rights

3. Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein. 4. (1) No House of Commons or legislative assembly shall continue for longer than five years from the date fixed for the return of the writs at a general election of its members. (2) In time of real or apprehended war, invasion or insurrection, a House of Commons may be continued by Parliament and a legislative assembly may be continued by the legislature beyond five years if such continuation is not opposed by the votes of more than one-third of the members of the House of Commons or the legislative assembly, as the case may be. 5. There shall be a sitting of Parliament and of each legislature at least once every twelve months.

Mobility Rights

6. (1) Every citizen of Canada has the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada. (2) Every citizen of Canada and every person who has the status of a permanent resident of Canada has the right (a) to move to and take up residence in any province; and (b) to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in any province. (3) The rights specified in subsection (2) are subject to (a) any laws or practices of general application in force in a province other than those that discriminate among persons primarily on the basis of province of present or previous residence; and (b) any laws providing for reasonable residence requirements as a qualification for the receipt of publicly provided social services. (4) Subsections (2) and (3) do not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration in a province of conditions of individuals in that province who are socially or economically disadvantaged if the rate of employment in that province is below the rate of employment in Canada.

Legal Rights

7. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice. 8. Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure. 9. Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned. 10. Everyone has the right on arrest or detention (a) to be informed promptly of the reasons therefor; (b) to retain and instruct counsel without delay and to be informed of that right; and (c) to have the validity of the detention determined by way of habeas corpus and to be released if the detention is not lawful. 11. Any person charged with an offence has the right (a) to be informed without unreasonable delay of the specific offence; (b) to be tried within a reasonable time; (c) not to be compelled to be a witness in proceedings against that person in respect of the offence; (d) to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal; (e) not to be denied reasonable bail without just cause; (f) except in the case of an offence under military law tried before a military tribunal, or the benefit of trial by jury where the maximum punishment for the offence is imprisonment for five years or a more severe punishment, (g) not to be found guilty on account of any act or omission unless, at the time of the act or omission, it constituted an offence under Canadian or international law or was criminal according to the general principles of law recognized by the community of nations; (h) if finally acquitted of the offence, not to be tried for it again and, if finally found guilty and punished for the offence, not to be tried or punished for it again;

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS



and (f) if found guilty of the offence and if the punishment for the offence has been varied between the time of commission and the time of sentencing, to the benefit of the lesser punishment. 12. Everyone has the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. 13. A witness who testifies in any proceedings has the right not to have any incriminating evidence so given used to incriminate that witness in any other proceedings, except in a prosecution for perjury or for the giving of contradictory evidence. 14. A party to any proceedings who does not understand or speak the language in which the proceedings are conducted or who is deaf has the right to the assistance of an interpreter.

Equality Rights

15. (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Official Languages of Canada

16. (1) English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada. (2) English and French are the official languages of New Brunswick and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the legislature and government of New Brunswick. (3) Nothing in this Charter limits the authority of Parliament or a legislature to advance the equality of status or use of English and French. 16. (1) The English linguistic community and the French linguistic community in New Brunswick have equality of status and equal rights and privileges, including the right to distinct educational institutions and such distinct cultural institutions as are necessary for the preservation and promotion of those communities. (2) The role of the legislature and government of New Brunswick to preserve and promote the status, rights and privileges referred to in subsection (1) is affirmed. (3) Everyone has the right to use English or French in any debates and other proceedings of Parliament. (4) Everyone has the right to use English or French in any debates and other proceedings of the legislature of New Brunswick. 18. (1) The statutes, records and journals of Parliament shall be printed and published in English and French and both language versions are equally authoritative. (2) The statutes, records and journals of the legislature of New Brunswick shall be printed and published in English and French and both language versions are equally

authoritative. 19. (1) Either English or French may be used by any person in, or in any pleading in or process issuing from, any court established by Parliament. (2) Either English or French may be used by any person in, or in any pleading in or process issuing from, any court of New Brunswick. 20. (1) Any member of the public in Canada has the right to communicate with, and to receive available services from, any head or central office of an institution of the Parliament or government of Canada in English or French, and has the same right with respect to any other office of any such institution where (a) there is a significant demand for communications with and services from that office in such language; or (b) due to the nature of the office, it is reasonable that communications with and services from that office be available in both English and French. (2) Any member of the public in New Brunswick has the right to communicate with, and to receive available services from, any office of an institution of the legislature or government of New Brunswick in English or French. 21. Nothing in sections 16 to 20 abrogates or derogates from any right, privilege or obligation with respect to the English and French languages, or either of them, that exists or is continued by virtue of any other provision of the Constitution of Canada. 22. Nothing in sections 16 to 20 abrogates or derogates from any legal or customary right or privilege acquired or enjoyed either before or after the coming into force of this Charter with respect to any language that is not English or French.

Minority Language Educational Rights

23. (1) Citizens of Canada (a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or (b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province, have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province. (2) Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada, have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language. (3) The right of citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province (a) applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant the provision to them of public funds of minority language instruction; and (b) includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities provided out of public funds.

Enforcement

24. (1) Anyone whose rights or freedoms, as guaranteed by this Charter, have been infringed or denied may apply to a court of competent jurisdiction to obtain such remedy as the court considers appropriate and just in the circumstances. (2) Where, in proceedings under subsection (1), a court concludes that evidence was obtained in a manner that infringed or denied any rights or freedoms guaranteed by this Charter, the evidence shall be excluded if it is established that, having regard to all the circumstances, the admission of it in the proceedings would bring the administration of justice into disrepute.

General

25. The guarantee in this Charter of certain rights and freedoms shall not be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any other aboriginal, treaty or other rights or freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada including (a) any rights or freedoms that have been recognized by the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763, and (b) any rights or freedoms that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired. 26. The guarantee in this Charter of certain rights and freedoms shall not be construed as denying the existence of any other rights or freedoms that exist in Canada. 27. This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians. 28. Notwithstanding anything in this Charter, the rights and freedoms referred to in it are guaranteed equally to male and female persons. 29. Nothing in this Charter abrogates or derogates from any rights or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominated, separate or dissentient schools. 30. A reference in this Charter to a province or to the legislative assembly or legislature of a province shall be deemed to include a reference to the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories, or to the appropriate legislative authority thereof, as the case may be. 31. Nothing in this Charter extends the legislative powers of any body or authority.


Application of Charter

32. (1) This Charter applies (a) to the Parliament and government of Canada in respect of all matters within the authority of Parliament including all matters relating to the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories; and (b) to the legislature and government of each province in respect of all matters within the authority of the legislature of each province. (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), section 15 shall not have effect until three years after this section comes into force. 33. (1) Parliament or the legislature of a province may expressly declare in an Act of Parliament or of the legislature, as the case may be, that the Act or a provision thereof shall operate notwithstanding a provision included in section 2 or sections 7 to 15 of this Charter. (2) An Act or a provision of an Act in respect of which a declaration made under this section is in effect shall have such operation as it would have but for the provision of this Charter referred to in the declaration. (3) A declaration made under subsection (1) shall cease to have effect five years after it comes into force or on such earlier date as may be specified in the declaration. (4) Parliament or the legislature of a province may re-enact a declaration made under subsection (1). (5) Subsection (3) applies in respect of a re-enactment made under subsection (4).

Citation

34. This Part may be cited as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"We must now establish the basic principles, the basic values and beliefs which hold us together as Canadians so that beyond our regional loyalties there is a way of life and a system of values which make us proud of the country that has given us such freedom and such immeasurable joy."


P.E. Trudeau 1981

The Four Governments

WILLIAM RAVENSBERGEN *Member of Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie*

This counterpoint article comes about in response to the editor's request to bring out the other side of the conversation that br. Roukema raises in relation to sphere sovereignty. I've chosen as title "The Four Governments" instead of sphere sovereignty, as that seems to cause some confusion. Br. Roukema doesn't really define what he means by "sphere sovereignty," but for now I will assume that a discussion as titled above will suffice.

The four governments I hope to touch on are personal, family, church, and state as established by God (Gen 1:28; Eph 6:1-4; Rom 13; 1 Pet 2). This topic has received more airtime in the last while, since the COVID restrictions have directly affected personal, family, and church life. It is my belief that in response to the COVID virus our governments have engaged in overreach to the point of tyranny.

While we respect the authority of those placed there by God, we do not give them ultimate servitude.

Authority: respect and limits

In any conversation relating to resistance to tyranny, we should begin with establishing our starting point or orientation. We ought to agree that our stance toward governing authorities must be the default of submission to God's authority, as he has established it through them. At the same time, we do well to understand that only Christ's authority is absolute and so therefore when I govern myself or my family, my authority has limits. Those I govern need to weigh my authority as it pertains to what Christ has entrusted to me as a husband and father and respectfully call me out when I exceed or abuse my authority. If I were to insist that my wife was not allowed to visit her friends unless I was there, or restricted her from doing her task, she ought to resist my tyranny. John Knox uses the example of two sons who restrain their father who, in a fit of rage, intends to burn down the family home.

The same applies to the elders in the church and to the authority of the state in its various manifestations (see also 1 Kings 2:9-18). Each of these governments or areas of authority overlap and I must assume that we operate in our families in that way. We understand that Christ has ultimate authority over an abusive husband, and we certainly don't advise a wife and her children to remain in that environment. We must extrapolate that out to the other two governments as well, such that if a consistory demands something that God does not and interferes with family or personal government, they ought to be resisted there too and even respectfully admonished. If the elders bind a person's conscience by forcing dictates on an individual that God doesn't require, they must be politely but firmly resisted.

For example, we recognize that the elders cannot dictate how a father provides for his family, as that is not in their realm of authority. Similarly, if parents decide that it is appropriate for their young children to stay up till 10 p.m. each night, while the elders might suggest to them that that is not the wisest for the children, they cannot compel the family to comply. Nor can they tell them what foods are most appropriate, or how often

they can go out for dinner, or with whom. In 2 Chronicles 26 we read of the priests resisting King Uzziah when he wanted to offer incense in the temple, something outside of his office and authority. So, while we respect the authority of those placed there by God, we do not give them ultimate servitude. That is reserved only for Jesus Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Matt 28:18; Rev 19:16).

By whose standard?

We are certainly called to live quiet and peaceable lives as Christians in submission to authority. However, in a post-modern and decidedly anti-Christian world, we must ask: by what standard? Is it the peace of Christ we are striving for or just conformity to the demands of the world around us to present a modicum of unity?

When an individual's ability to provide for his family is removed and when people are prevented from gathering for corporate worship, we need to ask the question: whose authority is preventing that? Are those actions of the government legitimately within their sphere of authority? In contrast, what does God command us to do? Genesis 1:28 says, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens," referring to our calling to work, the cultural mandate. In Psalm 122 we are reminded of the decree of the Lord, "Jerusalem built as a city that is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD." This command to assemble as church for worship is repeated in Hebrews 10:25: "Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." There aren't any caveats to those commands, as in: only fulfill them unless there is a respiratory virus affecting the world!

Br. Roukema rightly states that the civil authorities have a duty to protect its citizens. Likely where we disagree is to what degree that duty extends. Much of the conversation gets messy,

We must stand up for those who cannot.

since we are still in the middle of a man-made crisis, if you will, and that makes it difficult to separate the emotions from the discussion. Our brother states that it is appropriate for the civil government to make demands to meet certain building code restrictions etc. and then applies it to the current context of COVID, which I see as an apples-to-oranges comparison.

For example, citizens have been told that it is okay to remove the mask when sitting down to eat at a restaurant, but you must wear it when entering and moving about the building, and so most churches followed that pattern. We have known for some time however, that an aerosolized virus (such as COVID-19) cannot be stopped by a cloth mask even though the larger droplets generated by coughing and sneezing could be trapped. Like how we used to sneeze into our elbows or into a handkerchief to be courteous to our neighbours, we can still do that without wearing a mask. Competent and recognized scientists have debunked the ability of the mask's efficacy. A simple experiment to show this for yourself would be to put a multi layer mask on and breath on a pair of glasses. They will undoubtedly fog up from the aerosols produced by your lungs and these will circulate up to thirty feet in an enclosed space.¹ While it is appropriate to ensure there are enough exits in a building to allow people to escape quickly during a fire event, it is not the same thing to require all people to wear masks indoors.

God-given freedoms

God has created man and set the redeemed free in Christ, not only from sin but also from tyranny. That does not mean that we will not have to live under tyranny for a time, as Germany did from the early 1930s till the end of the World War II. However, I don't believe that we are to acquiesce to tyranny when we have the opportunity to resist. At the time I write this we are living in a period when the Emergencies Act (formerly: the War Measures Act) has been enacted against peaceful protesters in Ottawa. This has been based on a smear campaign of lies

and untruths in the legacy media and in parliament, which is chillingly like the Germany of the 1930s. Hitler gave himself extraordinary powers at that time and began a campaign of segregation and fear. We are, I trust, painfully aware of the consequences of that. The church at the time was complicit in Hitler's rise to power and I recommend Eric Metaxas' biography on Dietrich Bonhoeffer for a more well-rounded treatment of those times than I can offer here in this limited space. Hermanus Knoppe's book titled, *Theatre in Dachau* might be relevant to this conversation as well. The point is, that throughout church history both on the European Continent and in British Presbyterianism, there are many examples of resistance to overreaching, tyrannical authorities. God has given us history to learn from.

When speaking about our freedoms we don't appeal to the Constitution of Canada or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms *per se*. Our rights and freedoms are given to us by God, and we can point to these written documents as a witness to what God has given to us. This country was founded on the principles of the supremacy of God and the rule of law. That means we can appeal to God when the civil realm becomes tyrannical, and we ought to do so, so that the state does not take the place of God as the source that fulfills all our needs. The state's role is to punish evil and reward those who do good *as defined by God's law*. There is no other ultimate standard than his law.

A proper understanding of the four governments and where each authority begins and ends is helpful in determining where resistance to tyranny is appropriate. Initially Br. Roukema states that it is reasonable to come to different conclusions on this topic, and yet concludes his article by stating that resistance to tyranny is unbiblical. I hope that what I write above has allowed for an appreciation of the deeply held belief that resistance to tyranny is *required*. This is a much greater witness of the church in the world than the inverse of that. We must stand up for those who cannot. 🇨🇦

¹ See the video of Dr. Byram Bridle, a viral immunologist at the University of Guelph at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXLPRBqyBww>

Christianity and Science: Investigating a Most Beautiful Book

Part 2 of 2

Scope of science

The massive cultural changes brought about by the Renaissance and the Reformation remain with us today. In premodern times, the whole Western world was Christian (at least in name), while today, in part because of centuries of religious fighting, plus the variety of religious options, many people now look to science for answers. Further, the scope of science has been probed to previously unimaginable extremes resulting in the atom bomb, humans on the moon, computers, and sophisticated medical procedures.

So, what does all of this mean for Christianity? Can science progress beyond religion? And can it offer us a comprehensive knowledge of reality? The short answer is: not even close! In this final section, we will see why science *will* never nor *could* ever do away with Christianity.

Christianity and science

If you remember, science is the idea that we can gain knowledge by observing the universe. While this definition can be modified and refined, the underlying principle holds true. The universe is “out there,” and when humans investigate it by prodding and observing it, they learn new things. So far so good, but what does investigating the universe have to do with the

modern idea that science can somehow replace Christianity? Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton would find such an assertion absurd. Science has to do with observing creation and learning new things, but what new things could nature possibly teach us that oppose our faith?

Much of Christianity is prescriptive. From God’s Word we learn who God is, that we have fallen into sin, and how Jesus is our redeemer. Science, on the other hand, is descriptive. We observe what’s out there and record what we see. Of course, doing science correctly can lead to some startling discoveries, but the problem for science is that what motivates scientists to make incredible discoveries cannot be justified by science. In other words, you cannot learn by observing the universe that science is a worthwhile practice (unless, after observing the universe, you come to see that God exists). This is because the natural world (apart from God) is simply cold and heartless, full of death, and seemingly random. For Christians, creation reflects God’s wisdom, and discovering God’s laws is like studying the faithfulness of his character. But if you try to justify the scientific enterprise simply on the basis of what science itself has observed over the last five hundred years, all you are left with is a handful of mindless laws and an unfathomable volume of empty space.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

Further, while science has offered us significant new insights into the vast intricacies and mechanics of how God governs the universe, in the overall scheme, its scope is narrow. For example, science has nothing to say about questions of morality, meaning, and ultimate purpose. Similarly, it has very little to say about aesthetics and beauty. Why does the night sky, illuminated with a billion stars, grip you with a sense of wonder? Why would a man do anything for his wife, or a mother anything for her children? Why shouldn't I lie to get that business, or cheat to pass that test? For all its insight, science cannot inform the most meaningful areas of life.

Christianity: science's foundation

Another aspect of science is that it depends on the assumption that our senses work correctly. Science simply cannot justify this without first assuming that it is true. For example, science depends on accurate observation, but one's senses must be working correctly to observe accurately. Now, the only way for scientists to go about testing the accuracy of their senses is to make observations using the very senses they wish to test. But how can they even begin this attempt unless they are already convinced that their senses work? They must begin with and proceed from an unproven assumption that our senses work accurately.

Scientists also make other assumptions that cannot be proven by science, including that the universe is real, that it is rational, and that the human mind can comprehend it. For the Christian, none of these assumptions are a problem. We believe that our senses are accurate because God designed us to gain at least some knowledge by observing his creation. We know that the universe is real because Scripture tells us that God created it, and we expect it to be rational because God is so.


A beautiful book

With all of these factors in mind, I think it's clear that science simply does not oppose Christianity, and so we should not fear

that it does. Instead, science depends on the great tenets of our faith before it can even get off the ground. This does not mean we should get snarky with our college professors or scientific neighbours when they claim science can tell us everything. But it does mean that when they get snarky with you or your kids, they do so at their own intellectual peril.

Still, scientists continue to make new observations about fossils and other features of the universe that are worthy of our attention as Christians. We need to be well-informed. As our young people go to university, and as we share Christianity with our neighbours, we may find ourselves discussing current scientific developments and how we as Christians view them through the lens of Scripture. Engaging with books and videos on science by reputable Christian scholars can help counter-balance what young people are already encountering from secular sources on YouTube, TikTok, and the like.

God reveals his glory

In a way, it is no surprise that humanity is enamored by studying the universe. As the Belgic Confession puts it in Article 2, God's creation is like a beautiful book that reveals the glory of its Creator. There is something lacking in each of us, and many have turned to the cosmos, thinking that if they study it, they might discover what they need. The truth is, only our Father in heaven can fill the longings of the heart, and every human needs Jesus Christ to mediate that path. There is something even more glorious than the vast intricacies of creation, namely, the suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 



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Update From Prince George



View of Prince George from Connaught Hill Park, on a hazy morning.

Criteria for success

Somebody once told me that he had been moose hunting for a week. I asked him if the hunt had been a success. He answered, “Well, it depends how you define success! What metric are you using?” In other words, he didn’t get his moose, but had a memorable time regardless.

How do we define “success” when it comes to a mission church? What are the “metrics”? This question has been on our minds during the past five years. There have been times when doors were closing and our numbers were shrinking. Our outreach did not seem to be bearing fruit and our members were taking jobs (or retiring) in other cities. Sometimes it seemed that the church was going to fall apart. One Sunday morning I preached to seven people, which included my wife and four children.

At this time in the history of our church, we were encouraged by the sovereignty and the grace of God. We learned in

our hearts what we already knew in our minds—that “success” in the church is not defined by human metrics like numbers or programs. In the church, success is defined in *spiritual* terms, by criteria such as: knowing and trusting God, faithfulness in belief and practice, proclaiming the Word of God to the world, and living together as the body of Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Reasons for rejoicing

When we were small, it was hard to function. Our members were busy with the regular activities of working and raising families, as well as with a number of significant life challenges. We had little energy for evangelism. We were essentially in survival mode. But then God chose to encourage, strengthen, and increase us. Here are five ways in which he did that:

First, God gave to us a recently retired couple, John and Betty Siebenga, from Houston BC. In response to our prayers, God

moved them to reach out to us with the offer of spending two weeks each month in Prince George. We eagerly responded, and for the past two and half years John and Betty have been volunteering countless hours. Their energy, love, and talents have made a difference that is really indescribable.

Second, God gave to us four new Christian families who moved to Prince George. Three of these families moved here in response to a series of brochures that the Smithers Home Mission Board produced and sent all across Canada. They came from far and wide—from Grassie, ON, from Coaldale, AB, and from Chilliwack, BC. Then, more recently, we received another family from Vancouver, BC. These families have all brought a commitment to daily faithfulness and a willingness to be living members of the body of Christ. By God's grace, we are being knit together into a functioning church that is able and willing to look for opportunities to bring the gospel.

Third, God gave to us five new covenant children. In the first five years of my ministry here, I had the privilege of baptizing one adult and one infant (my own daughter). In the past year we have had five children born to families of our congregation. What a joy it has been to welcome and baptize these children. We are now faced with a "problem" that every church likes to have—our nursery is too small (we are working on some renovations).

Fourth, God gave to us a number of regular guests. Currently, we have between seven and ten guests joining us for worship on any given Sunday. Some of these visitors are pursuing membership, while others are still getting to know us better. By God's grace we also had one of our regular visitors come



The new provisional council after ordination on January 9, 2022.
Left to right: John Siebenga, Tim Schouten, Ty Voorhorst,
Thomas van Leeuwen, Sheldon Rogers.

to know Christ and then publicly profess her faith last year. In addition, when COVID restrictions were implemented, we set up livestream, and this has resulted in quite a few regular viewers.

Fifth, God gave to us our first ordained officers—three elders and one deacon. This significant occasion took place on January 9, 2022. Together with me, these men will function as provisional council for the church in Prince George. This will greatly increase the spiritual shepherding of the flock. We are not ready for institution, but this helps us to grow in that direction.

God's perspective

It is good to rejoice when times are good, and times are good right now! However, we keep in mind God's metrics and God's perspective. His goal for us is not in the first place that we would be a numerically strong and well-oiled machine, doing all the things that churches do. As mentioned above, God's goals for us are spiritual goals.

Please continue to pray for the mission church in Prince George. At this time, please pray that God would continue to knit us together as a functioning spiritual body, and that he would open many doors and hearts for the gospel of Jesus Christ. 🇨



The baptism of Melody Voorhorst on January 16, 2022.



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A Look Back, and Forward, to Denver Church Camp

BEA STERK

It is the end of January. A glance outside shows the Colorado sun reflecting brightly off the snow. As preparation for the next annual Denver Church Camp starts to take root, this is also a time for the planning committee and the Denver congregation to enjoy reflecting on those surfacing memories of last year's camp! It is a reminder of how the Lord has blessed so many years of the annual Denver Church Camp and the many preparations that go into it. As we look back on last year's camp and begin to look forward to Camp 2022, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and praise to God!

A look back

"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a

reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect . . ." (1 Pet 3:15). This was the Bible verse printed on the camp shirts last summer and our theme text for the weekend. David Salazar opened the weekend for us with an introduction to our main theme for the weekend: Living in a post-Christian world. The biblical teachings we discovered together last summer of what this means for believers rings as much true today as it did then. Post-Christian America did not happen overnight; rather, Satan used temptation, and still does, to draw people this far and further down the rocky road. Yet, 1 Peter 3:15 resonates in the hearts of believers, "Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you. . . ." That hope rests on a sure and solid foundation, Jesus Christ!





Rev. Derek Vandermeulen was our keynote speaker for the weekend. He compared the world we live in to D-Day and V-Day. Christ has won the decisive battle, but victory day is yet to come. The church is engaged in a spiritual warfare, *but*, glory to God, the outcome is secure! As church, as believers, we must keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, seated at the right hand of God! Such comfort, such truth! Certainly, this calls the church to action, to evangelism. Christians are pilgrims in this world, but we do operate in this world. In love, in gentleness and respect, believers must witness to the hope that is in them.

Pastor Steve Vandavelde put forth some practical ways of doing this in a wrap-up session Saturday night, specifically highlighting hospitality in a post-Christian world. Christ's love dwells in the hearts and homes of believers! May the homes of believers be a welcome haven where this love and grace are shared abundantly and readily.

Flipping through last year's camp booklet I came across the hymn, "Take My Life and Let it Be." With eyes focused on Christ, believers confess, "Lord, take my life, my moments, my days, my hands, my feet, my voice, my possessions, my intellect, my will, my love, and my self, and use 'every power as Thou shalt choose' for your glory alone and for the increase of your kingdom!" This kingdom is powerfully portrayed in the church, the gathering of believers, and most vividly in Sunday worship. Every year we are blessed to worship the Lord together at camp, where our hearts and voices unite in praise and worship.

Last summer Pastor Vandavelde led the morning worship, specifically focusing on the theme text of 1 Peter 3:15-16. Pastor

Gerrit Brintjes led the afternoon worship with a message on Matthew 10:24-33. This text came with a powerful reminder that was echoed in the theme of the weekend. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs on your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 10:29-32).

A look forward

It is January, and the committee is gearing up for another weekend in the beautiful Rocky Mountains this summer. On the table are the myriad of fun activities, games, and challenges that highlight each year's camp, the most entertaining and exciting activity being the prize ceremony on Sunday evenings presented by Karen and Paki Temu. Thinking of the laughter and anticipation that accompanies this event brings a smile to our faces. As the committee sits down again with the sometimes daunting task of planning another camp, it helps to look back and be reminded of the wonderful moments enjoyed at Denver Church Camp. We remember the encouragement in God's Word, the joining of heart and voice together in worship, the fellowship with each other, laughter at mealtimes, 9-square in the gym, zip-line and the stunning creation showcased in the surrounding mountain peaks. With excitement we begin to look forward to another wonderful Denver Church Camp this summer of 2022. Glory and thanksgiving be to God! 

Farewell

to the den Hollander Family

MARIA BARTELS AND LOIS SCHIPPER



On January 30, 2022, Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie heard the last sermons from Rev. R. J. den Hollander as our pastor. The congregation was blessed once again by the faithful and passionate preaching of Rev. den Hollander and was reminded that, even with the mixed emotions of the day, we have an unchanging Word, unchanging God, and unchanging Son.

Farewell sermon

In the afternoon our dear pastor preached his farewell sermon to his beloved congregation on Philippians 2:12, 13 with the theme of "Work out your own Salvation." Rev. den Hollander

encouraged us to do this by living like Christ, living for Christ, and living in Christ. The text started with, "Therefore, my beloved. . ." The church at Philippi is loved by Christ and loved by Paul. Despite Paul's inability to be with the church at Philippi, he still cares for them and wants to motivate them to grow in Christ. Paul is concerned that the church is relying too heavily on his presence. We were reminded that just as the Philippians had to learn to completely rely on God, not on man, we too need to completely rely on God and on our Lord Jesus Christ. He's the one who redeemed us. He's the one who has given us salvation in his bloodshed on the cross. There is no presence or absence with Christ, only presence!

So, what exactly does Paul mean by "work out your own salvation"? Salvation has already been obtained for us, but we can also say it is a process. "Strive to enter the narrow door" Jesus says in Luke 13:23. Our faith must keep growing and maturing;

Pictured above, from left: Gifts being presented to the den Hollander family; "Ask that Question!" game show; Br. Pete Feenstra; Council members depicting Rev. and Liz in 40 years; den Hollander family enjoying the Farewell Program

it requires work. We must live for Christ and show that our salvation lives! Over the last seven and a half years it has become obvious that our pastor has a love for words (and math). In this sermon we were introduced to the Latin math phrase “quod erat demonstrandum” (QED), which is translated as “that which was to be demonstrated.” QED is placed at the end of a mathematical proof. First you start with a complete mathematical equation and then you show step by step that equation to be true. Rev. den Hollander compared that to what Paul was getting at. “Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. That’s the opening statement. Now, demonstrate that to be true! Work that out in your life! Then when Christ returns and we are glorified, we can write, QED—as it was demonstrated!” We don’t earn anything by this work, we are just showing that our salvation lives. In our everyday life, wherever God has put us, we can work out our salvation; we demonstrate that we are a people saved by Christ, who are living in Christ. Yet, it’s not we, but *he* who is at work in us. Soli Deo Gloria!

Farewell program

After the service there was a brief coffee social, followed by an organized farewell program for the den Hollander family. Brother Pete Feenstra opened the program with reading 1 Corinthians 2:12, 13. This was the text for Rev. den Hollander’s inaugural sermon preached on Pentecost Sunday, June 8, 2014. In his first sermon as our pastor, Rev. den Hollander had assured us that God uses weak and sinful men to proclaim the gospel and the Spirit to help us learn.


The program then continued with laughter, singing, and some tears! First off was the game show called “Ask that Question!” where the audience could ask the contestant (a forty-year-old minister) questions that they had been eager to ask for the last seven and a half years. This brought on a lot of laughs as we learned many secrets from Rev. den Hollander, even though he had to pick his set answers from a bucket. Next up was our own Grassie choir, who performed three beautiful songs in a four-part harmony. There is a great joy of singing in Grassie church (encouraged by our pastor), and these members practice faithfully each Sunday afternoon around the piano. Their final song, a version of the Lord’s Prayer, was filled with emotion and will be remembered by many.

Next up was a very humorous skit on behalf of Council, depicting Rev. and Liz forty years from now reminiscing about current members of Council. We do hope their memory of Grassie will be a little better though! This act was followed by a heartwarming poem “Our Paths” recited by the Birch small group. Our Council members then treated our music loving pastor and his family to the singing of “God be with you till we meet again.” Good job gentlemen! As mentioned earlier, Rev. den Hollander is a lover of words (aka logophile), and therefore a short video was played called “10 rules how to make a sermon good,” which gave us all a good chuckle. Appreciation was shown with some special gifts for the den Hollander family—wood working tools, all for shaping, as our pastor enjoys working with wood and has molded and sculpted us these last seven and a half years, a hand painted picture of our church building done by a congregant, pool toys and candy for the kids, and a large card signed by all the members.

Rev. den Hollander then took the stage to read from Isaiah 40 and to express his gratitude to Council and congregation for their love and care. He then sang Psalm 134:3 “The LORD now bless you from above. . .” to the congregation (as we had sung verses 1 and 2 to Council at the last installation of office bearers), which was a beautiful way to end our time together.

Conclusion

Rev. den Hollander, thank you for all your enthusiastic work in our midst and for unearthing the treasures. As you said, “Every preacher of the Word is dispensable, this isn’t my church, this isn’t your church. Presence. Absence. Regardless. It is the church of Christ!” Even so, you and Liz, Jakob, Micah, Ethan, Madilyn, and Jonah, will be greatly missed. We are thankful you are just a “slide down the escarpment” and that you will remain in Classis Niagara. We pray that you will be a blessing to Living Light Canadian Reformed Church in Grimsby and that they in turn will be a blessing to you all.

“Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:30, 31). 

CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

LORD'S DAY 6

When does the Bible first talk about Jesus as our Saviour? Was it when John the Baptist was telling the Israelites to repent? Was it when God promised Abraham that many people would come from him? The Bible does talk about Jesus at those times, but none of those is the very first time. The very first time was when Adam and Eve were alive. After they sinned, God himself told them that Jesus was coming. Adam and Eve didn't even have to ask for someone to help them. God decided he would help! After that, God reminded his people many times that Jesus, their Saviour, was coming. God reminded Abraham. God reminded the Israelites by using John the Baptist to talk about Jesus. The Israelites even had special days that would remind them that Jesus was coming!

Now, if you were an Israelite who lived before Jesus was born, you would not know him as Jesus. You would only know him as the Saviour, or the Messiah.

Fill in the blanks using the following words: Christ, heel, Mediator, head

Genesis 3:15b

"He shall bruise your _____, and you shall bruise his _____."

1 Timothy 2: 5

"For there is one God, and there is one _____ between God and man, the man _____ Jesus."

Attach the following words to the word Mediator (see the word Saviour as an example):

God, man, Jesus, Christ

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I recently read a book on Reformed Presbyterian mission in late nineteenth century America which made me think of the concerns raised by Rev. Kampen's editorial (Jan 21) addressing potential issues with an increased frequency of Lord's Supper celebrations. The book described the first communion service in this fast-growing church on a Native reservation. What struck me was the intensity of preparation for the whole week leading up to the celebration. The busy schedule reads as follows:

Beginning with the "preparation Sabbath" the Sunday before, preaching services were held every day of the week. Friday was a fast day with preaching morning and afternoon. Members were called to self-examination, repentance, and commitment to a closer fellowship with God. Children of the congregation were urged to come to a personal acceptance of the faith. On Saturday there was more preaching. Sunday morning a long table was set up in front of the church and spread with white linen. In the center were a single goblet of wine and a loaf of bread. Members who had attended the preparation services were invited to the table while everyone sang the 24th Psalm. On Monday morning a thanksgiving service was held, concluding the communion season. The solemnity of the proceedings evoked strong emotions, though quietly expressed.

Note the word "season," not just a short form and a shorter sermon. With all this, twice a year was felt to be sufficient!

That's just old tradition you may think, not very practical for today. Yet it addresses the very core of the celebration, not by increasing the frequency but by remembering our Lord's sacrifice in greater depth and appreciation. Just food for thought. I do wonder, though: would the consequence be more preaching than Rev. Kampen intended?

Ben Meerstra, Vernon

Letters to the editor are most welcome (letters@clarionmagazine.ca)! Whether it's to agree or disagree, to offer an alternative, present a new idea, or simply give a few reflections on an article, we invite you to join the discussion. Please note that letters must be under 300 words and written in a Christian manner. See clarionmagazine.ca for complete details.

PRESS RELEASE



Edmonton Mission Board, January 3, 2022, Edmonton, AB

With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, the Edmonton Mission Board announces that Darren Versteeg has been chosen as the inaugural mission worker for the Edmonton Mission Board. This appointment is effective January 1, 2022 and brings to a close a lengthy search. We are so excited to begin our work.

Darren Versteeg is a member of the St. Albert Canadian Reformed Church in St. Albert, Alberta, and is married to Carla. They have two covenant children. Prior to starting his role with the Edmonton Mission Board, Darren worked in various roles in the residential construction industry, in banking, and in accounting. Darren and Carla had prayerfully considered the ministry previously but had not seen a clear path forward.

The Edmonton Mission Board is a mission work of the Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, and is supported by the church, as well as surrounding Canadian Reformed churches. The Mission Board's mandate and vision are:

- a. Mission: To share the hope of salvation with our neighbours by sowing the seed of the gospel in our community.
- b. Vision: All people in the Edmonton area will learn and know about the hope we have in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Contact information

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Edmonton Mission Board | Keith Jansen, Secretary | EMB@edmontonimmanuel.ca | 780-777-7203





Classis Ontario West, March 2, 2022

Opening of Classis

On behalf of the Cornerstone church at Hamilton, Rev. John Louwse opened the meeting in a Christian manner. In prayer he remembered the needs and significant events within the classical region and the federation.

The credentials were examined by the delegates from the convening church and found to be in good order. Classis was declared constituted.

The following brothers formed the executive of Classis: chairman—Rev. K. Kok; vice-chairman—Rev. J. D. Louwse; clerk—Rev. J. Temple. Rev. Ken Kok thanked the church at Hamilton Cornerstone for convening Classis and completing all the preparatory work. The agenda was adopted.

Licensure examination

Brother Taylor Bredenhof presented a sermon and it was deemed sufficient to proceed with the examination of doctrine and creeds. After being examined, Taylor Bredenhof was granted permission to speak an edifying word in the churches, upon the successful completion of his second year of study at CRTS.

Question period ad Article 44 of the Church Order

The three questions of Article 44 were asked, and all the churches indicated that they are continuing the ministry of the office bearers as well as honouring the decisions of the broader

assemblies. One church sought the advice of Classis. Pulpit supply was requested by the Pilgrim church at London and this was granted for one Sunday per month starting in May.

Church visitations reports

The church visitations reports to the churches of Grand Rapids, London, Chatham, Kerwood, Glanbrook, Hamilton Providence, Ancaster, and Hamilton Cornerstone were received with thankfulness.

Appointments

The Providence church at Hamilton was appointed to convene the next classis on May 25 and June 1, 2022. Suggested officers for the next classis are: chairman—Rev. J. Poort; vice chairman—Rev. J. Temple; clerk—Rev. A. Vreugdenhil.

Closing of Classis

Personal question period was not made us of. The Chairman declared that censure according to Article 34 CO was not necessary. The Acts and Press Release were each read and approved by the assembly. After the chairman led in thanksgiving prayer, Classis was declared closed.

*For Classis Ontario West March 2,
Rev. J. D. Louwse (vice-chairman at that time)*

