

# Clarion

*No Comparison  
In The Fruit of the Spirit is Joy  
Douwe Johannes VanderWerp Part 5*



# Clarion

**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 is the "dog days of summer" in North America and what better opportunity to use some of that down time for faith-building reading as we trust you will find inside Issue 17! There is devotional material aplenty as Pastor Bruintjes meditates on mission work in Treasures, New & Old while Pastor VanderGaag unpacks the joy found in the fruit of the Holy Spirit as shown to us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Very edifying!

Pastor Arend Witten sent us an article from his new home in Baldvis, WA on the value and pitfalls of comparing ourselves to others in our Christian walk—it's bound to get you thinking. Mr. Keith Sikkema presents us with the fifth and final installment in his series of stories which gives us insight into the struggles of our forefathers in the Secession of 1834 through the experiences of Douwe VanderWerp. Since cycles of deformation and

reformation continue to occur, we can learn from the past and be encouraged when we find ourselves in similar circumstances.

In Ray of Sunshine you can meet Mr. Dave Elliot Vanveen, who is one of several honoured sons and daughters of our heavenly Father having birthdays in September—happy birthday all! Clarion Kids walks our young ones through the meaning and benefit of Christ's suffering. A press release from a recent Classis Pacific West shows the reception of a new pastor in Houston, a Rev. Han Gil Lee who until recently was pastor of Salem URC in Bowmanville, ON—welcome to the CanRC, Pastor Lee! And to begin our offerings this issue we have a thoughtful editorial on the matter of calling (something many of us wrestle with) from the pen of Dr. Jason VanVliet. Enjoy!

*Peter Holtvliüwer*

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## EDITORIAL

# What is Your Calling?

**H**ave you missed your calling in life? Or, backing up a step, how do you find your calling in the first place? Not only youth but also adults ask these questions from time to time. Good answers can be elusive.

## Calling defined

Different people mean different things when they speak of calling. At a minimum, we all want to acknowledge our God in our daily care and labour. If we are just keeping busy, we can simply speak of it a *task*. If it is little more than having a title, making money, and paying bills, the word *job* will suffice. But as redeemed servants of Christ we put our hearts and hands to the task “as to the Lord and not to man” (Eph 6:7). In this way we speak of our daily *calling*.

But in the Bible God speaks of calling in at least three different senses. To begin with, he has called us out of darkness, into his marvellous light (1 Pet 2:9), and unto service as his saints (1 Cor 1:3). Our Redeemer graciously gives this calling to every child of God—from students to CEOs and from mothers to mechanics (Rom 8:30). For our present purposes, let’s refer to this as the *salvation sense* of calling.

Scripture also uses the word *calling* in a narrower sense. Paul, for example, was called to be an apostle (Rom 1:1). God calls many more men, although certainly not all men, to serve as ministers, elders, and deacons. Such a man must wait until he is called “and thus be certain that his call comes from the Lord” and not merely from his own aspirations or ambitions (BC, Art 31). This is the *special office* sense of calling.

Finally, although it is quite rare, the Holy Spirit also speaks of calling in the sense of our *daily work*. In 1 Corinthians 7:17 we read, “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has *called* him.” Please note, though, that this particular calling can change, even quickly. A servant is called to faithfully serve his master, but that does not necessarily mean God calls him to remain a slave for the rest of his life. Not at all! The Spirit even says, “If you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity” (v. 21).

## Callings discerned

We need to use this word *calling* with more discernment. Which sense of calling are we using? Is it a calling for life or one that can change throughout life?


In the salvation sense of calling, God summons each Christian to live as a redeemed saint every day again. Seasons and circumstances may fluctuate, but this calling never changes. Next, the Lord calls some men to special office. This call is not irrevocable. An office bearer caught in serious sin may be removed from office (CO Art 72). Still, this special calling is so weighty that ordained brothers vow to stick with it.

But the Lord speaks differently about the daily work sense of calling. As we learned from 1 Corinthians 7, yes, your heavenly Father calls you to your daily responsibilities. But tomorrow God may change your assignment. That doesn’t mean you missed your calling to begin with. It simply means the Lord has put a new opportunity on your path.

## Callings found and fulfilled

So, how do we find our calling in life? To make a responsible decision, we should analyze our God-given talents, pray, seek advice from others, and consider the needs within the church and beyond. But we can also put undue pressure on ourselves to find *just the right* calling, as if the Lord will only be pleased and we will only be happy if we narrow things down to that one ideal option that becomes our life-long calling. Let’s be careful how far we go with this.

For example, if the Lord gives a young woman exceptional ability in understanding others and empathizing with them, she could use this gift to be an excellent counsellor, an effective teacher, or a devoted wife who also provides much-needed volunteer help at various charities. That list could be expanded. Does she miss her calling, then, if she chooses one instead of the other? No. Can she opt for different daily work down the road? Yes. She can fulfil her calling (salvation sense) in any one of those callings (daily work sense).

So, rather than agonizing over whether we have found or missed our calling, let’s use our God-given talents and with the Preacher say, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Eccl 9:10) to the Lord, who called us into his marvellous light. 



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# Renewed Zeal for Mission

*“They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.” (GALATIANS 4:17)*

**M**ission. By God’s grace, throughout our federation there is renewed zeal for local mission. Jesus came to seek and save the lost rather than sitting and waiting for them to show up (Luke 19:10). There is an intentional “going out” in the work of mission, with a purpose to share the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ. He commanded his disciples, and through his disciples the church, to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:18-20). Where grace makes dead sinners alive in Christ there is great joy in heaven, which should be echoed on earth (compare Luke 15:7, 10, 32). So, the church must be intentional and zealous, making much of seeking and saving the lost.

Yet not all missional endeavours are the same. The churches in Galatia had come to embrace the gospel of grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Soon after, it seems, a group of missional Jews had come and were preaching to the churches that they must do more by adopting the sign of Jewishness, circumcision. If they did this, they would truly be accepted and part of the people of God. They raised the bar of belonging beyond the gospel of Jesus Christ alone.


They were zealous and intentional in their work. “They make much of you . . .” (Gal 4:17). It seems the missional zeal of the Judaizers was overwhelming. The mission team was deeply interested in the Galatians and seemed genuinely concerned for their well-being. They invested their time and energy in this mission. It seems, for the Galatians, this attentive care was overwhelming.

But Paul warns the Galatians: “They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you make much of them.” The Judaizers excluded the Galatians from true fellowship, so that they would be more eager to be counted as “one of them.” They wanted the Galatians to be more like them, so that they could boast in who they were and have others boast in who they were. The Judaizers were on a mission, but the wrong mission of making their own name great, and leading people back into slavery. Jesus condemned such mission; “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he

becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves” (Matt 23:15).

Today, as churches engage in mission, a competitive edge can rear its ugly head. Many churches and denominations have identity markers, and we can fall into the temptation of focusing on what makes us unique, rather than what makes Christ so wonderful. We can go down the path of wrong mission in trying to ensure our name, method, and identity is celebrated at the end.

In mission, we must ask ourselves, “Who do we wish to make much of, Jesus Christ or ourselves?” An easy way to test our heart is to ask a probing question, “Would I be content in gospel seed-planting if others saw the fruit?” Or, more convicting, “Would I be discouraged, if those converted do not celebrate and make much of me?” These are heart-probing questions that require humility and prayer.

How can we guard against misguided mission? Understand the goal—to have Christ formed in them (Gal 4:19). This happens as we make much of Jesus Christ and his cross, as the only hope and foundation for all. Paul, in wonderful summation, says, “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal 6:14). 

## For further study

1. Read Romans 10:1-13; Romans 16:17-20
2. What identity markers, beyond gospel of grace, might you hold out as important for others to love and celebrate?
3. By whom do you feel excluded, and might you be tempted to change your identity to belong to the “in-crowd”? Is this exclusion based on the gospel of grace?



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# No Comparison?

AREND WITTEN

**I**t is good advice. You've likely heard it. Probably dispensed it to another. Maybe you even follow it. "Don't compare yourself to others." Each of us has strengths and weaknesses. We need to accept who we are and simply serve each day with what the Lord has allotted to us. So don't compare.

Your hair, front lawn, career accomplishments, and grandchildren are all liable to comparison. But perhaps most insidious is when we compare our spiritual lives to others. "They're happy, godly, and capable. But I'm weak, useless, and unhappy." Don't compare!

But is that really biblical? With this article I'd like to explore biblical teaching on comparing, specifically as it relates to our spiritual lives.

To begin with, God alone is without comparison. That is reason to worship and praise him. "Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD?" (Ps 89:5-6). God is beyond all of us. "No one," is the answer.

## It's not all bad

Surprisingly, comparing our lives to the lives of others isn't all bad. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the LORD compares his people to one another. To the people of Judah, Ezekiel said, "Samaria has not committed half your sins. You have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed. . . . So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace . . ." (16:51-52). It's a very negative comparison. But it was accurate, necessary, and designed to shame the Judeans to genuinely repent.

More positively, the apostle Paul describes for the Corinthians the "abundance of joy" and the "wealth of generosity" of the churches in Macedonia towards the poor (2 Cor 8). He intends that the Christians in Corinth test their willingness to give to that of the Macedonians, and "excel in this act of grace." He writes, "I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love is also genuine." The word "prove" here has the sense of test or examine.

## They put me to shame

Clearly seeing the sacrificial living of a fellow believer can legitimately cause you to compare your own life. We can learn from a positive example and seek to emulate the godliness of our fellow believers. Young couples compare their parenting to the wisdom of experienced parents, and work on growing. A church member notices the caring work of his deacon and is moved to reach out too. When I see the quiet trust of a senior brother or sister, I am reminded to have more patience with the ups and downs of life. We sometimes say, "They put me to shame." Along the same vein, the apostle Paul has no hesitation in calling the Corinthians to imitate him (1 Cor 11:1). He commends Timothy to the Philippians saying, "For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ" (Phil 2:20).

Why do we often advise, "Don't compare"? Where does this comparing go wrong?

## The one-eyed king

In the church of Corinth there was a group of arrogant, self-commending, false teachers who were opposing the apostle Paul.

.....

Where does  
this comparing  
go wrong?

.....



What grounds had they for claims of greatness? Comparing. They compared themselves with one another and enjoyed some puff-chested mutual back slapping. The apostle writes, “Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding” (2 Cor 10:12). The problem was the standard of comparison. John Calvin pulls no punches when commenting. He writes,

For an explanation of this passage we need look no farther than to the monks; for as they are almost all of them the most ignorant asses, and at the same time are looked upon as learned persons . . . the excessively insolent arrogance of the monks proceeds chiefly from this—that they measure themselves by themselves; for, as in their cloisters there is nothing but barbarism, it is not to be wondered, if the man that has but one eye is a king among the blind.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the false teachers in Corinth were “without understanding.” They would compare themselves to one another, without first taking into consideration whether God approved. The apostle concludes, “For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends” (2 Cor 10:18).

## Stopping the pendulum

When we compare our lives to others, our feelings can swing from envious self-loathing (“I’m such a loser”) to self-congratulatory arrogance (“I’m thankful I’m not like that tax-collector”). But when we consider the Lord’s opinion, the pendulum can stop swinging.


In the mirror of God’s law, we see ourselves as sinners. The apostle concludes in Romans 3:9, 10 “What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one.’” Earlier in his letter the apostle had delineated some of the awful consequences of rejecting the truth. “They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness . . .” (1:28, 29). Faced with such a catalogue of vices we may be tempted to muse with satisfaction, “That is not me.” But immediately in chapter 2, the apostle turns the camera

# Any act of kindness in the life of a Christian is the fruit of the Spirit

around, “Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges . . . because you, the judge, practice the very same things” (Rom 2:1, 2).

The gospel beats down our pride. God has had to be very patient with us. If we got what we deserved, it would be temporal and eternal punishment. The Lord Jesus came and suffered and died for our sins. It is only by his power that as Christians we are able to choose and do anything good.

For us to boast is as odious as the teenager who brags of new sneakers paid for by Dad’s money. Any act of kindness in the life of a Christian is the fruit of the Spirit. So, when we enjoy a loving friendship, we should praise God. Similarly, it is by the Spirit that we gain a victory over a temptation.

On the other hand, the gospel also saves us from self-loathing. When we compare our lives to others and conclude “they put me to shame,” there is grace and power to change. We are accepted not because of what we are able to accomplish, but because of what Christ has accomplished for us. In this, there is no need to compare ourselves to others. “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord” (2 Cor 10:17). 



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<sup>1</sup>John Calvin and John Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 332-333.

## In the Fruit of the Spirit is

# Joy

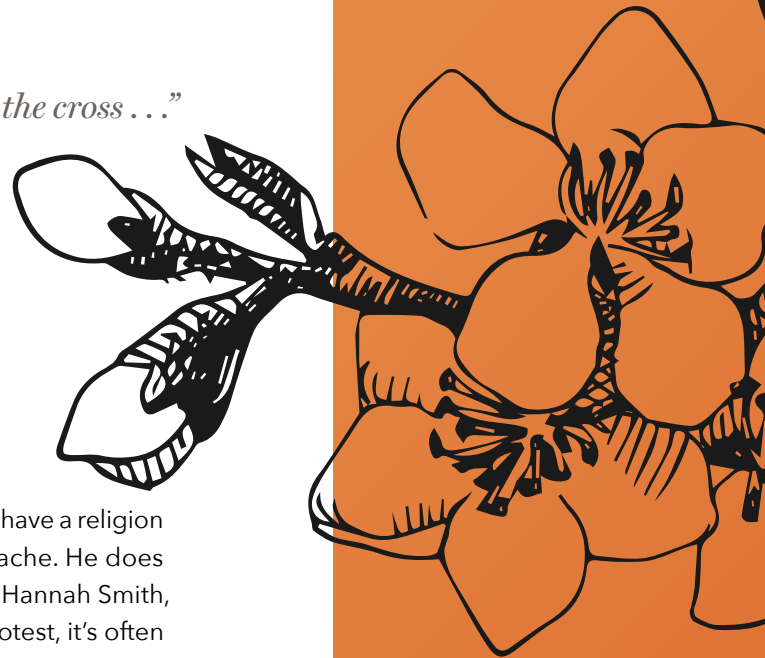
*“... who for the joy that was set before him endure the cross ...”*

(HEB 12:2)

TYLER VANDERGAAG

### Introduction

“You Christians”—a thoughtful unbeliever once said—“seem to have a religion that makes you miserable. You are like a man with a headache. He does not want to get rid of his head, but it hurts him to keep it” (Hannah Smith, *The Christian’s Secret*, 15). As much as we might want to protest, it’s often true. Joy can seem out of reach for us. It’s like the “grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire” (Matt 6:30). But this is not the way God intended it to be. This is not the gospel. Although there is much sorrow and trouble in this life, our lives can and ought to be full of joy.







## Jesus was fixated on this joy

### Jesus's joy

Before we can think about our own joy, we first need to consider the joy of the Lord Jesus. What brings a smile to his face? What is his greatest joy? Hebrews 12:2 tells us. We're called there to look to Jesus, to fix our eyes on him—the author and perfecter of our faith. And then it speaks about how there was a “joy that was set before him” that led him to endure the cross, scorn its shame, and sit down at God's right hand. Those words, “set before him,” carry with it a sense of dogged determination, the kind a marathon runner has. That's what the Lord Jesus had. He was fixated on this joy. It was a prize he could not take his eyes off. So much so that that this joy led him to stop at nothing. Nothing could break his stride. Nothing could stop him from the joy that was set before him—not even the cross! He scorned its shame, which is to say he made light of the cross.

Think about that. Those who've lived through a war often have difficulty speaking about it. It's too horrific, too painful. Well, on the cross Jesus went through all the horrors and anguish that hell itself could muster up. Yet, there was a joy that was set before him that made him scorn, make light of the horrors of the cross. The joy on the other side of suffering far outweighed the light and momentary troubles of the cross (cf. 2 Cor 4:17).

Now ask yourself what was the joy that made the cross such a small trifle, such a light burden for the Lord Jesus? Was it fame? Prestige? Power? Wealth? No. The joy that was set before him was that through his sacrifice on the cross, you, me, and his bride—the church—would be forgiven. That was and still is Jesus's greatest joy!

This joy set before him was the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the Lord Jesus. We should never think that Jesus—just because he was God—didn't need the Spirit. It was in the Spirit's strength that he endured the hellish agony of the cross and scorned its shame.

### Joyful healer

Now what does all this mean, practically, for us today? It means that when you come to Jesus with your “failures and foibles . . . for fresh forgiveness, for renewed pardon, with distress and

need and emptiness,” his heart bursts with joy (Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, 36-37). Here, our sinful hearts struggle. We tend to think that when we come to Jesus with our sin, with our burdens and sorrow, our worries and doubts, that deep down Jesus is a bit disappointed, maybe even a bit frustrated with us: “You're here for forgiveness again? What's wrong with you?” But how wrong we are!

An illustration will help. It's not my own (Ortlund, 36). Imagine a wealthy doctor who travels to a remote village that has been struggling with a contagious disease. This doctor has found a cure, but when he gets to the village, those afflicted refuse his help. After a long while, finally a few brave souls step forward and are cured. What, I ask you, does that doctor feel and have deep within his heart? You know the answer, don't you? Joy! Well, as it is with this doctor, so it is with Jesus—the Great Physician and Healer of our souls. He came to heal the sick, those afflicted with the terminal illness we call sin. His greatest joy is when we come to the throne room of grace and say, “Lord Jesus, I am empty and worn out by sin and suffering; I need your renewing mercy and forgiving grace.”

That's what brings joy to his heart, a smile to his face. It's then that his heart bursts with joy. Dear child of God, you have a Saviour who is filled with the joy that is found in the fruit of the Spirit! Don't keep him at arm's length even after you've sinned against him. Your sin is not greater than his joy. So come to him and confess your sin. That's when Jesus's joy is greatest.

### Our joy

There are many things that can fill us with joy. The birth of a child (Luke 1:14) and friendship (Prov 27:9) are but two examples. At the same time, we also recognize that “there's a time to weep and . . . a time to mourn” (Eccl 3:4). Now, the problem is that we tend to think that during times of sorrow there can be no joy. You're either sorrowful or joyful but not both.

So, we might wonder about statements like the one in 1 Thessalonians 5:16, “Be joyful always.” Does Paul have a twisted concept of joy? Are you supposed to say, “Life's good” even when a storm is brewing in your heart and you're almost falling

## Your sin is not greater than his joy

to pieces, when darkness is your closest friend, or when you're standing at the grave? Does having the joy in the fruit of the Spirit mean pasting a plastic smile on your face and never admitting that your heart is aching? Not at all! The same Paul who said "be joyful always" also said in 2 Corinthians 6 that he was "sorrowful yet always rejoicing" (v. 10).

So, what's the secret? How can we be sorrowful yet always rejoicing? The secret is that our deepest joy is not rooted in our circumstances, but in Jesus. Jesus is your joy, your greatest joy. As we rest in him, in his love, in the forgiveness that he delights to give us, our joy will be constant and complete. There's no greater joy than knowing that sin has been taken away in Christ. Now there's no guilt in life, no fear in death. This joy will always be there because Jesus will always be there. Unlike our family and friends, Jesus doesn't come and go. Jesus is not fleeting or fickle. He's a rock of refuge. He's the anchor for your soul, "firm and secure" (Heb 6:16). And when our lives are rooted in him, our joy will be as unshakable and constant as the sun in the sky. You can't always see the sun, but it's still there behind the clouds. So it is with the Lord Jesus. He's your constant joy that no one can snatch from you, that no circumstance can chase away.

So, do you want to be happy and not like that man with a headache? Then stop looking at your circumstances. That's so often our problem. The reason I lack joy is because I look at the mountains of troubles all around me. I see sorrows like sea

billows roll. The more I look at them the bigger they get and the more impossible it is to have anything that even resembles joy. Then I begin to despair and the darkness closes in. I trust I'm not alone. So, in such times, we must remember that in the fruit of the Spirit is joy, a joy that no amount of trouble or sorrow can snatch away. Oh, may the Spirit so move our hearts and shift our eyes off the trouble and sorrow and look to Jesus, our true joy!

Your joy in Christ is the only joy that can sustain you and keep you secure when your health declines and there's strife and struggles all around you—yes, even when you stand at the grave. As the Spirit does his work in you, his joy will allow you and even move you to "be joyful always," not just when the sun is shining, but when a blizzard is brewing or the rain keeps falling. When, by God's grace, this happens, then on the happiest days of your life, when things are going smoothly, you can give thanks to God that your joy in Christ rises even above these moments of happiness. And on your darkest days, in your deepest sadness, you can do the same. Our joy in Jesus is richer than any earthly happiness and runs deeper than our deepest sorrow. ☑



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# MERF News

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

June 2022



## INDONESIA – Java Island Outreach



Sunday school teacher training at Gunungkidul-Yogyakarta

Indonesia has the world's 4th largest population. It is made up of 1300 different ethnicities in 17,000 islands stretching over 3000 miles along the equator north of Australia. Official figures say that 87% of the more than 275 million confess Islam. The vast majority, however, are nominal Muslims and know very little about their religion. The claim of 11% confessing Christians seems inaccurate in the light of the steady growth of the Indonesian church.

Bahasa Indonesian is the national language, but 737 other languages are spoken. Traditional folkways are strong among all. Indonesia has many young families, over 40% of the population are under 25 years of

age. Over 60% live in urban areas.

Half the Indonesians live on Java Island. Javanese language dominates, the second language is Sundanese. The Indonesian capital, Jakarta, is the 2nd largest urban area in the world. Two of the three MERF ministry teams serve on Java Island, one in Jakarta and the other is in Malang (central East Java). The original team serves from Makassar, Sulawesi Island.

Both Java teams have active Bible outreach and training programs both in-person and online. The Jakarta team also shares the gospel via broadcasts in Javanese and Sundanese languages as well as Bahasa Indonesian.

### Online Biblical Training

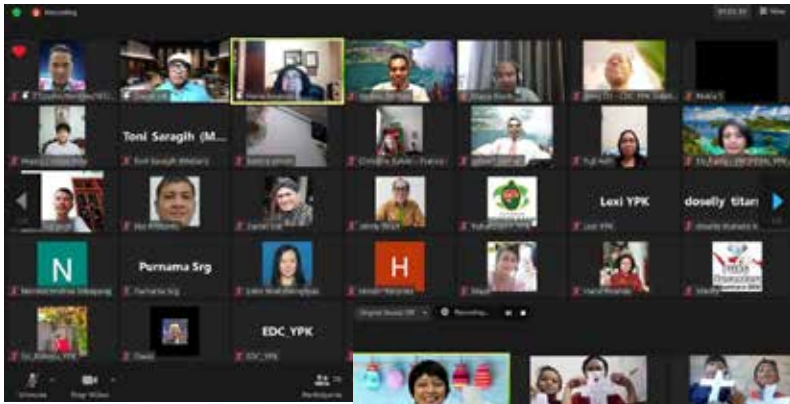
In God's providence, despite the frustrating disruption and challenges, months of extended COVID measures hindering Bible teaching face-to-face actually resulted in expansion of online activities beyond anything imagined. Before COVID, most activities were in the immediate vicinity with occasional long ministry trips to far areas. Trips provide encouragement to small fellowships and the training of local spiritual leaders. COVID lockdowns and the rise of internet apps, especially ZOOM meetings, enabled online outreach and biblical training opportunities to greatly multiply overnight. Existing online pro-

grams blossomed and new ones were added, targeting a variety of different audiences. Suddenly requests came in from far and wide to join the online biblical training events.

No longer were classroom space, distance or accommodation an issue. Indonesian believers are hungry for God's Word. Even during the COVID restrictions, from the security of their own homes, located miles and miles away, believers and serious seekers have been able to connect. They could receive Bible teaching, ask questions, share and pray together. Previously, it would have been difficult and expensive, if not impossible, for many of the participants to have such opportunities. Finally, now in-person activities are starting up again as the online programs also continue to expand. Praise God!

In **Malang**, Pastor Jonson Dethan's regular livestream Bible teaching become YouTube videos, available at any time. Over 1700 are subscribed to the channel, they come from a variety of religious backgrounds and places. Some ask questions or make comments.

In **Jakarta**, Tommy & Elisa Christanto prepare short radio and online audio and video Bible programs



**Above:** Pastor Jonson Dethan teaching online. **Right:** Online Sunday school Easter celebration

in both Bahasa Indonesian and Javanese languages. These are done in a variety of formats. This includes, devotionals, Bible stories with songs & simple related handicrafts, as well as Bible knowledge activities & quizzes. Some are shared on YouTube and others by WhatsApp. Many are designed especially for children. Others target teenagers and some are for adults. Pastors and Sunday school teachers express appreciation for these online resources to share the gospel and nurture their churches. These have been especially valuable during the extend-



ed pandemic restrictions. A regular online Sunday school class for children and prayer meetings continue online. Also, online Sunday school teacher training courses meet a big demand, with participants from all over Indonesia and beyond.

In addition, Sundanese and Sumba speakers serve part-

time on the team. A weekly Bible radio program is aired in the Sundanese language. Another is about to be launched in the Sumba language.

Cat is being translating to Indonesian. Also, this year at the request of Christian radio stations in Indonesia, MERF's Arabic team provided recordings sung from the Arabic Psalter to air during the Muslim Ramadan fast. Interest in the Arabic language has provided an opportunity to share beautiful Psalms along with translation to Indonesian.

**In-person Outreach**

As the pandemic subsides, in-person Vacation Bible School events, along with children's ministry training,

**Joint Projects**

distribution of Christian literature and small diaconal aid projects among the poor are increasing. Some new on-line contacts can now be followed up in person. Prayer is needed for wisdom to balance online and in-person gospel ministry. These ministries bring God's transforming Word to many Indonesians.

It is especially encouraging to see other MERF ministries combining efforts with the Indonesian team to share the gospel. Currently the MERF Augustine Program Coordinator's 7-minute simplified catechism YouTube series – *The Minister's*

**MERF-Canada**

Thank you for your faithful support! Please make cheques payable to MERF-Canada and send them to the address at the bottom of the page.

Online donations can be made to Middle East Reformed Fellowship (Canada) Inc. through [www.merf.org/support](http://www.merf.org/support)

e-transfers:  
[merfcanada@gmail.com](mailto:merfcanada@gmail.com)

*“For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.”*

— Psalm 62:1-2



Tommy & Elisa Christanto visit gospel radio listener community in Central Java mountains

# Meet Dave Elliot Vanveen!



I am fifty-one years old, and live at the Lighthouse, in beautiful Fergus, Ontario. I was born and raised in Fergus. In September I will be fifty-two years old. In 2002, when Twin Oaks opened, I lived there for a few years and then moved to the Lighthouse. I have a lot of family in the Fergus area and enjoying visiting with my brothers and sisters and their

families. You can find me most Mondays hard at work with wood working, and on Thursdays I am busy doing a paper route. I enjoy helping keep the Lighthouse property neat and tidy and you can often find me busy clipping or helping with landscaping. I love music, especially the recorder, and find much pleasure playing it in accompany with the piano. Some evenings you can find me practicing my game of pool downstairs. One of my favourite things to do is write my many thoughts on paper. I love to share my Christian perspective, especially in regard to politics. On Sundays I am so happy to go to church, and I always live in the joy of the faith, knowing that I will spend eternity with my Saviour.

## September Birthdays

To Katie, Marsha, Jerry, Cindy, Nick, Dave, and Paul: We wish you all a blessed birthday!  
May you have a wonderful day celebrating with family and friends.  
May the Lord give you all you need in the year to come, to continue serving him,  
and shining your light in the world.

**6 Katie Deboer** will be **22**  
34756 7 Ave  
Abbotsford, BC V2S 8C4

**8 Marsha Moesker** will be **45**  
c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line RR 3  
Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

**14 Jerry Bontekoe** will be **58**  
c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road RR 2  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

**15 Cindy Blokker** will be **33**  
c/o Harbour Home  
Spadara Drive  
Hamilton, ON L9B 2K3

**22 Nick Prinzen** will be **50**  
c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West  
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

**25 Dave Vanveen** will be **52**  
c/o Lighthouse  
6528 1st Line RR 3  
Fergus, ON N1M 2W4

**29 Paul Dieleman** will be **53**  
c/o Beacon Home  
653 Broad Street West  
Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

**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



# Douwe Johannes VanderWerp

## (1811-1876) PART 5

KEITH SIKKEMA

### Trouble

On Thursday, November 13, 1834, the Bible is open on Mr. VanderWerp's lectern. The children are hard at work. Some work at the benches, doing math; some work in the straw, reading a book. Some students help each other with grammar. Mr. VanderWerp listens to one student saying her lesson. Mr. Snippe, the farmer, watches from the shadows under the hayloft. He likes what he sees.

At 11:00 there is a sudden rattle on the door. The teacher, the students, the pigs, and the calves look up. The chickens and the rooster cock their heads. Everyone hushes up. *Nobody* knows what to think of it. Mr. VanderWerp steps towards the door to open it, but the guests don't wait—they just step in. The children gulp. How rude! Who would do such a thing? Don't they know good manners?

The mayor steps in. Some children hold their breath. Then the policeman steps in. Some children turn pale. Then the town clerk steps in. Some children start crying for their mommy. Some run to get out. Mr. VanderWerp considers how to be respectful to the intruders, who look important and stern and mean.

Stern-faced, they walk over to the teacher's lectern, first the clerk, then the mayor and then the officer. The clerk gets paper,

his quiver, and his inkwell from his letter bag, and puts them on the lectern. He shoves the Bible off the desk. It falls to the ground with a thud, sandy dust flying. The policeman moves to the clerk's right, his hand on his sabre, prepared to use it. The mayor moves to the clerk's left. All three grimly face Mr. VanderWerp.

"What is your profession?" the clerk asks in a critical tone.

"Teacher, Sir," and the clerk dips his quill in the well and writes it down.

"Where do you live?"

"At Hendrik Sickens' farm, Sir."

The clerk writes it down, and asks, "Since when?"

"Since two weeks, Sir."

"What did you do during that time?"

"The first week, nothing, Sir."

"Why are you teaching now?"

"To make a living, Sir, and to teach the children how to read and write."

"How much are you getting paid?"

"The parents of my students give me room and board, Sir, and each child brings a nickel every week."

"Do you intend to continue this school?"

Mr. VanderWerp hesitates. "Good works are only those done out of true faith in accordance with the law of God and to his glory—and not those based on our own opinion or on precepts of men," he remembers from the catechism. It is good to teach these children on biblical grounds. Yet, he does not want to be disobedient or disrespectful to people in authority.

"I suppose not, Sir," he says.

The clerk writes everything down and then reads out loud what he wrote. The policeman nods. The mayor nods. The clerk and the mayor sign it with the quill. They tell Mr. VanderWerp to sign it. All the time, the policeman keeps his hand to the sable and watches. He is the witness and the enforcer of the law. Then he signs, too. Everything went orderly. He didn't need his sabre. They can go now, and march away, through the door. The mayor up front, then the policeman, then the clerk.

Mr. VanderWerp is shaking and tells the children to go home as well. Mr. Snippe steps forward from the shadow under under the hayloft and encourages him. "Our LORD will take care of us," he says, "you did what was right."

The mayor brings the report to the Provincial Governor in Assen, ten kilometers away. "Treat these people harshly for starting a school without permission," he says. "That teacher, Mr. VanderWerp, told such horrible stories about religion that the children got very scared and some even ran away crying and couldn't sleep at night! The parents call this repentance and force their children to go to VanderWerp's so-called school! In a barn—humph!—it is a fire-hazard with all the hay and straw, it reeks of pigs and calves, and it is too dark! They should learn to obey the rules! Humph!" He doesn't even realize that some of it is made up.

The children tell their story at home. That evening, they meet to bring the problem to the LORD in prayer. The week after, they decide to ask for permission to have a school. They fear God and want to obey the government's rules!

They ask the mayor, but he refuses. Then they beg the Governor, but he doesn't budge. They even implore King William I to let them have a school in which to do what they had promised at baptism, and for which they themselves will pay. Their children shouldn't grow up like illiterate savages but must learn how to serve the LORD; nothing works. They may not have their own school. It is against the rules. It is illegal.

Mr. VanderWerp must go to court for teaching school without permission. He may choose: Go to jail or pay a fine and the costs of the court. That is three months' pay! The parents pay. The mayor gives the money to the public school.

## Aftermath

Mr. VanderWerp will now teach catechism and Bible: That is allowed. Sometimes, he also "preaches" in Seceded churches, as a lay preacher. Sometimes he reads a sermon by a minister, and sometimes he prepares his own, but he preaches with the same enthusiasm and love for the LORD as he used to tell Bible stories. Later, in the 1840s, he studies with *Dominay DeCock*, and is ordained to be a minister in 1844. The LORD remembers his people!

Several years later, in 1848, Seceded parents in Smilde get permission to have their Reformed schools, as long as they pay for it themselves. At the same time, many Seceded people leave the country to settle in Holland, Michigan, and Pella, Iowa, to build their own Reformed schools and churches.

The LORD's work continues. He keeps and builds his church in the Netherlands and in North America. No one stops him: Not Satan, not laws, not officials, not kings—no matter how hard they try. The Lord Jesus Christ is King, the Word of the LORD is preached and taught. God's people persevere.

*Dominay VanderWerp* serves the LORD. In 1863, the church of Graafschap, Michigan, calls him to be their minister. He smokes a pipe and thinks and prays about it and declines: He cannot leave. Graafschap calls again, and he declines again: It is a place of pioneers in a country fighting a civil war; a wilderness with forests, poor roads, and mud; it is a troubled congregation of zealots; and the journey across the ocean is difficult. Graafschap calls him a third time, and he cannot decline again.

He emigrates in September 1864. He becomes the editor of a new church magazine. He teaches pastors for the Christian Reformed Churches. There aren't many students, but the LORD uses him to build his church, keeping it in the truth. In 1876, he dies of cancer, and in the same year Calvin College (University) is started in Grand Rapids to train ministers.

The LORD's work continues. He gathers his church from all times and places. 🇨🇦



**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 15

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, he *suffered*. This means that he was very sad because of sin. His people were sinful. Instead of loving Jesus, they sometimes tried to trick him into saying something wrong! Jesus cried when his friend Lazarus died. Jesus was sad when his own people were shouting, "Crucify him!" And then Pontius Pilate said that he should die. But Jesus didn't do anything wrong! These are all examples of how Jesus suffered. But Jesus suffered even more. You see, hell is where people are totally forsaken by God. And Jesus was forsaken by God the Father on the cross. That is when he descended into hell. Now, here is God's great love for us. Why did Jesus suffer so much? Because then we could become God's children. We would not be punished in hell. Jesus suffered so that we can live with God forever. Our God is so good!

Fill in the blanks of these passages using the following words:  
God, rejected, suffered, righteous, sorrows

Isaiah 53: 3: "He was despised and \_\_\_\_\_ by men, a man of \_\_\_\_\_ and acquainted with grief."

1 Peter 3:18: "For Christ also \_\_\_\_\_ once for sins, the \_\_\_\_\_ for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to \_\_\_\_\_."

Unscramble the words to learn why it is comforting for us that Jesus died on the cross. Then look up Lord's Day 15, Question and Answer 39 to see if you are correct!

Then I (wokn) \_\_\_\_\_ that Jesus took the (eucrs) \_\_\_\_\_ that I deserved because a crucified one was (eucdrs) \_\_\_\_\_ by God.

**PRESS RELEASE****Classis Pacific West  
June 23, 2022**

**O**n behalf of the convening church, Smithers, Rev. H. Alkema opened the meeting in a Christian manner, reading Isaiah 52:1-10 and leading in prayer.

The delegates of the convening church of the previous classis, Refuge, examined the credentials and reported that all churches were properly represented at Classis. Classis was declared constituted. The following offices were appointed: Rev. K. Jansen was appointed chairman, Rev. A. Plug vice-chairman, and Rev. R. Visscher clerk.

The agenda for the meeting was adopted. The call of Rev. Lee from the Canadian Reformed Church in Houston was approbated. In accordance with Article 5 of the Church Order, the colloquium of Rev. Lee was undertaken with the discussion focusing on doctrine and church polity. Afterwards Rev. A. Plug led a thanksgiving prayer, after which Rev. Lee left the meeting.

A church visitation report was received for a visit to the Canadian Reformed Church of Willoughby Heights.

Question period according to Article 44 was held. Surrey-Maranatha requested and received advice on a number of matters.

Surrey articulated that the congregation has voted not to work towards the dissolution of their church and asked that the ad hoc committee established for that purpose be dissolved. Classis concurred with the request and thanked the brothers from the ad hoc committee.

There was an opportunity for churches to give an update on their mission work. An update was given.

The following appointments were made by Classis:

Convening of next classis: by Willoughby, on September 22, 2022 (if cancelled: December 15, 2022), at 9:00am.

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

Opportunity was given for personal questions.

Censure as per CO Article 34 was not deemed necessary.

The Acts of Classis were adopted. The Press Release of Classis was read and approved.

The Chairman closed Classis in prayer.

Rev. A. Plug  
Vice-chair of CPW June 2022

