

Clarion

*In the Fruit of the Spirit is the Lord Jesus
Introducing Professor Reuben Bredenhof
Douwe Johannes VanderWerp Part 3*



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

It's summer here in North America and I hope many of you will enrich your leisure time by leafing through (and soaking up!) this issue. You'll find nourishment for your soul in the meditation on God "tackling" Jacob provided by Pastor Clarence VanderVelde in *Treasures, New & Old*. Pastor Tyler VanderGaag also gives sweet spiritual nectar in looking at how the Lord Jesus displays so perfectly the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the first of a planned series. He hopes to take us slowly, immersively, through each of the nine-fold fruit!

Dr. John Smith of CRTS mines Scripture for us in a different way, showing us God's perspective on the Jewish people (part 1). This may impact how we look upon Jews in our time, including the state of Israel. Speaking of CRTS, our intrepid reporter Ilse Vandermeulen caught up with our professor-elect Dr. Reuben Bredenhof and we are pleased to introduce him to our readers via her interview with him. One of Dr. Bredenhof's portfolios is Professor of Mission and so it's fitting that we may present the mission work being done in Papua New Guinea

through the pen of Pastor Cornelis Kleyn. MERF, too, gives us a glimpse into how their mission efforts are affecting students and preachers in north-east Africa.

What's left? Well, Mr. Keith Sikkema gives us another chapter in the story of Douwe VanderWerp (don't forget, these are stories meant to be read to kids). We learn there about how some earnest believers living in dark days struggled with having their children baptized. Interestingly, Rev. Eric Kampen in his editorial touches on the significance of baptism (and Lord's supper) for the assurance of our salvation. The *Ray of Sunshine* column introduces us to birthday boy Terrence Berends while *Clarion Kids* gives the kids a neat lesson in the different names of our Saviour. Two letters to the editor on different topics give us all something to consider while the press release of a recent Classis Pacific West has more than a few interesting bits of news to appreciate and even give thanks for.

Now, relax, enjoy your breather and this issue!

Peter Holtvliuwer

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EDITORIAL

Sacramental Assurance

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!” It is well possible that such words may seem a bit over the top. This is not so much because they are words of a hymn rather than a psalm. Psalm 23 starts, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Psalm 27 starts, “The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?” With the words of Lord’s Day 1, we confess that “I belong with body and soul, both in life and death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.” Rather, it can be the case that they seem over the top because, well, to put it plainly, there is, at times, no sense of assurance. It is not that there is not a desire for assurance. Rather, there may be doubt as to whether it is true that “Jesus is mine,” whether I belong to him. For some, words like, “The LORD is my light and my salvation” may come from the lips, but there is a sadness because it is not felt in the heart.

Feeling a disconnect

It is good to know that this disconnect between what is said and one’s feelings is not unusual for children of God. As there are psalms that speak exuberantly about loving and serving the Lord, there are other psalms that express questions about his presence, wondering where he is in the difficulties of life. Psalm 42 describes a believer thirsting for God like a deer panting for flowing streams, suggesting a spiritually dry time. The psalmist states that his soul is cast down, wondering why God seemingly has forgotten him. In Psalm 88, the psalmist cries out day and night to God. His soul is full of troubles. He feels God’s wrath heavily upon him. You can well imagine that a person in such a state would have trouble joining others in singing “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine,” for he or she doesn’t feel it.

The lack of assurance is also acknowledged in the fifth chapter of the Canons of Dort, dealing with the perseverance of the saints. In Article 11 it states, “Scripture meanwhile testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various doubts of the flesh and, placed under severe temptation, do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance.”

Is it possible to gain, or regain, a sense of assurance? Thankfully, it is. The same chapter in the Canons of Dort reminds us in Article 14 that “just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel, so he maintains,

continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats and promises, *and by the use of the sacraments.*”

Note the sacraments! The Lord has given them for the strengthening of our faith. When you read through the Lord’s Days explaining the sacraments, it is remarkable how they bring out that the essence of the sacraments is assurance. Both with respect to baptism and the Lord’s supper, after mentioning the teaching character of the sacraments, it states, “But, even more important, he wants to *assure* us . . .” (see Q & A 67, 73, 79). They are, after all, seals of God’s promises.

Seek the assurance

We do well to think about this when it comes to the sacraments. We do this perhaps more easily with respect to the Lord’s supper, as we celebrate it many times throughout our lifetime. When going through a spiritually dry time, it is good to think of the assurance in receiving the bread and the wine as symbols of Christ’s body and blood. It is spiritually refreshing. It is also good to think about the assurance factor in baptism. We easily overlook this because, for most of us, it happened when we were infants. It is, however, a lasting sign of an everlasting covenant. The physical action even can be seen as a spiritual touch by our Saviour. At those times in life when we sit leaning forward with a sense of despair, perhaps our head resting on our hands, we should think about the fact that at our baptism, our gracious God put his name on our forehead. The water has long ago dried up, but it left an indelible mark.

So, when there are those dry spiritual times, when the feeling of this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance is not there, think of baptism and the Lord’s supper, sacramental assurance that we belong to Jesus, as we are born of his Spirit, and washed in his blood. ☪



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Tackled by God

“And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him.” (GENESIS 32:22–32)

Jacob had had a falling out with his brother Esau, had fled from him, and was now returning to the Promised Land but was afraid of meeting his brother. Things didn't look good because Esau was on his way to meet Jacob with 400 men.

Jacob prayed to God for help, sent away his family for their safety, and was left all alone that night. Suddenly a man appeared, who wrestled with Jacob until daybreak. It's a mysterious account—Jacob wrestling with a man who turns out to be the Angel of the LORD, the pre-incarnate Son of God in human form (Hos 12:3, 4a). Afterwards, Jacob named the place “Peniel,” because it expresses that Jacob had seen God there face-to-face (Gen 32:30).

God initiated this wrestling with Jacob, and it was a physical expression of a spiritual encounter. This was a deep spiritual moment in Jacob's life—a high-point in Jacob's life—about Jacob wrestling in faith with God.

God tackled Jacob for his sins, especially the sin of manipulating and deceiving his brother Esau. Jacob wept that night, confessing his sin and expressing his dependence on the LORD.

Jacob prevailed in the fight against the man that night and held on to him until he received a blessing from the man. Formerly, Jacob had manipulated, deceived, and taken. But at Peniel, Jacob *asked* for the LORD's blessing. And God blessed Jacob, probably by repeating his earlier promises. Peniel was about Jacob's spiritual transformation. Only as a new man could Jacob enter the Promised Land.

Jacob went from being a person who manipulated and deceived people to being a person who had wrestled with God in faith and had held on to the promise. “Jacob” (meaning “he takes by the heel”) became “Israel” (meaning “he strives with God”). This name marked Jacob as being God's servant.

We too must see our sin, repent from it, and express our dependence on the LORD. We cannot enter heaven without repentance from sin. Sometimes God tackles us in a special way so that we are confronted by our sins and come to confession of sin. The Christian's life is about the fight of faith.

It was only by God's grace that the Angel of the LORD did not destroy Jacob because of his sins that night and that Jacob prevailed. That's because Jacob's struggle at Peniel

foreshadowed Jesus Christ's struggle at Gethsemane and Calvary! There God the Father tackled the incarnate Son of God for our sins. There Christ held on to God in faith, but there was no grace for Christ because he had come to *obtain* grace for everyone who believes in him by his suffering and death for our sins.

When Jacob left Peniel, the sun rose upon him (Gen 32:31). It's a telling detail which teaches that repentance from sin marks a new beginning for people; it's the dawn of a new day in someone's life. Then we live under the sunshine of God's grace.

It's also significant that as the sun rose upon him, Jacob went his way limping because his hip was put out of joint by the Angel of the LORD (Gen 32:31). The permanent limp was a constant reminder of this encounter with God and it was meant to keep Jacob humble. It reminds us of what Paul says about weaknesses—thorns in the flesh—being God's way of making us humble and making us remember that we can only overcome by God's grace. As Paul was told, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

May our lives be characterized by confession of sin and expression of dependence on the LORD. May the sunshine of God's grace be upon us. 🌞

For further study

Read Hosea 12.

1. What further light does Hosea 12:3,4a shed on this passage?
2. What is the significance of the fact that the man did not answer Jacob's question, “Please tell me your name” (Gen 32:29)?
3. Can you think of a time when God tackled you because of a sin, after which you again experienced the sunshine of his grace?



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The Jewish People

in Biblical Perspective: Twelve Theses

(Part 1)

JOHN SMITH

This past March, I was invited to give a presentation at our Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College as part of a “theme week” on the topic of the Holocaust. My “assignment” was to give a biblical perspective on the Jewish people today. This was a new topic for me, and I learned a lot about the Jews today and what the Bible says about them. I certainly have not learned all there is to know, and some things are not yet settled in my mind. So, I presented the topic to the students by way of twelve thesis statements. Theses do not give the last word but are meant for further discussion. This two-part article will present the twelve theses and give an explanation for each one. I thought that twelve would be a fitting number for our topic, since it matches the number of the tribes of Israel. I must say that I have a new respect for Martin Luther, who somehow managed to come up with ninety-five!

1: Israel is the seed of the woman

That is to say, although Eve was “the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20), and thus of all the nations of the world, the LORD also said that her “seed” would one day crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). What does this have to do with Israel? Well, the book of Genesis is divided into ten sections, each of which begins with the words, “these are the generations of.” The last of these ten sections is called “the generations of Jacob,” that is, the family of Israel (Gen 37:2). So, the book of Genesis is the birth story of the people of Israel; it traces Israel’s family tree. We might think of Genesis as Israel’s baby photo album. Remember how Jacob got his name: when he was born, his little baby hand was grasping his brother’s heel (Gen 25:26). Yes, the Hebrew name “Jacob” is related to the word for “heel” in Genesis 3:15. Thus, it was through the people of Israel that

The people of Israel are the first heirs of the covenant promises

God planned to destroy the work of the devil and to bring salvation to the world. In order for Jesus to accomplish God's plan, he had to be born of the people of Israel and to represent them (Matt 1:21; Gal 4:4).

2: The Israelites are the seed of Abraham, born out of faith in the power and promises of God

In Genesis 10 we read the names of seventy nations, which were formed from the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and which spread across the earth. But Israel was not one of these seventy. Instead, God called a man out of the nations, an old man with a barren wife, and he promised that through their seed, blessing would come to the nations (Gen 12:1-3). Isaac's birth was a miracle born out of faith (Rom 4:19; Heb 11:11), and his survival on Mount Moriah was another miracle of faith, one which prompted the LORD to swear this oath to Abraham: "Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Gen 22:16-18). At the end of Genesis, Jacob went down to Egypt with a company of seventy—a microcosm of the nations—to wait for God's promises to come true (Gen 46:27; Exod 1:5; Deut 32:8). Their very formation as a people is thus a testimony to the work of God to undo the curse that had come upon mankind.

3: Israel is God's firstborn son (Exod 4:22)

As such, the people of Israel are the first heirs of the covenant promises, to be received in the way of obedient faith. Theirs

would be a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod 3:8). To them would belong the blessings of God, expressed in a fertile land, victory over their enemies, and a happy life that would be the envy of the nations (Lev 26:3-13; Deut 28:1-14). As son of God, it was Israel's unique calling to be the light and the witness of God in the world (Isa 42:6; 43:10). They were to be the evidence that the curse of sin could be overcome. They knew the one true God by name, and they were to be to him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:6). Thus, the line of the Old Testament goes from Adam the son of God (Gen 5:1-3; Luke 3:38), to Israel the son of God (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1), to David the son of God (Ps 89:27), to Jesus Christ the son of God (John 1:49; Acts 13:33). As Christians, we confess that we are "children of God by adoption," through grace in Jesus Christ (LD 13). But we should not forget that the adoption as sons came first to the people of Israel, already long before Christ was born (Matt 15:26; Rom 9:4). Their God-given rights of sonship are older and prior to ours.

4: The oracles of God belong to the Jews (Rom 3:2)

It was to *them* that God spoke at Mount Sinai, for *them* that Moses recorded the law, to *them* that the angels came with messages from heaven, to *them* that the prophets gave their oracles. It was to the Jewish people that the sacred Scriptures were entrusted; it was they who preserved them, in their language, with their script. It was they who copied them over centuries and even millenia, because the imperishable Word of God was written down on perishable materials and copied by fallible people. Thus, it was the sacred trust of the Jews to preserve the holy oracles of God from generation to generation. It was the Jews who made the first translation of the Old Testament Scriptures (the Septuagint) in the last centuries before Christ, so that the Greek-speaking Jews in the Diaspora could understand them. Yes, this Greek translation, too, belonged to the Jews first of all.

5: The apostles and NT authors were Jews

Thus, not only the Old Testament, but also the New Testament Scriptures were written down by Jews—a fact that is easily forgotten by Jews and Christians alike (Matt 10:1-6; Rom 11:1; Gal 2:14).¹ The Greek Septuagint and the Greek New Testament, both first written by Jews, together became the Greek Bible of the

¹ Luke may well have been a Gentile, though this is uncertain.

We think of it as *our* missionary calling, and it is, but it is in the first place the fulfillment of Israel's Old Testament calling to be a light to the nations


Christian church. And once that happened, the Hebrew Scriptures were largely forgotten by the church, but not by the Jews.

6: The Jews faithfully preserved their Hebrew Scriptures

During the Middle Ages, the Jewish community set high standards of precision for copying their Hebrew scrolls and codices. They knew exactly how many Hebrew words were found in a book, how often a particular word occurred in a particular form, where the middle word and even the middle letter of a book was to be found, and they preserved rabbinic debates on the most minute details of the text—all of this as a sort of quality control that would prevent even a single word of Scripture, a single jot or tittle, from being lost (Matt 5:18). When the Reformers decided to return to the original Hebrew texts of Scripture, these Hebrew texts were ready and waiting for them, thanks to the tireless efforts of the Jews alone. So precise was their work, that when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, scholars were amazed to find that many of them were virtually identical to the Jewish scrolls of the Middle Ages. (I wish I could say that that Christian scribes copied the Greek and Latin Scriptures just as carefully, but that, unfortunately, was not the case.) All of this means that, when I read the Hebrew Bible, I do so as an outsider and a guest, a grateful recipient of centuries of pious and painstaking Jewish labour. I do so in the acute awareness that it is only through God's undeserving grace to sinners, and through the fulfillment of his promise to bring in the nations, that I can call the Hebrew Scriptures my own.

7: The mission of the church is a mission for Jews first of all

Christ, as to his human nature, is a Jew. He who is the eternal Son of God, the seed of the woman, the Son of David, and the

promised Messiah, lived as a simple Jewish rabbi who taught his disciples about life in the kingdom of God (Matt 23:10; John 13:13). Thus, Christianity as to its origins is not a western religion but one that arose in the homeland of the Jews, as the fulfillment of their Scriptures. The Great Commission was given to Jewish apostles (Matt 28:18–20). We think of it as *our* missionary calling, and it is, but it is in the first place the fulfillment of Israel's Old Testament calling to be a light to the nations (Isa 42:6; 60:3), and it is a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that in him and his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed (Gen 12:3; Ps 47:9). It was Christ's death and resurrection that brought this mission into effect (Acts 13:33; Rom 15:8). The apostles had to go first to their own people, not just because the Jews were the covenant people, but because it was their calling to be a light and a witness to the nations (Matt 5:14; 10:5–6; 15:24; Acts 1:8; 13:46–47; Rom 15:19). As Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). Yet the Great Commission also brings a change of direction: whereas in the Old Testament Israel had to attract the nations to Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:41–42; Ps 87; Isa 60:3; Zech 14:16), in the New Testament age the mission of the church went out from Jerusalem to the world, establishing local churches that did not have to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem but are *en route* to a heavenly homeland, with the New Jerusalem as their destination (Heb 12:22; Rev 21:24). 

To be continued in the next issue.



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In the Fruit of the Spirit is the Lord Jesus

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (GALATIANS 5:22-23)

TYLER VANDERGAAG

Introduction

We typically think about the fruit of the Spirit in terms of our sanctification and growth in Christian character. This is good and well. But what if we peeled back the fruit of the Spirit not to focus on the need to cultivate godliness in our own lives, but to see the Lord Jesus for who he truly is? That’s what I’d like to do in this series. The fruit of the Spirit serves as a window into the beautiful, dazzling, and awe-inspiring tender heart of the Lord Jesus.

Now perhaps some of you might be a bit disappointed by this. You were looking forward to an article about cultivating the fruit of the Spirit in your own life. Don’t be. Gazing upon the beauty of the Lord Jesus will not only lead us to rejoice in our Saviour and abide in him, but to an abundance of fruit and character growth in your own life. Abide in him and we will be like the righteous man of Psalm 1 who “yields abundant fruit” and “thrives, whatever his pursuit” (*Book of Praise*, 3).

Legal and lawless context

In Galatians 5, Paul spoke about the fruit of the Spirit to a young church struggling with both legalism and lawlessness. In the church there were legalists who insisted that Gentiles must be circumcised in the flesh (Gal 5:1-12). There were also lawless anarchists who affirmed that freedom in Christ gave them total, absolute freedom from any law, leaving little room for godly discipline and obedience (5:13-15). Both groups were wrong. There’s no room for legalism or lawlessness in the church. But if the Christian life is neither about legalistic law-keeping nor a lawless free for all, then what is it about? How do we avoid Pharisaic legalism and yet maintain godliness? The answer Paul gives in Galatians 5:16-23 is a Spirit-filled life. Those who “live by the Spirit” (v. 16) are “led by the Spirit” (v. 18), and those who

“keep in step with the Spirit” (v. 25) will not embrace the desires of the sinful flesh—sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, etc. (vv. 19-21). Instead, they cultivate the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, and all the way down to self-control (vv. 22-23).

Jesus Christ’s fruitful heart

Now, if we read all this in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can see that he fits the description of a Spirit-filled person better than anyone else who ever lived. He was neither a legalist nor a lawless anarchist. He always lived by, was led by, and kept in step with the Spirit. He cultivated the fruit of the Spirit in a way that no one else ever has or will on this side of the grave. His very life was rooted in the Spirit. In his discussion about the Spirit and Jesus Christ, Sinclair Ferguson said this: “The New Testament pointedly refers to the Spirit’s ministry throughout the life of Jesus, from his mother’s womb to the garden tomb and beyond” (*The Holy Spirit*, 38).

This was already prophesied about in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ is the Branch from the stump of Jesse that will “bear fruit” (Isa 11:1). He will bear fruit because “the Spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:2). That’s exactly what happened at his baptism. The Spirit descended on him like a dove leaving him “full of the Holy Spirit” (Luke 4:1). The word “full” carries with it a sense of completeness. He was filled to the brim, overflowing with the Spirit. Full of the Spirit, the Lord Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert (Luke 4:1). And after forty days and three temptations—which he surely resisted by keeping in step with the Spirit—“Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee” (Luke 4:14).

How different Jesus is from us. Sometimes we face temptation remarkably well. So much so that we surprise ourselves. Did

The fruit of the Spirit serves as a window into the beautiful, dazzling, and awe-inspiring tender heart of the Lord Jesus

I really resist the urge to covet or speak the harsh words that were running through my mind? We know, of course, that's the Spirit's work in our lives. But at other times we fail so miserably that we're embarrassed at how easily the devil and sinful flesh get us hook, line, and sinker. Not so with Jesus. Never once did he give in, never once did the devil get him. He walked with the Spirit. He knew the Spirit would never hang him out to dry or leave him in the dust. The Spirit never did—even on the cross. That was the opportunity that the devil was waiting for (Luke 4:13). He hoped that there—as God's wrath was being poured out upon him and death was staring the Lord of Life in the face—Jesus wouldn't live, be led and walk by the Spirit if only for a moment. It never happened. He was tempted in every way, yet he never sinned (Heb 4:14).

Now, because Jesus lived by the Spirit, was led by the Spirit, and kept in step with the Spirit (and still does to this day), we're not surprised that when we look at his heart we find the fruit of the Spirit just as it ought to be: tender, ripe, and rich. All nine ingredients of the Spirit's fruit are there in abundance. His *love* is as wide as it is deep (Eph 3:18). His *joy* is profound (Heb 12:2). His *peace* is with us (John 20:19). His *patience* for the worst of sinners is unlimited (1 Tim 1:16). His *kindness* for those in desperate need of grace is unusual (Titus 3:4). He's a walking display of God's *goodness* (Mark 6:50). His *faithfulness* as a son in God's house is astounding (Heb 3:6). His *gentleness* is what gives rest to weary souls (Matt 11:29). He always exercises *self-control*—even when he chastises us for our legalistic attitudes and lawless hearts (Luke 9:55).

Indeed, Jesus Christ's life, his very heart is filled to the brim with the fruit of the Spirit. No wonder Isaiah 11 calls him a Branch that will bear fruit! That's a perfect description. Maybe you've seen a tree branch so heavy with fruit that it's almost touching the ground. That's how it is with the Lord Jesus. He's a Branch over-loaded with fruit. Yes, more than anyone else, Jesus is the man of Psalm 1 who "yields abundant fruit" and "thrives, whatever his pursuit."

As believers, this is also the one we "belong to" (Gal 5:24). What a blessing! We belong in body and soul, both in life and

in death, to a *fruitful* Saviour whom we can truly abide in, draw near to, and find rest for our souls in. That's really the goal of the Christian life: to abide in Christ and rest secure in him. There's no reason for us to resist him. He's not a harsh master or a wicked tyrant. He's our Spirit-led Lord and our Spirit-filled King. So, if there's anyone we can abide in and come to, it's him—the one who yields the abundant fruit of the Spirit!

Our fruitful hearts

Not only does the Lord Jesus bear fruit for our benefit and salvation, he promises that as we abide in him, we also will bear much fruit. He promised as much in John 15:5, "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." Abide in Christ and the fruit of the Spirit will bud, ripen, and bear fruit in your own life. This is the beauty of the gospel! Christ uses the fruit of the Spirit in his life to shower us with his love, his joy, and his peace. But then he goes even further by giving us the same Spirit so that we might also cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in our own lives and so sanctify, renew, and make us more and more like him.

So, do you want to grow in Christian character? Do you want to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit more and more in your life? Are you painfully aware that some ingredients of the Spirit's fruit are lacking in your life? Well, whatever you do, don't navel gaze. Don't look deep within yourself to find the fruit. Look to the Lord Jesus, the fruitful one. Abide in him. It's the only way to grow in Christian character. It's the only way to increase in love, to be more joyful and kind, more patient and faithful, more gentle and self-controlled. You must abide in him. When you do, the fruit of the Spirit will come. Slowly but surely your character will bud, blossom, and bloom. 🌱



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Introducing Professor Reuben Bredenhof

ILSE VANDERMEULEN

A new face will soon be spotted at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) in Hamilton. General Synod Guelph has appointed Rev. Dr. Reuben Bredenhof as successor to Professor Arjan de Visser for the department of Mission and Ministry, starting in the academic year of 2023.

Dr. Bredenhof, 44, resides with his wife Rebecca and their four daughters in Mt. Nasura, Western Australia, where he has served the Free Reformed Church of 285 members for seven years. In addition to his work as pastor, he has published several books and articles, including some pieces for the Gospel Coalition in Australia. Further, he is an active blogger on his website reubenbredenhof.com to—in his own words—edify and encourage people. *Clarion* reached out to Dr. Bredenhof to ask him how he is preparing for his new role and the transition to Hamilton.

Passion for the Word

Teaching and studying the Word of God is Dr. Bredenhof's great passion. After obtaining his undergraduate at McMaster University in Hamilton, he attended CRTS for his Master of

Divinity. "I was born in Surrey, BC, where I grew up on a farm. I left when I was eighteen for McMaster. I would have stayed in BC to do my BA, but I already had met my future wife, who lived in Hamilton, and this was a good motivation to relocate to southern Ontario," he says.

Rev. Bredenhof was able to study for a Master in Theology at St. Stephen's College at the University of Alberta while serving the congregation of St. Albert. He wrote a thesis on Paul's pastoral ministry model in 2 Corinthians, a study that will serve him well as a new professor in Ministry and Mission.

While shepherding the congregation of London, Ontario, his consistory graciously allowed him time to work on a doctorate at St Mary's University in Twickenham, UK. For his Ph.D., Rev. Bredenhof undertook an extensive study on the parable of Lazarus and the rich man recorded in Luke 16:19-31. It was published as *Failure and Prospect* in the Library of New Testament Studies (2018).

The newly appointed professor encourages other young ministers to continue to study, despite challenges like an ever-increasing pastoral workload and extra study costs. "I



found it challenging,” he admits, but “I really enjoy studying—as odd as that is—it’s something I love to do, and I was quite motivated to find time to study. God blessed me with the ability and financial means—the Lord provided in that way. And he also provided consistories that were supportive, both consistories in St. Albert and London, and also here in Mt. Nasura . . . giving me time to go on a research trip or giving me a few weeks off to write another chapter of a thesis. I’m very grateful for the churches that have been so supportive. That’s what it takes for other young men to do it. They need to be self-motivated to study and they need financial support, as well as support from your congregation. It can be done.”

Appointment to CRTS

During General Synod 2022, Dr. Bredenhof addressed the delegates via a video link to introduce himself and share his gratitude for his new appointment. He expressed confidence that God directed his path to this new position and that he is humbled by the opportunity. “It is a big trust given to those called to train young men who will be on the pulpits of the churches. There is a lot of responsibility that comes with that,” he explains. “If they are faithfully trained well, God can bless that. But if they are poorly or inadequately trained, I would definitely feel some of that on myself.”

It is difficult for a seminary to find a candidate that can teach the whole range of the discipline of Ministry and Mission: it is a diverse area, including homiletics (the preaching), pastoral work, catechism teaching, and worship, as well as mission. Having written several academic works, Dr. Bredenhof has developed skills in writing and developing logical arguments. He is looking forward to adding to his knowledge and expertise. “I did my advanced training in New Testament . . . so I realize that I have a lot to learn about ministry and mission in the sense of being able to teach it. Theological students need clear steps and methodology.”

To prepare for teaching in the area of Mission, Dr. Bredenhof plans to study this field, talk to other mission instructors, and possibly visit a mission field sometime in the next year to find out firsthand the challenges and cross-cultural issues the students need to be prepared for. The upcoming months are dedicated first to parting with the congregation of Mt. Nasura, then packing and a few weeks of holidays before travelling to Canada in December to be reunited with family in BC and Ontario.

A big change

Having four daughters between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, there is excitement and some reluctance to give up friends and their community after seven years. “We can work through this as a family and pray about this together and talk about serving God through this change and sacrifice,” says Dr. Bredenhof. “We still are very Canadian. You don’t lose that very quickly. . . We look forward to lots of different things about being in Canada again, especially seeing our family, whom we were not able to see for the last three years because of COVID.”

From January until the next September, Dr. Bredenhof will be preparing for the position of teaching theological students. “I have several months at the beginning of next year dedicated to studying. So, I will be reading a lot of books on preaching and developing a method on how to teach preaching. Taking my experience as a preacher and thinking on how to best share that.” He will be closely working together with Professor de Visser, who offered to share his extensive experience as a professor at CRTS.

One of the things Dr. Bredenhof looks forward to is having colleagues, as a minister is somewhat on his own in his work. “I look forward to working with colleagues, four colleagues who are men of God and who are experts in their field. I’m looking forward to having conversations over lunch or coffee and learning a lot from them.” Further, the soon-to-be professor also looks forward to working with the students. “I think in a way that can be a continuation of pastoral ministry, which I enjoy a lot. . . It’s a different relationship, but I look forward to developing good, open relationships with the young men at the seminary.”

And as a true academic he adds, “I look forward to getting into books, reading, and writing!” Maybe that is what Prof. de Visser referred to when he welcomed his successor during Synod and called professors “quirky” people. Bredenhof laughs and quips: “I have no idea what he is talking about!”

Many exciting changes are coming both for the Bredenhof family and CRTS in Hamilton. Dr. Bredenhof: “We look forward to the journey and doing it in God’s strength. We know that he’ll provide, as he always has.” 🍷



Ilse Vandermeulen

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

May the Foundations Be Strong

“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (PSALM 11:3)

CORNELIS KLEYN

“At least you have foundational principles in your church; in the church I go to we don’t!” This is what a lady told us at an outreach of the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea (PNG). There is a hunger for truth in PNG, where peoples’ lives are being destroyed for lack of knowledge due to traditional customs and the presence of every denomination under the sun. Although commitment to the Reformed churches is slow, there is a steady growth in depth and membership, for which we thank the Lord.

Status of the Reformed Churches of PNG, May 2022

The churches in Papua New Guinea are divided into north and south, with the northern churches helped by two missionaries

(Ryan DeJonge and David Pol) and a mission worker (Ben van de Kamp), supported by the Free Reformed Churches of Western Australia. The first of these, the Living Waters Reformed Church at Kamkumung (Lae), is the only instituted church in the federation, while the other two churches in Wantun and Hila are much more recent additions to the federation and are still far from institution. With twice yearly outreach tours in the PNG highlands and regular local outreaches, we hope and pray that the Lord may continue to add congregations in the coming years.

There are four church groups in southern PNG as well as the Reformed Churches Bible College. Two missionaries (Hans Vaatstra and Cornelis Kleyn), a teacher (Mark Mulder), and a campus manager (Richard ‘tHart) are all busy working at the Bible College and the missionaries also spend a little time in

| Church Group | Status (Date Began) | Leaders | Members (end 2021)* |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Kamkumung (Lae) | Instituted | Pastor, 2 elders, 1 deacon | 38 / 60 |
| Wantun | Church plant (2014) | Pastor, several leaders | 24 / 55 |
| Hila | Church plant (2021) | 3 leaders | N/A |
| Beretete | Near institution | Pastor, 2-3 leaders | 31 / 41 |
| 9 Mile | Near institution | Pastor, 2 leaders | 36 / 26 |
| East Boroko | Church plant (2005) | 1 leader | 13 / 17 |
| Veifa’a | Church plant (2003) | Candidate Pastor, 3 leaders | 9 / 13 |

* These figures are not totally accurate since record keeping here in PNG still leaves something to be desired.



the churches. The churches in the south are Beretete and 9 Mile, each with their own pastor and church leaders and working slowly towards institution, while the other two (Veifa'a and East Boroko) are not that far yet.

Reformed Churches Bible College

In November 2021, our whole Reformed community in PNG was in shock as one of our Diploma Students, Joe Pinauga, passed away from COVID-19. With underlying conditions, he was more vulnerable than most of the students. On a Saturday we drove down to his village of Veifa'a for the burial, after an initial service at the Bible College. Although we had hoped that Joe would become a minister in the churches, God had different plans and wanted him to come home. His wife decided to come and study at the Reformed Churches Bible College (RCBC) this year (2022) and so she and her five children remain at RCBC.

In February 2022, the doors of the Bible College opened again for the year. The RCBC serves the Reformed Churches of PNG as well as some other individuals, particularly from a larger federation named the United Reform Churches (URC), a breakaway from the United Church in PNG. We run a two-year Certificate course in Reformed studies and have seventeen students in this program in 2022, in addition to five students in the three-year Diploma program with a focus on ministry. Finally, we also have one student from the URC doing the Proficiency in Preaching program this year, which is a four-month program focused solely on getting used to writing sermons regularly. We were privileged to have Rev. Henry Versteeg from the Canadian Reformed Churches and Rev. Melvin Dotinga from the United

Reformed Churches come over from North America to help us in blocks 1-3.

East Boroko building projects

Early in 2022, East Boroko raised a fence around most of the church property and opened a road to the land. Although we need more fencing and the road still needs a lot of work, this is an encouraging start for this small settlement congregation. The congregation is working towards calling its own pastor the Lord willing later in 2023. On the picture you can see Pastor Aisi from 9 Mile with the church leader of East Boroko, smiling after the fence was raised.

After the physical projects we held an outreach in the nearby market on the book of Jonah, with one chapter a night. The settlement people came out to listen, but their lifestyles of gambling, drinking, and living for basic leisure to cover their poverty and pain in life make it very difficult for them to step out and come to church. Being in the settlement full time, building relationships and helping people pastorally in their troubles will probably get further. It simply reiterates why the church needs a pastor.

Schools

In the month of March there was a teachers' conference and several board meetings held for the boards and four teaching staff of 9 Mile and two teaching staff of Beretete. In 9 Mile they run a school up to Grade 4 in 2022 and hope to keep adding one grade every year, while in Beretete they run a school up to Grade 2. The schools were encouraged again in a covenant



vision whereby the parents in the church take responsibility for their school. This is starting to happen, but certainly a new concept for many people here in PNG. Most see the schools as outreach tools—but how can little children reach out? As missionaries we have been encouraging a covenant school vision, since we believe it is important to focus on the covenant children so that the next generation can praise the name of the Lord even more than the present generation. Please pray about the future of these fledgling schools.

Leadership in the churches

Another major event so far in 2022 has been a Leadership Conference held in the village of Veifa'a, a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Port Moresby. There were more men than ever in attendance this year (about twenty-five), and this is promising for the four church groups. You can see many of the men on the picture as we sat on a "patta patta" newly made for the occasion.

We pray that later this year or early next year more men may take up leadership in Beretete, 9 Mile, and East Boroko, but that does depend a lot of the maturity of the men and their commitment to the ways of the Lord and his church.

Outreach in 9 Mile

We already mentioned the outreach in East Boroko held after the fence was raised around the church property. A much larger outreach was held in May in 9 Mile. This outreach dealt with the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith. We taught on the Bible Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, and to the Glory of God Alone in addition to preaching on these topics to drive the message home. It was very encouraging to see two of our national pastors, an elder in the church who is still hoping to enter ministry, and an RCBC student in his last year preach with

passion to an outside audience. As missionaries (Pastor Hans and Cor) we also joined in the teaching and preaching.

The setup of this outreach was quite an effort for the church. It included a stage with a speaker system, a tent from which Bibles and other Reformed literature were sold, and canvas on the ground for people to sit on. The turnout at the church property was quite reasonable—both church members and outsiders as can be seen on the picture. One young man commented that the outreach was just so different than all the others he has heard, and he wants to commit to the church in 9 Mile. And another lady left disappointed in her own church, feeling that she was never taught the fundamentals of the Christian faith there.

Conclusion

Growth in the church of God is often a slow, painful process. This is especially true in a largely uneducated country like PNG where the true gospel, a reasonable faith, is not easy for people to grasp. And yet we are thankful for the real growth we are seeing in the churches lately. We are seeing increased numbers in 9 Mile, more men able to be considered for leadership, schools that are helping the next generation, and a growing desire to reach out effectively to the community. Please pray for the Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea that God will continue to grow them as a witness in a country whose people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. ☪



Cornelis Kleyn

Missionary in Papua New Guinea sent by Bethel Canadian Reformed Church at Toronto, Ontario
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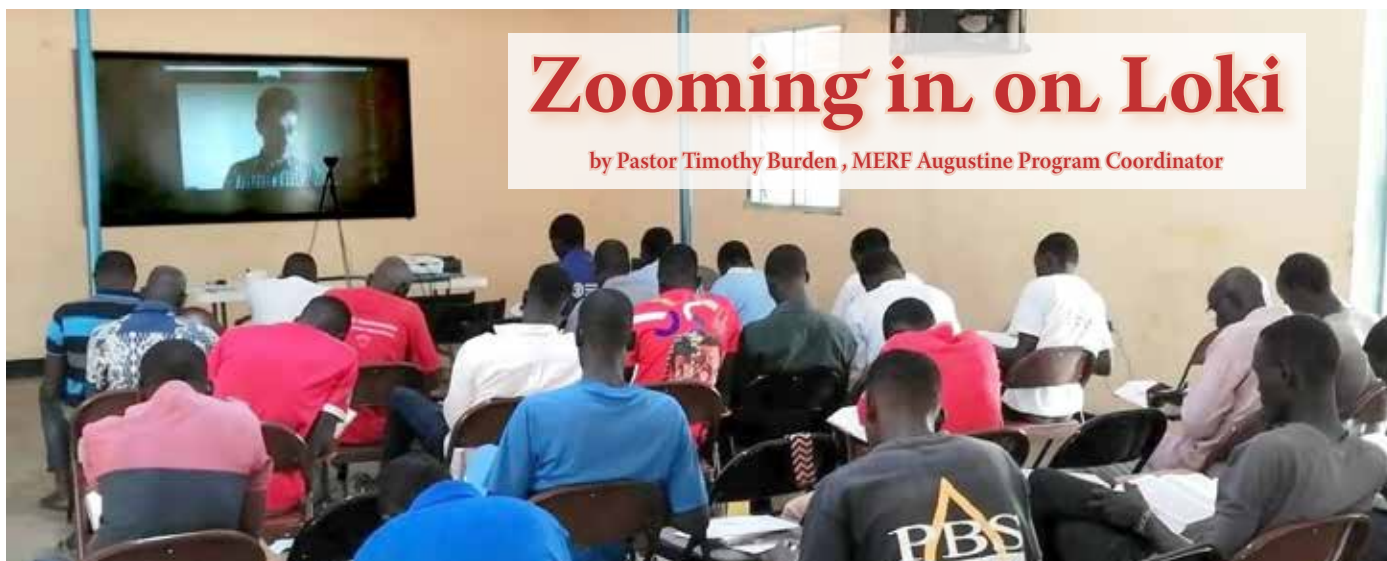


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METF News

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

May 2022



Zooming in on Loki

by Pastor Timothy Burden, MERF Augustine Program Coordinator

UK Pastor preaching to/teaching the class via zoom

It was a privilege, after 24 months of pandemic-enforced absence, for Rosalind and me to be back in Loki for biblical training in the Augustine Program intensive 3-month course for South Sudanese and other East African church leaders. I was teaching a Unit that I have not taught before, and Rosalind was an invaluable help to the students and to me on the English language front, as well as an unofficial medical officer.

While there, we were able to try out the new internet equipment. A number of pastors from the UK taught via zoom. Their teaching was greatly appreciated by all. I also learned about the limitations of the connection.



Tim Burden with Teacher, B Titus

Student Comments

To evaluate the teaching and use of Augustine Program material, I asked the students to write what they had learnt so far and what they found most helpful. Here is what some wrote:

Erupe Wilyson Ekadel

Lokichar, KENYA - Turkana

“MERF offers a conducive environment for the trainees of different nationalities. The majority are South Sudanese and Kenyans. I was impressed by the level of interaction and integration among the students. We learnt from each other and made friends through group discussions.

The training was mainly theological, though there was an English part that aimed at enabling the semi-literate trainees to be able to read and interpret the Scriptures.

The most useful part of the training for me were the group discussions and assignments which helped me to understand and comprehend more on topics of discussion.”

Makal Deng Gey

Juba, SOUTH SUDAN - Nuer

“We learned about how Jesus viewed and used the Bible and the doctrine of Scripture. For example, the Lord Jesus was very clear that the whole of Scripture is about him and the work of salvation. This theme is continued into the New Testament, we should be very clear about this too.

Let me pray a short prayer:

Lord help me to remain humble even though the world would have me share in the spoils of the proud. Help me to keep my eyes focused on you so that I will make the right choices. In Jesus, I pray Amen.

David - E- Eruupe

Lodwar, KENYA - Turkana

“We started learning the Pastoral Epistles whereby the teacher introduced these letters of Paul and what they contain. It was a very interesting topic, everyone really enjoyed it. The teacher was doing his level best to make us all understand, and everyone really enjoyed it.”

Eyapan Kennedy

Lokichoggio, KENYA - Turkana

“I have learned many things at MERF Biblical Training Center in Lokichoggio that have affected my life positively. Actually, I will not go back to my congregation the way I was, I have made at least a step.”

Ojullo Omot

Pochalla, SOUTH SUDAN - Anuak

“In pastoral theology I have learned something about Timothy and Titus. How the apostle Paul instructs them about prayer and preaching, the practical matter of appointing church officers and the care of those in real need. Paul encourages Timothy to faithfulness in gospel ministry, to preach the gospel, to protect it and pass it on to the people. Paul also urges Timothy not to be ashamed of the message, nor of any who are suffering because of it. We also learned how to prepare sermons, the stages to follow. I will thank



One of the students' group assignments on Acts

MERF for this knowledge given me.”

Obang Owar

Pochalla, SOUTH SUDAN - Anuak

“I have learned about Galatians: That grace is the flow of undeserved love of God to us – it is the flow of God’s gift of salvation to us. That Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins.”

Gilo Otholi Oboya

Pochalla, SOUTH SUDAN - Anuak

“First of all, I want to take this opportunity to give thanks to God for what he has done for me so far of being lucky for three months. It is also a great

opportunity for me to be here and lucky attending theological training. Thank you to all the sponsors who give their money for us to be equipped and trained with the Word of God here in Kenya. May God Almighty bless them wherever they are for their generosity.

From the book of Genesis, we learned about creation, marriage, work, Sabbath, sin and judgement, salvation, worship and multiple languages. We saw that Genesis is divided up by the phrase “these are the generations of.” In Romans, we saw that the righteousness of God is the gift he promised and revealed. Justification is by faith alone in Jesus Christ.

In conclusion: I have been equipped with head, heart, and hand knowledge to work as an example of serving as the Lord Jesus served. It is by your commitment as teachers that has enabled us to know how to spell the words and read God’s Word and preach it. Your commitment means a lot to me personally. Thanks. May God Almighty bless you all.”

Juma James

Juba, SOUTH SUDAN - Murle

“I learned to serve others as Jesus Christ served me.

In serving, the Lord Jesus thought about the needs of others rather than his own. He did not let position and praise stop him from serving us. He humbled himself and was obedient to his Father God. You find out in the book of Philippians 2:4-8 that we are not to be self-serving hypocritical bullies, wanting to be the big man while making others look small. We’re not in it for what we can get out of it, but to give.

James Kunga and I lost our families in the year 2012. It was a conflict between tribe and tribe. Sometimes I look back thinking about my family, it feels so painful, and I am afraid what I learned might disappear out of my mind. That is why I lost out on what I’d heard before, but currently the knowledge that I have found here encourages me to continue going forward not to keep going back to what happened to my family. I can encourage my brother too.”

Joseph Lokoyo Manath

Juba, SOUTH SUDAN - Murle

“Here I have gained more about circumcision. Before I did not know, because I heard in my area from my brothers who are in darkness, “if you want to be a Christian you must be circumcised, but I did not know how to answer them then. Now I gained more knowledge because we Christians don’t circumcise like that. Circumcision is in the heart by faith.

I gained more knowledge. We Christians have been justified by faith. When I go back to where I came from, I will encourage the brothers who are in our church to be continuous with the Word of God. I will tell those who are in darkness to come to the light. I will appreciate my

“What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”

— 2 Timothy 2:2

brother to be continuous in prayer. I will go and tell all my community to return to God and I will tell them the good news concerning Jesus Christ. Thank you!!

Jiji John Bobok

Juba, SOUTH SUDAN - Murle

“Jesus’ example teaches us that our service needs to be humble, sacrificial, deeply loving and caring, as well as gracious and generous. When I go back, I will share with those who have not yet had a chance to come here. I will encourage them to continue reading the Word of God. Also, when I go back, I will preach out to the people what is in the Bible not what is outside the Bible. May God Almighty, Father, King of kings bless us all in Jesus’ name, Amen.”



Rosalind Burden helping students with English

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Douwe Johannes VanderWerp

(1811-1876) PART 3

KEITH SIKKEMA

Changes and troubles

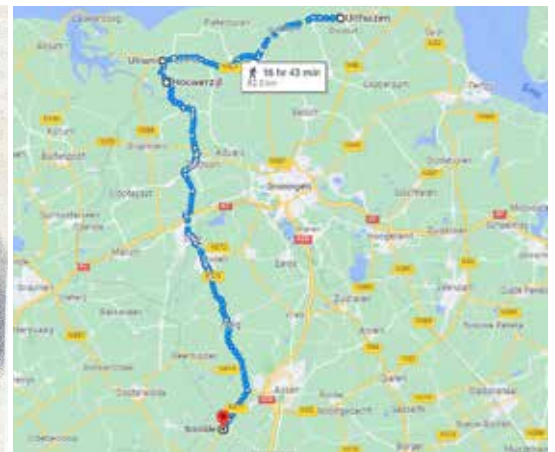
Dominay DeCock is not like *Dominay VanderHelm*. In church, *Dominay DeCock* humbly preaches the Word of God, *not the word of arrogant men*. He tells people about God's salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, *not about feeling good and following Jesus as a good example*. He encourages people to trust the LORD, *not themselves*. That gives them joy, and they sing psalms that praise God, *not hymns that please people*.

People come from near and far to hear the truth! They come in carriages, or they walk, from the province of Groningen, from Drenthe to the South, or from Friesland to the West. Some come from Uithuizen, where Mr. VanderWerp grew up, a five- or six-hour walk! Mr. Dijkstra, a shepherd, walks twelve hours from Smilde to worship in Ulrum! On Sundays, more than 100 carriages and wagons bring people. They tie their horses to trees and posts along the streets.

The church is chock-full! There aren't enough pews or chairs to sit on. Mothers take children on their laps. They squeeze an extra person in their pew. Still, some must sit on the steps to the pulpit, stand in the aisles, or in the lobby. Some stand on ladders outside to look through the windows! *Dominay DeCock* can hardly even reach the pulpit!



Hendrik DeCock



Dominay DeCock used to be like *Dominay Hofstede de Groot*, the former minister, who was now a professor in Groningen. He didn't care much for the Old Testament or the Catechism and the Belgic Confession. He didn't mind that the psalm book didn't have the Canons of Dort in it. He believed that people should forget about old-fashioned doctrines, and just be good Christian persons, with Jesus as an example. That is how he was taught in Groningen.

What happened?

Some time ago, the LORD had sent an older man by the name of Klaas Kuipenga to *Dominay DeCock* for catechism lessons. When the minister explained about the need to be a good

Christian, Mr. Kuipenga shook his head. “*Dominay, Dominay,*” he said, “If I must add but one sigh to my salvation, I will be eternally lost!” He explained that as long as *Dominay DeCock* would be teaching and preaching like that, he could not make public profession of faith.

Dominay DeCock started reading John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. A sister in church gave him a copy of the Canons of Dort, and he read it. Some shared with him books of old sermons they would use in their Conventicles. The LORD used this to make him understand the Bible differently. He began to preach about people’s sin and misery, and how badly they needed a Saviour to pay for their sins. There was so much joy in Ulrum when that happened—and the news spread everywhere!

Professor Hofstede de Groot heard about it and wrote a letter to *Dominay DeCock* that he was so sad for his former congregation. He was disappointed that he preached such dark and harsh old-fashioned nonsense! *Dominay DeCock* then wrote him a letter to explain why he was wrong, but the professor didn’t bother to write back. When *Dominay DeCock* also started to teach catechism to people from elsewhere, their ministers, like *Dominay VanderHelm*, were upset. But the LORD made people eager to hear the *truth of the gospel*. They had not heard it for years!

Wolves

In the fall of 1833, some sad and tired parents from Uithuizen knocked on *Dominay DeCock*’s door. He let them in. They didn’t waste any time and asked him, “*Dominay*, can you please baptize our babies? It is unusual, *Dominay*, and we hardly dare ask, because it may lead to trouble, but our own minister doesn’t preach the truth of Scripture like you do.”

Dominay DeCock wanted to know where they were from, and who their minister was. It was *Dominay Meijer-Brouwer* of Uithuizen, but they kept telling their story. “When we have our children baptized, we must answer whether ‘we confess that the doctrine of the Old and New Testament . . . and taught here in this Christian church, is the true and complete doctrine of salvation.’”

Dominay DeCock nodded: That’s right!

“But *Dominay*,” they went on, “he hardly teaches from the Old Testament and what he says is not at all the true and complete doctrine of salvation. How can we say ‘yes’ to that?! How can we promise to teach our children those lies? We can’t sleep at night because our consciences bother us. We want to do what

is right before the LORD. Even when we talk to him about this, he does not listen! Please help us!”

Dominay DeCock understood and promised to ask his consistory what he should do. This gave hope to these parents, and they went home in peace.

At their next meeting, the consistory thought and prayed about this and agreed that it was good to baptize these babies. The parents loved the LORD and wanted to do what was right. They were sheep that were attacked by a wolf who didn’t care. Also, there were no church rules against it. They let the parents know, and the next Sunday, they came with their baby to church in Ulrum to be baptized. This brought joy, and good the news spread! Soon, at least sixteen babies from other congregations were also baptized in Ulrum.

Around the same time, *Dominay Reddingius* of Assen wrote a brochure about Conventicles. It went on and on about how dumb and simpleminded those people were, and how they were misled by old-fashioned nonsense! They were upsetting good, tolerant Christians; they were divisive separatists! *Dominay DeCock* knew right away that the author didn’t understand how Conventicles helped people find comfort when they didn’t get it in church. This minister didn’t understand what was going on; he was *stuck in the mud* of tolerating new, faulty ideas and opposing the good old truth.

How sad! What should *Dominay DeCock* do? In November of 1833, he wrote a booklet in which he called *Dominay Meijer-Brouwer* of Uithuizen and *Dominay Reddingius* of Assen *wolves attacking the sheepfold of Christ*! Their work didn’t feed the LORD’s sheep but devoured them by leading them astray!

Before long, in December 1833, there was a complaint against *Dominay DeCock*: He baptized babies and taught catechism to young people from other congregations! He offended good ministers by calling them wolves! How dare he! There were only five people at Classis, and they couldn’t really make a decision. Yet, they were upset that *Dominay DeCock* “insulted some honorable teachers and caused chaos and confusion . . . that is moral misbehaviour!” Classis suspended him from office. Until further notice, he could no longer serve as minister. Yet but they were “nice,” and he would still get paid and could continue living in the manse.

Trouble

It is Saturday, and *Dominay DeCock* is in his study. He thinks about all that has happened. His books are spread out on his desk. The Bible is open, and he has paper, quill, and ink to



Widow Koster's Home, Ulrum

take notes, but he is distraught. He looks at the decision of Classis. When will the LORD open their eyes, just like his own were opened? *Dominay* DeCock starts humming Psalm 56,

For this I know, that God is at my side;
In him, whose word I praise, I will confide;
He heard my voice when in my fears I cried.
The LORD is my defender . . .

There's a knock on the door, and *Dominay* DeCock's wife, Frouwe, walks over to open it. There's Mr. VanderWerp! "Well, well," she says, "you must be here to see my husband! Come in!" He leaves his *klompen* at the door and goes straight to the study.

"Better leave the mud and mire at the door!" he says when he steps in. It is only half a joke. When he sees *Dominay* DeCock's frown he knows that something is bothering him. "Wait for the LORD, brother," he says, "and ask him to set you free from mud and mire!" Mr. VanderWerp nods and smiles—that's what he has been singing!

Before long, they talk about the ideas of *Dominays* VanderHelm, Reddingius, Meijer-Brouwer, Professor Hofstede DeGroot, and the decision of Classis. They also talk about the decision to let the minister of a nearby church preach in Ulrum on Sunday.

What would the LORD want them to do now? Should *Dominay* DeCock preach anyway? They want to do what is right—and not go against the decision of Classis. Could they worship somewhere else? They think of Geesje Koster, Freerk Cooper's widow, who welcomes Conventicles at her place. They will check it out, along with some more brothers from Ulrum. So, unexpectedly, there is a meeting at the house of Geesje Koster that day and they discuss it. To their surprise, Mr. Dijkstra from Smilde is there, too. He arrived early for church! They make a plan.

On Sunday, Mr. VanderWerp does not go to church in Niekerk. After they made the plan, he had gone home to Mr. Pietersen to ask him to lead the singing and do the reading once more. On Sunday morning, he walked back to Ulrum again, and now watches from the manse's window what is happening across the yard at the church in Ulrum.

Evangelical hymns weighed
and found wanting.

The church bell calls people to come to church, *Ding-dong, ding-dong!* Some come, but many don't. But now . . . what's that? It looks like armed militiamen marching in. They have guns, and among them . . . that's the minister Classis appointed to preach today! The militiamen set themselves up around the church building. The minister goes inside. Do they expect a rebellion, and is it for his protection? But *Dominay* DeCock and his people do not want to rebel, they want to submit to the authorities and do what is right.

When the church doors close, they get up and walk to Geesje Koster's house. Several other church members are there, too. *Dominay* DeCock may not preach, but Mr. Dijkstra, who is an "exhorter" in Smilde's Conventicle, speaks briefly on a passage of Scripture. *Dominay* DeCock then leads in a long prayer (that is allowed), to ask and praise the LORD for many things he might have otherwise said in a sermon. After, they go home and are comforted and encouraged!

Dominay DeCock decides to appeal the decision of Classis at the Provincial Board. Mr. VanderWerp helps him prepare the appeal. Will they allow him to preach again? Will they listen to his appeal?

At its meeting of April 1, 1834, the Provincial Board takes note of the appeal, and discusses it. They don't like the appeal and change the punishment for *Dominay* DeCock to make it worse. He will be suspended for two years even, he will no longer get paid, and he must pay for the costs of the meeting.

Of course, *Dominay* DeCock appeals the decision to the General Synod, but it goes nowhere: They only give him half a year to think about it. Around the same time, a friend, Jacobus Klok, writes a booklet to show the problems with the "evangelical" hymns. *Dominay* DeCock writes an introduction for it and publishes it. This is too much for the people who disagree with him, and the Provincial Board changes the suspension to deposition on May 29: He is no longer a minister at all.

By that time, Mr. VanderWerp is in trouble also.

Double trouble. Now what? 🙄



Keith Sikkema

Semi-retired from Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College and still teaches Church History and Foundations of Curriculum courses
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CLARION KIDS

AMANDA DEBOER

LORD'S DAY 13

Do people ever say to you, "Wow, you look so much like your dad"? After all, you are a child of your dad's. So, you might have things that are the same as him. Maybe you look like your dad. Maybe you act like your dad. Jesus, God the Son, has things that are the same as his Father too. God the Son was not created. Neither was God the Father. God the Son was there before the world was made. So was God the Father. This is why Jesus is called God's "only begotten" Son. We are sons and daughters of God, but we are not the same as God. We were created by God. We are born and die. In fact, we are sinners. God the Son paid for our sins on the cross. That is how we can be God's children. And so, God's only begotten Son is also called "our Lord."

Do you remember all the different names for Jesus that we've talked about? Put the letters in the blocks to write all the names. See Jesus as your example below.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| J | E | S | U | S | | |
| | | | | | | |
| God's only begotten | | | | | | |
| our | | | | | | |

Wordsearch

Jesus
Christ
Begotten
Son
Lord

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



RAY OF SUNSHINE

Rachel Vis



Meet Terence Berends!

I am forty-five years old and live at the Lighthouse in beautiful Fergus, Ontario. Some of my very favourite things to do are swimming, visiting/socializing, and making puzzles. You can find me most Tuesdays at Maranatha Christian School, where I help with the recycling, and on Fridays at Emmanuel Christian High School where I also do recycling. On Wednesday nights in the summer, I play soccer. On Thursdays, we do a paper route together and it is so much fun!!! I have a birthday coming up in August and will turn forty-six years old. I love receiving cards and letters in the mail. Music is a genuine interest and I love to sing praises to my Saviour, whom I look forward to spending eternity with.

August Birthdays

Happy Birthday to the five of you celebrating a birthday in August! We wish you all the Lord's blessings in the year to come.
"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

4 Terence Berends will be **46**

c/o Lighthouse
6528 1st Line
RR 3 Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

9 Rose Malda will be **65**

Mt. Nemo Christian Nursing Home
4486 Guelph Line
Burlington, ON L7P 0N2

31 Kristi Oosterhoff will be **32**

c/o Harbour Home
42 Spadara Drive
Hamilton, ON L9B 2K3

5 Philip Schuurman will be **63**

1156 Diltz Road
Dunnville, ON N1A 2W2

23 Jack Dieleman will be **50**

c/o Harbour Home
42 Spadara Drive
Hamilton, ON L9B 2K3

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.

Rachel Vis >> 731 Lincoln Street, Wellandport, Ontario L0R 2J0 | tom.rachelvis@gmail.com | 905-329-9476

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I've got talent. That's a good thing, isn't it? But anyone who says that in the church—particularly with reference to leadership and music—must wait to use those talents until they are asked. That is the conclusion of Rev. Kampen. That certainly invites a response!

Who does the asking? I presume Rev. Kampen means the consistory does. I wonder if he has ever interviewed talented women—those with gifts that could serve the church in strategic, helpful ways—to determine if they have been asked. Sure, lots of service by women happens organically. That's good. Sometimes women are asked informally, even casually, in the foyer after a church service. But how much more beneficial would it be if there were a more formal way in which women's talents, even those of leadership, could be acknowledged and incorporated constructively into congregational life. Something for our male leaders—our consistories—to think about and act on.

Musical talent! Agreed, music leadership is not a talent show, but it is a blessed and joyful way for congregation members to serve the church. In our current congregation, more than ten per cent of our membership leads the congregational singing—a different group each Sunday. Various instruments and varied voices. The age range? Seventeen to seventy-two. It's part of the fabric of who we are as congregation, not a talent show. Of course, it's organized; led by a talented, capable team of women and a consistory liaison . . . just so we can check that box.

I am not suggesting an overturning of the structures we have in place in our Canadian Reformed churches. However, there is significantly more room within those structures for employing all the talents God has showered on his church—more than what Rev. Kampen suggests.

Respectfully yours,
Sarah Vandergugten
Langley, BC

To the Editor,

Thank you Dr. Scholtens for your honesty in your recent *Clarion* submission, sharing how a fetus is used in vaccine manufacturing. Is the public aware that the fetus used would need to be healthy? This vulnerable mother would be groomed to donate. Often this healthy baby would be *live* when cut up in order for it to effectively culture a vaccine. The baby's life would be used, cut short, and callously labelled "unwanted" and exploited for our benefit.

The drunk driver victim in your example would have been wanted by his loved ones. This would be an unexpected event where his organs would be harvested only minutes after the painful decision to remove life support. His life deemed no longer sustainable. *Not* because it was "unwanted." His remains given back to his grieving loved ones to be honourably brought to a public funeral, after which a stone of remembrance would be placed over his grave.

I sympathize with the inherent desire to live well and not suffer, but should we intentionally do so at the expense of another's life? Wasn't it the innate intent behind the formation of our prolife chapters, WENEEDALAW, and the pregnancy care centres to send the message to mothers that their child should never be considered "unwanted"?

The Psalms speak of a God whose heart is turned towards those who struggle with sin, grief, the marginalized, and the unwanted. Shouldn't we take this into consideration when we line up for a vaccine made or tested on a little life trampled by science for "the greater good"?

Should we be calculating ways to escape temporal suffering, or should we humbly ask ourselves if Jesus's warning to Capernaum in Matthew 11:23 could be the Rich Man's warning to us of impending eternal suffering (see Luke 16:19-31)?

Sincerely,
Christina VanderZyl
Neerlandia, AB

Classis Pacific West Refuge CanRC (Langley)— April 7, 2022

On behalf of the convening church, Refuge, Rev. R. Visscher opened the meeting in a Christian manner, having the assembly read 1 Thessalonians 3:6-13 and pointing out how the passage assumes being connected to one another as churches. The assembly sang Psalm 95:1. In his opening prayer he remembered the installation of Rev. Alkema in the Smithers CanRC.

The delegates of the convening church of the previous classis, Langley, examined the credentials and reported that all churches were properly represented at Classis. Classis was declared constituted. As per the suggestion of the previous classis, Rev. J. Segstro was appointed Chairman, Rev. K. Janssen Vice-chairman, and Rev. D. Vandeburgt Clerk.

Changes among ministers

The agenda for the meeting was adopted. Classis reflected on the arrival of Rev. H. Alkema to the Smithers CanRC, the Houston CanRC in extending a call to Rev. Lee, the call extended by the Sardis CanRC to Rev. D. Vandeburgt and declined by him, and the call extended to and accepted by Rev. B. Schoof by the Chilliwack CanRC. The list of incoming correspondence was reviewed. As this was his first time at a Classis Pacific West since his installation in Smithers, Rev. H. Alkema signed the form for subscription.

The Surrey-Maranatha CanRC requested honourable release for Rev. B. Schoof, as he had accepted a call to the Chilliwack CanRC. All the documents were found to be in order and honourable release was granted as per July 1, 2022.

Requests from Houston and Surrey-Maranatha for assistance from ministers in the classis with preaching arrangements were granted. Each could count on a minister one Sunday per month.

Reports & advice

The following reports were received:

- The Treasurer, br. J. Kuik. An assessment of \$4 was approved for 2022.

- Cloverdale as church appointed to review the books of the treasurer. Following this report br. Kuik was discharged with respect to his responsibilities for 2021.
- Houston as church appointed to inspect the archives: all was in order.
- Committee for Needy Churches: no requests had been submitted.
- Church visitation to the Surrey-Maranatha CanRC.

The Chairman asked whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured, and whether there was any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of their church. Four churches responded with “yes, yes, no” and three with “yes, yes, yes.” Cloverdale, Langley, and Surrey-Maranatha requested advice and received it. Surrey’s request for advice concerned its future. Classis struck a three-member *ad hoc* committee to assist Surrey in its considerations. Appointed to this committee were members of the neighbouring congregations: Willoughby Heights, Refuge, and Cloverdale (including the counselor-delegate, who would be the convenor).

Mission activities

As per CPW regulations, the churches apprised each other of their mission activities.

Cloverdale: The work of Asia Mission continues. There is a lot of concern about developments abroad. Locally, the evangelism committee is starting things up (e.g. Cloverdale Market, VBS). A Hope Explored course will be offered.

Houston: activities locally are beginning again as health restrictions ease.

Langley: there are concerns with respect to Asia Mission. Travel abroad is not possible. The online work continues at full speed. Christianity Explored continues. They are also reviewing local church structures and considering options where mission is concerned.

Refuge: A brother, fluent in various south Asian languages, has been elected as an elder set aside for outreach to the Indo-Pakistani community in the area. He has been leading a local Bible study. We are hoping for assistance from other churches in this effort. A program with a local outreach focus is planned for Good Friday. Community dinners are being planned for Langley City.

Smithers: The work in Prince George is progressing very positively. In early January three elders and one deacon were ordained as a provisional council for Prince George. Local initiatives are beginning again, such as outreach among the indigenous population, a moms group, and Christianity Explored.

Surrey-Maranatha: Lack of involvement of members has meant their efforts have been minimal.

Willoughby Heights: Financial support continues to be given via assessments to the work in Prince George overseen by Smithers and the work in Brazil overseen by Aldergrove. Willoughby also financially supports the project of Pastor Elienai of the IRB in Sao Paulo, Brazil. This year Willoughby has decided to become a supporting church for the Mission in Mexico project overseen by Abbotsford and Vernon; Willoughby will be considering becoming a cooperating church in the near future. Locally Willoughby is continuing to explore the opportunity of creating a reading room in its building or close to it (e.g. in a shopping mall). There is also some communication with the local Free Reformed Church regarding cooperation in outreach.

Appointments and conclusion

The following appointments were made by Classis:

Convening of next classis: by Smithers, at a place determined by Smithers, on Thursday June 23, 2022 (if cancelled: September 22, 2022), at 9:00am.

Suggested officers for the next classis: Chair: provided by Willoughby Heights, Vice-chair: provided by Langley, Clerk: provided by Refuge.

Committee for Examinations: Deputies (Sermons): Rev. K. Janssen and Rev. H. Alkema; Exegesis OT: Rev. R. Visscher; Exegesis NT: Rev. H. Alkema; Scripture Knowledge: Rev. J. Segstro; Doctrine & Creeds: Rev. D. Vandeburgt; Church History: Rev. K. Janssen; Ethics: Rev. T. Schouten; Church Polity: rev. K. Janssen; Pastoral Theology: Rev. D. Vandeburgt.

Church Visitors: Rev. D. Vandeburgt (convenor), Rev. K. Janssen, Rev. R. Visscher, Rev. H. Alkema.

Archiving Church: Smithers.

Inspection of Archives: Houston.

Treasurer: br. J. Kuik (17167 83rd Ave, Surrey, BC V4N 0B2; 778-574-5083).

Church to review CPW financial books: Cloverdale.

Needy Churches Committee: br. H. Leyenhorst (convenor), br. J. Lengkeek, br. R. Van Oene.

Preaching arrangements in vacant churches: Rev. R. Visscher.

Coordination Ecclesiastical Contacts: Rev. J. Segstro.

Counsellors for vacant churches: Houston – remains Rev. J. Visscher, Surrey-Maranatha: Rev. K. Janssen.

Opportunity was given for personal questions. Censure as per CO Article 34 was not deemed necessary. The press release of Classis was read and approved. The acts will be adopted by the executive. The Chairman closed Classis in a Christian manner, remembering the needs of the churches within Classis, of the federation, and the needs of the world in his prayer. Following prayer, the assembly sang the doxology and was declared closed.

Rev. K. Janssen

Vice-chair of CPW April 2022.

