

A CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

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MAY 27, 22

Clarion

*Are You Giving Like a King?
CRTS Principal's Report
Welcoming Pastor Rolf*



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

Do you enjoy a good chuckle once in a while? Most of us do. And Scripture says that a cheerful heart is good medicine (Prov 17:22). To that end we are introducing a new occasional column called *A Cheerful Heart* and in our first one Rev. James Slaa relates a humorous wedding incident. It's good to laugh at ourselves sometimes. If you have a funny story to do with life in our churches or families (written in good taste, under 800 words), send it along to submissions@clarionmagazine.ca and we'll certainly consider it.

Readers are engaging with our articles (great to see!), so you'll find two letters toward the end of the issue, just ahead of two press releases of recent classes. Does the name Jordan Peterson ring a bell? Lucas Holtvliwer reviews his thought-provoking podcast. Ilse Vandermeulen shares a very encouraging story of how the Lord used COVID-19 to increase the spread of the gospel (yes, a true silver lining to that dark cloud!). The fairly new congregation in Grimsby, ON shares the joy of welcoming their new (but still familiar) pastor Rolf den Hollander and family as they move "down the mountain" from Grassie.

On the meditative front, Rev. Randall Visscher helps us to see the bigger missional framework of our prayers while in a separate article Rev. Rick Vanderhorst urges us to use our earthly treasures well and give like a king—worthy thoughts to ponder! Dr. Jason VanVliet presents us with an overview of the recent year at CRTS, letting us know where things are at with enrollment, faculty/staff, and renovation plans. *Clarion Kids* relates some fun facts about some animals God the Father created, and in *Ray of Sunshine* we are introduced to Beverly Breukelman, a daughter whom the Father has gifted with attention for detail. And finally our editorialist Rev. Jim Witteveen shines a light on the dubious practice of "virtue signalling" while reminding us of our truly virtuous calling.

Since on June 5 we will mark the day of Pentecost, let me also wish our readers the joy of the Lord in reflecting on this great blessing. Happy reading!

Peter Holtvliwer

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EDITORIAL

The Virtue of Not Virtue Signalling

In the days of the early church, theologians like Ambrose of Milan and Augustine of Hippo developed lists of “cardinal virtues,” the practical ways in which God’s people live out their faith. These virtues find their source in Scripture and have traditionally been divided into two types—the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude) and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love (1 Cor 13:13). The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the cardinal virtues can be shown by all, while the theological virtues require the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. But in reality, to live the virtuous life we need the Holy Spirit to empower us. Only in Christ can we truly live virtuously, although we do this in weakness, with many failings.

In popular culture, the cardinal virtues are often mocked and redefined. Today, the word “prude” is probably heard more often than the word “prudence.” The concept of “justice” has been distorted in many ways. “Temperance” is often associated with movements that just want to take the fun out of life. And “fortitude” has become “toxic masculinity,” which must be rejected out of hand.

So, when we think of the word “virtue” today, one of the first expressions that may come to mind is the term “virtue signalling.” Virtue signalling, according to dictionary.com, is “the sharing of one’s point of view on a social or political issue, often on social media, in order to garner praise or acknowledgment of one’s righteousness from others who share that point of view, or to passively rebuke those who do not.” While the world of online social networks may be the breeding ground of virtue signalling, it is impossible to escape, both in the virtual world and in real life.

Virtue signalling takes many forms and is expressed in various contexts. How do we counteract bullying and make it clear that we want to create environments where everyone feels safe, valued, and respected? By setting aside one day a year to wear a pink shirt, thereby bravely demonstrating that we are against bullying and that we value “inclusion.” How do we show that we are on the right side when it comes to indigenous issues? By setting aside another day to wear an orange shirt and hang banners that declare “Every Child Matters,” making it very clear that we are actively working to not be on the wrong side of history. How do we demonstrate our compassion and care about international events? By posting selfies and hashtags and

surrounding our social media portraits with frames that declare, “I Stand with Ukraine,” or whatever the issue of the day may be.

It is all too easy for us as Christians to get drawn into the world of virtue signalling. Pressure to conform is immense, especially when refusal to conform seems to place us on the wrong side of issues that seem to be so black and white. You don’t want to wear a pink shirt? Why not? Are you in favour of bullying? You don’t want to say that you stand with Ukraine? Why not? That must mean that you love Vladimir Putin and support what he’s doing! Whether it’s in school, in our daily lives, or in church, our virtue signalling culture puts a great deal of pressure on us to conform.

Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to a life of virtue, and through his Holy Spirit he equips us to live that life. To Christians who live in a culture in which displays of “righteousness” (as defined by the world) are expected, the Lord Jesus says, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 6:1). Virtue signalling accomplishes nothing in the end, because it replaces genuine action with symbolic acts that are ultimately meaningless. Anyone can virtue signal; only those who are united to Christ by true faith can be truly virtuous, performing meaningful actions that are done out of truth faith, in accordance with the law of God, and done to his glory (LD 33). Virtue signalling is the epitome of the works that our catechism describes as being the opposite of good, because they are based on our own opinion or on the precepts of men. And because of the nature of virtue signalling, it can never lead to real, positive change.

So, let’s reject virtue signalling, and embrace true virtue. That may make us outsiders in our virtue-signalling culture, but we have been called to be counter-cultural, come what may. By leading lives in this dark world that are characterized by Christian virtue, we shine the light on the truly virtuous One, our Lord Jesus Christ. 🙏



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Praying Like We're on a Mission

“Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.” (LUKE 11:2-4)


The Lord's Prayer teaches us to be missional even in our prayers. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the church on Pentecost. This was done in order that they might be equipped to accomplish a Christ-given mission. Before his ascension Jesus told them, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). They were given a mission: to testify about the person and work of Jesus Christ and the kingdom which he came to inaugurate. For forty days Jesus appeared to the church and spoke about the kingdom of God. On the fiftieth day, he sent them the person they needed, the Holy Spirit, so that they could speak about the kingdom for themselves and share the good news of its arrival with the entire world. That mission continues for believers today. We are reminded of it every time we pray the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus teaches us, through the Lord's Prayer, to pray for his kingdom. He teaches us to pray like we're on a mission, his mission, a part of his ministry. Consider, after all, what Jesus preached. Matthew 4:17 tells us, “Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” Mark 1:14-15 tells us something very similar, “Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’”

Repentance. The kingdom. Good news. These concepts are all emphasized in the Lord's Prayer. When we pray “Hallowed be your name,” “Forgive us our sins,” and “Lead us not into temptation,” we are praying about repentance and turning away from sin and evil; we are praying that many might imitate the righteousness and holiness of God. When we pray “Your kingdom come” and “We also forgive everyone who sins against us,” we speak of the kingdom: the rule of Christ in the hearts of many. When we pray to God as Father and ask him to “Give us

each day our daily bread . . . and lead us not into temptation,” we acknowledge the goodness of our God. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray for the things which Jesus Christ preached and proclaimed; we pray that we might join in his ministry.

We begin the Lord's Prayer by addressing God and praying that others might know him better. When we say “Hallowed be your name,” we're really praying that people everywhere will come to use the name of God in a holy way, that they will recognize that he is holy. When we pray “Your kingdom come,” we're praying that Christ might rule in the hearts of many.

One simple way for all believers to participate in the spread of the gospel is to pray the Lord's Prayer and include the petitions of the Lord's Prayer in our other prayers. We should pray that people everywhere might know the goodness and holiness of our God. We should pray that people everywhere might know the one who rules at the right hand of the Father. We should pray that people everywhere might know the forgiveness which has been revealed to us. 

For further study

1. Read Luke 4:14-44
2. How often do you pray for the spread of the gospel and the growth of the kingdom of God?
3. How often does your church pray for the conversion of unbelievers?
4. How can prayer fuel the evangelistic efforts of a congregation?



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Are You ~~Living~~ ^{GIVING} Like a King?

RICK VANDERHORST

Do you ever wish that you could live like a king? Most people in this world do. After all, the phrase “living like a king” conjures up images of people with great wealth living in luxury every day who can spend their money on whatever they please. Do a quick internet search of the phrase “live like a king” and you’ll find websites telling you how to achieve this lifestyle or advertisements for vacations where you can live this way for at least a short time. Perhaps there’s something of this in all of us too—the desire to gain more so that we can spend money on whatever we please.

Examples from history and today

Why is this sort of extravagant lifestyle described as “living like a king”? If you’re the king, there’s no higher human authority above you who can take your money. Money is under your control, and you can use it for your own pleasure. You can use your power and wealth to have people serve you instead of the other way around.

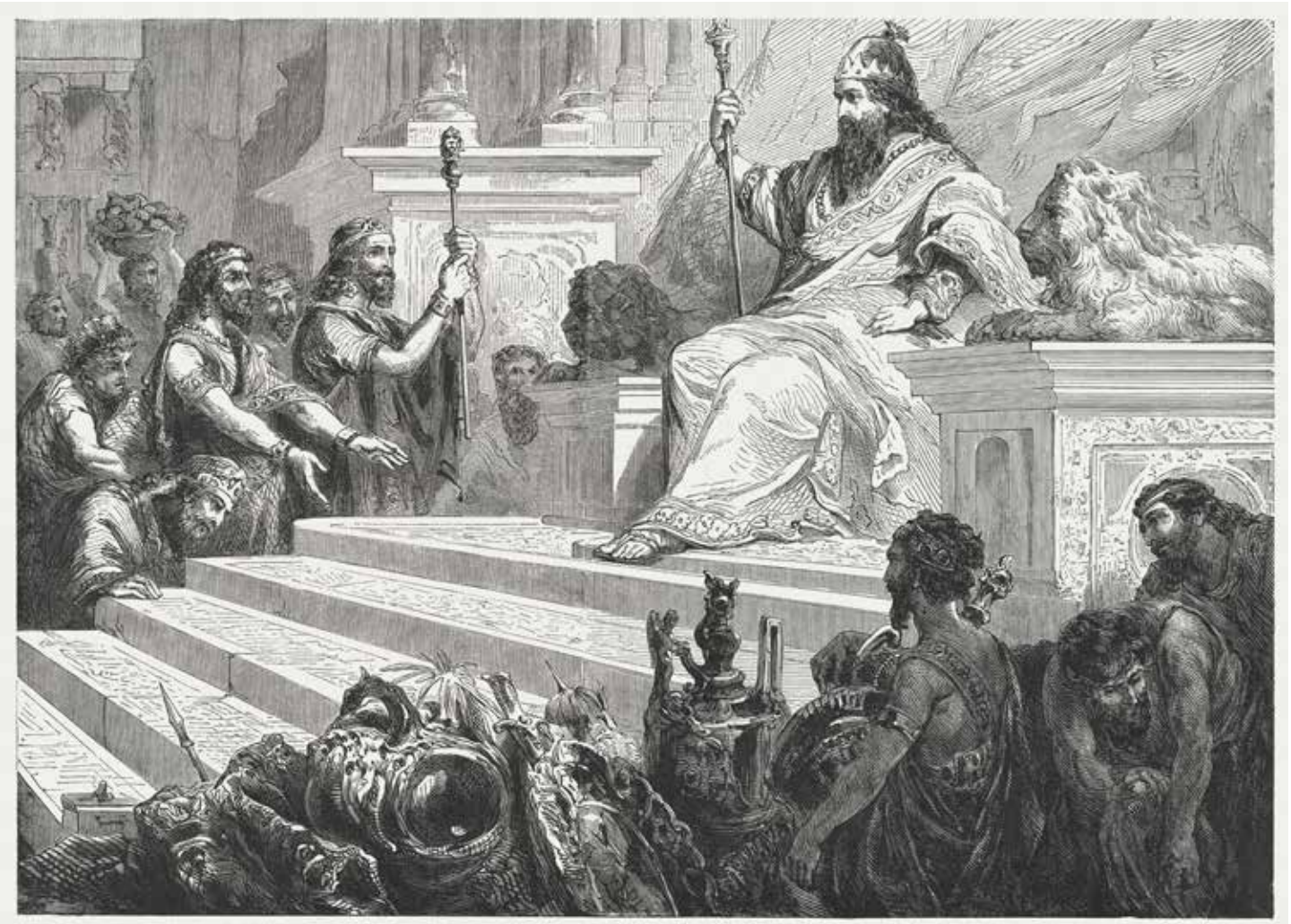
Throughout history, we see many examples of kings living this type of lavish lifestyle. One perfect example is King Louis XIV of

France, whose palace at Versailles was the picture of wealth and luxury. Countless tourists continue to be awed by the palace’s sheer size and luxurious interior. For a modern example, one could also think of some of the royals of Saudi Arabia whom some estimate to be worth over a trillion dollars.

God’s kingship

This attitude towards kingship and wealth reveals how far humans have twisted the image of God. To see this, one only needs to look at God’s kingship. Far from being tightfisted, God’s kingship is characterized by generous giving. As the Creator and Supreme Ruler of the universe, God owns everything (Ps 24:1, 2). By his almighty and ever-present power, he is in control of all things (LD 10). This also means that every good thing we receive in life is a gift from God. As James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”

When you reflect on the truth of these words, you can see how generous God the King is. Think of all the good things the King of the universe is constantly giving his creatures: Sunshine,



rain, food, drink, clothes, music, life, breath, and every enjoyable thing you can think of! As Paul and Barnabas told the people of Lystra in Acts 14:17, "God did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." This is what also makes our rebellion against God so terrible and at the same time so foolish. God the King constantly gives us good things. By rebelling against him, we deserve to forfeit all his good gifts. Yet, God continues to send good things even to rebels (Matt 5:45).

Kings and giving in the Bible

When we study the attitude of kings in the Bible, sadly we see them walking in the way of greed and taking rather than mirroring God's way of kingship. Think only of King Eglon of Judges 3. To get to the size of King Eglon in his time, one had to be extremely greedy and selfish. While he feasted in his palace, the hard-working people under his control suffered. There's one

interesting example in the New Testament as well. In Luke 18, a rich ruler asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Christ told him to sell all his possessions and give to the poor. The rich ruler became very sad because he was extremely rich and didn't want to part with his wealth.

Israel's Old Testament kings also fell into this type of greedy kingship. In fact, when Israel asked for a king in 1 Samuel 8, Samuel warned them about this very thing. God predicted that the king they asked for would take their sons and daughters into his service. He would take the best of their fields, vineyards, and olive orchards. He would also take a tenth of their grain, the best of their servants, and the best of their donkeys. In short, Samuel warned that a human kingship would be characterized by taking rather than giving.

By God's grace, there were Old Testament kings who mirrored God's generous kingship. Both David and Solomon did at times. While David did amass large quantities of precious

There is no greater act of giving than the cross

metals near the end of his reign, he didn't do it for his own gain but for building the LORD's temple. Solomon, too, gave the Queen of Sheba all that she desired (2 Chron 9:12). That being said, even David and Solomon failed in this at points. David took Uriah's wife for himself and then even took Uriah's life. It was the most unkinglike act he ever did. Solomon amassed huge amounts of horses and gold and silver for himself, something God warned the kings against in his law (Deut 17:16-17).

Christ as the perfect king

All these human failures show the need for a better king who would reflect God's generous kingship. That king of course is our Lord Jesus Christ. As God's Son, Christ perfectly embodied the image of God in his life. It's no surprise then that Christ's kingship was characterized by generous giving rather than selfish taking. Jesus himself affirmed this in Mark 10, when he contrasted his kingship with that of the Gentile kings. He summarized his kingship by saying, "Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." That's how far Christ's giving kingship went, even giving up his very life to ransom sinners from death. He went to the cross giving up every single possession and ounce of dignity he had so that he might save us. There is no greater act of giving than the cross. Praise be to our generous king! Even upon his ascension Christ continues to give. From heaven he sends the Holy Spirit to build up his people. Ephesians 4 teaches that our ascended Lord gives spiritual gifts to his church (see vs. 7-12).

God's Spirit in us

Through Christ's gift of the Holy Spirit, we are being transformed back into the image of God. We are kings already in Jesus Christ. We are seated with Christ at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places. By the power of the Spirit, we will become more like Christ and so reflect his and his Father's kingship. Instead of making it our aim to live like a worldly king (like so many in our culture do), we aim to give like our heavenly king. When we do this more and more, we will indeed be living as the kings God desires us to be.

There are multiple ways we can give as God our king does. We can support the church financially through voluntary

contributions; we can give to the poor (God always wanted kings to care for the poor and weak); we can support worthwhile projects in our communities for the good of society; we can give our time and energy for the building of God's kingdom; the list goes on.

Give everything we have?

All this might raise the question in our minds, "If God wants me to be a giving king, does that mean I am not allowed to have anything for myself?" Here is where we need to remember that we always remain under God's kingship. He is a generous king, and we may enjoy his good gifts. In fact, the good gifts we enjoy from God are meant to increase our joy in our king. When you receive a nice present from someone, you might always think of that person and be thankful for them when you use that gift in the future. It's the same thing with us and the good gifts God gives us.

That being said, there is a temptation for money and possessions to rule over us. It's easy to fall into the trap of the rich ruler of Luke 18. He may have ruled over many people, but his money was ruling over him. Here again we need to trust that God our king will give us good things to enjoy in life—we simply need to be patient. He may call us at some point to give up all that we have for his kingdom. However, we can do this with joy knowing that God has already given us his Son and so he will give us all things (Rom 8:32). Now, where is the line between enjoying good gifts from God the King and being ruled by money and possessions? We might wonder, "Should I buy a king-sized bed?" That is for each of us to work out in our own lives as we prayerfully study God's Word and examine our own hearts. But in the end, there is much joy when we learn to give like kings as God our King does. 📖



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Where's Fifi?

(and other unusual questions asked at a wedding)

With May upon us and June around the corner, it's the season for weddings! Weddings happen in every month on the calendar, but there's something special about the warmer months and available vacation times that lead most husbands and wives-to-be to set a date for their nuptials in and around summertime. Due to COVID rules and restrictions, the last two years have not been kind for setting, attending, celebrating, and even officiating at weddings. We are approaching this summer with hope and expectation that weddings will be less unusual again.

Allow me to tell you the story of a small, unusual, and special wedding that took place in that time. Before I go any further, I want to assure you that I have contacted the couple involved and they have allowed me to tell their story.

A mountain-top experience

It was early April 2020 when things were shutting down fast and no one really knew what was coming next. I was scheduled to officiate at a wedding towards the end of that month. But the couple was getting nervous thinking that weddings would soon be severely restricted in terms of attendance, or even suspended altogether. They approached me and asked if their wedding could be moved up a few weeks. That was possible. Preparations went into high gear, the church announcement was made, and the couple hastily organized a new venue.

So it was, in just over a week's time, I was driving down a backcountry road approaching coordinates sent to my phone. Much to my chagrin, I had misjudged the distance and was only going to arrive just when the wedding was supposed to



start. When I got there, however, there was only one pickup truck on the side of the road. Not only that, but the groom was also standing in the box, in his underwear, putting on his suit! Despite how unusual that must seem, I was relieved to discover I wasn't late. You know you are on time when you see that. The rest of the wedding party had not yet arrived. Apparently, the groom and best man had come early to set up and waited to change into their nice clothes only when they finished their tasks.

Soon after this the rest of the party arrived and, fortunately, the groom was dressed. There was a total of nine of us and the bride's dog (which I'll call Fifi). We were at the edge of a deep gorge along a river. There was a cold breeze and snow on the ground. Thankfully, the best man was standing in the right spot before the wedding started, because the registration form blew out of my hand toward the edge, and he caught it before it floated down into the depths and rushing waters far below! Perhaps it was a sign of things to come . . .

“The rings, please”

During the ceremony and after the Scripture reading, just before I began the address, the bride suddenly asked out loud, “Where's Fifi?” My (inward) response was, “Does it matter where Fifi is?” But with growing anxiety, she started calling and the others began whistling. Sure enough, Fifi trotted down the path! Though a little bewildered at this interruption, I was glad Fifi was back in attendance, because now we could continue with the ceremony. But the bride wasn't done with her unusual questions. “Where is Fifi's collar!?” I don't remember now if my next question was still to myself or out loud. “Is it important?” Apparently it was, because, you see, the rings were tied to her collar! We halted proceedings. The message from Song of Songs had to wait. We commenced with a search party spreading out through

the woods. How relieved I was when I heard the groom shouting some distance away, “Found it!” How unrelieved I was when from a different area of the woods the bride called out, “Are the rings on it?” and the groom answered back, “No!” Thankfully, after some combing of the area, the rings were discovered in the snow, and the wedding ceremony resumed!

The only other hiccup was that there was no signing table. That's what can happen when you skip the rehearsal. The bride's father voluntarily went on all fours, and we registered the marriage on his back! Despite the drama, bridegroom and bride exchanged vows and were joined together in holy marriage. As a bonus, the setting produced the most stunning photos of a wedding I have ever seen!

On the way home I wondered if I ever had or would ever again officiate at such an unusual wedding. We were living in an exceptional time. Since then, I have officiated several smaller weddings at interesting places. Although we have lamented the many restrictions, over the past two years we have also managed through them and celebrated the extraordinary. God is good, all the time. To be honest, I have not really missed the very large weddings. There is something special and intimate about small weddings. They tend to be simpler and more focused.

Still, we are grateful for the possibility to again gather in larger numbers amongst relatives and friends and in familiar settings for such important, serious, and Christ-centred moments that weddings are and ought to be. 🇨🇦



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Throwback Photo Contest

Are you handy with a camera? Have a passion for landscapes or perhaps church buildings? Then we have a contest for you! Send us your best black-and-white shots of any (past or present) Canadian/American Reformed Church building or a landscape photo of the surrounding area, and the best photo will grace the cover of *Clarion* for our “retro” issue this summer. As *Clarion* turns 70 years old this year, we're going to do a “throwback” issue with a black and white photo of either a landscape or a church building (remember the covers from the 80s?). **Send your high-resolution images** to layout@clarionmagazine.ca by **June 17**. No limit to entries. Note: Send us photos in both black-and-white and colour and we may use the colour shots inside of later issues. *The Clarion Team*

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Another Academic Year Draws to a Close at CRTS

JASON VAN VLIET

Another season of instruction has sped by, somehow even more quickly than normal. Still, with much thankfulness to the Lord, the regular rhythm of seminary life became more normal as the months went by.

Restrictions decrease, fellowship increases

It goes without saying that the last two years have been challenging for everyone. Our seminary, too, had to navigate all the changing restrictions. At times it was exhausting. Yet our heavenly Father always provided. Classes continued, courses were completed, and new skills were acquired.

Growing proficiency in hybrid learning, though, is no substitute for regular on-campus interaction. Just like with congregations and families, our desire for unencumbered, full-numbers fellowship grew stronger by the week. Thankfully, for all intents and purposes, we are now back to normal at the seminary. Having everyone together in the same room for chapel, reinstating "cake-days" (a calorie-rich staple of seminary fellowship), and even being able to whisk into the building without clicking through a health screening form are all rediscovered joys. This sense of renewed social vitality is palpable in the halls. May our gracious and sovereign God continue to sustain these circumstances.

Enrollment up, need remains

At the beginning of this academic year, we had thirty-two full-time students. For personal and workload reasons, one international student had to discontinue his studies, but in the second semester we were joined by two more part-time students, each taking a course or two. Overall, then, the size of our student body remained stable. This year six students are in line to graduate. A previous issue of *Clarion* published their profiles.

For next year nine new students have been admitted to our freshmen class: five entering the full MDiv program, one starting our BTh program, and three visiting MDiv students from Korea for one year. Of course, things could change yet before September, but as it stands our student body will increase to around thirty-five students. This is truly a blessing for which we have been praying to the Lord.

By way of comparison, only one decade ago the average size of our student body was around fifteen to seventeen. Under the Lord's blessing it has doubled. This is as praiseworthy as it is noteworthy—*solī Deo gloria*.

At the same time, when one looks at a growing number of ministerial retirements along with the number of congregations, mission posts, and church plants that are being added,

the need for theological students remains as high as ever. The fields are not only ripe, but the acreage is increasing, so to speak. Therefore, let us continue to pray that the Lord would send more harvesters for training (Matt 9:37-38). Let us also discuss this with boys and men in our families and congregations who have suitable gifts for this special, beautiful office (Rom 10:15).

Speaking of prospective students, although we intended to host another national Prospective Students' Day this past January, the travel restrictions at that time made us reconsider and initiate provincial events instead. During the months of March and April, spearheaded by local ministers, a series of events took place in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario. By all accounts they were well received; attendance was encouraging. The Lord willing, we hope to organize a national gathering again in January 2023.

Renovation planned, funds raised

This increase in enrollment prompted plans to renovate the lower level of our seminary, where most of our instruction and fellowship takes place. Since our building was constructed back in the 1960s, it is due for some significant upgrades. The lifespan of a hot-water boiler can only be extended so long before it runs out of steam, figuratively (or literally!) speaking.

Yet, as the student body grew, update plans steadily morphed into renovation drawings. Two existing rooms will be combined into one, large room to accommodate the larger class sizes. Beyond that, other walls will be removed to create a larger, open-concept student lounge.

Preachers are also pastors. Working with people is part of their work each week again. Therefore, having ample space to congregate, discuss, debate, pray, and encourage one another is critical, not only for a pleasant learning environment but also for a well-rounded educational experience leading toward shepherding God's flock that consists of many different sheep.

As I write this article, the City of Hamilton is reviewing the architectural drawings. Under the Lord's blessing, by the time you read this, the nail guns and impact drivers will be "singing" a productive chorus. Our prayer is that the Lord will make it possible to complete the project before school starts again in September. If you wish to peek at the architectural plans, just go to www.crts.ca and look for "Partnership in the Gospel" project.

Also, we wish to underline, most emphatically, our deep gratitude for the prompt and generous donations given to support this project. Even during months when COVID was causing no small amount of stress for everyone, the Lord granted a successful fundraising campaign of \$1.23 million. Thank-you, *very much!*





Faculty and staff

In the library and administrative office, Mrs. Margaret Alkema, Ms. Catharine Mechelse, and Mrs. Leanne Kuizenga keep many things, both great and small, moving ahead efficiently. They are assisted by Harmina Vanderbrugghen, who volunteers in the library, and Sara Kingma, who assists in orienting international students to their new country and congregations. The dedicated labour of all these ladies is simply invaluable.

All five full-time professors are busy guiding students through the course material and mentoring them with advice and regular prayer, as well as taking care of various administrative tasks. Dr. Van Raalte is recovering well and returned to a modified workload for this past academic year. In particular, Rev. J. de Gelder was found willing to teach a course on the Church Order. We thank him for this. We also pray that the Lord will continue to grant ongoing recovery to Dr. Van Raalte.

Speaking of professors, Dr. de Visser plans to retire after teaching one more year. For us, and no less for him, it is hard to imagine that his retirement is around the corner. With this in mind, General Synod Guelph 2022 will decide on a proposal to appoint a new professor of Ministry and Mission. By the time you read this, his name may already be public.

On this note, the churches also need men to consider advanced studies in all the various theological disciplines. In this way there will be ministers who are well-equipped to become professors in the future. Perhaps ministers and consistories alike can prayerfully consider this, and if anyone wishes to discuss this further, feel free to contact us.


Looking to the horizon

Recognizing and taking comfort in the truth that the heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps (Prov 16:9), what are the upcoming items on CRTS's agenda? As the

Board of Governors agreed back in September 2021, we are currently focusing on a thorough-going review of our curriculum, looking for ways to improve and serve the churches even better. Enhanced training in area of missions is one item on that list.

Next, we are exploring ways to best help mature students find a good path to, and through, seminary training. Studying for the ministry when you are a single man in your early twenties is one thing. Following the same course of study when you are a married man, somewhere in your thirties and blessed with children, adds another level of complexity. What can be done to reduce the challenges while maintaining a proper standard of preparation for gospel ministry? We hope to examine this question more intensely in the near future.

Finally, for decades we have enjoyed a close, and most blessed, working relationship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. More recently, the Lord has also guided us into a fruitful cooperation with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. How can we best work together to provide theological training for each federation, while at the same time sharing the Reformed heritage with other international students so that the glad tidings also spread within their own countries and contexts?

These topics, along with numerous others, can be found on our long-term to-do list. Like any other to-do list, it grows with ease and only shrinks with exertion. In all things we must be realistic but also trust that our sovereign God blesses beyond expectations. Therefore, we are of good heart, knowing that in the Lord our labour is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58). 



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Growing Interest for Reformed Bible Course Amongst Karen People

ILSE VANDERMEULEN

HAMILTON—Semula Horlings is a member of Providence Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton and interprets an online Bible course for Karen people taught by emeritus minister George van Popta over Zoom. They are an unlikely pair, one a former refugee and one facing serious health concerns, called by God to share the Reformed faith with a growing group of young believers in several parts of Canada and beyond.

In 2006, Semula arrived in Canada with her mother and two brothers as refugees. Hiking along one of the rivers in the beautiful forests of her homeland Burma (now officially called Myanmar) is something she would love to do again one day. “There are lots of beautiful white lilies there, and many different kinds of orchids especially in the rainy season,” she recalls. Springtime in Canada, when everything turns green after a long winter, reminds Semula of her country of birth, from which she fled when she was seventeen. She is not sure if she will ever be able to see Burma again, but what she is sure of is that Jesus Christ her Saviour carried her through every day of her turbulent life.

Burma has been ruled by a military dictatorship for over seventy years. Since 1949, the country has been in a civil war, where the military tries to control several ethnic groups, especially the Karen people (pronounced Kuh-rèn). “The Karen were the first people in Burma, like the native people in North America,” Semula explains. “It’s a long history of persecution by Burmese kings and now the military.” The Karen’s traditional religion was animism—the belief that objects, places, and creatures possess a distinct spiritual essence—but by the grace of God, in 1813, Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson landed in Burma from North America to share the gospel.

Refugee

Semula’s father was an evangelist, and at age three, her parents took Semula and her two brothers out of their village because of killings, forced labour, and torture of Karen Christians. “We were running as they burned down the houses. In thirteen years, we moved to five different locations,” recalls Semula, who ended up in refugee camps in Thailand when she was ten years old. At age seventeen she lost her father, who was killed while helping others escape. “We lived in constant fear, and it was like a prison to me,” she says, looking back to those days in the camps.

In 2005 Semula and her family were offered an opportunity to come to Canada, a new, lonely, and cold country. Semula was proficient in English and took on the role of translator for her family and many other Karen refugees as they had to navigate finding work, health care, and the social system. The Settlement Integration Services Organization in Hamilton asked her to interpret as a volunteer and she was able to attend college.

Streetlight

Semula longed for communion and worship with other Christian brothers and sisters in her new country. She found Streetlight Ministries in 2007 and started to attend Bible study. It was at Streetlight that she met her future husband, Richard, whom she married in 2011. The couple now attends Providence Church after being at Streetlight for over ten years; they have received a daughter and a little boy. Semula: “Coming to Canada and having a faithful church is such a blessing to me. My identity is in Christ and that is how I connect with other fellow Christians, regardless of social status, education, or possessions.”

The catechism teaching made a deep impression on Semula. “It is the core of the gospel. I learned so much from



Rev. George van Popta, wearing a traditional Karen shirt he received on his birthday, and Semula Hurlings (front row, third from right) with some participants of the online Bible course

the catechism and wanted to share that with my people. Many became Christians, but they have a lack of biblical knowledge for several reasons. They are first generation believers. The Bible is not just a moral teaching, but the truth that makes us new.”

Semula requested that the consistory make catechism teaching available for a new immigrant Karen family, and retired minister George van Popta was found willing to take on this task. Many years earlier at age twenty-five and still in seminary, Rev. van Popta was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. “The first decade after my diagnosis I had many relapses and remissions; essentially it went quiet, but then the symptoms came back. The chronic pain was the most debilitating,” he says about his struggle with MS. In 2016, at age fifty-eight, Rev. van Popta decided to retire early from his congregation in Ottawa. “It was difficult. I loved the pastoral ministry and my congregation.” But he adds: “Little did I know that I would still be called to do mission work!”


Old Testament

After Rev. van Popta systematically went through the Catechism Lord’s Day by Lord’s Day, he continued with teaching the Old Testament, starting in Genesis. “They knew the stories,” he notes of the participants, “but learned them in a moralistic way, not in a redemptive-historical and Christological way.”

The group grew with Karen people whom Semula invited to church. Others started to join by Facebook video chat. Rev. van Popta: “And then it was 2020 and with COVID everything came to a halt . . . But we were already online, and we said: why don’t we continue with our video chat?” It opened up opportunity for relatives and friends from other parts of Canada to join as well. When the group exceeded the video chat capability, it moved to Zoom; now a group of fifty regular Karen attendants meet three times a month.

The group did not shy away from the book of Leviticus. “We are at Mount Sinai at the moment, and we went through the five main sacrifices in the first chapters. After that I turned the attention to Leviticus 23 to explain the seven festivals.” Rev. van Popta says that the most common response from the group is that they never heard the Bible explained this way. “I am nothing special, but I have something they don’t, and that is our Reformed teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ in everything. He is clothed in the pages of all of Scripture, including the Old Testament.”

The retired minister thoroughly enjoys his task of teaching. “I am profoundly thankful every day. I always had a heart for newcomers and people from different ethnicities. I was drawn to the Karen people who came to our church. Being retired, I had good opportunity and I feel the Lord brought me to this at his time.” Pastor or “Grandpa” George and his wife “Grandma” or “Mother” Dora also very much enjoy getting to know the Karen people and their lightheartedness and joy. “As a people, they are family-oriented, and love laughter and social gatherings.”

The minister stresses that it is important that the course should not be an end in itself, but that the participants need to connect to faithful churches in the areas they live. “The harvest is plentiful,” adds Semula, who is also in contact with Karen in Thailand. “It is such a blessing that we can share the gospel as Reformed churches with others, even in other parts of the world.” Rev. van Popta: “God can take something which we really dislike, COVID, and use it for the good progress of the gospel. The Lord Jesus is on the throne.” 



Ilse Vandermeulen

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Living Light Canadian Reformed Church Welcomes Pastor Rolf

TERESA POST

How many of you readers can clearly think of the feeling that comes when you are highly anticipating a wonderful event such as Christmas morning, the arrival of family or friends you haven't seen for quite some time, or the arrival of a new (grand)child? That was the feeling felt by the members of the Living Light Canadian Reformed Church family on Sunday, February 20 when Rev. Rolf den Hollander was installed as the pastor and shepherd of this newly established church in Grimsby, Ontario. Rev. W. den Hollander Sr. led this service, where he spoke a message on being devoted in prayer.

Using Colossians 4:2-4, Rev. den Hollander taught the congregation to pray for the progress of the proclamation of the gospel so that mouths would be opened, the mystery of the gospel of Christ would be proclaimed, and that this message would be clear. He encouraged everyone to be praying constantly for our pastor and the church leaders. This was a very important message for our young congregation as we then witnessed the installation of Rev. R. J. den Hollander, who turned to the congregation to give his "I do" of confirming that

he would, indeed, follow the will of the Lord as Pastor of the Living Light congregation. Following the service, delegates from Classis Niagara spoke a few words of welcome. These words were given in person by brothers J. Werkman from Smithville, R. Jager from Attercliffe, and P. Feenstra from Grassie, and in letters from the congregations of Dunnville, Spring Creek, Lincoln, Niagara South, and a personal letter from our counsellor, Rev. Bouwman.

Pastor Rolf led the afternoon service that same day and strengthened all members with a message of our task in Grimsby. Using Isaiah 40:9, which says, "Comfort, comfort ye my people," he taught us that, as comforted people, we are to be heralds of the good news by "lifting up your voice with strength" and announcing, "Behold your God!" He encouraged us to be passionate about the gospel and desire to share it; that there is no perfect church but there is a perfect gospel; fear not when speaking of it. The Living Light congregation is sure to be shepherded by a loving shepherd—both in the form of our new pastor but especially by our Saviour, Jesus Christ!



(Clockwise, from top left) father & son; First Council; Fishers of Men; reception; Welcome cake

Welcome program

Five weeks after this memorable day, on Sunday, March 27, the members of Living Light enjoyed a lovely welcome program for Rev. den Hollander, his wife, Liz, and children, Jakob, Micah, Ethan, Madilyn, and Jonah. The organizers put on some entertainment involving a Family Name Game where the den Hollanders and congregation had to guess which congregational member's name was being given in rebus form. This was followed by a den Hollander In-quiz-ition Game which had male and female members of the congregation playing a game of competitive trivia about the den Hollander family. Much laughter was enjoyed in both games!

The young children sang "Days of Elijah" and "Fishers of Men." While giving a gift of some fishing equipment, the children could learn that, though Pastor Rolf does enjoy the sport of fishing, he is also, in fact, a fisher of men! There was also a presentation of a coupon book in which each coupon offered Pastor Rolf and his family various opportunities to enjoy in the coming months with the goal of getting to know every member

personally. The final gift presented to our new pastor was a set of equipment that will allow him to care for the outdoor property of his new home. As Pastor Rolf mentioned in the following week, he and his family were overwhelmed by the loving welcome from the members of Living Light CanRC. With the lifting of restrictions just the week before, the welcome program was followed by a very enjoyable stand-up reception in the basement of the old Presbyterian church. This, too, was a very welcome change, as the congregation had not been able to do this since its institution in September of 2021.

In just under the six months since the institution of the Living Light Canadian Reformed Church, God has faithfully cared for his congregation in Grimsby. That warm feeling of excitement, delight, and joy continues to be felt week after week. It is clear that the Holy Spirit is working in the hearts of each member, and it is our prayer that this work will also bless the community of Grimsby as we live and worship as "Living Lights" in this place, under the leadership of our new pastor, Rev. R. J. den Hollander. *Soli Deo Gloria!* 🇨🇦



www.merf.org

MERF News

Middle East Reformed Fellowship—“Declaring the Whole Counsel of God”

March 2022



Hope Amid Challenges in Ethiopia



Wonji Church members



Ethiopia lies across the Red Sea from Yemen. One of the most populous African nations, it is landlocked on the semi-arid Horn of Africa by Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia. In the west, the Blue Nile flows from its mountain peaks to Sudan. South Sudan and Kenya border the south.

After his election in 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a confessing Christian of the largely Muslim Oromo tribe, successfully brought peace to extended internal tribal conflicts and with neighboring Eritrea. Yet, over the past year these resurfaced when forces of the small northern Tigray tribe waged a civil war. (It previously held power in Ethiopia for over 30 years.) Armed conflict

has displaced millions and destroyed crops and herds, resulting in hunger and instability. Also, the south is suffering food shortages from severe drought.

The good news is that, in the west, after 10 years of construction, last month the first electrical turbines of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam were switched on. When the dam reaches full capacity, 60% of Ethiopia's population will have access to electrical power.

In the past year, Ethiopian churches in Muslim majority areas have suffered from a rise in persecution. More than a dozen church meeting places were burnt down and members scattered to other villages. In addition,

the economic collapse from COVID measures rendered many other churches unable to support their pastors and evangelists.

3 Language Teams

Ethiopia's MERF ministry teams prayerfully meet these challenges with the gospel message of hope. They carry out MERF's fourfold ministry encouraging local churches in *evangelism, church extension, biblical training and diaconal aid*. MERF has three gospel radio ministries and literature projects in three main Ethiopian Languages: *Oromo, Amharic and Somali*. Each also has its own online ministry and website. Recent literature production

projects, in each of these languages include: *Reading the Bible* by Geoffrey Thomas, *Stand Firm (A Young Christian's guide to the Amour of God)* by Peter Jeffery, *Healthy Christian Growth* by Sinclair Ferguson and *Living the Christian Life* by Albert Martin.

New Churches

Praise God for many new requests for local language Bibles in Muslim dominated regions. The teams are glad to be able to put God's Word in the hands of the spiritually hungry. They also organize biblical training programs and distribute Christian literature to newly-planted



New book distribution

churches in those areas.

When church fellowships in these areas are forced to flee their homes and are scattered to other communities due to persecution, support is provided to meet their physical and spiritual needs. Diaconal aid is always accompanied by the ministry of the Word. Although God's people suffer greatly in such traumatic circumstances, the Lord preserves His own and new churches are being planted in the new locations. Please keep this vital witness in your prayers.

MERF also partners with different local fellowships to support local workers. They include over 50 missionary evangelists, 22 of whom are working in Muslim domi-

nated areas. The others serve in mixed areas.

Biblical Training

Despite COVID limitations, biblical training events and efforts to fol-



Healthy Christian Growth by Sinclair Ferguson
Amharic, Somali, and Oromo languages

low-up the trainees continued. There is a great longing for learning God's Word. Pastors in the greater area of Addis Ababa, the capital city, are enrolled in discipleship training programs. Also church fellowships in far-flung places often ask for biblical training visits.

Trips to other regions build up and encourage churches and give opportunity to distribute literature. For youth training courses, translations of *Reading the Bible* by Geoffrey Thomas, *Walking Worthy (Guidelines for the*

Christian Life) by Peter Jeffery and the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* are taught.

Diaconal Aid

When COVID lockdowns and other measures were put in place, businesses closed and many church members lost employment, so pastors and evangelists struggled to provide for their families' needs.

Thanks to the generosity of MERF supporters, diaconal aid of food and school supplies have enabled them to

“Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!”
— Psalm 67:5

conflict in the north, they were enabled to get reestablished in the capital, where they have opportunity to share the gospel with others who speak their language.

Ethiopia Teams Praise & Prayer

- We thank God for all His protection in this time of difficulty in Ethiopia.
- We thank God for His provision through MERF to support persecuted believers as well as pastors and evangelists affected by COVID measures. Please pray for their witness.
- We ask prayer for peace and stability, the end of tribal conflicts and widespread hunger, so that churches can be grounded in God's Word and share the wonderful gospel with the many who need to receive it.

weather these difficult days and continue to share the gospel message. MERF support has also been provided to help an Eritrean refugee congregation. Fleeing armed



Walate Youth Training

MERF-Canada
Thank you for your faithful support! Please make cheques payable to MERF-Canada and send them to the address at the bottom of the page.
Online donations can be made to Middle East Reformed Fellowship (Canada) Inc. through www.merf.org/support
e-transfers:
merfcanada@gmail.com

CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

LORD'S DAY 9

Did you know that there is a tiny frog that only grows to be one centimetre? There is also a monkey so small that it can wrap its cute little arms around an adult's finger! Those are small animals, aren't they? Animals can be very large as well. One animal, called an Antarctic Blue whale, weighs about as much as thirty-three elephants! God the Father created these animals. Yes, God the Father created more than just animals. He created the whole world! To create means to make things using nothing. People cannot do this. Only God can! He is also taking care of everything he created. God the Father is powerful. He is our God. We can trust this powerful God, can't we? He will give us what we need. And he loves to help his children.

Figure out the "secret message" to learn about another creature that God the Father created!

20 8 5 16 21 18 16 12 5 6 18 15 7

12 9 22 5 19 9 14 9 14 4 9 1

1=A	2=B	3=C	4=D	5=E	6=F
7=G	8=H	9=I	10=J	11=K	12=L
13=M	14=N	15=O	16=P	17=Q	18=R
19=S	20=T	21=U	22=V	23=W	24=X
25=Y	26=Z				

Attach the following words to the word Creator: animals, trees, Father, power

C
R
E
A
T
O
R

Beverly Breukelman

Today I am going to introduce you to Beverly Breukelman. Beverly lives in a retirement home in Coaldale, Alberta. Alan and Christine, two of her siblings, also live there.

Beverly has never been given a full diagnosis of her disability. Her parents have been told it may be autism, or she may be emotionally disturbed. She is now in the beginning stages of dementia, which can be frustrating at times.

When she was in school, she had a very good memory. She also used to work in a greenhouse. When was Beverly was younger, she was able to write very nice letters and thank-you notes. She especially loved to write them to her Grandma. They were written without any mistakes.

Beverly does not need much to keep her busy. She is very content in her home, loving to sit quietly in the living room with her coffee while listening to music. She loves her coffee, but it must be instant coffee because it has to be decaf.

She also enjoys going on car rides. She has a small attention span though, so will only want to go out for an hour. Ladies from the church will take her out for coffee. After half an hour, she is ready go home. The retirement home will take her out on outings; she really enjoys it when they go to look at animals.

Beverly lives one block away from her mom. She goes there every Saturday with her brother and sister and they stay for a nice visit for an hour. Then after an hour she says, "I want to go home mom." They also visit their mom quite often in between services on Sunday.

I have a small story for you about Beverly to show you her personality: One day Beverly went shopping with her mom to go and buy some shoes. They bought the shoes, and afterwards her mom saw a nice dress hanging in the next store. Her mom suggested they go try on the dress, and Beverly refused to try on the dress because: "Mom, we were only going to buy shoes today!"

COVID has been hard on Beverly because they are often short staffed so there are less staff to take her out. She also couldn't go to church during COVID, and this made her very upset. She loves going to church twice a Sunday, and always knows when the day for Lord's Supper is.

Beverly has a very dry sense of humour at times. She loves the Lord, and is very content in her home, with her family, and church family surrounding her. ☺

Happy birthday to Joan, Lars, Devon, and Beverly! We wish you all the Lord's blessing in the year to come. May you all be a light to those around you, and use your unique gifts to honour and glorify the Lord.

June Birthdays

17 Joan Koerselman will be **65**
2113-16 Ave.
Coaldale, AB T1M 1J8

26 Devon Niezen will be **22**
7000 2nd line
Arthur, ON N0G 1A0

20 Lars Huijgen will be **31**
2629 Aspen Drive
Coaldale, AB T1M 0A2

30 Beverly Breukelman will be **60**
222 5-19th Street
Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS If there are any address changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible.

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PODCAST REVIEW



Editor's Introduction If you have a podcast you would like reviewed, please send Lucas Holtvlüwer your suggestions at lucasholtvlüwer@gmail.com. You can listen to Real Talk anywhere podcasts are found or by going to realtalkpodcast.ca.

In my previous piece I introduced a podcast that may not have been well known to many readers, Allie Beth Stuckey's *Relatable*. In this installment, I would like to provide some information and commentary on a much more well-known program: the podcast of Canadian Psychologist, Dr. Jordan B Peterson.

The Jordan B Peterson Podcast is a fascinating and thought-provoking production which explores a wide array of subject matter including the relationship between science and religion, human psychology, and the place of fundamental rights, such as freedom of speech, in a turbulent and increasingly stifling political climate. Thanks in part to his fame, and also in part to his incisive and deliberate style of questioning, Peterson is able to recruit numerous experts in their respective fields and engage in meaningful and often quite thorough discussions of the topic at hand. Of course, releasing episodes that are often 90 to 120 minutes in length also helps to increase the depth of any conversation. If you are a podcast listener who prefers shorter episodes, you may want to consider consuming the show in smaller chunks, which is easy to do thanks to the detailed timestamps given in the show notes of every episode.

For many of you, the name Jordan Peterson will be a familiar one. He has managed to attract a significant amount of media attention over the last six years since his stand against Bill C-16 here in Canada. Fast forward to today and the good doctor is a New York Times best selling author with a massive social media and podcast following which allows him to tour the globe speaking to tens of thousands of his listeners, readers, and viewers. Why Peterson is still able to maintain his relevancy is in no small part thanks to his blossoming podcast career. What started off as simply reposts of his YouTube lectures and other content has become a regular source of some of the best dialogue in all of Western politics and culture. In the main, Peterson strives to honestly investigate the vast array of subjects he delves into.

Of course, as other authors have pointed out in this publication before, there are some things to keep in mind when consuming Peterson's content. While much of his practical advice centred around personal responsibility aligns with traditional biblical principles, at a worldview level his acceptance of evolutionary theory and his promotion of Nietzschean and Jungian teaching can lead to some conclusions which run counter to a historical and literal biblical understanding. For a more fulsome analysis of Peterson from a biblical worldview, I would recommend Joel McDurmon's piece in *Reformed Perspective* entitled "Is Jordan Peterson the champion we've been looking for?"

Worldview criticisms aside, there is much that critically thinking Christians can glean from Peterson's podcast. A brief sampling of some of his latest topics and guests include the dark



side of our human nature (dare I say depravity?!) with Robert Greene, the Russia-Ukraine conflict with Frederick Kagan, God & Consciousness with Curt Jaimungal, and the spiritual void in the West with Rav Aora.

Another interesting thread to follow, given Peterson's tremendous influence and reach, is his faith life and his seemingly increasing warmth towards an acceptance of Christ as his Lord and Saviour. Over the past few years, both he and his family have been through some very serious health troubles, with his wife Tammy miraculously recovering from what Peterson had previously called a "death sentence" of aggressive cancer. She has now become a practising Catholic and there seems to be a new sense of openness in Peterson's heart towards the gospel message, with him even ending one of his videos a few months ago, entitled "A Wing and a Prayer," with a version of the Lord's Prayer.

If you are interested in more commentary and analysis on Peterson's impact on the church and his recent leanings towards something approximating a faith in Christ, I would recommend checking out the YouTube channels of Paul VanderKlay, a CRC pastor, and Jonathan Pageau, an Eastern Orthodox cultural commentator. May the Lord bless the work of Peterson's podcast and use it to further his Kingdom and glorify his Name! 🙏



Lucas Holtvlüwer

Co-host of Reformed Perspective's
Real Talk podcast

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Rev. Tim Schouten places the matter of vaccines in the context of Romans 14. It's the "offense of the weak" argument. That is, we shouldn't force an activity on people if they think it is sinful. I know there is a lot of debate around the passage (and 1 Cor 8ff), but one thing is clear. It never means that differences of opinion are permanent or final. It is perfectly Christian to help someone outgrow a misconception, but of course never demand it. I say that with the greatest of humility. So, with that idea in mind, I must point out important factual errors in Rev. Schouten's concerns over the COVID-19 vaccines. I'm a professor of biochemistry. The mRNA vaccines that Pfizer and Moderna have marketed are not produced in HEK293 cells. They are made in a completely cell-free environment. It is a beautifully simple process actually, and truly a gift that the vaccine-hesitant could embrace. There are no moral issues associated with the production process. (Making good beer is more complicated, by the way.) These are amazingly useful vaccines, and you will see more of them. It is also a myth that the technology was rushed into production. The first discovery that mRNA can be used in this way was in 1990 and it has been steadily researched and developed ever since. The first clinical trial was in 2003, and there have been over 140 clinical trials since. A colleague in Texas was working on ways to make a vaccine for coronavirus for over twenty years. When COVID-19 hit, these pharmaceutical companies beat a path to his door, to gain access to his discoveries. Christians should see the providential hand of God in the timing of this technology with the onset of the pandemic. It is truly an amazing story.

Dave Schriemer, Calgary, AB

Dear Editor,

I commend Rev. Kampen for bringing up the issue of conscience in his editorial. However, by reducing Article 32 to "salvation issues" only, Rev. Kampen missed the point regarding the binding of the conscience and the opportunity to address why members believed their consciences were bound and compelled. He concludes that since "no one has introduced human inventions and laws into the worship of God which bind and compel the conscience in any way," the rules needed to be followed to preserve harmony and unity, to "keep the peace in Jerusalem."

Just because consciences were not bound and compelled with regards to one's salvation does not mean they were not bound and compelled at all. Members who turned to Article 32 BC did so because they recognized burdens beyond the Word which they could not in good conscience perform and obey. Thus, it was not a "salvation issue" as Rev. Kampen describes it, but a matter of obedience toward sanctification.

The reality for many members was that it was not a simple matter of following these rules that indeed have no bearing on one's salvation, but which did weigh heavy on members' consciences with regard to their sanctification.

Members were convicted that wearing a mask would be participating in a lie violating the ninth commandment, that prohibiting healthy members from gathering for worship is a violation of the clear command from Scripture not to forsake the gathering of the saints, that loving one's neighbour is acted out through social interaction, visiting, handshakes, and hugs and not with a deliberate distancing from family, friends, and congregants albeit temporary.

The "peace in Jerusalem" would have been better served if no one had compelled anyone to do anything contrary to their conscience. This is the way of freedom, the way of love.

Ard Doornbos, Barrhead, AB

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

Classis Manitoba held on March 25 and April 8, 2022

On behalf of the Carman East Canadian Reformed Church, Rev. Carl Van Dam opened the meeting by reading from Psalm 16, leading in prayer, and requesting that we sing from Psalm 16:1-5. As memorabilia the following were mentioned: With thankfulness it was noted that Rev. Rick and Hannah Vanderhorst received a baby girl in December 2021, and that the COVID-19 public health mandates ended on March 15, 2022, allowing the Manitoba churches to gather for in-person worship with the entire congregation again. It was mentioned that there is progress in the establishment of a new congregation in Elm Creek. Mention was made of our retired ministers Rev. Klaas Jonker, Dr. Andrew Pol, and Rev. John VanRietschoten.

Credentials were received from all the churches and examined. The churches were all properly represented. Rev. James Zekveld was seated as an advisor. Classis was constituted. Executive officers were appointed: Rev. Rick Vanderhorst as president, Rev. Joe Poppe as vice-president, and Rev. Carl Van Dam as clerk. The president, Rev. Vanderhorst, thanked the convening church for organizing and hosting Classis. The agenda was slightly amended and adopted. Rev. Klaas Jonker was welcomed as observer.

Reports

No report was submitted to Classis by the treasurer. A report was received from Carman West regarding the inspection of the books of the treasurer and they were found to be in good order. A report was received from Redeemer regarding the inspection of the classis archives. They were found to be in good order. The report included a few minor matters that needed attention. The Grace church was mandated to send a proposal to a future classis to amend the mandate for the archivist. A report from Deputies for Contact with the Manitoba Provincial Government (mainly dealing with arrangements for the solemnization of marriages) was also received with thanksgiving.

In closed session, church visit reports were read on visits made to Carman East, Carman West, Emmanuel (Denver), Grace (Winnipeg), and Redeemer (Winnipeg). Each of the churches in turn was remembered in intercessory prayer.

Advice, greetings, and appeals

The president asked the questions according to Art.44 of the Church Order. Each of the churches indicated that the ministry of the office-bearers was being continued, and the decisions

of the major assemblies were being honoured. Three churches requested the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of their church. Intercessory prayer was offered for those who are straying from the Lord, and for the office-bearers and congregations affected by this.

A letter of fraternal greetings was received from Central Classis of the USA (URCNA). A letter of fraternal greetings was also received from the Presbytery of the Dakotas (RCUS), along with an invitation to attend their upcoming meeting. Rev. Steve Vandeveld passed on greetings from the Coram Deo of United Reformed Church in Littleton, Colorado. He was asked and was able to visit with their consistory, giving some background about the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Two appeals were discussed and deliberated on. The delegates from the church involved recused themselves from this discussion. In order to do justice to these appeals, Classis decided to adjourn and reconvene on April 8 to finish the agenda then. The delegates from the church involved rejoined the meeting, and the vice-president led in prayer, and adjourned the meeting.

Reconvening

Classis was reconvened on April 8 at the Carman West church building. The Denver delegates attended via Zoom. The vice-president opened the meeting by reading from 1 Peter 1:1-12, leading in prayer, and requesting that we sing Hymn 36:1, 2. Classis further discussed and deliberated on the appeals before it. Decisions were made about how to respond to the appeals. Prayer was offered for all involved. Afterward, the delegates from the church involved with the appeal rejoined the meeting.

Carman West is appointed the convening church for the next classis. It will be convened, the Lord willing, on June 17, 2022 (if necessary), or else on September 23, 2022. The suggested president for the next classis is Rev. Steve Vandeveld. Classis expressed appreciation for the work sister Wilma Bergsma did as treasurer, and formally appointed sister Pat Van Veen as the new treasurer of Classis.

Personal question period was held. Brotherly censure was not necessary. The acts of Classis were adopted, and the press release was approved. Classis sang from Hymn 36:3, 4, and Rev. Vanderhorst closed in prayer.

Vice-president at the time, Rev. Joe Poppe

