

Clarion

*Christians and
Critical Race Theory (2)
Black Lives Matter (2)
Seminary Graduate Profiles*



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 Issue #10 where we present the concluding parts to the articles on Critical Race Theory and Black Lives Matter. These will formally complete our theme issue on Critical Theory. Moving on to less philosophical matters, you will find the profiles of six CRTS students who are set to graduate this year, the Lord willing, and hope to enter the ministry of the Word! May God open the way for them. Related to the spread of the gospel you can find another *Discipling the Nations* installment, this time on a budding work in Mexico. Our federation of churches in Canada has recently expanded by one and we present an article joyfully announcing the institution of the church in Arthur, Ontario.

We also have a news-style article on the background of this institution by Mrs. Ilse Vandermeulen, whom we have asked to serve as our "Clarion reporter"—a new initiative. Sometimes there are stories in our church life that need searching out and by sharing them will help us not only stay connected across the

federation but also learn from each other and bring honour to our God. If you know of such a story, please get in touch with either Ilse or myself. Welcome aboard Ilse!

Rev. Eric Kampen brings us what is sure to be a thought-provoking editorial on whether a person's talents necessitate the use of those talents in church life. Do you listen to the parting blessing pronounced by the minister in church? Hopefully that blessing will become fresh to your ears after reading Pastor Winston Bosch's meditation and its connection to Christ's Ascension. *Clarion Kids* is back with a lesson on the Trinity and Mr. Mitch Bosveld educates us about the plight of the persecuted Christians in North-East Africa. And rounding out this very full issue is a "Readers' Forum" article taking a different approach to the question of requiring vaccination for church attendees, as well as a press release of a recent Classis Central Ontario.

Last but certainly not least: have a blessed Ascension Day!

Peter Holtvlüwer

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EDITORIAL

I've Got Talent!

Two topics that give rise to lively discussions are women in leadership roles in the church and the use of a wide variety of musical instruments. It may not be apparent at first, but there is a common denominator. It can be summed up by the thought, "I've got talent! Why can't I use it in church?" With respect to women, some have leadership capabilities and are good speakers. With respect to music, some have great abilities on a wide variety of instruments. If someone has talents and wants to use them in serving in an office or musical accompaniment, shouldn't they be allowed to use them?

In response to this line of reasoning, it has to be stressed that the criterium is not, "I've got talent," but whether one is called to a task, or something is called for in God's Word. Just because something is possible does not make it the right thing to do.

We see this with respect to serving in a leadership role. In Article 31 of the Belgic Confession, it speaks of being chosen to an office by a lawful election. It states that "everyone shall take care not to intrude by improper means. He shall wait for the time that he is called by God, so that he may have sure testimony and thus be certain that his call comes from the Lord." In this, one can sense a reaction to the Anabaptists who simply claimed positions of leadership based on inner feelings, perhaps pointing to their gifts. The Scripture references include Acts 13:2, which describes how Paul and Barnabas were set apart for the work of mission, and Hebrews 5:5, which mentions how even the Lord Jesus did not exalt himself to be made a high priest but was appointed by God.

For an example of some assuming a task when not called, we can think of Moses. At age forty, he took it upon himself to act as saviour of his people. That did not go well. He had to flee. After spending forty years in Midian, God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt. It is striking that when he was called, he resisted. In the end, he had to submit to God's call.

When it comes to leadership in the church, the Lord calls brothers to the various offices (1 Tim 2:12; 3:1-13; Titus 1:6). We need not go into the process, except to say that calling is restricted to men, even though sisters may have many of the talents to serve in office. It is not talent or ability that determines, but calling by God.

We can also apply this to the question of using musical talents. While Paul calls for singing and making melody to the Lord (Eph 5:19), which might include musical accompaniment, there is no mention of people called to use their musical abilities in the New Testament. The only time we read of people called to a ministry of music is in connection with the temple (1 Chron 23:6; 2 Chron 8:14). Temple worship, however, was part of the age of the shadows, representing heavenly worship. It is not necessarily prescriptive for congregational worship.

The ambiguity about the use of musical accompaniment in congregational singing, however, does not mean we can use the argument of "I've got talent." Talent is not the determinative factor. The concern always has to be what best helps the believers offer up their praise to God. A worship service is not a talent show. The question is whether something will help the congregation in the singing of praise to God. This may mean that someone with musical talents may need to learn to play instruments that will help believers do that, for the reality is the instrument of one's choice may not always be the best to help congregational singing.

In the life of the church, then, it is not the case that talents determine what someone should do, be it with respect to leadership or musical accompaniment. With respect to leadership, calling is of primary importance. With respect to musical talents, also there one can speak of calling, as one with such talents is called to develop and use those talents so the congregation can excel in praising our gracious God. Furthermore, also in this case one must wait to be asked, not insisting or imposing. In the end, whether it comes to leadership or musical accompaniment, in the church it is not a talent show. In the church, all is focused on service, and using talents to serve the well-being of the congregation when asked. ☪



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Lifting Up His Hands He Blessed Them

“And lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.” (LUKE 24:50–51)

When I was little kid and bored in church, I used to count organ pipes, ladies’ hats, or how many times a particular visiting pastor would push up his glasses while he preached. I also analyzed how pastors raised their arms for the end of the service blessing. Did he go for the “canoe carry ninety-degree arm bend”? The “straight arm morning stretch” approach, or maybe the “arms forward let’s play patty cake” position?

Well, that bored kid is now a pastor, and it turns out giving the blessing is one of my favourite things to do. For some people the blessing is an indication that we are almost done; they are packing up while I speak. And yes, maybe some kids are analyzing my arm positions. But I also see people smile, or even cry a bit as the blessing is given. Some hold out their hands in a gesture of receiving, others pull their loved ones in close. Some close their eyes, others look me in mine. It is a special moment and I love it.

The blessing from Numbers 6 goes like this: “The LORD bless you and keep you, the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the LORD lift up his face toward you and give you peace.” These words have a beautiful backstory. Leviticus 9:22 tells us that Aaron the high priest would offer sacrifices for the sins of the people while standing up on the edge of the altar. And then, before he stepped down, he would turn to the congregation and from up on the altar, his hands covered in the blood of atonement, give the Numbers 6 blessing. The symbolism is awesome: the blessing comes to the people on the basis of the blood of atonement, the substitutionary sacrifice for sin.

But it gets better. When your pastor gives the blessing on Sunday, it is not so much in imitation of Aaron the high priest on the edge of the altar, but in imitation of Jesus the great High Priest ascending into heaven. The Bible tells us that as Jesus was carried up into heaven, he lifted up his hands and he blessed his disciples, no doubt with the high priestly blessing of Numbers 6. And while Jesus’s hands were not covered in blood, they

did carry the scars of his bloody death. Christ raised his arms in blessing on Ascension Day because he had already spread them in sacrifice on Good Friday. This is the glory of Ascension Day: the blessing of God comes to us in the nail-scarred hands of our ascending Lord.

You are reminded of this every Sunday when at the end of the service your pastor raises his hands in imitation of Christ and speaks the LORD’s blessing. That is a special moment, and I hope you grow to love it. Maybe this Sunday you don’t pack up your stuff during the blessing. Maybe you don’t count the organ pipes, ladies’ hats, or how many times the pastor adjusts his glasses. And please don’t analyze how the pastor raises his arms. Instead, smile. Or maybe shed a tear of joy. Or hold out your hands if you like, pull your loved ones close, and with eyes closed or open, hear the glorious words of the nail-scarred but ascended Lord Jesus Christ speaking also to you. Yes, not only to others but also to you. “The LORD bless you and keep you, the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. Amen.” Happy Ascension Day! 🍷

For Further Study

1. What do you do when the pastor is giving the blessing?
2. What is the disciples’ reaction to the blessing in Luke 24:50–53?
3. How does Psalm 67:1–3 explain one of the purposes of the blessing?



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The first part of this article appeared in the previous issue of *Clarion*, ending with this conclusion: *"In the end, CRT is not only a dangerous and destructive ideology, one that leads to increasing division and antipathy between people of different ethnic backgrounds—it is also completely incoherent, and can not stand up to logical scrutiny."*

Christians and Critical Race Theory

(Part 2)

JIM WITTEVEEN

Critical Race Theory (CRT) leads to the rejection of certain black voices because they do not align with the Marxist doctrines that the Critical Race Theorists hold dear. For example, Justice Clarence Thomas (the black American Supreme Court justice) is disqualified as a possible representative of African Americans because of his politically conservative worldview. The same holds true for leading black intellectuals like economist Thomas Sowell, whose conservatism also disqualifies him from that position. Because of this incoherence, as well as the danger that CRT poses to society as a whole, many prominent African American intellectuals reject it completely and oppose it vociferously.

The new religion of “the Elect”

One such voice is that of John McWhorter, who teaches linguistics, American studies, and music history at Columbia University. McWhorter refers to CRT advocates as “the Elect,” and to their ideology as a new religion that is seeking to take its place as the unofficial state religion of the United States. McWhorter (who is himself an atheist!) identifies a number of religious aspects that have become apparent in the CRT movement.

According to McWhorter, the Elect have their own “superstitious” belief system. Since McWhorter wrongly believes that all religions involve a suspension of disbelief, he sees in CRT advocates what he observes in all religions. CRT’s own particular superstitions even lead to its own brand of liturgy—ritual gestures like those evidenced in the protests that followed the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Secondly, the Elect also have their own clergy—spokesmen whose message is accepted and passed on as gospel. Robin DiAngelo, Ibram X. Kendi, and other leaders of the movement act as a priesthood, and when people flock to hear them speak, they do so with the much the same intent as those who, in previous generations, gathered in their thousands to hear the preaching of the travelling evangelists.

The Elect also have their own version of original sin—white privilege. The only thing that white people can do is confess our sin by acknowledging our privilege and the ways in which we have benefited from the institutionalized racism of our society. Having submitted ourselves to this new “sacrament” and begun to work to absolve ourselves of the stain of white privilege, we must then participate in re-education programs that serve to reinforce this understanding of ourselves, and acknowledge that we can never truly be forgiven.

RECOGNIZE
YOUR OWN
WHITE PRIVILEGE

Have the
uncomfortable talk
with family/friends
MAKE CHANGE!

Speak out against CRT and you risk being excluded from social networks, academic opportunities, employment prospects, and participation in public discourse

Every worldview has its own eschatology—its own peculiar view of judgment day and the end times. In this the Elect of CRT are no different, McWhorter says. They work to bring about the day in which society completely and absolutely owns up to its sins, when all will finally be made right in the world. The problem with the Elect’s apocalyptic vision, however, is that it seems that the End will never arrive; there will always be one more barrier to overcome. The anti-racist track has no finish line.


Finally, the Elect have their own particular version of excommunication; they ban heretics from their midst, they vilify their opponents as blasphemers, and they do all that they can to silence the voices of dissenters in every arena. This is another aspect of the “cancel culture” which has branded certain points of view as unacceptable and unworthy of being represented in the public square. Speak out against CRT and you risk being excluded from social networks, academic opportunities (either as a teacher or a student), employment prospects, and participation in public discourse.

The challenge of CRT and the Christian’s response

We can (and indeed must) pray that CRT will collapse under the weight of its own incoherence. Let’s also pray that it will prove, in the long run, to be nothing more than a historical anomaly that will lead future generations to look back in amazement that such an ideology could ever have been widely accepted and promoted in the first place. Until that day, however, we live and work in a society in which the mainstream has become completely dominated by this worldview. University students are forced to engage with CRT in almost every area of study; even the “hard sciences” don’t provide a place of refuge from its doctrines. Many workplaces, ranging from high-tech firms to fast food restaurants and major hardware store chains, have implemented training programs based on CRT, and their employees are required to participate in order to not have their positions terminated.

Additionally, CRT has begun to infiltrate the church, both through “true believers” in the ideology who are deliberately working to co-opt Christian leaders and win them to the cause, as well as through those who are unaware of the roots of CRT, the anti-Christian nature of its core beliefs, and the overarching political agenda of its proponents. Many have been deceived into imagining that CRT is an ideology that can somehow be integrated into the Christian worldview. But this is not possible.

In this challenging context, Christians have a duty to confess the truth in the face of the dominant lie that is being proclaimed and enforced as a new orthodoxy. Our most important responsibility is to know the truth, speak and confess it honestly, and equip ourselves to expose the lie. The ninth commandment demands this of us.

Critical Race Theory stands diametrically opposed to the gospel message, which proclaims that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free (Gal 3:28). While Scripture teaches that there is but one race, the human race, created in the image of God to serve him and worship him, CRT worsens the division that has grown between ethnic groups because of sin, a division that is based on physiological characteristics and nothing more. There is a great divide in the human race, that is true. But it is not some kind of divide between the races; it is the divide that God has instituted between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—the Antithesis. In Christ, and only in Christ, can disunity and enmity be overcome. It is only the gospel, and not Critical Race Theory, that can lead to true and lasting reconciliation—reconciliation between human beings, because of the reconciliation with God that our Saviour has made possible. 



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Black Lives Matter: What Should We Think of it?

(Part 2)

DICK WYNIA

In the first part of this article, we were introduced to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) organization. In the second part, I would like to offer some assessment of BLM from a Reformed and Christian perspective. We need to be clear about what we're doing here. If the question is, "Should Christians support an organization that aims to identify and address racist attitudes and behaviour?" or "Do black lives matter?" the answer is very simple: "Yes, of course!" The gospel makes clear that there is no room for racial prejudice in the hearts or in the actions of believers in Jesus Christ. But the question we're answering is, "Should Christians endorse the aims and purposes of the organization called Black Lives Matter?" The answer is, "No."

Why not?

Marxist ideology

BLM does not openly identify itself as Marxist, but, given Patrisse Cullors's 2015 statement that she and her fellow BLM founders are trained Marxists, and her later confirmation that she "believes in Marxism," it seems fair to conclude that BLM is at very least influenced by Marxist principles. While not conclusive in itself, certain buzzwords, like "liberators/liberation," "comrades," "collective/collectively," are sprinkled throughout the "About" section of the BLM website. They are also found among the thirteen guiding principles identified in the materials prepared for public school teachers in Washington, D.C. as part of their "social justice" curriculum. In a June 2020 article for the American Philosophical Association entitled, "Black

Lives Matter’ as Identity Politics and Class Struggle,” Vanessa Wills, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at George Washington University, argues—approvingly—that BLM does indeed apply Marxist thought in its approach to addressing systemic racism. On its website, BLM honours Dr. Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party, a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist organization of the 1960s and 70s.

This is not the place for a detailed description or analysis of Marxism. Suffice it to say that it is atheistic, it teaches that everything that exists is material and is derived from matter, and that capitalism is by its very nature a system in which the rich (or the business owners or *bourgeoisie*) exploit the poor (the workers or the *proletariat*). BLM’s focus is not primarily on economic injustice or exploitation, but on racial injustice, which it calls “systemic racism.” What they mean by “systemic racism” is that white people have structured society and public institutions in such a way that whites are privileged and blacks are disadvantaged. The Marxist solution to injustice is societal change through revolution, and there are many references to revolution and liberation scattered throughout the BLM website. While BLM does not openly advocate violence, it has been closely associated with violent protests that took place in various U.S. cities in the aftermath of police shootings of black people in recent years, complete with rioters looting stores and burning buildings, including police stations.

Paganism

Marxism is known for describing religion as “the opiate for the masses,” but Patrisse Cullors describes BLM as a “spiritual movement.” According to Cullors, BLM’s spirituality involves ancestor worship. In a discussion after a June 2020 “performance,” she and Melina Abdullah, co-founder of Black Lives Matter—Los Angeles, touched on the practice of calling out the names of the victims that they advocate for in protests and demonstrations. “It’s kind of a way to invoke their spirits,” Abdullah said. “Uplifting the names of victims goes beyond creating hashtags,” Cullors said. “It is literally almost resurrecting a spirit so they can work through us to get the work that we need to get done,” she said. For Cullors, highlighting their names makes her feel “personally connected and responsible and accountable to them, both from a deeply political place but also from a deeply spiritual place.” Promotional material for a BLM Healing Justice Webinar in 2021 clearly suggests that these practices have a place within the movement. On account of such things, American Baptist

minister Voddie Baucham argues in his book on Critical Race Theory, *Fault Lines*, that BLM is “openly pagan.”

Opposition to biblical norms for sexuality, marriage, and family

BLM doesn’t explicitly interact with biblical teaching about sexuality, marriage, and the family, but its guiding principles clearly contradict what the Bible teaches in those areas. As noted in Part 1, among BLM’s guiding principles are the commitments that it is Queer Affirming and Trans Affirming. That involves “freeing ourselves from the grip of heteronormative thinking” and “doing the work required to dismantle cis-gender privilege.” (To this way of thinking, the concept of gender is a matter of the mind, something one chooses; thus “cis-gender” is a negative term referring to the gender one was “assigned” at birth—i.e., male or female—and “trans-gender” is choosing to identify as some other gender, of which there are numerous possibilities.) BLM is also “committed to dismantling the patriarchal practice that requires mothers to work ‘double shifts’ that require them to mother in private even as they participate in justice work.” Just what is meant by “patriarchal practice” is not spelled out, but in feminism, describing society as patriarchal means that it has a systemic bias in favour of men and against women and children. Biblical teaching about gender, sex, marriage, and family would undoubtedly be described by BLM as “heteronormative” and “patriarchal,” and thus teaching that must be opposed.

Misleading characterization of the purpose of policing

BLM claims that policing in America began with the slave patrols of the southern U.S. in the 1800s. BLM co-founder Opal Tometti said in a June 2020 interview with *New Yorker* magazine, “People understand that this system is filled with all sorts of inequality and injustice, and that implicit bias and just outright racism is embedded in the way that policing is done in this nation—and when you think about it historically, it was founded as a slave patrol. The evolution of policing was rooted in that.” That claim is patently untrue. While there were indeed slave patrols in the 1800s in the U.S. south, Augustus Caesar already had a kind of police force, the *cohortes urbanae*, as did Britain, as early as the twelfth century. There were constables in Britain and in New England in the 1600s; Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City had the first U.S. police departments in the early 1800s. The purpose of these police forces was not to catch runaway slaves.

The gospel proclaims the only genuine solution to racism

Misleading characterization of police violence against black people

Police malpractice of any kind, including any wrongdoing motivated by racism, cannot be endorsed or excused. There is no doubt that black people—along with members of other people groups—have suffered injustice at the hands of the police. However, the narrative that is promoted by BLM in support of defunding the police is not supported by the facts.

In his book, *Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth*, Thaddeus Williams, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Biola University, cites statistics compiled by the *Washington Post* on people who were shot and killed from 2016–2019 by the police in the U.S. In the course of those four years, almost 4,000 people were shot and killed by the police. Roughly half of those people were white, and about a quarter of them were black. Each year in that time period, on average, twenty-five unarmed white people and eighteen unarmed black people were shot and killed by police. On average, twenty-four of these unarmed victims—sixteen white and eight black—were not fleeing the scene. Nearly all of these incidents involved suspects who physically attacked police, usually under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Williams cites several incidents in which police have killed white people in circumstances very similar to highly publicized police killings of black people. These incidents have received no media attention, and the police officers involved have not been disciplined or convicted. In other words, racism is not necessarily the explanation for the way “the system” has dealt with police violence against blacks.

Not all black lives matter to Black Lives Matter


In addition to questioning the BLM claim of systemic racism in American policing, Larry Elder, a black American conservative, faults BLM for ignoring so-called black-on-black crime as a real scourge in the black communities in America. Citing statistics from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, he says, “The No. 1 reason for death, preventable or otherwise for young black men, is homicide, almost always at the hands of another young

black man,” while the main cause of death for young white men is accidents.

Combined with statistics that show that close to half of all the babies aborted in the U.S. are black (when only thirteen percent of the U.S. population is black), and that almost half of all black pregnancies end in abortion, it is fair to ask, “Do all black lives matter to Black Lives Matter?” Judging by BLM’s silence on the black lives lost in black-on-black violence, and to abortion, the answer seems clear: “Not all black lives matter.”

In summary

The guiding principles of Black Lives Matters are not biblical; in fact, some are anti-biblical. The Marxist perspective does not yield an accurate diagnosis of the problems of racism and cannot provide a real solution. There are significant misrepresentations in the way in which BLM assesses and accounts for the ills affecting black people in the U.S., the U.K., and Canada. Without denying that racism exists in our culture, it is difficult, in view of current anti-discrimination legislation, to accept the claim that we are beset by systemic racism. BLM’s solutions pit black against white, and encourage division rather than reconciliation. BLM seeks to undermine God’s will for sexuality, marriage, and social life generally. Since it does not accurately diagnose the problem, it cannot provide a real solution.

Christians have an obligation to identify oppression, and to help victims of oppression, including the victims of racism. But God’s Word identifies the real cause and source of racism: “out of the heart come evil thoughts” (Matt 15:19). In Christ, the gospel proclaims the only genuine solution to racism: a new heart, with new motives: those who by faith have been raised with Christ seek the things that are above, where Christ is, and form a community where “there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free” (Col 3:1, 11). 



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Student Profiles

Graduating Class of 2022 at CRTS

JASON VAN VLIET

As another academic year winds down at CRTS, students are shifting their attention to the summer activities. Many are heading out on internships. Some are looking forward to reconnecting with family and friends. Others are lining up some summer work. And, with thankfulness to the Lord, we note that six of our students are graduating this year.

All six graduates intend to present themselves to classis to become eligible for call, four of them immediately and two of them after helping in local congregations. However, it is far better that they introduce themselves and explain their plans. On the following pages you can read each of their profiles. Enjoy!

Tsjibbe deJong

Hello there! I'm Tsjibbe (pronounced "Chibba") deJong. This is my beloved, Kara, and our children, Zoe (5) and Isaac (born in March this year).

I grew up on a dairy farm outside Dunnville, Ontario, and attended Heritage Christian School from K-12. After graduating, I spent a year at Brock University before transferring to Redeemer University. At Redeemer I majored in English Literature and minored in Political Science and Religion. It was at Redeemer that I met Kara, a native of Fergus, ON, who was taking Psychology and Theater Arts. We married in 2014 and finished our degrees together. It was during this time that I began to feel called to ministry.

It was also during our last semester at Redeemer that we were blessed with our beautiful daughter Zoe. Finishing Redeemer in 2017, I spent a year landscaping and learning my languages

while Kara stayed at home with our daughter and later took a job at Beacon Home in Dunnville, where she worked for four years.

It's hard to believe that my four years of studying at CRTS are almost finished! God has richly blessed us during these seasons of study. I am thankful for all the people he has placed on our path during this time—teachers, mentors, and new friends—who have encouraged and taught and challenged and prayed for us. With their help I have grown in knowledge and love for our



Saviour. The experiences that we've had, not only in seminary but also while doing internships in Strathroy and Edmonton and while teaching catechism in Attercliffe, have been of inestimable value and have only increased our eagerness to enter into fulltime ministry with all of the delights and challenges that will be ours.

We'll be heading out West to Lethbridge this May and will remain there for the better part of a year. Halfway through that, I will, Lord willing, be coming back to Ontario to do my classical examination.

It is a sort of sweet sorrow to be finishing up our time in this season of life, but we look forward to seeing where God will guide us next.

Rodney den Boer

G'day! My name is Rodney den Boer. As I reflect on four years of CRTS training, it stands out that God has been exceedingly good to me. I'm grateful and excited (though a little nervous) to see where his good hand will lead me forward!

As I write this from Hamilton, Ontario, I'm about as far away as possible from the place where I was born. The town of Albany on Western Australia's southern coast is almost directly on the opposite end of the globe, and it was there that I grew up, breathing fresh ocean air. I'll never forget the white, sandy beaches and the good old jarrah trees. Perhaps it was Albany that gave me an early love for God's creation—I still enjoy the outdoors today.

So how did I end up on the opposite side of the globe? I grew up in a loving, Christian family and was taught the gospel as soon as I could understand it. From a young age I wanted to serve God with my life. I often thought about gospel ministry and wondered, "Is God calling me to serve in this way?" The quest to answer that question took me from Albany to Perth for university. A few years later, having finished my undergraduate degree along with a basic understanding of biblical languages, I still wasn't completely sure. At that point, a few people encouraged me to take a leap of faith and sign up for seminary. So, I did. It really was a leap of faith—I remember, for instance, booking that one-way ticket away from family, friends, and everything I knew. Somehow the finality of that moment hit me. It was a leap into a lot of unknowns. However, I'm so glad God led me to come here to Hamilton.

As I mentioned, God has been very good to me in the last four years (my whole life, actually!). One of the biggest highlights has been the bonds formed with my classmates and lots



of other people along the way. Bonds formed through sweaty ping-pong matches, a lot of coffeetime banter, serendipitous chats in the seminary hallways, times of singing praise to God together (I'm going to miss our chapel singing), and excursions onto the ice rink or even the ski hill. The friendships have gone deeper, too—bonds have been forged through the fires of suffering together and strengthened as we've prayed with and for each other.

Throughout this time God has worked in me an increasing desire to serve in gospel ministry. This has been strengthened through various internships, which have taken me to a few different corners of the world, from the farmland in Fergus (Ontario), to the much more tropical Papua New Guinea, over to the other side of Canada to Aldergrove (BC), back to Ontario to Owen Sound, and finally, a short internship in Niagara Falls.

Through all these experiences our good Father has shaped me and has been preparing me to serve in his kingdom. He has guided my past and my future is secure in his hand. I remind myself of that often. My continual prayer is that he will be glorified in my life wherever he calls me to serve him. With this in mind, I plan to present myself to Classis Ontario West at the beginning of June to become eligible for call.

Dathan Pleiter

Hello everyone! My name is Dathan Pleiter, and this is my lovely wife and friend, Katrina (nee Wanders). Maybe I should begin with my name, which is kind of the elephant in the room. I come from a family of seven, four boys and one girl. My brothers all have strong biblical names, named after noble and faithful godly Old Testament believers, one, a faithful minor prophet, another, a godly king, and the youngest, the first high priest of Israel. So as a young boy I began to wonder, *what godly believer*



was I named after? Turns out, I shouldn't have asked that question. "Dathan" wasn't a godly character at all but an infamous rebel, who was swallowed up by the earth. Around the same time, the Bible song writer Jamie Soles released a new song, "Korah, Dathan, and Abiram." One line particularly struck me as young child, "Never name your children this, if you want people to admire 'em." So, there I was with an existential crisis at all of age six, wondering if my parents knew their Bibles. For the record: the Bible never gives such a prohibition, but I do wonder what my name would have been if I were a girl . . . who knows.

My growing up years began in British Columbia. From there our family moved to Western Australia, where I lived until I moved to Ontario to pursue theological and pastoral training at CRTS. When I was young boy, I wanted to become a pastor.

However, as I entered my early teenage years, my aspirations changed. Fighter pilot was where it was at; there was something about breaking the sound barrier at Mach 2 that appealed to my more juvenile sensibilities. But a career as pilot was not meant to be. (The height and math requirements may have had something to do with that.) During this time, God placed it on my heart to pursue the ministry, which was confirmed by the encouragement of my parents and other mentors. Upon the completion of my undergraduate in Philosophy and Ancient History, and part-time studies with Rev. Dr. Anderson, I moved to Ontario in the summer of 2018 to begin seminary training.

During this time, I met Katrina. Well, actually, we met at convocation (other than church, you can't get a more sanctified place to meet a girl). In June of last year, we were married, and have experienced the joys of walking alongside each other in life. It is amazing to see where God has led our lives over these past four years. Through the various internships of the pastoral training program (Rev. D. Poppe, Rev. R. Bredenhof, CampFire, Rev. E. Onderwater, Rev. J. VanWoudenberg) and conversations with fellow peers, as well as the mentoring of friends and other brothers and sisters in the faith, God has impressed upon our hearts his love for us in Jesus Christ. It has been such a privilege to proclaim the gospel of our Lord over this past year. If God grants the opportunity, it is my desire to serve as an under-shepherd of our Chief Shepherd, Lord, and King, Jesus Christ. After completing my studies, Katrina and I have planned to go to Australia for an internship there while at the same time giving my wife an opportunity to meet my family. (We hoped to do that sooner, but travel restrictions prevented that.) As things stand now, after the internship we hope to return to Canada and go to classis to become eligible for call. Although we look ahead with mixed emotions, we trust that God will equip us to walk in the footsteps of our Saviour, wherever they may lead.

Tim vanBeek

"An engineer walks into a seminary . . ."

Perhaps that sounds like the opening line of a vocational joke, but it was, in fact, the scene on a sunny September day in 2018.

My path to seminary began later in life. I was born in 1984 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, the second oldest of six children. The carefree bike rides and backyard baseball games of youth gave way to the halls of academia when I graduated from high school and began postsecondary studies in Computer Engineering at the University of Manitoba. Thoughts of the ministry had crossed my mind a time or two, but French put the fear of languages

in me and prevented me from pursuing the prerequisites. Fast forward through five years of lab-work and exams, and I stood proudly with diploma in hand and (iron) ring on finger. An engineer for life . . . so I thought.

I quickly settled into a comfortable career, working first in the rail industry and then in medical physics at a local hospital. Work went well and afforded enviable flexibility, yet at the same time life was full of friends and family. Every week again, I was encouraged and convicted by the Word preached faithfully in my home congregation of Redeemer Canadian Reformed Church. In all this, God gave abundantly and soon set before me new opportunities. I found time to read and think. A nearby university offered Hebrew courses, and so, richly blessed with time and a developing interest, I began to test the waters.

The Hebrew language requires a quiet study space and caffeine, and both needs were happily met at a local coffee shop. This, too, was a small beginning, because, although I became

a regular visitor with sincere intentions to study, I soon discovered another reason to visit. A certain Emma van Weerden had recently moved from Guelph to Winnipeg for graduate studies at the University of Manitoba and taken a part-time job at this very establishment. What started off as free coffee turned into good conversation and long walks along the Red River, and, in the summer of 2016, we were married.

The following year was full of blessing and apprehension. The language requirements were completed, but the timing of a transition to CRTS was still unclear. I had reached the ten-year mark at work. My contributions were valued, my colleagues became friends, and over this time I accrued additional responsibilities. Moreover, in May of 2017, Emma and I received a beautiful daughter whom we named Arielle. We were setting down roots in a wonderful community. Suddenly the once-distant future felt very imminent, and the weight of leaving became heavier. Yet, there was also a sense that we had “set the hand to the plow.” So we went, secure in the care of our loving Father. Time and again, we felt the blessing of the Lord on our transition from Winnipeg to Hamilton.

Four years of seminary life have passed very quickly with more than a few notable highlights. In February 2019, we welcomed our vivacious son Judah. Then COVID-19 came and went, though not without disturbing a few well-laid plans. In the summer of 2020, the opportunity for an internship abroad was dashed against the rocks of Australian border restrictions. But where one plan falls, another opportunity beckons, and we were quickly and warmly welcomed in Attercliffe, where I spent twelve weeks under the mentorship of Rev. R. Vermeulen. In January 2021, we rejoiced to receive another son, whom we named Caius. Then again, in the following summer, we enjoyed another opportunity to work, filling a vacancy in Elora Canadian Reformed Church for ten weeks and giving us another taste of what life in the ministry would be like.

Today, I’m preparing myself to walk out of these now-familiar doors. There is some trepidation: the world changes, and my world has changed. And yet, there is unspeakable comfort. Why? Because God does not change. His Word will never pass away. His plans for us are eternal. And so, secure in this knowledge, I plan to present myself to Classis Ontario West at the beginning of June, seeking an opportunity to serve our Lord and his church.





Anson van Delden

G'day to you all! I'm Anson van Delden, that old guy in the family pic (I'm sure you already assumed that). Together with me is my wonderful wife Rachel, and my two boisterous children: Kaya (9) and Joash (7).

When I am required to introduce myself, I am always unsure what to say. I am Canadian: I was born in Burlington, Ontario (1982). I am Australian: I have spent most of my life in Perth, Western Australia (approximately twenty-eight years). I was also a "resident alien" (!?) of the USA: I lived in Lynden, Washington for five years. Perhaps I am best described as a *bitza* (slang for "bits of everything").

This photo represents what is closest and dearest to me: my family. They were all born in the sunburnt country, the land Down Under, the wide brown land of Australia. My wife is my closest friend and my pillar of support. Who and what I am (at least the good things) should be attributed to her! And my kids . . . well, they keep me young(ish)!

After looking at the picture, if you think I look old(er), you're right. I had a vastly different "life" in Perth before becoming a student. In this matter, I distinctly remember a conversation around a supper table with my family, and the question being discussed was, "What are you allergic to?" When the focus turned to me, my daughter quickly interjected, "Dad is allergic

to work!" Truth is, I'm a *bitza*. I entered the workforce (into the cabinet-making trade) after graduating from high-school, and I remained in that industry for approximately fifteen years. My career trajectory changed drastically in 2015 when I began my post-secondary studies as a "mature student" in preparation for pastoral ministry. In 2018, our family relocated to Hamilton, Ontario to continue my studies, this time at CRTS. And now I, or better yet, we, are on the edge of another adjustment—from trade, to student, to pastor. *Bitza*.

The past four years at seminary have been hugely formative for us. The highlights are, without doubt, the pastoral and mission internships. We experienced two amazing internships under and alongside fantastic family friends, Pastor Winston and Berber Bosch, up in Ottawa. We also experienced the same support and affection during our three-month internship in our home church (Mercy Christian Church) with Pastor Ian and Nadia Wildeboer. Our most interesting (and perhaps most memorable) internship was in Scotland with 20Schemes. We are indebted to these families for the time, energy, love, and guidance they have given to us. One other significant high-point was my appointment (and privilege) to care for and serve Mercy Church in the office as elder. I am grateful to my fellow office-bearers (and the Mercy congregation) for their patience in dealing with my shortcomings, and I thank God for the strength given me to accomplish this task.

As mentioned, we stand at another junction. The thought of leaving behind our dear friends and cherished church community is super tough. We love our church. We love our community. Hamilton is home. We want to express our deep gratitude to you all for your support, prayers, love, and encouragement. But this season of life as student is almost done, and what God has planned for us in the future we have yet to discover. My intention is to be examined by Classis Central Ontario at the beginning of June in order to become eligible for call. So, we walk forward, trusting fully in God's good and gracious plans for us.

Bryan Vanderhorst

Hello! I'm Bryan Vanderhorst, and this is my wonderful wife Paige (nee Van Delft) and our children, Zoe and Jesse. How did we get to this point? Good question—I'm happy to share.

My hometown is Abbotsford, BC, where I was born and raised by my loving parents, Gerrit and Grace. Given that dad is a charter member of the Abbotsford CanRC, we put down deep roots there in both the church and school communities. I attended John Calvin Elementary and Credo Christian High and enjoyed



subjects like math and physics (a rarity I'm told). And so, as you might expect, I pursued a career in that direction.

However, already during my first year of work, the Spirit of God began nudging me in the direction of ministry. I was surprised that my heart was softening to the idea, since I had always resisted it and didn't believe that I had the talents for ministry. Learning Greek and Hebrew was particularly intimidating, seeing as Grade 8 French hadn't gone so well. Nevertheless, I eventually handed in my resignation and headed back to university.


Around this time, Paige and I started dating. I made it my goal from the beginning to have good communication in our relationship and to be as transparent as possible, so I soon

brought up the fact that I was studying with the purpose of heading to CRTS and asked if that was something she would be comfortable with. Apparently my wording could have been better, since she interpreted my question as basically asking if she would marry me. Given that this was our second date, her ensuing silence was understandable. In any case, she eventually said yes (to the idea of seminary and marriage), and so our lives were united in December 2014.

One-and-a-half years later, the Lord blessed us with our beautiful daughter Zoe. Initially she was somewhat shy, but over time she emerged as an outgoing and energetic young lady who brings much joy and excitement to our family.

The three of us arrived in Hamilton in August 2018. While leaving family behind is never easy, it was a great joy for us to be immediately surrounded by so many brothers and sisters in Christ. In time this new place became our home, and the Lord has blessed us here in many ways. In February 2019, our son Jesse was born. He's had a strong personality from the beginning and has a rather contagious laugh. He loves his family and adores garbage trucks and diggers of any kind.

Of course, there was also much schooling to be done over the last four years, together with various internships (thanks Revs. Vermeulen, VanSpronsen, and Bultje). I cannot overstate how thankful I am to these men, ministers, and professors, for the knowledge and wisdom they've given. I also experienced the privilege of having two mentor relationships at CRTS with Drs. Visscher and den Hollander who, though separated in years, were united in hairstyle. But in all seriousness, these men were a unique blessing through the guidance and encouragement they gave during the various seasons of life which a young(er) seminarian goes through.

There's so much more that we could share! So many stories to tell and people to thank, but, ultimately, we praise our God and Father for leading us to the place we are today. At the beginning of June, I intend to present myself to Classis Ontario West to become eligible for call. Although looking to the future all we see is one vast and entirely unknown territory, we are eager to see how the Lord will use our gifts for his service. May his name be hallowed and adored. 



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North-East Africa

MITCHELL BOSVELD

Eritrea

Have you ever heard of a country called Eritrea? The chances are the people living in Eritrea haven't heard much about Canada either. Eritrea is a small country in North-East Africa and is home to about 5.5 million people. This Muslim country has been run by the dictator President Afewerki for over thirty years.

Life in Eritrea is difficult for nearly everyone who lives there. Poverty is widespread, and the government is corrupt. The government is one of the most repressive in the world; some have likened it to North-Korea. Phone calls are monitored, social media and the internet (which is intentionally kept slow) are both heavily censored, and there is a network of civilians who spy on neighbours. Even if you want to travel from one village to another, you need permission from the government.

The Christians in Eritrea are some of the most persecuted in the world. What might surprise you, however, is that almost half the population identifies as Christian. In fact, the government even recognises three Christian denominations—Eritrean Orthodox (EOC), Catholic, and Lutheran. Christians belonging to these denominations are allowed to worship in public. However, they are not allowed to have any personal Christian items such as Bibles or commentaries, and private prayer and Bible reading are considered dangerous activities. Having or doing these things are considered treason by the government.

The Christians who face the most severe persecution are Baptists, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals. They are seen by the government as

agents of the West. Also, these Christians are seen as a threat by the allowed Orthodox Church. Christians who leave the EOC are persecuted not just by the government but also by the EOC. The EOC has some influence in society, and so they are threatened when members leave. So, the government and the EOC often work together to suppress these Christian communities. These Christians need to worship in private and are constantly being monitored by the state. Pastors are targeted by the government and, once caught, they are imprisoned without trial. They are kept in prison under inhumane conditions for years.

Somalia

Just south of Eritrea is an African country called Somalia. To be Somali is to be Muslim. This is even written into their constitution—Islam is the state religion, no other religion can be propagated in the country. Somalia is a safe haven for radical Islamic militants, and the terrorist group Al-Shabaab has a lot of power and influence. Because Islam is entrenched in Somali culture and society, Christians are seen as a threat to both the culture and the Islam religion and anti-Christian sentiment runs strong.

There are very few Christians in Somalia, and those Christians who haven't yet fled the country live in constant fear. All church buildings in the country are in ruins, and organized Christianity is illegal. Somali Christians face jail time and even the death



Prayer requests

- Pray for the governments of Eritrea and Somalia, as well as Al-Shabaab, that their hearts may be softened and that they turn to the Lord Jesus and repent
- Pray that the leaders of the Eritrean Orthodox Church see Christians from other denominations as their brothers and sisters in Christ rather than a threat to their influence in society
- Pray that God will bless the work of the Christian ministries who are trying to reach Somali Christians
- Pray for the Eritrean and Somali Christians to stay faithful to God despite their persecution
- Pray that we grow in our compassion for our suffering brothers and sisters.

for evangelizing. Yet they were released due to pressure from European governmental representatives. Although they were not allowed to return to their home and were deported to another area of Somalia, God preserved their lives, and we can praise him for that! Also, Somalis found with Christian material on their phones *only* receive a beating rather than death or imprisonment.

Because of political instability, poverty, and persecution, more Somalis live outside of Somalia than inside it. Those that have fled live in communities throughout the world. Yet these communities still govern themselves by Somali law. So even Somali Christians living outside of Somalia face persecution. Yet, for these communities there is more freedom. Having greater access to internet, they are being reached through radio broadcasts, podcasts, and other media. Christian ministries reach Somali communities throughout the world through radio, YouTube, and podcasts, which can be used discreetly. The result of this is that the number of Somali Christians is growing. Praise God. 🇸🇴

sentence from the government if a friend, neighbour, or even family member suspects that they are Christian and report them. But if Al-Shabaab suspects someone of being a Christian, they will be killed on the spot. Owning a Bible or even liking a Christian social media post puts Christians in imminent danger.

Yet, despite this persecution, God has been good to the Somali Christians. The Somali government has been under pressure by the rest of the world because of their constant human rights violations. A Christian couple were arrested in late 2020



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Note: Most of the information from this article comes from the Voice of the Martyrs Canada and Open Doors USA websites. Both organizations have an email list which you can join if you would like to receive updates on the persecuted church worldwide.

MINISTERIOS LA FUENTE

Update

From Queretaro, Mexico

SCOTT AND ANNEMARIE BREDEHOF

For more information and to sign up for our prayer updates, go to therabbisburrito.blog and you can follow us on Instagram @missionsinmexico. Or send an email to: sabredenhof@gmail.com

Initial plans

Before arriving in Queretaro, Mexico two and a half years ago, our plan was to rent a house in the city for the first year, dedicate our time to language and cultural learning, and then decide where specifically we wanted to live and begin ministry. We thought being right in the city to start would make it easier to find a suitable language school, provide us with more opportunities to meet people, and give us a good sense of the city.

We ended up finding a house in a nice neighbourhood with a nice park and within walking distance of a variety of stores. I (Scott) was also able to bike the twenty minutes to language school and got to know the city pretty well—if you want to meet people, walking and biking the city is far more advantageous than driving!

Change of plans

Before that first year was up, COVID-19 became a thing and derailed a lot of our plans. Especially in the first year of COVID, it was difficult to plan for anything or to begin anything new. We did start doing food distributions in various neighbourhoods throughout the city, which gave us lots of opportunity to bring the gospel, but we always knew it was going to be a temporary ministry. It also meant our work was scattered about in different locations.

After discussions with other missionaries and our own mission board we realized that the best thing would be to focus our outreach efforts on a particular neighbourhood. We also decided that we wanted to continue our involvement at the Pan de Vida children's home, which is located just southwest of the

city. With that in mind, we started looking at neighbourhoods that were within five to ten minutes of Pan de Vida. We were also mindful of not stepping on the toes of other gospel-centred churches in the area.

Santa Barbara

Ultimately, we decided on the Santa Barbara neighbourhood, in part because we would be able to rent a house owned by Pan de Vida, which was previously used as a transition home for the youth who age-out of the orphanage. We liked the idea of paying our rent to someone we trust, and the rent money will help out Pan de Vida as well. A win-win situation and something we felt was God's way of helping us identify a neighbourhood to move into and begin ministry.

The Santa Barbara neighbourhood is located on the southwest end of the city with a population of around ten thousand people. It has more-or-less retained the authentic feel of a Mexican town, resisting the influence of modern architecture and the influx of American stores (Walmart, Starbucks etc.) that can be found in other parts of the city. Drive down the streets and you'll see plenty of mom-and-pop stores, old, rusty trucks, equally old *señoras* shooting the breeze by the plaza, and perhaps a horse or two. At the heart of the neighbourhood is the central plaza and the Roman Catholic church, symbolic of the religion that in many ways still dominates the habits and tendencies of the people.

At the tianguis

At the time of writing, the transition home is undergoing renovations in preparation for our move in May, which makes it a bit harder to begin any outreach in the area. A lot of opportunities arise out of just living in a place and going about the daily routine of life. In the meantime, we are trying to find ways to be present in the community and start to meet people and tell them what we are doing. One way we have started to do that is to have a book table at the local *tianguis* or open-air market.

The first time we showed up at the *tianguis* to investigate the possibility of having our own table, we attracted a lot of attention—being Caucasian, tall, and having four little blond-haired kids with you will do that. It is common for people to come up to our kids and touch their hair and gush over their blue eyes. But there are also quite a few people who seem a bit suspicious at



first, which is understandable. It will take time to gain people's trust and that is the reason we are there: to be present, to meet people, to earn trust, and, ultimately, to bring the Good News.

Ministerios La Fuente

We have been going to the *tianguis* about twice a month since November, selling a few books, meeting a few people, and participating in the culture and economy of the place. We have already been able to make several connections, including one which pointed us to a storefront for rent. At the end of February, we signed a lease contract and since then have been preparing the small space to be a centre for outreach. We hope to begin Sunday evening services, Bible studies, and ESL classes in April and May. Other ideas include sports outreach and a summer kid's club. We have given the outreach centre the name "Ministerios La Fuente," which means "The Fountain (or The Source) Ministries," praying that through this ministry many would come to know Jesus, the well-spring of eternal life.

Forward in faith

We are looking forward to making the move into the Santa Barbara neighbourhood and beginning this new chapter. We also go forward with a bit of trepidation and uncertainty, but we know our job is to remain faithful to the Lord and the task he has given us, and then to watch what he does with it. We also continue to pray that God will provide an ordained missionary to come alongside us and lead the church plant. ☪



Classis Northern Ontario welcomes new church in Arthur

"We have spoken with quite a few people in the Arthur area who are interested in seeing a Canadian Reformed church established within the town. We are therefore writing to find out how many members would potentially be open to joining in the event that this church was established." With these words, Dwayne and Jen Jansen invited people from several Canadian Reformed churches in the vicinity of their hometown of Arthur, Ontario to become involved in starting a new congregation to address the growth in the area. Exactly a year later, Arthur Canadian Reformed Church held its inaugural service on February 20, 2022.

Young Couple Initiates New Church in Arthur, Ontario

Dwayne and Jen, both twenty-nine and parents of three small children, were members of Fergus North church, where the membership outgrew the fairly new building that opened in 2014. Both were asked to be members of the Growth Committee, which looked at several options to solve the issue. One of the options was starting a new congregation, twenty kilometers north in the small town of Arthur on Highway 6. Many younger families live in this town, as housing is a bit more affordable, while attending several different Canadian Reformed churches in the region.

The Jansens quickly became very enthusiastic about this option. "Church should be where the people are," says Dwayne. "When you have to drive to another town to do home mission, for example, there is a disconnect." Jen: "We have next door neighbours who are Canadian Reformed, but I don't even know them because they attend a different location."

The couple sensed a positive energy for a new church, but Dwayne and Jen did not know if it was plausible. Sensitive to congregations that could not afford to lose many members, they started to research numbers, found answers to questions and concerns, and drafted a proposal. Jen: "We estimated that since 2018 the Arthur community grows thirty Canadian Reformed people per year, both people who move here and babies born." Their first estimation of potential membership was 150 people, enough to start. Dwayne: "When we handed the project over to the nucleus council at the end of 2021, we were already at 180. The numbers worked."

No handbook

Jen says they felt the Lord leading, every step of the way. With Fergus North's approval of this new direction, the Arthur Church Initiative Committee was set up to draft a proposal for Classis Northern Ontario. "We thought older, more experienced

people would take over to start the church, but we were asked to continue, and we learned so much!" adds Dwayne. The committee reached out to other new congregations for information. "Nobody really knows how to start a church. There is no handbook," laughs Jen. "Every situation is different and there is not really one example to follow. We used the classis proposal from Niagara South as our framework."

The proposal to start and maintain a congregation in Arthur, and how it would function, was put forward to Classis Northern Ontario in December and Dwayne and Jen were asked to attend the meeting. The couple is appreciative of the wisdom and advice given by the ministers and elders at Classis. "It is important to do everything in good order in church," says Dwayne. "The experience of starting this church taught us humility and trust. We were so caught up in the details sometimes, and then it was encouraging to hear Classis say: 'this is God's church in Arthur, and we will support it.'"

As Arthur Canadian Reformed Church is not a split, but the coming together of many people from different congregations, the new members have to get to know each other. Also, the church building the new congregation is renting is in the middle of town and Dwayne and Jen hope that the new church will be a light in the community. As Jen puts it, "God is in charge, also in this COVID time. He started a church, when nobody was even going to church." Dwayne adds that "God did not need either of us. He used us as instruments. Everything that was an obstacle, He removed." 📖



Ilse Vandermeulen

Ilse has a BA in Journalism and is active in communications and fund development. She lives in Elora, Ontario

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Institution of Arthur Canadian Reformed Church

JEN JANSEN

A chilly February wind whooshed around tall snowbanks as dozens of smiling faces walked through the Village of Arthur to eagerly attend the first worship service of the Arthur Canadian Reformed Church. This date, February 20, 2022, came exactly fifty-one weeks after the first email went out gauging the interest should such a church be instituted. While the idea of this church has been around for years, the general consensus was often “not yet” or “a few years from now.” It is clear that everything happens in God’s time, and he chose a time when church unity has been rocky to unite a new body of believers in Arthur.

As just shy of 200 members, including an abundance of children, walked into the St. Andrew’s Presbyterian church in Arthur, there was a buzz of excitement. I sat at the piano and although I couldn’t see what was going on behind me as I played, I could hear more chatter than I think I ever have at a Sunday service. I’m sure many introductions were being made as congregants originating from four different churches began to get to know one another. Being in an old building, there are sounds of creaky wooden floors and benches. Once seated you can see the light filtering through the beautiful stained glass, and looking around at the semi-circle of benches, it’s easy to see the joy on people’s faces.

Unity was a running theme as Rev. Wierenga led the afternoon service. We sang of flocking together joyfully as a close-knit unity, of Christ uniting us as the “Church’s One Foundation,” and “how good it is when brothers are united.” We praised God for the work that he has done, both in this past year but also through generations of believers.

Rev. Wierenga reminded us of what Paul tells us in Ephesians, that unity is something we already have in Christ. As a new

congregation, we don’t have to seek out unity; that is already there in our Saviour. But we do need to maintain that unity. He spoke of this unity being maintained by correct attitudes and not by a certain technique or program. This attitude is laid out in Ephesians 4, “To walk . . . with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” It was a truly beautiful sermon to not only begin a new congregational life together but also to reflect on the unity which Christ continually provides for us no matter what our situation.

After confessing our faith in Christ by singing the Apostles Creed, we could witness the installation of office bearers. Six men (three elders and three deacons) were continuing their office as they had served in their previous respective churches and were re-ordained into the Arthur church. These men put a lot of work and effort into setting up the church after Classis Northern Ontario approved the proposal set forward by the Arthur Church Initiative (ACI) in December of 2021. An additional three men were also ordained to the office of elder at the first service. It was beautiful to witness these men stand up beside their families and make vows before the Lord to serve his church.


Following the benediction, the newly ordained office bearers were called forward to sign the Subscription Form. Br. Brian Niezen, an elder who has served on the initial council, came forward to present greetings with a theme of past, present, and future. He began by acknowledging members of the ACI and the work that was done that led to this point. He then invited br. Dwayne Jansen to speak on behalf of the committee to reflect on the past year.

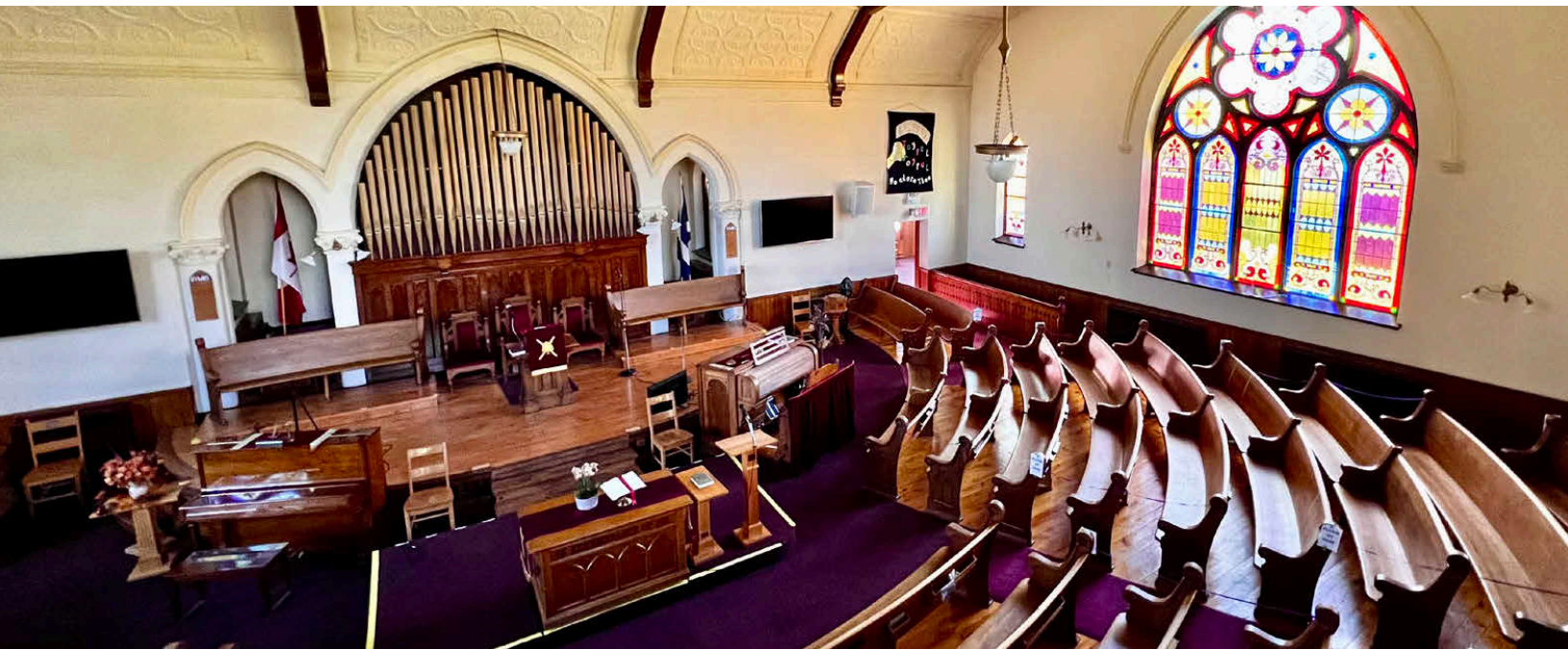
Br. Jansen spoke of how God led us here and in his time. The Lord “melted away obstacles” and left us standing in awe of his

work. He proceeded to thank the many hands that were involved in bringing us to this day, namely the ACI for their dedication, the congregation for their enthusiasm and correspondence, Classis Northern Ontario for their wisdom, and the nucleus council for taking on this big project after concurring advice was given. The Lord used the talents of many for his Kingdom work.

Following br. Jansen's "blurb," br. Niezen called upon Rev. Wieringa to wear another hat and greet the congregation on behalf of Elora Canadian Reformed Church. Rev. Wieringa commented on seeing Arthur representatives at the next classis and mentioned that Arthur has begun to bridge the gap to Owen Sound. He noted that our classis is among the largest in the federation, but also one with the most vacant churches, with only three active ministers anticipated by this coming summer. Laughter echoed through the building as Rev. Wieringa encouraged us to "put some fire under [the] calling committee . . . unless you want to see a lot of Rev. Jagt and myself."

Br. Niezen returned to the pulpit to read letters from several other churches in Classis Northern Ontario (Grand Valley Canadian Reformed Church, Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Brampton, Living Word Canadian Reformed Church in Guelph). Rev. Jagt was then called up to extend greetings on behalf of Fergus North. He expressed sadness at saying goodbye to so many members from Fergus but also joy in the uniting of a new congregation. Reflecting on Rev. Wieringa's sermon, he encouraged us to celebrate the love of Christ and our unity in him. He read from John 15 about remaining in Christ's love.

Looking ahead, br. Niezen spoke on behalf of the newly ordained council. He looked forward to the work ahead as these brothers seek to serve in the church and the surrounding community. In closing the congregation rose together and appropriately sang "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow." Indeed, it is his work that was done and his blessings that brought forth the fruits that led to this celebratory day. 



CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

LORD'S DAY 7

You know the song "Glory be to God the Father," right? We are going to work our way through this song to learn about God. God the Father created the world. We know that from the creation Bible stories. He also takes care of the world. Next in the song we sing, "Glory be to God the Son." The Lord Jesus is God the Son. Remember how we said he is God and man at the same time? God the Son, Jesus, died for us so that we can go to heaven. Then the song says, "Glory be to God the Spirit." This is the Holy Spirit who lives in us. He works faith in our hearts. The Father, Son, and Spirit are God Almighty, three in one. Hallelujah! Glory be to him alone!

Read Q/A 24 (on page 524 of the *Book of Praise*). Then match what we sing in the Apostles' Creed about each Person of the Trinity.

God the Father

Our sanctification

God the Son

Our redemption

God the Holy Spirit

Our creation

Wordsearch

Father

Son

Spirit

Three

One

T	O	J	H	H	G	S	O	Y
E	T	N	Z	Y	M	Q	A	Q
K	A	G	E	U	E	I	V	K
X	E	A	S	E	R	V	S	B
S	O	N	R	W	D	F	W	H
Z	W	H	L	H	T	S	B	Z
O	T	P	I	V	H	Z	J	E
C	S	P	I	R	I	T	E	M
F	A	T	H	E	R	O	H	R

READERS' FORUM

Dear Editor,

Allow me to respond to Rev. Tim Schouten's articles on mandatory vaccination. Let me start with his comments about vaccines in the third installment in the March 18 issue. He questions their safety and effectiveness. I question his sources. Even if there were concerns at the outset, these have by now, a year later, been laid to rest. Like smallpox vaccine and polio vaccine, COVID vaccines are safe and effective in reducing death and serious illness due to a nasty and unpredictable virus. Are they perfect? Few things in medicine are. Rev. Schouten worries because the vaccines were developed so quickly. I thank the Lord that this technology was developed in such a timely fashion, and gratefully accept it as another gift of mercy.

The concern is expressed that vaccines are developed using fetal cell lines, and that therefore Christians should abstain. Let me first say that no one has ever suggested that the fetuses in question were aborted for the specific purpose of obtaining tissue for medical research. No, the abortions were performed, as they usually are, because the pregnancies, sadly, were unwanted. But are Rev. Schouten's conclusions logical? Would we come to the same conclusion in other but similar situations?

In the case of abortion, one person dies (the unborn baby) because of the sinful actions of another person (the mother). No different in essence from the following scenario: A drunk driver hits a pedestrian, who dies two days later of the serious head injury he sustained. One person died (the pedestrian) because of the sinful action of another person (the drunk driver). Would anyone question using the perfectly good kidneys of the pedestrian for a patient with terminal kidney failure who has been waiting for a kidney transplant? In the same vein, why would one object to using fetal tissue if the abortion was not performed in order to obtain that tissue?

Now onto the main gist of Rev. Schouten's articles. He argues that churches must not accede to government demands for proof of vaccination in order to attend church. I certainly would not want to defend every government directive with respect to its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. What I thought was lacking in the articles, though, was context.

There was very little current context, very little acknowledgement that governments were dealing with a serious public health issue, the likes of which had not been experienced in living memory! The expression "desperate times call for desperate measures" has been around for a long time. And indeed, when patients in nursing homes start dropping off like flies, to put it crassly, that might be described as a desperate time.

There was also very little biblical context. How were infectious Israelites treated? Were lepers allowed in the tabernacle or the temple? There are lots of instances in the Old Testament that can be construed as public health issues, but none of that was mentioned in the articles. Context matters!

I have a request, dear editor. Please have one of your contributors, or one of the professors, retired or active, at our seminary, address the following question: What does the Bible tell us about the role of government in public health? And a related question: What is the church's task broadly speaking (not just COVID), with regards to governments' public health measures?

I make these comments, and raise these questions, as a contribution to an open and frank dialogue about current issues, as we all strive to humbly serve our Master in gratitude. 🙏

*In brotherly love,
H. A. Scholtens, MD.*

PRESS RELEASE

Classis Central Ontario (Burlington Rehoboth) Friday March 11, 2022, held at Redemption Canadian Reformed Church, Ontario

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. Clarence Vandervelde welcomed the delegates and called the meeting to order. He recalled the last two years of COVID and how we can meet again as society is opening and restrictions are being removed. He then led opening devotions.

The report on the examination of credentials was received from Fellowship. The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. All primary delegates were noted to be present, and the Rev. Clarence Vandervelde declared Classis constituted. The officers suggested by the previous classis came forward to take their respective places: Rev. Tony Roukema as chair, Rev. Jake Torenvliet as clerk, and elder Henry Nieuwenhuis as vice-chair.

The agenda was adopted with changes to the order of examinations.

The following matters of memorabilia were noted: Pastor Tony Roukema recalled the needs of all the emeritus pastors and of their spouses and others of Classis Central Ontario. He mentioned CRTS and the needs of Dr. Gootjes, Dr. VanRaalte. Rev. B. De Jong mentioned that Blessings has taken over responsibility for Streetlight, and Rev. Paul Aasman was extended a call to continue in his role, and the installation of Dr. Greg Davidson was remembered.

Rev. H. Jagersma led in prayer for Brother Kevin Wattel before he delivered his sermon. He presented the required documents to undergo a licensure examination, and they were declared in good order. Kevin delivered his sermon proposal on Matthew 21:33-46. In closed session, the sermon proposal was deemed sufficient to proceed with the remainder of the examination. In open session, Kevin Wattel was informed of the decision. Kevin Wattel was then examined in Doctrine and Creeds. In closed session the examination was deemed sufficient. In open session Kevin Wattel was informed of the decision that he sustained the exam and Classis grants him consent to speak an edifying word upon completion of his second year at CRTS. Dr. Greg Davidson led in a prayer of thanksgiving, and opportunity was given to congratulate Kevin.

Classis then proceeded to the examination of Brother Kevin Star. The documents required for the candidacy examination were reviewed, declared to be in good order, and the examination began. Br. Aaron Witten led in prayer for Kevin. Kevin Star delivered his sermon proposal on Psalm 1. In closed session, the sermon proposal was deemed sufficient to proceed with the remainder of the examination. Kevin Star was examined in

Old Testament exegesis, New Testament, doctrine, personal life, and public ministry. In closed session, Classis discussed the examination, and deemed it insufficient to sustain the exam. Rev. Tony Roukema and Rev. Bill DeJong met with Kevin Star to inform of this decision and committed this to prayer.

Rev. Tony Roukema led in prayer for Brother Timothy Veenstra. He presented the required documents to undergo a candidacy examination. He delivered his sermon proposal on Matthew 20:20-28. In closed session, the sermon proposal was discussed and deemed sufficient to proceed with the remainder of the examination. Tim Veenstra was examined in Old Testament exegesis, New Testament exegesis, in doctrine, in personal life, and in public ministry. In closed session, Classis discussed the examination and deemed it sufficient. In open session, Br. Timothy Veenstra was informed of the decision that he sustained the exam, and that CCO declared him eligible for a call in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Br. Allard Gunnink led in a prayer of thanksgiving, and opportunity was given to congratulate Tim Veenstra.

According to Article 44, C.O. all the churches answered that the ministry of the office bearers was being continued, that the decisions of the assemblies were being honoured, and no advice of Classis was requested. No advice, proposals, or instructions were requested.

The following appointments were made for next classis:

- A) The convening church for the next classis is Redemption, and hosted at Redemption.
- B) Next classis scheduled for June 10, 2022. Alternate date Sept 16, 2022.
- C) Suggested officers for next classis are:
 Chairman: Rev. Jake Torenvliet
 Vice-chair: elder delegate from Rehoboth
 Clerk: Rev. Clarence Vandervelde.
 Church visitation reports due next classis.
 Question period was not utilized. Christian censure according to Art. 34 C. O. was not deemed necessary.
 The Acts were adopted, and the Press Release was approved.
 Rev. Tony Roukema led in prayer and declared Classis was closed.

*For Classis Central Ontario,
 Henry Nieuwenhuis (Vice-Chair at the time)*

Gerard Nordeman

1942 June 6 2022

With thankfulness to our Heavenly Father
we announce the **80TH birthday**
of our dear Dad and Opa.

We can certainly attest God has been with him
over these many years both in good days and bad.
We are thankful for your example and pray for our
LORD's continual blessing in your days ahead.

Thankful children

Gary and Natalie Nordeman
Eric and Jackie Nordeman
Brian and Erna Nordeman
Walter and Debbie Nordeman
Rick and Michelle Nordeman
Albert and Tracy Nordeman
Sharon Oosterhoff
Don and Monica Bos
And many grandchildren
and great grandchildren

40 Riverside Circle Smithville Ontario L0R 2A0
gjnnordeman@zohomail.com

90TH BIRTHDAY

Hendrik Holtvlüwer

1932 ~ June 13 ~ 2022

64 YEARS MARRIED

Hendrik & Susanna Holtvlüwer (nee Wynia)

1958 ~ June 10 ~ 2022

*The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?*

*The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?*
Psalm 27:1

As Dad (Opa) turns 90 and our parents (grand-parents and great-grandparents) hope to celebrate their 64th wedding anniversary this June the Lord willing, we as family thank and praise our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for being the stronghold of their lives these many years. May our heavenly Father continue to uphold them so that they may dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

1031 Manotick Station Rd, Manotick, ON K4M 1B2



Ebenezer Canadian Reformed School
Smithers, BC
www.ebenezerschool.com

ECRS is a vibrant K - 12 school located in Smithers BC, with 240 students in single grade classes. The school is supported by four local Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches.

Expressions of interest and applications are welcome for the following positions:

- **High School – Effective Immediately**
- **Intermediate Position – 2022/2023**
- **High School – 2022/2023**

Considering ECRS?

We invite you to come for a visit. Complimentary flights can be arranged.

Did you know ECRS offers a bursary program?

Post-secondary students going into teaching may qualify. See school website for more details.

Contact our Principal:

Derek Stoffels
(250) 847 3492
principal@ebenezerschool.com



"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." 1 Peter 2:6

We are inviting applications to fill the possible opening of:
Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)
Position to commence on August 1, 2022.

The SERT position is a 60% position with possible additional in-class teaching.

Possible Grade 1/2 part-time position.

Cornerstone operates a K-8 school with double grades and currently has a student body of 88 students.

We seek qualified applicants who love to teach and desire to support our community in its mandate to raise our children in the fear of the Lord.

For further details please contact the principal:

Mr. John Van Iperen

Phone 519 837 4092 (school), 289-527-2102 (home)
principal@guelphcornerstone.com

Applications should be sent to:

Cornerstone Christian School

108 Forest Street, Guelph, ON N1G 1H9

Attention: Mrs. Anita Van Rootselaar

Education Committee Chair

edcom.chair@guelphcornerstone.com

