

A CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

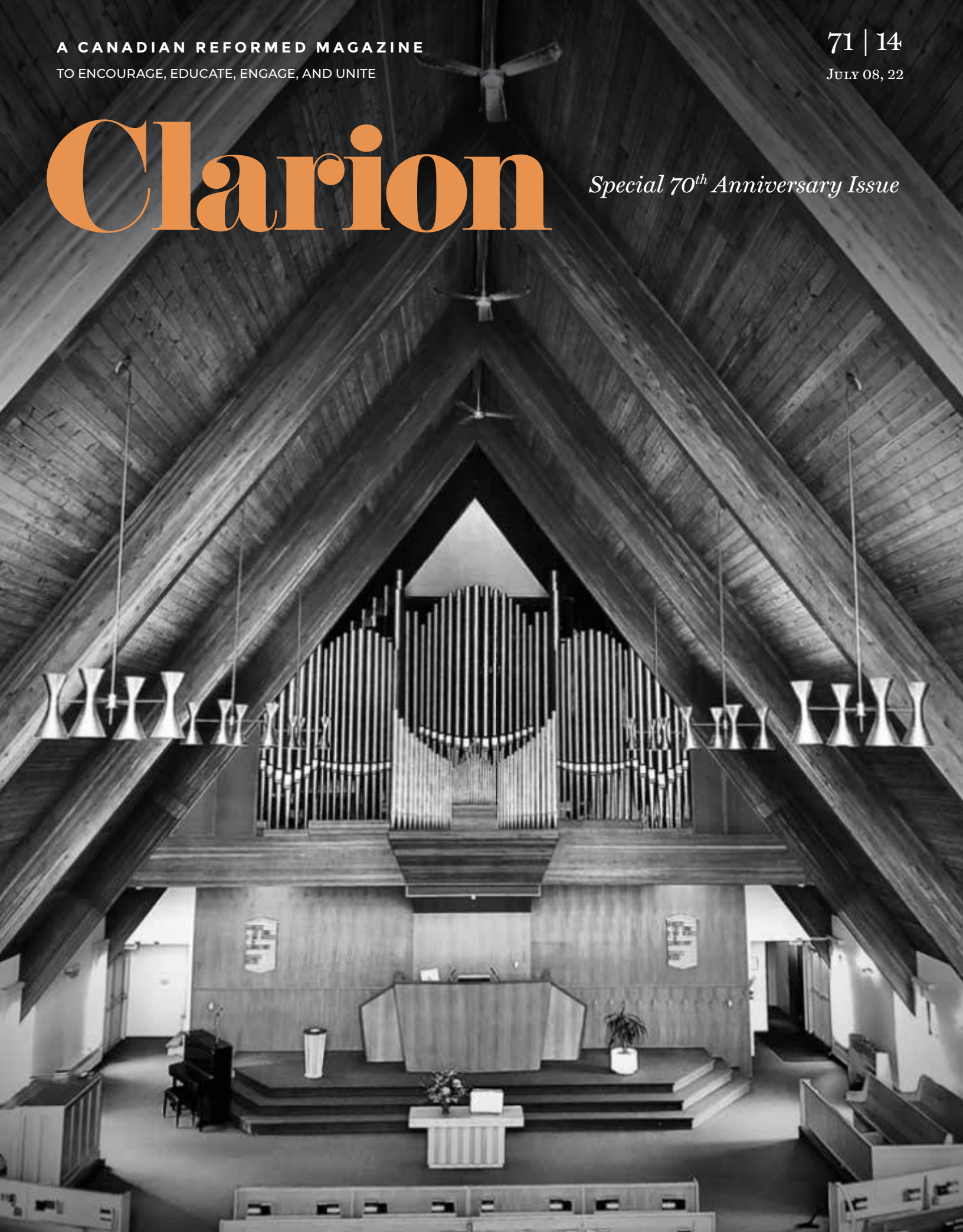
TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

71 | 14

JULY 08, 22

Clarion

Special 70th Anniversary Issue



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

We have a fun little treat for you this time, dear reader! On the occasion of *Clarion's* 70th birthday this summer, we present you with a "throwback" issue. The idea is to honour those who have gone before us in starting, operating, and filling the pages of this magazine for seventy years, all of which was only possible under the LORD's rich blessing. While a few current writers have pieces in this issue, most of the articles are reprints from decades ago. Laura and I (with Margaret Alkema's help) had fun culling through the early volumes. We ended up choosing articles that we thought may still speak a word of wisdom to us today. Several articles had to be translated from the Dutch and I'd like to express my gratitude to those who did so (and who expressly asked to remain anonymous)—thank you!

Clarion began life under a different name: *Canadian Reformed Magazine (CRM)* and, as you can glean from my bird's-eye historical review of its origins in "Happy 70th Birthday *Clarion*," Rev. Willem Loopstra was the driving force in getting it off the ground. To honour this fact, we have let his voice speak to us once again in the opening editorial. His warning about propaganda and discernment remains fitting for our day too. Because it was such a brief piece, we have included another of

his articles later on about facing well the challenges of immigration. This may yet speak to us in the 2020s as many churches are receiving refugees or immigrants from all over the world.

Two names many older readers will remember well from their numerous articles are Rev. Gijsbertus Van Dooren and Rev. Willem W. J. VanOene. We are pleased to print a very early, penetrating meditative piece from the former and an article from the latter in the 70s which exhorts the reader to fulfill a particular command of God, "Fill the earth." Also from the 70s is a submission by Rev. Clarence Stam, whom many more of us are likely to remember since he was still writing in *Clarion* until his death in early 2016. He writes incisively about the matter of church government. We've also "mirrored" two regular columns: we have a current *Treasures, New & Old* by Rev. Ben Schoof, which is set next to this column's predecessor, *From the Scriptures*, which features a meditation from 1982 by Dr. Jack DeJong, a very regular contributor to *Clarion*. Similarly, you will find our customary *Clarion Kids* set next to *Our Little Magazine*, another little blast from the past. May this issue bring back fond memories to many and may it also serve by God's grace to build us all up in the faith!

Peter Holtvlüwer

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EDITORIAL

Prophecy as Distinct from One-Sided Propaganda

WILLEM LOOPSTRA

Recently we were struck by a quote that the *Gereformeerd Gezinsblad*¹ of September 29, 1953, gave from the well-known book by Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*. Among other things, the quote said this:


The very first condition which has to be fulfilled in every kind of propaganda is a systematically one-sided attitude towards every problem that has to be dealt with. . . . The receptive powers of the masses are very restricted, and their understanding is feeble . . . propaganda therefore needs to address more the feelings than the intellect of the masses.

We know all too well from the 1930s and 40s what use Hitler made of this "truth." It was one of the means by which he rallied thousands to follow him,

and which managed to lead National Socialism to a temporary victory.

These words from one of the greatest anti-Christian forces of our century should serve as a warning to us as regards our life and our struggle in and for the church of the Lord. We too can be guilty of this sin, and it is precisely in the true church that this sin is all the more dangerous. For if ever the "devil approaches by wearing socks,"² then certainly he'll be first to apply that strategy in the true church. Therefore, keep your eyes and ears open and compare everything, but then also everything with the Scriptures (cf. 1 Cor 2:13). So-called "truths," apparently taken from the Scriptures, which do not reconcile with other Scripture data are not true prophecy. Before we spread our subjective feelings—which to

the best of our knowledge concur with Scripture—into the world and the church as "truth," we need to "compare Scripture with Scripture," in an effort to prevent among us a "systematic, subjective, and one-sided attitude" in regard to the "issue" that concerns us.

The warning of Prof. P. Deddens in *De Reformatie*³ to first open the Bible and to also consider fairness in dealing with the articles of the Church Order should make us all the more cautious. Let it motivate us to carefully take all of Scripture into account in every matter under consideration, for that is the greatest equity we can practice. In that way we will increasingly become true prophets, being guided by the prophetic Word of the Spirit! 



Rev. Willem Loopstra was the first minister to serve in Ontario in the Canadian Reformed Churches, pastoring first two congregations simultaneously (1951-1954) and then one of them until his retirement (1971). Starting *Canadian Reformed Magazine* (CRM) was his initiative and he worked at producing it for twenty years (1952-1972) whereupon it became *Clarion*. He was also its first editor (1952-1954).

This article was originally published in *Canadian Reformed Magazine* Vol 2, Oct 27, 1953.

¹ A newspaper produced in the Netherlands for Reformed families.

² A typical Dutch saying. It implies that Satan often uses stealth to attack his unsuspecting prey.

³ A magazine produced in the Netherlands directed mainly to the Reformed Churches (liberated).

FROM THE SCRIPTURES

*Enduring Stability**“... He will be the stability of your times ...” (ISA 33:6A)*

Isaiah stands next to God’s people in the face of imminent destruction. In the presence of death and annihilation, Isaiah intercedes for his countrymen with a cry of deliverance: “O LORD, be gracious to us; we wait for thee.” The mighty power of Assyria stands at the gates of the holy city, and there does not seem to be any hope left. Isaiah’s prayer is a cry from the depths—a cry filled with the intensity of struggle.

It does not take long, however, before his prayer becomes a prophecy. It’s almost as if Isaiah sees the LORD answering his prayer before he has finished with it. While Isaiah is still praying, he hears the LORD coming, and the LORD shows him the great victory that he will bring about. He prophesies the LORD’s defense of the holy city, and his faithfulness to his people. He will defend Jerusalem, and fill Zion with justice and righteousness. He will prevent the foundations of the holy city from being destroyed. And Isaiah hails his coming as a time of renewed stability.

The word used for “stability” here is closely related to the word used in the Bible for “faithfulness,” “steadfastness”—the words have the same root. The concluding “Amen” of our prayers comes from the same root as well. That root points to certainty, steadfastness, solidity. However, that solidity is the solidity found in the Word of the covenant. God brings stability to his people because he is faithful to his covenant. He confirms his promise made in the beginning that his people will always be cared for, and never lack.

And the LORD has fully manifested his faithfulness to the covenant in the coming of Jesus Christ, his only Son. He came to give a new foundation to Jerusalem, his church—a foundation which can never be

shaken. His coming and substitutionary work for us forms the stability of our times. In the moment of prophecy, Isaiah sees him coming to deliver his people, and make good God’s covenant with man. That is why Isaiah’s words reach beyond his own history and his own time, and speak directly to our time, and to the church in the world today.


Our times have been aptly characterized as times of instability. The economy has become much more volatile than ever before, and the eighties have been hailed as a period of increased stress on our socio-economic foundations. In the flux of the modern world with its high rate of change, people have begun to look for things that are more lasting and meaningful. Men search for stability and certainty in tumultuous times.

Isaiah’s words certainly still apply. In fact, the situation he lived in forms a telling reflection of the situation the church faces today. Increased instability is coupled with the ever-growing threat of total annihilation. The eighties have witnessed the return to the arms race, and the re-emergence of hostilities that were only slightly hidden in the detente period. A new time has broken through—a time when men and nations show us their true colours.

All these things add up to a very uncertain future—from a human point of view. Changing epochs only add to the instability and uncertainty in the world. And we know that present economic woes and

greater degrees of uncertainty stem from one source: men have tried to build a world of prosperity and certainty without the Lord of life. But that is not possible. And the LORD sends his judgments upon a world which has refused to seek him and acknowledge his sovereignty in all things.

Precisely because of this, the church may not expect a sudden shift to increased economic stability. Indeed, God’s judgments will continue to work. Yet Isaiah says, “He shall be the stability of your times. . . .” That is the LORD’s promise to the church through changing years and changing epochs. In the face of uncertainty, he is our certainty. In the face of instability, he is our stability. He will protect and deliver his people—in prosperity or adversity. He will fill Zion with glory—in war or in peace. He will cover his people with his favour as a shield, and in all that happens he will protect them.

That is why we must place all our trust in him, too. He is faithful to the one covenant—and seeks that sort of faithfulness among his children. In changing times, we must see the LORD as the stability of our times, and build on the sure foundation of Christ, Mediator of the covenant, Head and Cornerstone of his church. He rules creation from on high and leads and governs ages and times—leading all things to the full breakthrough of his time, in which we will reign with him, and God will be all in all. 



Dr. Jack DeJong was Professor of Ecclesiology and Diaconology (Practical Theology) at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary from 1990–2004. Before and during this time he served for many years as part of the editorial committee at *Clarion* and contributed, among other things, numerous Scripture meditations like this one.

This article was originally published in *Clarion* Vol 31, No 1, Jan 8, 1982.

TREASURES NEW & OLD :: MATTHEW 13:52

Patience

“Clothe yourselves with patience, bearing with each other and forgiving as the Lord forgave you.” (COLOSSIANS 3:12-13)

Do you consider yourself a patient person? We like to think we are patient. After all, we put up with a lot! Perhaps the best way to find out is to get behind the wheel of a car. For some reason, that tends to bring out the impatience in us. It shows we live in a very impatient age. But for Christians, patience is a command, and a fruit of the Spirit. So, we all need to learn.

How would you define patience? Perhaps something like “delayed gratification.” The ability to wait, calmly, for something to happen.

The best way for us to learn patience is to meditate on the patience of God towards us. For God, patience has to do with one thing: human sin. Patience is used in the Old Testament to teach that God is “slow to anger.” He doesn’t immediately react in wrath to our wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Instead, he is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness.

Instead of instantly punishing us when we sin, in patience God forbore our sins, punishing Jesus Christ instead. And so our every sin is patiently forgiven. Paul speaks of this in 1 Timothy 1, admitting that though he was “the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus displayed his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.”

Christ’s patience towards persecutor and murderer Paul is an example to us. His patience to us is also unlimited. Whatever we have done is forgiven us when we repent.

God is also patient toward the wicked “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” But his patience towards those who refuse to repent will not last forever. And the Bible warns those who see God’s patience as lack of care or impotence. One day his judgement will come quickly. We have until then to repent and put our trust in Christ, and benefit from God’s patience forever.

What about our patience then? It is clear that patience is more than just putting up with things we don’t like or waiting for something to happen without getting angry. Patience is first of all about sin.

It’s easy to be kind towards to those we like and agree with, and who treat us well. But that’s not patience. Patience is how we act towards those we disagree with and how we deal with those who have sinned against us.

Patience is to “bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

As Christians we desperately need patience with one another. Because of impatience, the church will fracture and even split. When we do not bear with those with whom we disagree. When we disparage or cut off those who have different opinions than us. When we refuse to forgive others with whom we have a grievance. With enough patience, no difference in opinion can be enough to destroy or even fracture a relationship. With enough impatience, the smallest difference is mortal.

Remember that the Lord’s patience towards us continues to be essentially infinite. After all he has done for us, we continue to sin against him each day. And yet each time he forgives us wholeheartedly. So, can we not summon enough patience in our heart to forgive our brother or sister?

As we practice such patience, we will witness to the world around us. Society is incredibly impatient. Social media surrounds us with a bubble of those who think the same as us, and demonizes those who think otherwise. As a result, people have no time for those who think differently than they do and cut them out of their life as easy as blocking them online.

Only in the church can such different people, with different backgrounds, cultures, and opinions, not only get along, but be patient with one another. When we do, the church will be a beacon of love, reflecting God’s patience towards us. 🕊

For further study

1. Read Matthew 18:21-35
2. Are you a “chief sinner”? How have you needed the unlimited patience of God?
3. Are you patient? Are you holding any grudges or bitterness? Do you spend time with those different than you? Do you really listen to those who think differently?



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Throwback Photo Contest

Thank you to all who sent in photos for our contest! Below you will see some excellent submissions from our runners up. On the cover (and pictured here) is our winner: a beautiful shot from Phil Struik of the interior of the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church building. Black-and-white seems to really bring out all the visually interesting lines in this shot, whether in the angled roof and ceiling boards, the pews, or the pipe organ. A church setting - and one of our own at that - is fitting for our magazine. We feel it lends itself well to this anniversary issue. Thank you, and congratulations, Phil! *The Clarion Team*



Runner up, Susanna Holtvlüwer



Runner up, Kor Reinink



Runner up, Hannah Veenendaal

Happy 70th Birthday *Clarion!*

PETER H. HOLTVLÜWER

On June 15, 1952 the first issue of *Canadian Reformed Magazine (CRM)* rolled off the presses of G. K. Veltman Publishing Co. in Streetsville, Ontario. It was four pages (double-sided) in length but contained an insert of three pages, all with standard black print on plain paper. It was written entirely in Dutch. It first appeared monthly, later weekly, but by the end of 1954 bi-weekly. It cost \$4.25 per year (CDN). Seventy years later, thanks to the faithfulness of the Lord, this same magazine now rolls off the presses of Premier Printing in Winnipeg, Manitoba under the name *Clarion*. Its standard twenty-eight glossy pages, featuring plenty of colourful headlines, photos, images, and advertisements, are written entirely in English. It is published every second week and costs \$49 per year.

But why would a small Dutch immigrant church community, only months in their new homeland, wish to put time, money, and effort toward a magazine? Wasn't starting a new life in Canada hard enough? Who had time to write, publish, print, and mail copies of a periodical? Who had opportunity or the inclination to read it? Yet the desire was there, *CRM* endured, and *Clarion* is still read in many homes across our federation today (and



Rev. Willem Loopstra

beyond). And so, as we say “happy birthday” to our magazine, we’re going to take a look back on what drove the founders to do what they did and see how our little periodical may still be of service today.

Classis Canada

Believe it or not, the impetus for *CRM* came from the second meeting of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Classis Canada¹ held in April of 1951. At this point there were only six churches in our fledgling federation, comprised almost entirely of new Dutch immigrants, a flood of which was flowing into the Dominion of Canada in the wake of WWII. The very first Canadian Reformed church had been instituted a year earlier in Lethbridge, Alberta. By the fall of 1950, three other churches in Alberta had been established, as well as one far to the east in Georgetown, Ontario. These four churches felt the need to cooperate together in a federation and so work was done to hold the first Classis Canada in November 1950 in Lethbridge. Six months later, and with two additional churches having been instituted, the second Classis Canada was convened in Edmonton and there the need for a “church magazine” (among other things, to be sure!) was openly discussed. As one historical survey summarizes it, “The churches [were] exhorted to set up

press committees and to inform the clerk of the Georgetown church of the result of their endeavours.”²

Clearly, the churches felt a need for connection. Georgetown was thousands of kilometres from Lethbridge and even the Alberta churches were hundreds of kilometres distance from each other. Most immigrants had no vehicle in those years and, even if they did, the long trip on frequently gravel roads (the Trans-Canada Highway was not officially opened until 1962!) was a deterrent. Plane travel (where available) was only for the very wealthy. Train or bus would be the best options to go from Ontario to Alberta, but that would take many days back and forth. There was no internet, and phones were still rare and expensive to use. Isolation was a real risk in this vast country.

One relatively economical way to keep contact with each other was to have members subscribe to a magazine that shared news from all the churches and perhaps other articles related to church matters. The immigrants were already familiar with this practice from the Netherlands. The same desire to federate together in the unity of the Reformed confessions fed the desire to develop and grow that unity by sharing a communal magazine of some kind. *CRM*, then, came about in part to fulfill that sense of need.

Church & family magazine

The man most responsible for starting *Canadian Reformed Magazine* wasn’t even in the country when Classis Canada discussed the need for such a vehicle. Perhaps to our surprise, Rev. Willem Loopstra was also not much of one for writing. Instead, he was an initiator and an organizer, even an entrepreneur of sorts, and a man who didn’t mind to put his shoulder to the wheel in order to serve the greater good. After accepting the call to serve the churches at Georgetown and Hamilton (as the first CanRC minister in Ontario) and immigrating with his family in late 1951, Pastor Loopstra soon came to share the desire of the churches for a magazine to help maintain and promote unity.

Rev. Loopstra also saw this as an opportunity to build up individuals, couples, and families in the Reformed faith. In that light he set out with the help of Mr. Cornelis (Kees) Ouwensloot to produce a magazine specially designed for members of the Canadian Reformed Churches. For the first while G. K. Veltman

¹ Classis Canada was divided into Classis West and Classis East in late 1951. Delegates from the two classes then met in the first General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches in November 1954. For more details, see W.W.J. VanOene, *Inheritance Preserved: The Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches in Historical Perspective* (Winnipeg: Premier Printing, 1991), pp.93-95 and p.147.

² VanOene, *Inheritance Preserved*, p.95.

served as publisher, but before long Pastor Loopstra established his own publishing arm called Canadian Reformed Publishing House and this continued until his retirement. *CRM* was thus a private undertaking and never had the status of being the approved or “official” magazine of the federation, nor does *Clarion* today. Yet the desire all along was to serve the churches. It also never became nor was it intended to be a money maker; rather, the magazine was (and still is) a labour of love in the service of Christ.

From the start, Rev. Loopstra envisioned a magazine that would focus on both church life and family life. In the “old country” there had been a separate magazine for each, but in Canada at this time one magazine would have to do. According to Loopstra’s lead article in the very first issue, *CRM* would ask each congregation to share local news (much like church bulletins do today), but also press releases of council meetings, explanations of decisions, and even preaching schedules. The family side of *CRM* would consist of articles on various topics. In the second issue, a writer going by the name “Dick” started a column for young people, inviting readers to send in questions. Answers would aim to give guidance according to the Bible and the Three Forms of Unity.



Mr. Kees Ouwensloot at a linotype machine.

In all of this the managing editor’s desire was to “preserve and increase the Lord’s church in Canada.” Unite and build-up were key themes. Although the intimacy of the magazine’s early days (with only six congregations to keep track of!) has faded back as the federation has grown today into more than sixty-five congregations, mission posts, and church plants today, the love for the bride of Christ and the desire to keep the federation united in the one true faith continues to be pursued by *Clarion*. *CRM*’s original purpose can still be recognized in *Clarion*’s present tagline: “To encourage, educate, engage, and unite” believers in the Canadian (and now also American!) Reformed Churches.

“Pink Pages” & more

To bring out congregational news, Rev. Loopstra took responsibility to cull from church bulletins and summarize what was going on in what were soon affectionately called the “pink pages.” The pages were literally pink to make them instantly stand out from the rest. Readers looked for them and welcomed the news. In addition, he included articles that dealt both with issues in the churches broadly (e.g. unions and union membership) and in family life specifically (e.g. should adopted children be baptized?). It wasn’t long before regular columns emerged dealing with such things as Scripture meditations, the goings-on in our then-sister churches in the Netherlands, and observations/commentary on society generally and other church groups. Book reviews became a regular feature.

In an effort to defray costs, advertisements from church members (e.g. anniversaries) and businesses soon appeared in the back of the magazine. As time went on, the language evolved too. English blurbs appeared only occasionally in the 1950s; by the mid-60s, English was taking over more and more, and by the early 70s Dutch articles had all but disappeared.

For approximately the first year and a half of production, Rev. Loopstra functioned as the all-purpose editor, managing all the content. Shortly after Rev. Gijsbertus VanDooren came from the Netherlands to become the minister in Orangeville (formerly Georgetown), he was recruited to become the official editor-in-chief in 1954. He performed that task for sixteen years. Rev.



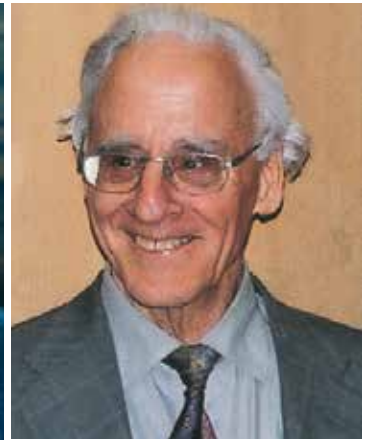
Rev. Gijsbertus VanDooren



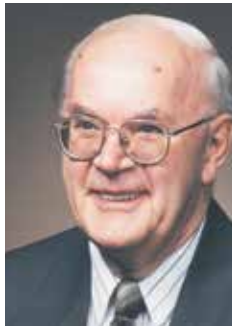
Rev. Willem Loopstra



Rev. Willem W. J. VanOene



Rev. Jakob Geertsema



Dr. Jelle Faber



Dr. Cornelis Van Dam



Dr. James Visscher

Loopstra, with the help of Kees Ouwersloot and later Diny and Tony Vanderhout and also his own children, continued behind the scenes to manage the production of it all until the end of 1972. They all put countless volunteer hours into this process with the pastor himself averaging about a day per week on this task.

The editor-in-chief always seems to have been assisted by co-editors, contributing editors, or some sort of editorial committee. Here is a list of the editors-in-chief of *CRM/Clarion*:

1952-1954 - Rev. Willem Loopstra
 1954-1970 - Rev. Gijsbertus VanDooren
 1971-1978 - Rev. Willem W. J. VanOene
 1979-1983 - Dr. Jelle Faber
 1984-1986 - Revs. Jakob Geertsema and Willem Pouwelse
 1987-1997 - Rev. Jakob Geertsema
 1998-2000 - Dr. Cornelis Van Dam
 2000-2021 - Dr. James Visscher

***Clarion* (1973–present)**

In the early 1970s, with Rev. Loopstra having been involved with *CRM* for twenty years and being at the point of retirement, there seems to have been a natural feeling to “pass the torch” in terms of the publishing. Around that time contact developed with br. Gerrit (Gerry) Kuik of Premier Printing in Winnipeg, who was interested in helping out. Soon it was agreed that Premier Printing would carry on where Canadian Reformed Publishing House had left off, aiming to use the magazine to unite and build up the blossoming federation which by then had grown to some twenty-seven congregations over four provinces and one state (Michigan). Rev. Willem VanOene was the editor-in-chief by this time, and he ably helped manage the transition.

In January 1973, Premier Printing published its first issue under the new name, “*Clarion*.” The word means “a clear sound,” and can also refer to a kind of trumpet. It was meant to allude specifically to the clear sounding note of the silver trumpets of the Levites that was to send a distinct message to God’s people (Num 10:1-10). The Editorial Committee of the day wrote, “After reading Numbers 10 you will see that in its own way *Clarion*, too, can rally God’s people in time of battle, and that it can also unite them in feasts of thankfulness as it makes its joyful noise unto

OVER THE YEARS: CLARION’S EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

1952-1966, 1970-1972	Rev. W. Loopstra
1954-1966, 1967-1970	Rev. G. VanDooren
1964-1967, 1970-1993	Rev. W.W.J. VanOene
1964-1967	Rev. A.B. Roukema
1966-1967	Rev. D. De Jong
1966-1969	Rev. F. Kouwenhoven
1966-1967	Rev. H.A. Stel
1966-1967	Rev. J.T. Van Popta
1966-1977	Rev. D. VanderBoom
1967-1970	Rev. M. Van Beveren
1970-1976, 1988-1990	Mr. W. Helder
1976-2000	Prof. J. Geertsema
1976-1980, 1983-1984, 1985-1988, 2000-2015	Rev. K. Stam
1979-1983	Dr. J. Faber
1981-2003	Prof. J. DeJong
1983-1986	Rev. W. Pouwelse
1986-2000, 2006-2019	Dr. C. Van Dam
1986-1990	Dr. K. Deddens
1994-2000	Rev. G.Ph. van Popta
1994-1996	Rev R. Schouten
1998-2005	Dr. N.H. Gootjes
1998-1999	Rev. J.L. van Popta
1998-2010	Rev. R. Aasman
2000-2021	Dr. J. Visscher
2004-2006	Rev. W. Slomp
2005-present	Mrs. L. Veenendaal
2007-present	Rev. E. Kampen
2011-present	Rev. P. Holtvlüwer
2016-present	Rev. M. Van Luik
2020-present	Dr. J. Van Vliet
2022-present	Rev. J. Witteveen

the LORD.”³ These words make clear that *Clarion* was essentially *CRM* under a different name.

To be sure, there were certain changes along the way. For instance, the magazine eventually appeared in colour in the mid 1990s. Some writers serialized articles on a particular topic (W. W. J. VanOene on the history of the CanRC; W. Pouwelse on ethical issues touching family life). Later these were published by Premier Printing as stand-alone books (*Patrimony Profile* and *Like Living Stones, A Spiritual House, and A Well-Founded City*, respectively). And yet, at its core, *Clarion* remains both a church and family magazine. The same basic effort was and is made every second week in *Clarion* as it was in *CRM*: to unite, encourage, and build up the members of the churches in the Reformed faith so that the churches may in turn continue to be a salting influence in our nation(s).

It is true that modes of travel and communication across our sprawling country have changed dramatically. Driving and flying long distances are now regularly undertaken by a majority of members. Phone and internet connections make personal

contact easy and inexpensive. And while social media, blogs, vlogs, and podcasts have added to the ways we can share news and ideas with each other, the printed magazine still has its place. It’s something you can hold in your hand, pass to your family members, and readily discuss over a beverage. In the midst of so much that is digital and virtual, it may even be refreshing to have something tangible and physical to personally share around. In any case, the prayer expressed by the Editorial Committee in 1973 remains apt for us today: “May *Clarion* fulfil its purpose as a Canadian and Reformed magazine, so that it will serve the Canadian Reformed community and so that also by means of its modest endeavours the clarion sound of the Reformed faith will be heard from coast to coast.” Happy birthday *Clarion*!⁴ 🇺🇸



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³ *Clarion*, Vol 22, No 1, p.2.

⁴ In researching for this article, I was aided by several individuals whose help was invaluable. The memories of Mr. Chuck Loopstra (son of Rev. Willem Loopstra), Mr. Rudy Ouwersloot (son of Mr. Cornelis Ouwersloot), Mrs. Diny Vanderhout, and Dr. Cornelis Van Dam helped fill in many details not recorded elsewhere. Mrs. Margaret Alkema, Librarian at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, also kindly gave much help in accessing the earliest volumes of *CRM* and helping me (an anglophone!) to make sense of the Dutch. Thank you one and all!

Our Task and Calling

WILLEM LOOPSTRA

In connection with a particular event, we feel compelled to write something in this issue about our task and calling. On August 21, 1952, the *Groote Beer*, which had arrived in Quebec a few days earlier bringing emigrants, sailed again for the Netherlands. If the information we received is correct, then this return trip included a considerable number of Dutchmen who returned to the old homeland.

Disillusionment with Canada?

Was it for a trip? To be sure, among those on board there were several who could afford the luxury of spending some months to visit relatives and acquaintances they had left a few years ago. In due

When we heard this, we asked ourselves: how is this possible? Is there reason for disillusionment? What is the root cause of this? It goes without saying that we cannot answer this question here in every respect. The circumstances will have been rather diverse and the peoples' reasons too varied. However, there is one thing to which we draw your attention.

In the first place: we continue to find a certain category of immigrants who claim that the information provided in Holland was seriously lacking. "If I had known everything," they say, "I would never have come here. And I'll be the last to encourage others to emigrate ever again." We will certainly not deny the claim that the information provided from here and in Holland could have been better.

of) information, but much more in the fact that the emigrants, when they were still in the Netherlands, and especially when they arrived here as immigrants, continued to look at the information through their *Dutch* glasses. It is difficult to blame them for doing so while in the Netherlands, even though it would have been proper that this danger would have been clearly pointed out to them in the information then provided.

Let me give a concrete example: when it is pointed out that one should take into account possible periods of unemployment, especially in the winter, the immigrant sees the concept of "unemployment" through his Dutch *security* glasses. After all, aren't people in the Netherlands insured against everything "from the cradle to the grave"? The much-desired Canadian ideal of freedom also implies that one needs to be *independent* and needs to take *his own* measures in order to cope with any setbacks!

The most beautiful experience of the fellowship of the believers is to take the correct scriptural attitude toward one another even in the smaller things

time they would return again to Canada in good spirits. But it appears that this was not the case for most of the travellers. By far the majority of these Dutch people had had enough and returned to Holland, being disillusioned with what they had experienced.

Of course, this information can also be improved as more and lengthier experiences are gained.

Orange-coloured glasses

Yet it seems to us that the fault does not lie in the first place with the (lack

Bite the bullet

In the second place, we would like to point out that many immigrants here in Canada no longer stand for their convictions and words that they expressed as emigrants in the Netherlands. This is related to what we wrote earlier, but it still needs to be pointed out as a wrongful phenomenon. In the Netherlands, it was

rather easy to say, “We’re willing to bite the bullet for one or two years.” Well then, let’s not look so downcast here when indeed, in many respects, the proverbial bullet has become reality! After all, it is worth the effort to persevere, given the prospects that lie here in all areas, but which need to be “conquered!”


Our task and calling is to continue to point out these things in a calm and faithful way, and in so doing—and in many other ways—to give each other a great deal of moral support. This should not primarily consist of removing all the difficulties for the newly arrived immigrants. It is much more beneficial that we teach each other to stand on our own two feet in all respects and to overcome the difficulties *by ourselves*.

On your own two feet

The immigrant needs to talk to his employer when there are difficulties, even if he hasn’t mastered the English language. If he would do so himself, he’ll learn English at its quickest. He has to take the initiative himself when the containers aren’t arriving soon enough. Then he learns the quickest way to approach the authorities he needs to speak to. And in the same way there are a hundred and one other things that shouldn’t be *done for him*, but that he has to manage and resolve himself. And the assistance he receives in this regard, which we should all be *eager to give*, should consist of showing him the way, so that he will learn to do this by himself.

These may appear to be small matters, yet they can be of great significance and

decide the question as to whether the immigrant will become disillusioned or not.

The most beautiful experience of the fellowship of the believers is to take the correct scriptural attitude toward one another even in the smaller things. We need to keep in mind what is best for our fellow brother and sister, even if he or she may think that another form of assistance would be more effective for him/her. In Lord’s Day 42 of the Heidelberg Catechism, it does not say that I should do everything that is agreeable to my neighbour for the present time, but that I should promote *my neighbour’s good* wherever I can and may. Let’s reflect on this and put it into practice with a view to our calling and our task *here as immigrants*. 



Rev. Willem Loopstra immigrated to Canada with his wife Ekeliena and their four sons in late 1951, in the thick of the post-war emigration boom from the Netherlands. He took his task as an immigrant seriously by (among other things) starting *CRM* with Mr. Cornelis Ouwersloot about a half year later. He began it as a magazine to help the Liberated Reformed immigrants maintain unity in faith and fellowship in their new homeland. By God’s faithfulness, it continues to this day under the name *Clarion*.

This article was originally published in Dutch in *Canadian Reformed Magazine* Vol 1, No 4, Sept 15, 1952.

Washing One Another's Feet

GIJSBERTUS VAN DOOREN

The apostle John was not able to simply tell the story of the foot washing (John 13:1-15). He could not because the Spirit of Christ took over. That Spirit, the author of God's revelation, not only urged him, but rather compelled him to introduce, with a forceful prelude, connecting eternity with eternity, this "simple" fact: the Master, in his undergarment, washing the dirty feet of his argumentative followers while orchestrating time into a straight path, the path of the greatest-ever office-bearer.

Just read the passage in your Bible. Jesus got up, laid aside his outer garments and, dressed in just a loincloth, poured water in a basin and started (John vividly remembers the scene) to wash the

We are not talking about just "a master" who teaches his followers a lesson in humility. He was not the only one ever to do so. There were so many other masters who were as humble as he was. He could be counted among others like Gandhi, Confucius, Francis of Assisi, and many monks. But then he would no longer be our Saviour, the blessed person Jesus Christ.

Then the washing of the feet would be an example, also an evangelical command, robbed of its evangelical character, brought down to the level of a humanistic slogan of a service to one's neighbour, becoming a harbinger for the antichrist.

lead to his death, before he is brought into the arms of his Father.

Therefore, we have this powerful prelude in verse 1: "... when Jesus knew" While looking at the feet of those whom the Father entrusted to him, he sees the ends of eternity. He knows that he came from the Father, before the foundation of the world. He knows that he will go to the Father and that all things have been laid into his hands. He sees the inviting perspective of the coming glory. But he also knows, since the devil has entered Judas, and knowing that his hour has come, that he only shall win that glory for himself and for those belonging to him if he descends into the depths of hellish pain.

Because of all this we don't have just a regular story of the washing of feet. Repeatedly we need to exegete this "simple" act, looking at it from all sides. Then the washing of the feet becomes the sign of his complete act of obedience, displaying all three offices.

We need to view this example of brotherly love in the framework of the mighty messianic message

disciples' feet, *because* he knew. . . .

He knew that his hour had come.

He knew that he would leave this world to go to his Father.

He knew that the devil had entered Judas's heart.

He knew that the Father had put all things in his hands.

He knew that he proceeded from the Father and would return to him.

Knowing all this, he poured water in the basin. That's why this simple act, just because it was so simple, was so immensely deep and mysterious.

When Jesus knew . . .

On the contrary: if we want to remember this message of the washing of the feet, we need to view this example of brotherly love in the framework of his mighty messianic awareness in which, according to the words of the Bible, Jesus laid aside his clothes, before he was stripped of them at the cross, and poured water in the basin. . . .

Then we can and must see him as the greatest-ever office-bearer of God, who was fully aware of his task, by means of this sign of his office of servant, which will

Prophet, king, priest

It becomes a sign of his prophetic declaration of the Father, for which he asks faith from his followers, that they may see the Father in him, and him in the Father. He works so that they, in faith, allow their Lord and Master to lay his complete mediatorial work at the feet of his Father, including the work he does at their feet, their filthy feet: "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me" (v 8).

It becomes a sign of his royal power over the eternal glory for the benefit of those who follow him because, not only

does he earn that glory for them with his Father, but he also guides them towards that glory up to the gates of heaven. In that way he raises hope in the hearts of his people, softening all their sorrows, leveling mountains and drying up seas, on the way to an immeasurable glory. Jesus said: "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean" (v 10). In this sign he also guarantees the continual, daily washing of the dirt that his followers have collected on the way to glory, a gift that the Father has entrusted to their Master.

It becomes a sign of him fulfilling his priestly task, performing in unending love the most lowly service, which then becomes the most important service: "I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you; you ought to wash one another's feet" (v 15). And so, love each other as I have loved you.

Anyone who has read the story of the washing of the feet in this way (and whoever reads it differently resists the Holy Spirit) hates all that "explanation" which transforms this official mediating act into a social program or a slogan of tolerance.

Purifying the church

In reality, this happens far too often. Washing one another's feet is explained as: no more fighting, no polemics, no more judging another person's opinion but instead allowing for another person's belief, recognizing other churches at face value. Giving up of what you have in exchange for something from "them" that might be better. This example of Christ turns into a base slogan for a World Council of Churches which rejects Christ's kingship, for a practicing of pluriformity where there is no room for his prophetic words, for a massive picture of all of us being image bearers of God where natural love will no longer be tolerated, much less where Christian love can flourish.

None of that! Washing one another's feet—that first deals most seriously with the "one another:" "you are clean," the communion of the holy catholic Christian church. This takes most seriously the full, official work of the Mediator, rejecting everything that falls short of that work. This is what in the end the washing of the feet shows: the struggle for the preservation and cleansing of the church, the body of Jesus Christ.


Washing one another's feet is not about being nice to the next person. It is

not a false irenicism, that rotting process for the church. Neither is it—for the sake of peace—to stop seeing our prophetic task.

Rather, it is the following: in a manner that is meaningful and clear, yet meek and humble, pointing out your brother's sins and, together, yes together, fighting against them. It is keeping the church pure, keeping the ecclesiastical style, keeping clear the paths of Jesus Christ who walks among the candlesticks.

Washing one another's feet is also at times washing each other's ears. But then for the sake of the house of the Lord, in all humility. In that way we seek the good of Jerusalem, always being alert and keeping watch.

Then we will proceed on our way with gladness, walking a smooth road. Then Christ displays his might among us. Then the obedience in our office will flourish as a result of our obedience to the Lord and Master.

Then the greatest among us will be a servant to all. And the greatest among us wears just his undergarment, pours the water in the basin, putting to shame anyone who holds off, holds off until someone else will go first. 



Rev. Gijsbertus Van Dooren was one of the pioneering ministers in the Canadian Reformed Churches, serving two congregations in Ontario from 1954-1977. He also served as part-time lecturer at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary from 1968-1983. Rev. Van Dooren became the second editor of *CRM* in 1954, fulfilling that task until 1970. He continued to contribute to *CRM/Clarion* for many years thereafter.

This article was first published in Dutch in *Canadian Reformed Magazine* Vol 2, No 38, Mar 26, 1954.

Fill the Earth

WILLEM W. J. VANOENE

After the LORD God had created man, he blessed him and said, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.” We know these words; at every solemnization of a marriage we hear them anew. Is it not about time that we reflect on them once more?

Expanding paradise

I do not wish at present to elaborate on the first part of the LORD’s charge, “Be fruitful and multiply,” although it would be very good if we would draw everyone’s attention to it in the age of “the pill” and of easy abortions. No, what I wish to write a few lines about is that second part: “Fill the earth and subdue it.” I have some serious questions in this respect and wish to share them with you. Do we still obey this command of our God?

One might remark that, when we do our work and when we do it faithfully, we thereby and therein are obedient to God’s command, “Subdue the earth!” Yes, but there is also the other charge: “Fill the earth!” The main point in this obliga-

tion as I see it is not “fill it with people.” That is expressed in the first part, about which we shall not speak. To “fill the earth” means: work throughout the earth; do not confine yourselves to one place, do not

stay together but spread out and let the whole earth become a paradise.

We are well aware that sin has entered into the world and that the situation has changed drastically since the LORD spoke those words. But whatever may have changed, not so the command of our God.

We realize that it is no longer possible, as was the case in the days before the fall, to move around and to wander away from the others without fear for one’s life and safety: there were no wild animals that threatened man’s life in any way; there were no men lying in wait to rob and kill. Life was safe throughout. The fact that there were no other people than Adam and Eve does not take away the correctness of that characterization of the situation.

Cities

Cain was the first one to build a city. No, it is not so that the city is condemned for that reason. Jerusalem, too, is a city with walls and gates, and as mountains are found round about Jerusalem, so the

favour and had not promoted the cause of the city, the watchmen would watch in vain. They did watch in vain when God withdrew his favour from them. And the new Jerusalem is still described as a city with walls and gates; but the gates are unlocked and open day and night.

We are to bear in mind that it was man’s rebellion against the LORD which led to the confusing of the language. “Come, let us build ourselves a city.” This is what prevented the spreading abroad on the earth after the flood. Thus the city became a symbol of rebellion against God and of the concentration of man’s power and cunning, his search for security and communion. The togetherness was to take away the uncertainty of life and the loneliness which man felt.

But the city—as is the case with all of man’s disobedient endeavours—has become exactly the opposite of what man expected of it. Almost nowhere is man more lonely than in the city! Life is more secure in the remote and rural regions than in the confines of the masses of concrete and steel, of brick and asphalt. Huge apartment buildings are almost cities by themselves; but the doors remain carefully locked and even the nearest neighbours are known only from furtive glances. Hardly ever a word is exchanged. Names and conditions are unknown. Thus, the loneliness is greater in the crowded conditions of the city than in a “lonely” village where only a few houses are found and where neighbours can chat leaning on a fencepost.

Some time ago I tried to find a member living in another city. I knew the address

The city became a symbol of rebellion against God and of the concentration of man’s power and cunning, his search for security and communion

LORD is round about those that fear him. Jerusalem, too, was a stronghold that provided protection and safety for as long as the LORD was looking down upon it in favour. If the LORD had not shown

LORD is round about those that fear him. Jerusalem, too, was a stronghold that provided protection and safety for as long as the LORD was looking down upon it in favour. If the LORD had not shown

but could not find her there although the address was absolutely correct; she had moved again. But when I asked left and right, no one appeared to know her or even to recall only the name. Yet it was not one of those ten or fifteen story structures; it was just a modest building.

The modern city isolates more than the "isolated wilderness." It is, besides, a place where life is more threatened than protected. Long gone are the days when one knew all the members of the local police force and greeted them when seeing them making their rounds on foot or bicycle. Even percentage-wise, more murders are committed in the "asphalt jungle" than in the rural areas. Yet more and more people exchange the rural areas for a place and for life in the city. In reaction, people have fled the city and moved to the suburbs, but the suburbs are being swallowed up by the city at an accelerated pace.

That is the world in which we live and the trend which we have to cope with. In more than one family it is experienced what dangers the city brings for old and young.

Spread out!

Fill the earth; spread out!

Yes, as a bitter fruit of man's fall, large areas of this earth have become uninhabitable. We realize this although, on the other hand, we may learn for instance from what the Israelis have achieved in arid regions that more parts of the wilderness can be made to bloom than is generally deemed possible.

Do we spread out? Or are we concentrating and "flocking together"? How many churches have been established during the past twenty-five years because members are pioneering in "new" regions? Not a single one!

I know the arguments. "There is no church there." "There is no Reformed school in that place." "We have to think of the future of our children and their eventual marriage." And so on. If the first immigrants from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands had talked like that, there would not have been one single Canadian Reformed Church.

Humanly speaking, if the family that, by mistake, was assigned to Homewood, Manitoba, instead of to Lethbridge where they intended to go, had not remained in Homewood, no Canadian Reformed Church would have been found in Carman and, maybe, not even in Winnipeg.

I appreciate the serious thought

Renewed pioneering

We are a people used to luxuries and it won't be easy to give them up. It will cost many hours of sweat and work to grow one's own food and to preserve it for the wintertime. It will cause a few blisters when wood has to be cut for the fire and when one can no longer just set the thermostat which takes care of a proper and even temperature throughout the day and the night.

Maybe our boys and girls will have to learn how to get butter from milk and how to gather honey from a beehive; maybe the girls will have to learn how to spin and knit and sew instead of lying on their backs reading Harlequin novels and listening to the raw sounds that spout

I do put before you all the question whether we should not seriously consider the matter of spreading out and of "pioneering."

that is given to the question of church and school; and it is understandable that people move to places where a Reformed school is found and where, eventually, the children can also attend a Reformed high school. These things have to be kept in mind. In more than one congregation it is felt that they have very little prospect of growth if they do not establish a Reformed school. However: if people move away from there because there is no such school, how will they ever get one? Then the ultimate result will be that the church disappears from that place, something which should be prevented. The cause of such a deplorable development would be the trend to flock together instead of spreading out and filling the earth.

from a radio or record-player. Maybe the boys will have to learn how to handle a team of horses instead of manipulating a "four on the floor" by which some 350 "horses" are activated. Our girls may have to learn how to grind corn and wheat and how to bake bread instead of pushing the buttons on a cash register or the keys of a typewriter.

But they will be none the worse for all this. And life may become much richer in every respect. We praise the pioneers, and we admire their courage, their stamina, and their perseverance. Meanwhile, we build on our "cities." We laud the life in the country where the marvels of our Father's creation can be seen and admired, far from the foul smell and the pollution caused by factories and exhaust

gases; but we bless the moment when we are back and can again flip a switch for instant light, remove the lid of a can for an instant meal, and add water to a bowl with “instant potatoes.”

I know that I am exaggerating just a little. But as a general characterization it is correct. No, I am not advocating a wild and unorganized wandering about of individual members. A tree which has grown up in a forest is liable to be blown over by a strong wind if the surrounding trees have been removed. We do need each other’s protection and attention.

But I do put before you all the question whether we should not seriously consider the matter of spreading out and of “pioneering.” We may have to give up some

luxuries; it will be a struggle perhaps for quite a few years. I do not minimize the adverse effects which living in a very small community may have. When you are a member of a large church of which you may hardly know at least half the membership, this has its advantages as well as its disadvantages, although more of the latter. It is not good when you sit at the Lord’s table and do not even know the name of the brother or sister sitting right beside you or across from you, though their faces seem slightly familiar. Living in a very small church, however, where everyone knows everything of everybody else, has its disadvantages, too. There, however, the bond oftentimes is stronger

and the need for strengthening of ranks more pressing.

If you consider a move, would you please bear the above in mind? When you plan to get married and are pondering the question where to settle, would you, then, think of the smaller churches or even of new regions where you could settle with a few families, eventually to attract others, too?


More will be asked of you.

But the rewards will exceed your expectations.

Fill the earth.

God’s world is very wide.

And he is everywhere.

With those who obey his command and subdue the earth. 



Rev. Willem VanOene belonged to the pioneering generation of Canadian Reformed ministers. He was the first to serve in British Columbia, having accepted the call to New Westminster in 1952. In 1981 he became lecturer in Ecclesiology at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary for several years. Throughout his ministry Rev. VanOene was a prolific writer and it wasn’t long before his articles appeared in *CRM*. He served as editor-in-chief from 1971–1978, overseeing the transition to “*Clarion*.” His pen was known to be sharp at times, but so were his insights; agree or disagree, many took the time to read him.

This article was first published in *Clarion* Vol 24, No 13, June 28, 1975.

Who Governs the Church?

CLARENCE STAM

Recently I had the privilege of engaging in a discussion with an esteemed brother on the topic, "The government of the church." It is a rather broad field, I know, but the matter was concentrated on the following important point: the role of the congregation in the decision-making process of the church.

Basically, the opinion expressed by my brother was: the consistory should remember to take all important matters to the congregation, the "body of Christ," and the eligible membership should have a final choice and say. He also felt the consistory cannot uphold decisions against the will of the membership. Ultimately, the consistory's task is to formulate proposals, make recommendations, and leave the final decision to the church. Otherwise, he claimed, hierarchy results, the ruling of the congregation by

not that we did not recognize the Synod's right to make any binding decision, but that we could not accept an unscriptural and superconfessional binding. The churches even had this right of refusal according to Article 31 of the Church Order.

Governing and ruling

My partner made the distinction between "ruling" and "governing." Ruling, he said, was acting as a "lord," imposing on others, and thus hierarchy. But governing is simply guiding without force, and thus formulating proposals for the benefit of the congregation. Such governing which respected the basic freedom of the congregation was truly anti-hierarchical.

There is some merit in this distinction, even though the words are interchangeable. Webster's writes the following: "'Govern' connotes as its end a keeping in

But the point is still: "governing" is much more than just formulating proposals as a possible guideline of action. The dictionary already indicates that it includes setting rules or laws "to determine" things. Governing has in it not only a real responsibility, but also strong authority. "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account," (Heb 13:17). My brother's view is unbiblical in that it unwittingly reduces the consistories and assemblies to mere consultative bodies without God-given authority and true governing power.

Democratic or theocratic?

In opposing one enemy, my friend is succumbing to another! Although he is fighting "hierarchy," he really is promoting it; namely, the hierarchy of the people, a democratic system: government of the people, by the people, for the people.

And the thing is: the church is not a democratic institution! The highest authority in the church is not the congregation itself, not even the consistory, but Christ. The church, we say, is theocratic, i.e., governed by God through his Spirit and Word.

My partner agreed with this, of course, but failed to see the consequences for his viewpoint. In his sovereign authority and grace, Christ has laid down a form of government, entrusted to the overseers, wherein he remains the final and foremost Bishop. The consistory does not so much rule in the place of Christ (that would already be saying too much!), nor does it represent the congregation in the way members of Parliament represent a certain constituency, but it rules in the name of Christ, applying his Word with the full authority of that Word. The

The church is not a democratic institution!

a higher body (in this case: the consistory).

The same, it was argued, also holds true for the major ecclesiastical assemblies (classis and synod); these, too, may only formulate recommendations, and the decision (in the form of ratification) is again with the (local) "body of Christ." The brother argued that the very essence of the Liberation in 1944 was a refusal of the Synod's right to make binding decisions and a maintaining of the independence and freedom of the local churches.

I answered that his vision entails nothing less than a far-reaching "congregationalism" and "independentism," which in the past have been repeatedly rejected by the Reformed churches. Besides, the issue in the Liberation was

a straight course or smooth operation for the good of the whole and the individual; 'rule' more often suggests the exercise of despotic or arbitrary power."

The Church Order certainly warns against a "lording it over" one another, and whether this is done by persons or assemblies makes no difference (Art 85 [now Art 74 - ed.]). The apostle Peter calls on the elders to govern "not as domineering," but rather as "examples" to the flock. In matters of major importance, a consistory will certainly take the remarks of the congregation into account, although the people's preference need not be decisive. So, agreed, there may be no despotism in the church of Christ!

office-bearers collectively “exercise the authority” given to them by Christ. So we say: Christ rules through them.

There has been an interesting debate on the point to whom exactly the authority of Christ has been given in the church. Prof. H. Ridderbos once wrote: the New Testament points to the congregation as the first and principal carrier of the authority of Christ, and the office-bearers are the means (Dutch: *de organen*) through which the congregation acts. But H. Bavinck has pointed out that the congregation’s right to elect office-bearers does not necessarily include the right to partake in the government of the church, nor does it suggest that the congregation rules itself through the office-bearers! The office-bearers do not receive their authorization from the congregation which elects, nor from the consistory which appoints, but from Christ to whom they must give account (Ezek 34; 1 Cor 3 and 4). “The members of the congregation do not partake, as such, in the government of the church” (for this debate see: Dr. G. P. L. vander Linde *Die Grondbeginsels van die Presbyteriale Kerkregeringstelsel*, Potchefstroom, South Africa, 1965).

So, the government of the church is to the overseers, and regulated by the Word of God. A consistory can and must make binding decisions only on the basis of that Word. This right, by the way, is also given to the major assemblies by mutual agreement of the churches. Through all these assemblies Christ is ruling his church by his Spirit and Word.

Christ did not impose hierarchy when he gave this authority to men. They rule only under him. Therefore, there is no right or need to reduce the office-bearers’

position to the advantage of the congregation. Such a move would be a direct attack on Christ’s own position in the church. He who disobeys the consistory’s scriptural government disobeys Christ. For the “Body” does not rule the Head, but the Head rules the Body in the way he has determined.

Safeguard

It could happen, and it has happened, that assemblies make wrong, unscriptural decisions, disobeying the Head of the church. Such was the case during the Liberation when some (undoubtedly impressive but nevertheless unscriptural) ideas of Dr. A. Kuyper were elevated to church doctrine. Then “synodocracy” results. It could happen that consistories demand unjust things, and “consistoriocracy” results. Ministers can gain wrong influence and “dominocracy” results. That would be hierarchical indeed, for hierarchy is not constituted by government per se, but by any government which goes against or beyond Scripture, the confessions, and the Church Order.

What then? Well, there is a basic, golden rule in the Scriptures: we shall be more obedient to God than to man (Acts 5:29). Men are fallible, God’s Word is perfect. And the introduction of special offices does not do away with the office of all believers! It remains the task of the members, though not called to govern, yet placed in the office of believers, to examine every decision made that regards them. And if any wrong decision is taken, the path is open to an appeal on the basis of God’s Word, and said decision is not binding if it conflicts with that Word.

This, you see, was an essential matter in the Liberation. No unscriptural bindings! It was a Liberation according to Article 31 of the Church Order, which is an effective safeguard against hierarchy of any kind. For the church is theocratic. God’s Word alone has the final authority to which all members must submit themselves.

On the other hand, if men appointed to govern do come with the clear command of Christ, obeying them is a submission to God himself. The safeguard of the Church Order is not a “democratic implant” but a “theocratic principle.”

The congregation’s role

What is then the task of the congregation with respect to the government of the church? First, it is to recognize the divinely given organization of the church. This order: Christ rules the church through legitimately chosen and appointed office-bearers, men “full of the wisdom of the Spirit” (Acts 6). This recognition includes a hearty acceptance of all scripturally-founded decisions, an obedience to God, and not to men.

This recognition does not undo the calling to be active in the office of believers; to be involved in the examination of all decisions in the light of the Scriptures; and, if it should happen that any assembly rides off the track, to bring this to the attention of those first responsible; to go the way of appeal if there is no adequate response.

The church is no hierarchy. Therefore, it cannot be a democracy. The church is the body of Christ, governed by him in the way he has appointed. Let us keep it that way. 🍷



Rev. Clarence (Klaas) Stam was raised in Canada but trained for the ministry at the seminary in Kampen, the Netherlands. After serving one Dutch congregation, he and his family returned to Canada in 1975, where he ministered to four successive congregations in Ontario until his early retirement (for health reasons) in 2004. He enjoyed writing and served many years on the editorial committee at *Clarion*. His articles frequently displayed a conversational style, combining insight, wit, and humour.

This article was first published in *Clarion* Vol 26, No 19, Sept 24, 1977

Circumspection... The Electric Church

CID

Not too long ago we had an interesting visitor, a distant relative who had emigrated to Canada shortly after World War II and had settled well in his new homeland. Except, in the Netherlands he had been a member of the Reformed churches, but since in his local town there was no Reformed church, he had simply joined the Presbyterian church. For a time things went well with our relative, but lately he (and his family) had grown somewhat discouraged with the effort of their (aging) minister, and he told me, "Often on Sunday mornings we just stay home and watch Rex Humbard on T.V."

Arm-chair Christians

So, our relative had become a member of the ever-growing "electric church," that vast audience of arm-chair Christians whose sole worship consists in seeing and hearing their flashy screen-evangelists once weekly on television.

The name "electric church" is not my invention, by the way, but is the title of a book written last year by Ben Armstrong, executive director of the U.S. National Religious Broadcasters (NRB). Armstrong claims that religious producers spend at least \$600 million per year to buy time on commercial stations. He also estimates that at least 14 million Americans watch a religious TV show and that another 115 million listen regularly to a radio gospel program. If this estimate is anywhere close to reality, the amount

is much greater than those who actually attend church.

Many of our churches, too, have their own radio program, the Voice of the Church, but our budget and (possibly) our audience is incomparable to the effort and following of the multi-million-dollar glitter-and-gleam evangelists who dominate the airwaves.

It is interesting to note who the top TV-preachers are, and what their annual broadcasting revenue is. I take my figures from the February 4th issue of *TIME*. Jim Bakker, host of the PTL Club (which stands for "praise the Lord" or "people that love," whichever you prefer) leads the pack with \$51 million. Pat Robertson, host of the 700 Club and author of the book, *Shout*

It from the Housetops, is second in line with \$47 million. In the lower echelons we encounter Rex Humbard (\$25 million) and Jimmy Swaggart (\$20 million). Despite these eye-dazzling figures, even these mammoth-evangelists sometimes meet with financial difficulties, but one moving plea to their faithful following usually results in instant funding. Rex Humbard recently was able to work away a million-dollar deficit and have enough "morsels" left to buy himself a house in Florida. Not bad for one haul.

This new tide of airwave evangelism is fostered and controlled almost completely by the "Evangelical-Fundamentalist-Pentecostal wing of Protestantism" (*TIME Magazine*) and has



Jim Bakker, "Leader of the pack."

no denominational binding. With 1400 radio and 35 TV stations, four religious “networks” make use of satellite and cable to reach millions of people throughout North America and even Europe. The possibilities are simply gigantic. It may very well be that the “tube” is replacing the “pew.” This hard-sell “televangelism” is offering devastating competition to the traditional churches who see their attendance and, subsequently, their revenue declining sharply.

Slick competition

The big question is: What makes these religious programs so popular? Perhaps a variety of answers can be given. The fault may lie for a great part with the “institutionalized” churches themselves whose message and ministry has become so shallow that they cannot hold on to their membership. Many believers are turning away from the clinical coldness of Scripture-critical denominations to the charismatic warmth of Pentecostalism.

For a great part, however, the success of the ‘electric church’ is due to its own slick programming, offering a tempting package of fantastic promises and easy-to-grasp answers. The formula is simple and is based on the format of secular talk-shows, like, e.g., the Johnny Carson *Tonight Show*. The “host” is introduced

amidst heavy lighting and bellowing gospel-music. Views of an enthusiastic live audience flash across the screen—all those happy people, where do they all come from? A Scripture passage is read from which simplistic yet extravagant conclusions are drawn. This is usually followed by a call “to accept Christ now,” and prayer. Then various guests from the religious celebrity circuit are interviewed, guests whose enthusiastic witnesses invariably centre around the marvellous things Christ has done with their lives. Born-again movie stars, sport figures, and ex-cons help to pass the hour with lively testimonies and humorous anecdotes. The host addresses the audience with an emotion-filled voice. “If Christ has done all this for them, imagine what he can do for you?” The program is usually concluded with a refined request for more funding so that existing projects can be preserved and expanded, and others can also be brought to Christ. Hence the impressive revenue.

The electric church with its immaculate, ever-smiling host and its pretty parade of born-again beauties does seem to fill a spiritual gap in America. Yet that gap is filled with Arminian heresy and false expectations. The broadcast diet offers little true nourishment but seems to fit excellently in a society geared

to “fast-food” restaurants and drive-in theatres.

The church comes together

Christ gathers his church *differently*. He calls and brings the believers together in holy worship and gives to them the preaching of the pure doctrine. He strengthens faith by the use of the sacraments and the experience of true fellowship. He has an ongoing “follow-up” in the exercising of Christian discipline. The problem of the electric church is not so much the initial motivation but the real follow-up. No wonder—the electric church lets you sit on the sofa; Christ activates his church via the pulpit to rise from the pew and be his followers every day in every field of life.

Only the church which gathered according to the norms of Christ is truly “electrifying.” It does not offer million-dollar shock-treatments but gives simple edification.

There is a vast difference between a television *club*, which centres around a charismatic host, and the Christian *church*, which has Christ as its Head and his Word as its only foundation.

Club versus church. Sofa versus pew. Learn to appreciate the difference: give the wolves in show-business-sheeps clothing no forum in your living room. 🗨️

The mysterious person who wrote under the pseudonym “Cid” was never publicly made known and I (PH) have not been able to find anyone who is able or willing to identify this individual. Yet for a while Cid was a regular (and unique!) contributor to *Clarion*, a part of our history. The articles from Cid’s pen seem to be mainly commentary on a range of cultural issues.

This article was first published in *Clarion* Vol 29, No 14, July 12, 1980.

Our Magazine

Dear Little Magazine Readers, Uncle Ben has been very busy these last few weeks and he has asked me to take "Little Magazine" over. I do this with pleasure, because I have already read quite a few of your letters and am beginning to know you a bit. Of course, you don't know me yet. I am Aunt Betty, am not too old yet, so that you don't have to be afraid I won't understand when you have something to tell.

We're starting out with a *new idea*. You know grownups have all sorts of clubs, Lion's Club, Golf Club, etc. But you don't have to be a grownup to have a club, because we are going to have a club of our very own too, for people from 6-13. If you send me your *name, address, age, hobby* and anything else you would like to tell, you will receive a *Membership Card*.

The name of our club? That is up to you. If you have any good ideas for a name, you will write them to me, won't you?

In front of me I have some letters that I want to answer yet.

Tineke Veldman You just had your birthday, didn't you? Did you have a good time? How do you like Saturday School? I bet the baby rabbits are cute. I hope you will write again soon, Tineke?

Nancy VanderMolen Nancy if the writing you did in your last letter was awful, what will it look like when you do good writing? I thought this writing was good. It's very nice of your father to offer to build me a house, but I think I like to stay where I am. I'm sorry but I don't think I know your brother John. Will we hear from you again?

Corrie VanDelft Somebody else whose birthday we missed. Sorry Corrie, I hope you had a good time anyway! Do you like going to the Christian School? Do you play the organ well? I bet your mother is happy she has such a good helper. Bye!

Geraldine Grit Did you ever write neatly, Geraldine! And what a beautiful

name you have! I still want to say Happy Birthday to you, although it's too late. How is Billy goat? Do you know the story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff? So long Geraldine!

Mary Doekes I think the snow is gone now, even in Orangeville, isn't it Mary? It's nice to live in such a big family I bet. I am glad you liked the story of Abraham Lincoln. Thanks for your nice picture. At least I know what you look like now. Write again soon, Mary.

Margaret Baartman Margaret had her birthday, too. She is ten now. Did you get that nylon dress, Margaret? I bet you live in a beautiful spot. I've always wanted to see the Fraser River myself. I hope we will hear some more from you, Margaret.

Edna Rowaan I know I'm getting pretty boring, but here is another girl who had her birthday. Edna is ten years now. Thanks for your nice picture. Do you always curl your hair on Saturday? As you see, you have your name in

the paper too, just like Aafke and Harry. Bye Edna!

Alice DeBoer How did you do in your exams, Alice? I used to collect stamps too. It's fun, isn't it? You must be an animal friend with so many animals around. You are 13 now, aren't you? I hope you will be a member of our club too, Alice!

Family of Boersema (Janice, Jackie, Atty, Renny, Ralph).

Janice Janice is only five, but she writes better than some grade 1 children I know. Sure, you may join our club too, Janice. Bye!

Atty You did not write your age, Atty, but I bet you are in Grade 3 (because of your hand-writing). Do you like doing dishes? (What a question, eh?) Bye, Atty!

Jackie How old are you, Jackie, about 7 or 8? How was the Home and Garden Show? Did you have nice Easter holidays? So long, Jackie!

Ralph I'm glad to hear from a boy at last. I hope all you boys don't think this is an all-girls club, because it isn't. Ralph has the explanation for "ginnipegs." This must be guinea pigs. They are small, short-tailed animals (usually white, black, or tan). Thank you Ralph!

Rennie Rennie still writes about snow. The weather is much nicer now, isn't it? Thank you for the explanation of guinea pigs. Rennie also thinks Sparky is a black cat with sparkling eyes. Rennie has a question. What are bantams? Can you answer that question? Let's wait for someone to answer that, Rennie.

Last but not least, I have another new idea. This time it's a *Picture Drawing Contest*. I am sure we have a lot of artists in our club. Your picture may be about *Spring, What you would like to be when you grow up, or Sports you like*. You may do your picture either in crayon or waterpaints. Don't use lined paper, please! Also, don't have too big

or too small a picture. We will be divided into 3 groups:

Group 1, boys and girls from 5-8.

Group 2, boys and girls from 9-11.

Group 3, boys and girls from 12 and over.

On the back of your picture state your name and age, and whether you are a boy or a girl, I hope you will all take part in the contest. Let's see how many little Rembrandts we have. (You know who that was, don't you?)

Send your picture and other letters to:

Aunt Betty,
c/o Editor C.R.M.
541 Emerald St.
Burlington, Ont.

We will hear from each other soon! Bye bye.

Yours,
Aunt Betty

From very early on CRM had an eye for both teenagers (a separate youth column) and children. "Our Little Magazine" was dedicated to interacting with children from across the churches. At first an "Uncle Ben" managed this, but later and for quite some time a certain "Aunt Betty" took this over. Here too the persons behind the names remain unknown to the present Clarion team! But Clarion continues this tradition (minus the pseudonyms!) with "Clarion Kids."

This article was first published in CRM Vol 8, No 3, May 16, 1959.

CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

LORD'S DAY 12

The Lord Jesus has a few different names. One of those names is Christ. Christ means "Anointed One." Anointing is when oil is poured on a man's head. The oil would run down the man's face and onto his shoulders. God used the anointing to show that this man had a special job from him. God used the anointing to show that he would help the man do that work. The Lord Jesus was anointed as well. Remember the Bible story of the Holy Spirit looking like a dove? He came to Jesus. So, the Lord Jesus was anointed with the Spirit! And Jesus had a very important job from God. He taught the Israelites, and us, about God. He died for our sins. And today he is in heaven, watching over us as King of the world. Praise God that Jesus is also the Christ!

Look up the following Bible passages and write down who was anointed.

Leviticus 8: 12: _____

1 Samuel 10: 1 (hint: see the verse before): _____

1 Samuel 16: 13: _____

Attach the following words to the word Christ: Anointed, Spirit, teach

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