



# Clarion

*3* A NEW DAY'S RESOLUTION    *5* HAVE YOU BEEN WITH JESUS?

*13* A GROWING RELATIONSHIP

# WHAT'S INSIDE

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**H**appy New Year! May this issue find you and yours beginning this year in the joy of the Lord and leaning upon him for strength and wisdom each new day.

This issue should feel a little thicker in your hand as we begin our new pattern of publishing more articles in each issue but sending them out less frequently (once in three weeks, on average). There is plenty to delve into here. Pastor Jim Witteveen starts us off with a timely word on New Year's resolutions. You'll find a meditation on looking to the Lord in impossible situations by Pastor Carl Van Dam and more devotional material by Pastor Tyler VanderGaag on the Spirit's fruit called "faithfulness." Pastor Jan DeGelder gets into the challenging topic of the "spirit of the Church Order" in his continuing column *Governing the Church*. We also have something special in a novel offering called *New Voices* which is explained in the article itself. We hope you'll enjoy it!

Some articles seek to challenge us (in a good way). Pastor Jake Torenlvliet asks us to reflect on whether those who interact with us could tell whether we "have been with Jesus." In a very helpful overview of the history of the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea and its thirty-year-old fellowship with our federation, Pastor Kwangyoung Park seeks to spur us on to grow and mature this budding relationship. Other articles provide great encouragement such as the MERF newsletter which lets us know of the burgeoning gospel work in South Sudan and Kenya—heart warming indeed, and much to pray about! Uplifting also is the summary of a recent ecumenical psalm-sing in southern Ontario provided by Mr. Michael Zwiép.

In our *Ray of Sunshine* column, we mostly note birthdays but this time we also note the passing on to glory of sr. Grace Homan, a long-time resident of Anchor Home. *Clarion Kids* comes to you with a fresh design as Amanda DeBoer continues to walk the kids through the Catechism. Amanda also brings us a book review related to Lord's Day 1, while Pastor Wes Bredenhof reviews a current book on an old topic: Christian Reconstruction. We round out the issue with a couple of letters to the editor (great to see reader interaction!) and a press release. May these various pieces be a blessing for you and help us all in our service of the Lord!

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## 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:

- C**onfessionally Reformed
- L**oving in manner
- A**ttuned to current issues
- R**eadable and Reliable
- I**n Submission to Scripture
- O**pen to constructive criticism
- N**urturing Christian living

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# A NEW DAY'S RESOLUTION

The year of our Lord 2022 is now history, and a new year is upon us. One flip of the now-proverbial calendar page marks the completion of yet another revolution of the earth around the sun. In reality, the transition from New Year's Eve to New Year's Day is no different from the passage of any other day. "The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises" (Eccl 1:5). But the symbolic importance of the arrival of a new year is clear, and the beginning of a new year can awaken within us a variety of emotions.

## LOOKING BACK

You may look back on the year that has passed with sadness and regret. Perhaps you didn't accomplish certain things that you badly wanted to. Perhaps you experienced losses that caused grief. We all failed in many ways, and certainly wish we could have done better. We didn't experience the kind of spiritual growth that we desired. It's inevitable, living as fallen creatures in a fallen world; life will largely be characterized by disappointments, frustrations, and grief.

## LOOKING FORWARD

And you may look forward with some trepidation about what the future holds—for yourself as an individual, for your family, for your church, or for our society in general. There are ominous signs that should realistically cause concern about where we are heading as a nation, and about the kinds of challenges that we will be facing in the future. Those signs can lead to anxiety, to worry, to a sense of pessimism, and even to a kind of paralysis in the face of an uncertain future.

So as a new year begins, there are many ways to face the future and the inevitable concerns that are awakened within us. You could resolve to put on a happy face, think positive thoughts, and live in denial of reality. Alternatively, you could live as the majority does in the developed world and attempt to drown out the voice of your anxiety through consumption—whether that consumption is of substances that promise to temporarily provide some form of relief, or of entertainment that will at least divert your attention for a while, or of goods that make their own empty promises of satisfying the cravings of your heart.

Clearly those are not acceptable resolutions for the faithful follower of Jesus Christ to make at the beginning of a new year. But is there a resolution that we could make that might be appropriate?

## A RESOLUTION A DAY

I would like to suggest a series of 365 resolutions instead of the traditional singular "new year's resolution." Rather than resolving to lose weight, or exercise regularly, or learn a new skill, January 1st would be a good day to make the following resolution: "Today I resolve to not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

And January 2nd would be a good day to follow up on that resolution, by making a new one: "Today I resolve to not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

And January 3<sup>rd</sup> . . . you get the picture, I'm sure!

You will undoubtedly recognize those words as those of our Lord Jesus, recorded for us in Matthew 6:34. Our Lord's understanding of the nature of human life was perfect. His vision was a realistic one—there will be trouble in this life. In fact, each day will bring its own troubles, and it is absolutely certain that each one of us will have to deal with those troubles on a daily basis. There is no hint of denial of reality in our Lord's words. But at the same time, he encourages us with the message that it will be possible for us to deal with those difficulties because of his daily provision.

## ANNO DOMINI

Remember that 2023, like 2022 and every year before it, will be "the year of our Lord." Every challenge that you will be confronted with will be one more aspect of his perfect plan for your life. But in order to live out the Lord Jesus's words of Matthew 6:34, we need to remember that he begins with the word "therefore," which links that message with the statement that precedes it: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (v. 33).

As we seek God's kingdom and righteousness by his grace and through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, we can be sure that we will be able to face each day's trials in this new year. May that be our daily resolution! **C**



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# OUR EYES ARE ON YOU

*“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”*

2 CHRONICLES 20:12C

**W**e can often be in situations in life where we feel helpless and out of our depth. We may be facing serious illness, a straying child, the death of a loved one, ongoing struggle against indwelling sin. We may be dealing with strained relationships with those close to us or problems with our boss which seem hopeless. And then we can come to the point where we just don't know what to do.

King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah were facing a great multitude of enemies: the Moabites and Ammonites, and some of the Meunites. The great host had marched up to Engedi in the territory of Judah. Jehoshaphat was afraid and proclaimed a fast throughout Judah. He sought the Lord in prayer in their great and urgent need. Our text comes from this prayer.

In his prayer, Jehoshaphat appeals to God on the basis of his past history with his people. Hadn't he driven out the Canaanites who lived in the Promised Land and given it to his people, the descendants of Abraham, forever? But now the nations, the ones God did not permit the Israelites to attack on their way to Canaan, are the ones invading the land of Judah. Jehoshaphat cries out to God to execute his judgment upon them.

Jehoshaphat knows that he is completely helpless against such a great multitude of enemies. He is king but he also doesn't know what to do. He acknowledges that he is powerless. He concludes his prayer to God, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

What a beautiful expression of trust in God! When we are faced with our helplessness, we can only turn to the Lord. We can always lift up our eyes to him and expect help and deliverance from him. We know that he is faithful and just, that he loves us and will help us in our time of need. We do not know what to do, but God does. He is real. He is alive. He is all-powerful and all-knowing. He can help like no one else can. When everything seems hopeless, he does the impossible.

Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah found this out in a wonderful way. What happened to that vast multitude of enemies?

They turned on each other and destroyed themselves without Judah even needing to do any fighting. All they had to do was gather the spoils of the Lord's victory.

When we feel helpless (and also when we don't), let us lift up our eyes to the Lord. May we always expect all good things from him alone and entrust ourselves and our troubles, griefs, and pains to him. He hears our prayer. He knows the anguish of our hearts and the perplexities of our minds. He provides real help and comfort when we are at our wits' end. He has shown the depth of his love and grace in Jesus Christ his Son. Pray to our heavenly Father that he would cause Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith by the power of his Spirit. Lift up your eyes to him always because he is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think. The great love of Christ for us is far greater than we can imagine. **C**

## FURTHER READING

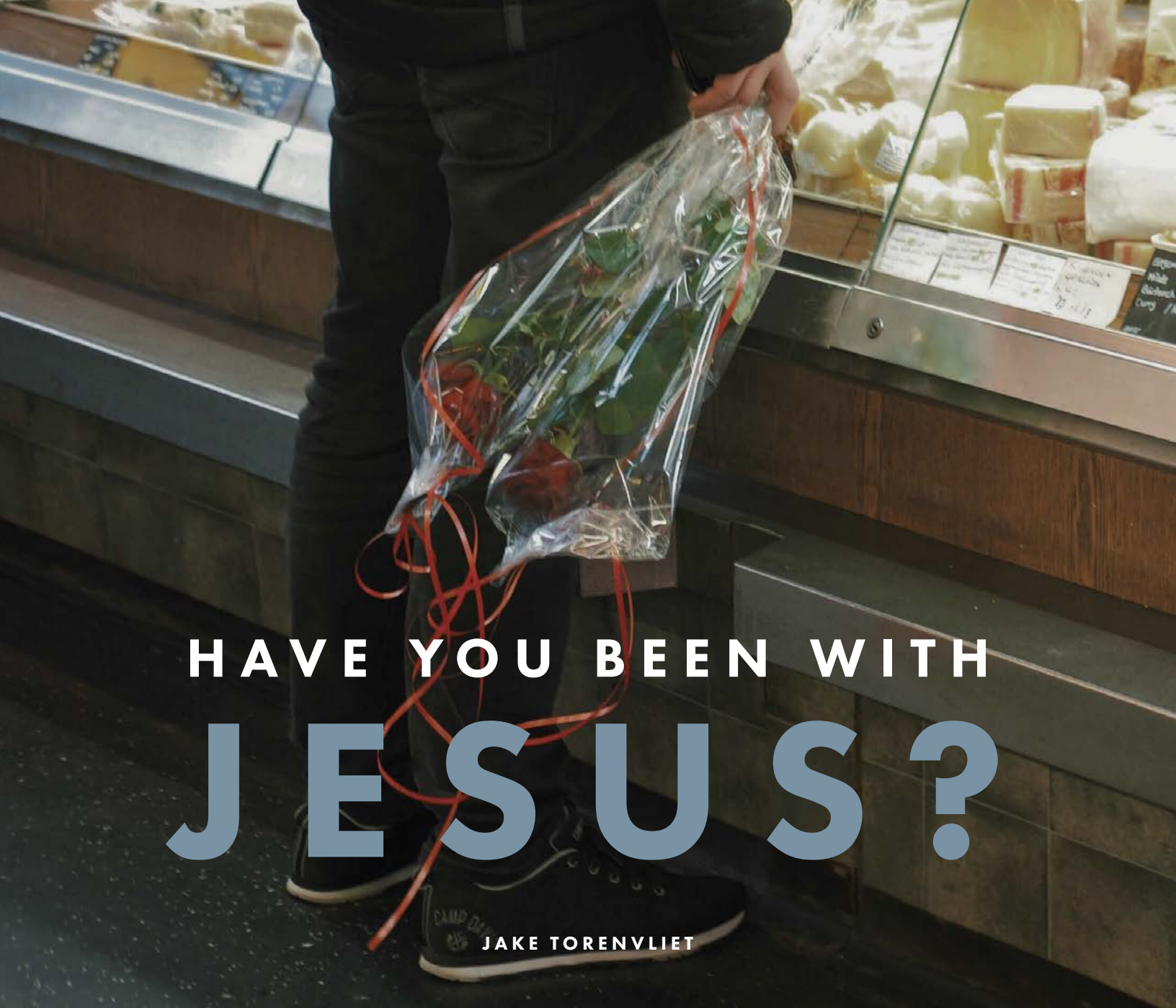
Psalms 123, 124, Ephesians 3:14–21

## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. What obstacles are in the way of us lifting up our eyes to God? How can we remove them?
2. What good daily habits can help us to set our eyes on God?
3. What examples of God helping you in your life when you felt helpless can encourage others?



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# HAVE YOU BEEN WITH JESUS?

JAKE TORENVLIET

## BODY LANGUAGE

Not long ago I watched a fascinating interview with a retired FBI special agent, a body language expert, whose job consisted of catching spies. He said, “We are never in a state where we are not transmitting information.” Even if we aren’t talking, our bodies continually transmit non-verbal information to the people around us, and usually we don’t even realize it’s happening.

The former agent shared a story about a time when his national defense team received information from another country that said, “You’ve got an American in your organization that we think is

actually a mole. Somehow, he entered the United States, was able to pass as an American, but he’s here working for a hostile intelligence service.” As the team narrowed down their list of suspects, they happened to record one of them on surveillance video leaving a florist shop. The individual held a bouquet of flowers, but rather than holding the bouquet upright, he held the bouquet by the stalk with the flowers facing downwards. That was the “tell.” The agent said, “That’s how they carry flowers in Eastern Europe.” So, they brought the individual in for questioning, and quickly discovered that he was, in fact, the foreign spy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wired, “Former FBI agent Explains How to Read Body Language | Tradecraft WIRED,” YouTube Video, 14:43 May 21, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jwUXV4QaTw&t=27s>

## CHRISTIANS ARE FOREIGN NATIONALS

Now, it may not be entirely helpful to compare followers of Jesus to foreign spies trying to infiltrate and destabilize another nation-state, but it's not totally off the mark either. In a very real sense believers have a foreign citizenship, regardless of the country in which they live. Take, for example, the words of Philippians 3:17–20 (NIV84): “Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. . . . Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Writing along similar lines, the apostle Peter addresses his intended audience in 1 Peter 1:1 as “elect exiles” or “elect strangers” in this world. And finally, as the author of Hebrews closes his letter, he reminds his readers: “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (13:14).

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*Heavenly citizenship  
should cause believers to exhibit  
unique behaviours*

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The Christian is a foreign national holding a heavenly passport stamped with the blood of King Jesus. His blood always speaks (cf. Heb 12:24), and so this passport will never expire or be revoked.

### EVIDENCE TO CONVICT?

Of course, there's the inevitable question. David Otis Fuller phrased it best when he asked, “If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” Would there be a “tell”? Is your life always transmitting verbal and non-verbal information about your real identity in Christ? After all, Colossians 3:3 says, “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”

The Bible is clear. Heavenly citizenship should cause believers to exhibit unique behaviours—sometimes without even realizing it—ways of thinking and living that are distinct from people who do not know Jesus as Lord and Saviour. This distinctiveness is far more significant than the way people might hold a bouquet of flowers.

Sadly, too many people today seem to think that being a Christian, or holding citizenship in heaven, consists of little more than superficial distinctiveness. A person's family of origin is hardly a true marker of Christian citizenship. During the 1994 Billy Graham Crusade, the late Billy Graham remarked, “You can be born in a garage, but that doesn't make you an automobile. You can be born in a Christian home, but that doesn't make you a Christian.”<sup>2</sup> The same is true of many other supposed markers.

Attending church on Sunday, while important, isn't the smoking gun we might want it to be. What if your neighbours assume you're attending a Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall, or Mormon Tabernacle? Neither is how much a “Christian” donates of their time and financial resources. A person's fidelity to particular Christian traditions, worship, or musical styles (in the ecclesiastical context) fails as miserably as the attire we select when attending Sunday worship. After all, how many individuals have wrapped their cold, dead, faithless hearts in their “Sunday best”?

### EVIDENCE TO CONVICT!

So what evidence, in terms of biblical expectations, would be sufficient to convict a person arrested on suspicion of being a Christian? The obvious starting point would be evidence of true faith in Christ! 1 John 4:2 states, “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” John's words are corroborated by the witness of 1 Corinthians 12:3, “Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

Of course, the faith alone that saves is never alone. By God's gracious indwelling of the Holy Spirit faith leads to a life of godly sorrow over sin and repentance (2 Cor 7:10). It forms the foundation of a life of love! In John 13, after washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus said in verses 34 and 35: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that are you my disciples, if you love one another.” Galatians 5:22 adds to the list of admissible evidence, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

One of our confessions, the Belgic Confession, also provides helpful guidance in Article 29 by way of a biblical summary. Often,

<sup>2</sup> No doubt, Billy Graham wouldn't necessarily have had a nuanced perspective on the position of baptized children among covenant believers, but his overall point still stands.

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*“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus”*

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we assume the focus of Article 29 to be exclusively connected to distinguishing the true and false church from each other. But the third paragraph alerts us to the fact that genuine Christians can sometimes be found in a false church. The inverse is true as well. Unbelievers and hypocrites (cf. LD 31) also mix into the flock of the true church. In this complicated reality, Article 29 suggests the following: “Those who are of the church may be recognized by the marks of Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only Saviour, flee from sin and pursue righteousness, love the true God and their neighbour without turning to the right or left, and crucify their flesh and its works. Although great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all they days of their life. They appeal constantly to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of Jesus Christ, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in him.”

### **HAVE YOU BEEN WITH JESUS?**


Maybe all of this sounds too complex. So, perhaps we can try to simplify things. In Acts 4, Peter and John were dragged before the Sanhedrin after healing a crippled man at the temple gate Beautiful. They had been arrested on suspicion of being Christians.<sup>3</sup> When they were asked “By what power and name did you do this?”

Peter responded with Spirit-empowered courage and boldness. He proclaimed that Jesus the crucified one was both the one who authorized the healing and was the only way of salvation for all humanity.

Immediately afterward, Luke notes something remarkable: “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (v. 13).

Don’t you love that line? “These men had been with Jesus!” During the night of Jesus’s trial Peter had been recognized three times as someone who had been with Jesus. That night he denied it; and now he wore it like the Holy Spirit’s badge of honour!

Here’s the point: there was something about Peter and James’s proximity to Jesus that left them marked. Something of Jesus’s beautiful character had rubbed off on these Galileans. Maybe it was his gentleness and compassion; maybe it was his love, his concern that others would know the truth of the gospel; maybe it was his willingness to lay down his life for the sake of others. More than likely, it was all of the above and more.

True Christians are imperfect reflections of a perfect Saviour. True Christians can be identified as people who have been with Jesus, who continue to abide in his love through Word and prayer. And so, the question is: have you been with Jesus lately? What is your life revealing about your identity? 



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<sup>3</sup> Admittedly an anachronistic remark seeing as those belonging to the Way aren’t referred to as Christians until Acts 11:26.

# *In the Fruit of the Spirit is* **Faithfulness**

*“Consider Jesus . . . who was faithful”*

(HEBREWS 3:1-2)

**TYLER VANDERGAAG**



## **INTRODUCTION**

Every ninety minutes or so, a legendary geyser in Yellowstone National Park erupts, shooting hot water high into the air. Perhaps you know the name of this geyser. It's called Old Faithful because that's what it is. You can count on it to erupt. Well, faithfulness is not just something for this old geyser. Faithfulness is in the fruit of the Spirit and it's a perfect description of the Lord Jesus.

## **JESUS, THE FAITHFUL SON**

Jesus is our Old Faithful. He is faithful, trustworthy, dependable, and reliable. Hebrews 3:1 calls us to “consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.” We don't typically think of Jesus as an apostle, but he is. An apostle is one who is sent and that is certainly true of the Lord Jesus (John 17:25). He was not acting solo when he came to save sinners like us. As the true super-apostle, he was doing the work of his Father. That gives

us great confidence and comfort. What he did he did with the approval and consent of his Father! They were in this together. Father and Son (and Spirit too) desired to see sinners rescued and redeemed from slavery to sin and the grip of devil.

Not only are we to consider Jesus as the apostle, but the “high priest” (Heb 3:1). It is in his role as high priest that we especially see the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus. As our high priest, Jesus was “faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house” (Heb 3:2). Even though Moses is not a high priest, he's used here as a comparison to the faithfulness of Jesus. And rightly so. If there was ever a man faithful in his calling, it was Moses. He was faithful in the eyes not just of people, but of the LORD (Num 12:7).

He served faithfully as a prophet of God and led God's house out of slavery in Egypt and rescued them from the tyranny of Pharaoh. Moses had every reason to resign and throw in the towel.





He faced enormous pressure and hardship. The people he served were ungrateful complainers. They grumbled against him, criticized his leadership. At one point the whole assembly even talked about killing him and Aaron (14:10). Yet for forty years Moses remained faithful in the calling God had given him.

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### *He was faithful to the end!*

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Moses's faithfulness was matched only by one: Jesus. He led God's people out of the worst kind of slavery—slavery to sin. He rescued us from the worst kind of tyranny—the tyranny of the devil. He did so by offering to God the sacrifice of sacrifices: himself. He's the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! And he sacrificed himself not just for a bunch of ungrateful complainers,

but haters and enemies of his (Rom 5:6–11). God's people didn't just talk about killing him, but actually followed through, nailing him to a cross. Yet through it all, the Lord Jesus, like Moses, was faithful. He never gave up or threw in the towel. He never wavered! He was faithful to the end!

Hebrews 3 goes on, "For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses. . . . Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant . . . but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son" (v. 3–6). Moses and Jesus are both worthy of honour, but Jesus is on a completely different level. You can admire a house, but the greater honour goes to the architect and builder. Moses was faithful in God's house not as the builder, but as the servant. He served the house faithfully and so is worthy of great honor. But Jesus, Jesus served not as a willing and faithful servant, but as a willing and faithful son! As God's beloved Son, he had every right to refuse this appointment, to refuse serving as the high priest to

such an ungrateful lot. It was a right that he didn't exercise! He "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant . . . becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:6-8). That's why he has greater honour than Moses. He did this as God's son, freely, willingly, joyfully!

*Not a day goes by or ever will  
where Jesus will neglect  
or forget to pray for us*

### JESUS, THE PRAYING PRIEST

His faithful service as our high priest didn't end at the cross. Hebrews 3:6 doesn't say that Christ *was* faithful. It says he "*is* faithful over God's house as a son." The Lord Jesus is faithful still now as our "merciful and faithful high priest" (2:17). You might ask, what is there left for our high priest still to do? Hasn't he already done everything there is to do as our high priest by offering himself once for all on the cross? No, actually he hasn't. High priests didn't just offer sacrifices. They also interceded for God's people in prayer. That's what Jesus does, and faithfully so. Jesus is praying for you and on your behalf, and not just in some erratic or sporadic way.


That's probably an accurate description of our prayer life: erratic and sporadic. The truth is we're all not as faithful in our prayer life as we would like to be or ought to be. God wants us to be people of prayer, yet we struggle for all sorts of reasons to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17). What a blessing, then, to know that what we struggle to do for ourselves, our faithful high priest does not. Not ever. Even when our prayer life stinks, his doesn't. Not a day goes by or ever will where Jesus will neglect or forget to pray for us (Heb 7:25). You can depend on it. He's your Old Faithful! This isn't, of course, a reason to remain complacent in our sometimes-sporadic prayer life. Not at all! His faithfulness in this area instead ought to spur us on to be more faithful in praying for ourselves, for others, and for the glory and honour of God's holy name!

### OUR FAITHFULNESS

As those united to Jesus by faith, we are to serve him as faithful priests. As priests, we are to present our bodies "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Rom 12:1). This includes, as the

rest of Romans 12 makes clear, refusing to conform to the sinful patterns of this world, a life of holy obedience, and total submission to God's will and Word. It's a call to love sincerely, and to zealously serve the Lord, to practise hospitality, bless those who persecute us, live in harmony with one another, refusing to repay evil with evil. It also includes prayer: "Be constant in prayer" (Rom 12:12). In this we see that it's a daunting task and responsibility to be a faithful priest, let alone to be faithful in our prophetic and royal offices too. Through honest reflection of our lives, we realize that there is so much room for growth, so much room for greater faithfulness in our service to God.

So how can we be more faithful? How can we grow in this aspect of the Spirit's fruit? Here we need to go back to the Lord Jesus again. His whole life was a life of unwavering confidence and faith in his faithful Father. Psalm 22 is usually associated with his suffering on the cross, but this psalm also testifies to Christ's faith as a child: "Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts" (v. 9). Notice that even with Jesus, it was the Lord God who gave him that trust or faith—"you made me trust you." This was—no doubt—the work of the Spirit in the life of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him and, as a result, faithfulness became a "sash around his waist" (Isa 11:5 NIV84). This is what allowed him to carry out his high priestly work on the cross, and also allows him to continually intercede for us. It's also how he continues to serve us as our chief prophet and eternal king! He was filled with the Spirit, and so he kept in step with the Spirit (and still does) by trusting fully in the faithfulness of God and in his faithful promises.

So, it must be with us. If we're ever going to faithfully serve the Lord in our prophetic, priestly, and royal callings, we must cling to our faithful God and Father. He's like Old Faithful too. He won't let us down. He will always supply us what we need to faithfully serve. Our faithful God never calls us to do something without also supplying us with what we need to do it. He calls us to be faithful and as he does so he promises to richly supply us with the Spirit. It's the only way our faithfulness will blossom, bloom, and grow. So, rely on God's faithfulness and trust that he will richly supply us with the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, including faithfulness. 



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# *The Spirit of the* **CHURCH ORDER**

JAN DEGELDER

**Y**ou may remember that in the first article of this series I mentioned an observation that usually the students entering seminary don't have church polity very high on their list of interests. However, eventually most of these men will become ministers. And soon after they receive a surprise. After they have been ordained and begin to attend council and consistory meetings, they find out how much time they spend discussing . . . guess what? Church polity! Suddenly, how to interpret and apply the Church Order becomes a very real issue.

The same is true for new elders and deacons. There is a problem or question or proposal on the table. How do we deal with it? What does the Church Order say about this? Sometimes you find out that the Church Order doesn't say anything about it. Then what? Or the Church Order speaks to a matter that is somewhat similar to the issue on the table, but it's not the same. What do we do now? After all, the Church Order is not a detailed lawbook that covers every possible scenario. It's not a fat volume, but only a few pages with basic rules.

There are, of course, other church polity resources available such as church order commentaries. That can be helpful, but these don't answer every question either. On top of that, commentators don't always agree, and not everyone will always agree with the interpretation of a particular commentator.

## **WHEN THE CO ISN'T HELPFUL**

This means that at times you are left questioning the proper way to read, interpret, and apply the articles of the Church Order. In that context someone might say: we should decide and act in "the *spirit* of the Church Order." You may have heard the expression, but what does it mean? It sounds a bit vague and fuzzy, does it not? Does it not undermine what we saw earlier about the Church Order as an agreement between federating churches that helps us express our unity of faith?

With that in the back of your mind, you can understand it when some say: "No, we should not go there. Let's just stick to the strict

**A note from the author** In upcoming columns, we want to look more closely at various articles in particular. As readers you will also be able to contribute by sending me your church polity questions. I will do my best to integrate those in this series, except for one category: "My consistory made this decision, but I disagree with it. What do you think?" I hope it's obvious that in *Clarion* I cannot and will not comment on local situations.

wording of the articles that we have in the Church Order.” That seems to have the benefit of a simple and straightforward application of the rules. But in practice, that only goes so far. Running the church is sometimes more challenging and complicated than we bargain for. Some articles tell us *what* to do, but not *how* to do it.

There is also the opposite approach. That’s the idea that one can appeal to the “spirit” of the Church Order to claim the freedom to decide whatever you see as beneficial in your situation as local church, especially when the Church Order does not say exactly what you’re looking for.

You may even hear this reasoning: “We know that in this case the Church Order has this rule. However, in our circumstances we should be free to do it differently and act more in line with the spirit of the Church Order.” Then the “spirit” of the Church Order becomes an argument to ignore what the Church Order is actually saying. That doesn’t sound good, does it? So, perhaps we should just avoid this whole idea of the spirit of the Church Order. But then—what if you run into an issue the Church Order says nothing about, but you do have to deal with it?

## WHEN THE CO SAYS NOTHING

Here is an illustration. Article 61 says: “The consistory shall admit to the Lord’s Supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.” As such, that’s fairly straightforward. But it does not say anything about admitting guests who might come from other denominations, or perhaps from no church at all.

So, what should the consistory do in the case of someone who is not a member of this church, and does not present a good attestation from a sister-church either, asking to participate in the Lord’s Supper? Some will say: “Since there is nothing in the Church Order about this, there is nothing we can do. We cannot receive anyone at the Lord’s Supper other than those explicitly listed in Article 61.” Others will say: “Since there is nothing in the Church Order about this, we can do as we see fit. We can basically receive anyone at the Lord’s Supper.”

In this article my goal is not to find an answer to the question. I might come back to it later. But my point is: What does it mean to refer to the “spirit of the Church Order” in such a discussion about a matter that is not explicitly mentioned in the Church Order? In those scenarios we will face a variety of opinions. Would it then be helpful to bring in the “spirit” of the Church Order? It depends on what we mean by that.

## A SPIRITUAL ORDER

The expression “the spirit of the church order” is not as vague and fuzzy as it may sound. It connects with what I mentioned in a previous article about the Church Order as a “spiritual order.” As the Belgic Confession puts it in Article 30, “the spiritual order which our Lord has taught us in his Word.” This means that with “the spirit of the church order” we refer to what I have identified in the previous article as the biblical convictions, the biblical principles that form the underpinnings of the rules we have adopted in our Church Order.


When consistories, councils, or major assemblies see the need to make a ruling in a situation that is not addressed by a particular Church Order article, or that requires an interpretation of an article, they can do so by referring to the “spirit” of the Church Order.

This requires that questions must be asked. Do the biblical principles that underly the Church Order and are summarized in the Reformed confessions give anything that is relevant for coming to a proper decision or ruling? Does the proposed ruling reflect that Christ is the only Head of the church? Does it reflect God’s justice and God’s grace?

This also ties in with the two main goals of the Church Order: (1) safeguarding faithful teaching (true doctrine), while warding off false doctrine, and (2) protecting the churches against both hierarchy and independentism.

## MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In other words, a council, consistory, or major assembly must be able to say: “We declare that, to the best of our ability, our interpretation and use of the Church Order in this case faithfully safeguards the true doctrine of God’s Word, summarized in the confessions, and reflects our loyal desire to maintain the fine line between hierarchy and independentism.”

That’s the accountability we owe each other as sister churches in the federation. My own professor of church polity put it this way: we can work fruitfully with the “spirit” of the Church Order as long as we remember that Reformed church polity only works for Reformed people. 



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# *A Growing* **RELATIONSHIP**

*The Kosin Church and the Canadian Reformed Churches*

**KWANGYOUNG PARK**

**T**he Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin Church) is a sister church of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). However, as the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) report to General Synod 2022 indicate, there has been no active fellowship between the two churches since we entered into ecclesiastical fellowship in 1992. However, after the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (RCN(Lib)) made an unbiblical decision in 2019, the Kosin Church has decided to strengthen its relationship with the CanRC in order to grow together in keeping the biblical truth.

The Kosin Church was established in 1952 after Korea gained its independence from Japan. During Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945), the Japanese government severely persecuted the Korean church. In particular, they demanded shrine worship in the Korean church, which meant Christians had to worship the Japanese emperor before worshipping God. At that time, many churches succumbed to the threat of Japanese imperialism and accepted shrine worship. However, a minority of pastors refused shrine worship, arguing that such idolatry was forbidden by the Ten Commandments and was thus unacceptable. As a result, many of the pastors who refused were imprisoned and even martyred by Japanese imperialists.

After Korea became independent again, pastors who were released from prison suggested a national repentance movement and insisted on the church's renewal to follow God's Word faithfully. However, the majority of pastors who had earlier accepted shrine worship rejected this suggestion. Instead, they denounced the pastors who insisted on repentance as separatists, and expelled them from the church. Therefore, pastors who were driven out established new churches following the Word of God faithfully. That was the beginning of the Kosin Church.

## **THE KOREAN AND REFORMED CHURCHES**

The first missionary to Korea, Horace Underwood, was a Presbyterian pastor who came in 1885. At that time, most missionaries to Korea came from Presbyterian churches originating in the United States, Australia, and Canada. Therefore, from the first most Korean congregations were established as Presbyterian churches. Moreover, most of the faculty of Pyongyang Theological Seminary, the first and only seminary in the early Korean church, were sent by the North Presbyterian Church in the United States. Thus the Korean church had grown into a Presbyterian church influenced largely by American churches. Not until the 1950s was there interaction with continental Reformed churches. Before that



Horace Underwood (1859-1916)

time the Korean church's knowledge of such Reformed churches was minimal.

Meaningful contact with Reformed churches began when Dr. Yun-sun Park, one of the most influential theologians of the early Korean church, studied theology in the Netherlands. After graduating from Westminster Theological Seminary (Th.M.), he moved to the Netherlands in 1953 to study at the Free University (Vrije Universiteit). Although (for various reasons) he returned to Korea without completing his degree, he was able to learn about the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. After returning to Korea, Dr. Park served for more than ten years as the president of the Korea Theological Seminary (the Kosin Church's seminary) where he introduced the Reformed churches. He introduced such influential figures as Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck, K. Schilder, and S. Greijdanus.

However, in the era of the great revival of the Korean church (generally) between the 1970s and 1990s, the Korean church was more interested in evangelism than in the Reformed church. At that time, the Korean church experienced unprecedented and rapid growth. In 1961, Korean Christians numbered about 600,000; this grew to about six million in 1979. By 1995 this number peaked at 8.5 million. At that time, the Korean church focused only on evangelism and numerical growth. Although some pastors were interested in the Reformed churches, many other Korean pastors and churches were not. After the 1990s, the growth of the Korean church plateaued and in fact entered a period of

decline. Experiencing the decline, Korean churches gradually desired to renew the church's theological identity as true churches. Naturally, more churches are interested in the Reformed churches now. At the same time, Reformed churches are unfamiliar to Korean pastors because most of them are trained Presbyterian men whose main influence comes out of American Presbyterianism.

## KOSIN CHURCH AND THE CANRC

From the beginning the Kosin Church was interested in Reformed churches due to the influence of Dr. Yun-sun Park, the first president of Kosin Seminary. The Kosin Church entered into a sister church relationship with the RCN(Lib) in 1967. Initially, the Kosin Church had tried to establish a relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Synodical) because the Kosin Church did not know much about the situation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands then. However, Dr. Geun-sam Lee, who was studying at the Free University, realized that the RCN(Lib) was more consistent with the Kosin Church's doctrine and history than the Synodical churches, and established a sister church relationship with the RCN(Lib).

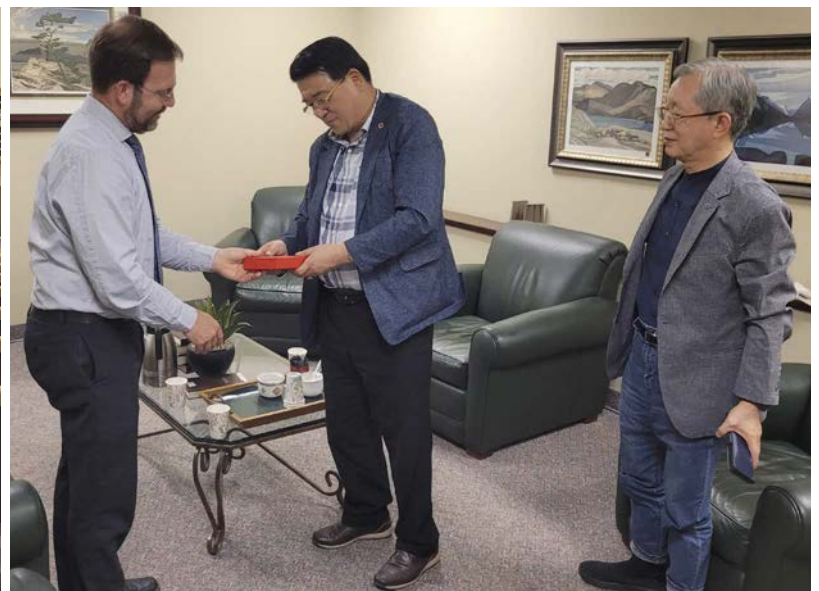
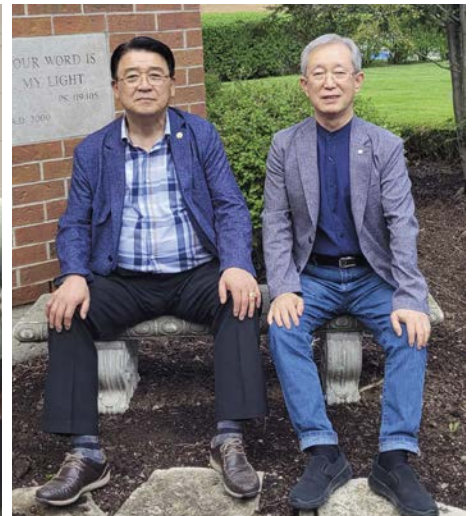
Once that relationship was in place, the RCN(Lib) gave considerable support to the Kosin Church. They helped with finances for constructing the new seminary building and provided some financial assistance to the seminary when it was difficult to operate at first. Also, they received theological students and taught them at the Theological University of Kampen. For instance, Prof. Soon-gil Huh, Hae-moo Yoo, Jong-gil Byun, and Deuk-il Shin studied at Kampen; later they returned to the Kosin seminary and contributed significantly to the introduction of the Reformed Churches to Korea. Of special note is the fact that the RCN(Lib) sent Prof. N. H. Gootjes to the Kosin Church in 1980. He went on to teach at the Kosin seminary for nine years (1980-1989) after which he went to Canada to serve as the newly appointed Professor of Dogmatics at the Canadian Reformed Seminary in Hamilton (CRTS). The relationship between the Kosin Church and CanRC began through his liaison.

The Kosin Church and the CanRC established ecclesiastical fellowship in 1992 and it continues to this day. However, due to the geographical distance and language barrier, the relationship between the two churches has not developed actively so far. When the RCN(Lib) made an unbiblical decision in 2019, the Kosin Church downgraded its relationship with them, and the CanRC cut ties with them. The pain of this breakup became a catalyst for a closer relationship between the Kosin Church and the CanRC. In particular, to urge the RCN(Lib) to repent of their unbiblical

decision, the Kosin Church sent delegates to the General Synod of the RCN(Lib) in 2020. The delegates of the Kosin Church and those of the CanRC met with each other, discussing developing a closer relationship between the two churches in order to grow together in keeping the biblical truth. With this in mind, the Kosin Church sent delegates to General Synod (Guelph) of the CanRC in the spring of 2022 and requested that they send delegates to the Kosin Church's General Assembly in the fall of 2022.

In particular, more personal interaction between the two churches is expected going forward. Rev. Daniel Shin, the son of Kosin University Professor Deuk-il Shin, graduated from CRTS and was called as minister to the Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church in 2021. Rev. Kwangyoung Park, a Kosin Church pastor

studying part-time in Hamilton, was called as a mission worker for the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church in Toronto in 2022. Moreover, during General Synod (Guelph), the presidents of the Kosin Seminary and of CRTS had a Zoom conference in which they expressed their shared goal of increasing personal interaction between the two seminaries by means of both faculties and students. Furthermore, several immigrants from the Kosin Church have already joined the CanRC. More immigrants from the Kosin Church are expected to join the CanRC if the relationship between the two churches grows. If that happens, wouldn't it be possible to see something of the eschatological vision (Rev 7:9) of all nations and languages gathering before the throne to praise our Lord Jesus Christ?



Kosin delegates to General Synod 2022 at Synod, visiting the Seminary and Teachers College.

## CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

There are three significant challenges facing the Kosin Church now. The first is the failure to transmit the faith from generation to generation. The Kosin Church has grown steadily since its establishment in 1952. At that time there were about 300 churches and fifty pastors which has since grown to about 2,000 churches, 4,000 pastors, and 400,000 members as of 2021—seventy years later. It is the amazing grace of God. However, the covenantal education of the next generation was not successfully carried out. As a result, the number of members from the next generation of the Kosin Church decreased. Shocking statistics were reported at the 2017 General Assembly that the number of children in the Kosin Church decreased by 30% in 2015 compared to 2006. This report shows that many children of adult members in the Kosin Church are leaving the church at an early age. This is due to the failure of covenantal education within the Kosin Church. To respond to this failure, several churches have established Christian schools, and the establishment of a Christian school committee in the General Assembly was being discussed in 2017. Regarding this issue, the CanRC can help the Kosin Church because it maintains the Reformed heritage of covenantal education.

The second challenge is the megachurch movement. In the past half-century, the Korean church (generally) has grown very rapidly resulting in the emergence of some megachurches over 10,000 members. The same is true of the Kosin Church. There are several large churches with more than 5,000 members, and many Kosin churches have more than 1,000 members. On the other hand, about 1,000 churches (i.e. 50% of all congregations) are not self-reliant. Large churches are getting bigger and have ample finances, but small churches are getting smaller and poorer. Due to the gap among the churches, the nature of the Kosin Church has been damaged, and both large and small churches were seriously concerned about the church's health. Accordingly, the Kosin Church studied the appropriate size of the local church, and at the 67th General Assembly in 2017, the final report suggested that the appropriate size of a local church is 300 members and a maximum of 500 members, and churches with more than 500 members need to maintain an appropriate size through separation and new church planting. This suggestion was a recommendation, not an obligation. However, several large Kosin churches began to separate and plant new churches following this suggestion. This is an effort to restore the healthy nature of the Kosin Church.

The final challenge facing the Kosin Church is the fight against unbiblical trends in contemporary Korean society. The most significant unbiblical trend we are facing is the distortion

of human sexuality. Following the free-sex trend among young people and the liberal government's efforts to legalize same-sex marriage, some Christians try to deviate from biblical teachings about human sexuality. Who can guarantee that there will be no person who accepts same-sex marriage and homosexual pastors in the Kosin Church in the future? In addition, the push by some for the ordination of women to office is a challenge facing the Kosin Church. It is necessary to prevent the movement from defying the Bible's authority and traditional Reformed theology with a post-modern and liberal biblical interpretation. Together, the Kosin Church and CanRC can fight against the liberal interpretation of the Bible, trust the authority of the Bible that God has given us, and preserve the truth of the Reformed theology we inherited from our ancestors.

## CONCLUSION

“And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecc 4:12). Amid the waves of secularization and distortion of truth, the church must faithfully guard the beautiful things God entrusted to us until his return (2 Tim 1:14). How beautiful it is to have a sister church that faithfully serves Christ's church, defending the authority and truth of the Bible together. The Kosin Church hopes to keep our Reformed faith and is walking this path along with CanRC. In particular, in the age of globalization, we could cooperate together in global missions and together protect both the Kosin Church brothers and sisters who immigrate to Canada and CanRC members who immigrate to Korea. Although we are geographically far apart and speak different languages, we are brothers and sisters who have one Father and are redeemed by one blood. We can become a church where “if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together” (1 Cor 12:24). Looking at us, our Lord is praying like this, “Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:11).

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” (Psalm 133:1) 



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# VISUAL MEDITATIONS

*on Jeremiah 9:23-24*

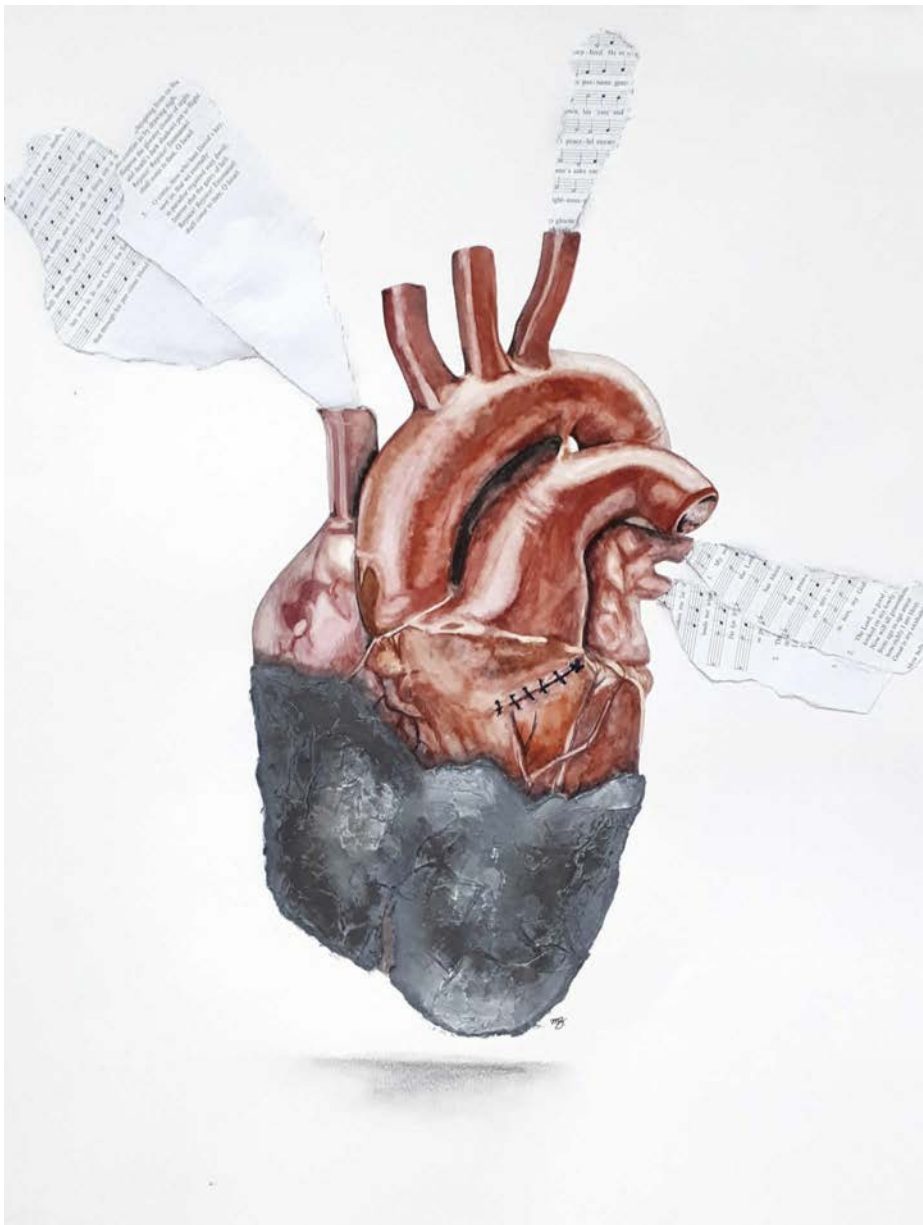
*This is what the Lord says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom, or the strong boast of their strength, or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.*

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION:

What are our young people thinking? What ideas and aspirations go through the minds of the up-and-coming generation and what can we look forward to from them? As a community of Christians, we are seeking to raise up the next generation in the fear of the Lord so that they may take their place beside us as brothers and sisters in service of our covenant God. *Clarion* aims to assist in this task as a vehicle to share ideas, to engage in thoughtful conversations for the upbuilding of our faith, and we would very much like our young adults to be part of this conversation. To that end we are pleased to introduce a new occasional column *New Voices* in which senior high students of our Reformed schools will share

their thoughts on a variety of topics. For now I'm running a pilot project with a few schools but I invite English and Art teachers from any of our secondary schools to reach out to me ([pholtvluwer@clarionmagazine.ca](mailto:pholtvluwer@clarionmagazine.ca)) to have some of your students published on these pages.

In this installment we present the art work of two students from Credo Christian High School in Langley BC. Under the guidance of their Art teacher Mrs. Sheila VanDelft, these students were asked to meditate on Jeremiah 9:23-24 and to artfully portray its message. They also wrote explanations of their work. Thank you Mikiah and Nadia, for sharing your talent and giving us something worthwhile to ponder!



## BOASTINGS OF THE HEART

Artist: Mikiah Zietsma

Acrylic paint, modeling paste, watercolor paint, collage, charcoal, pencil, thread, watercolor paper

### DESCRIPTION

I have painted the human heart, the top being alive and beating, and the bottom being stone. The contrast of colour between the different shades of red and grey, as well as the contrast between the smooth paint and the rough modeling paste, is meant to put greater emphasis on the impact our desires have on our heart and on our life. When our desires are in alignment with God's, our heart is alive with colour, with no rough edges. However, when we boast of the things of this world, our heart becomes dull and rigid.

I used portions of the *Book of Praise* to collage pieces flowing from the blood vessels displaying the praises we sing. There is also a scar on the heart that is stitched up and healing. I used string to stitch that piece together to add greater emphasis to it. The crack on the lower half of the heart has not healed and will remain broken because it is hardened to God's Word.

### MEANING

It is from the desires of the heart that we boast. The top half of the heart displays a healthy heart because it is boasting in Christ. From its blood vessels, praise is poured out. When the world begins to weigh us down, causing our hearts to become tired and worn, he provides us with strength. The wounds of our heart are stitched together because he loves us and makes us whole again.

When the desires of our heart boast in something other than Christ, our hearts become hardened and calloused. This is displayed in the bottom half of the heart, as it has turned to stone. We might boast in wisdom, or strength, or riches, but none of these things are eternal. They will all one day fade away and cause our hearts to be empty. The cracks that form are never fully healed, and scars remain when we let our hearts' desires fall out of line with God's desires.

Everything we have is from God. It is because of his kindness and justice and righteousness that we have been saved. God knows the boastings of your heart. Let him mould your heart so that you might know him more and reflect his character. Let his love flow from your heart, and his righteousness will reach all aspects of your life. Live justly, and let your heart only boast of him.

# JOY IN THE LORD

Artist: Nadia Binnendyk

Watercolour, Acrylic, modelling paste, sharpie

## DESCRIPTION

A woman beams with joy, a cross necklace around her neck and an eagle flying above her head. Various Bible passages proclaiming God's goodness and the joy we can have in him are written in swirls across the background.

The background of this piece is water colour, with various Bible texts written on in marker. The texture of the eagle's wings and chest are accentuated with modelling paste. The eagle and the woman are both painted with acrylic. Much of her face



and neck were painted using my fingers. I used a sponge and dabbed acrylic to achieve the unique texture of her sweater. I chose to use bright colours to give the piece a happy, joyful mood.

## MEANING

My piece, *Joy in the Lord*, is based off several Bible passages. The two primary passages that inspired this were Jeremiah 9:24, “But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight,” declares the Lord,” and Isaiah 40:31, “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” The subject is a young woman who is “soaring on wings like eagles” because her hope is in the Lord. She knows that God is loving, just, and righteous, and she is joyful because she has trust in his character. She wears a cross around her neck because she is proud to belong to God, and willing to show it. The eagle is a symbol of her joy and faith, and a reminder that her strength comes from God.

Our God is a good God who both wants our good and has the power to work everything out for our good. Knowing him is the best thing we could possibly have and experience. It is something to be joyful about and something that we should want to share with others. What could possibly be a better thing to boast about than having a personal relationship with this perfect God? ☺



*An Evening Singing*  
**PSALMS**

*Ecumenical Gathering Chronicles the Life of Christ in the Psalms*

**MICHAEL ZWIEP**

A testimony of the life of Christ, members of Reformed and Presbyterian congregations across Southern Ontario and Western New York assembled at the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church on the “mountain brow” in Hamilton, September 16, 2022 to sing psalms from various liturgical traditions with voices lifted in praise and unity. The auditorium was filled to capacity and a sense of eager anticipation. An effort to promote the Reformational practice of corporate psalm-singing and inspire ecumenical fellowship and Christian solidarity, the event included versifications of the Psalms from the 1912 edition of the *Psalter*, the *Anglo-Genevan Psalter*, *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, and *Scottish Metrical Psalter*, chronicling the birth, suffering, and crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ.

### EVENT OPENING

The event was led by a number of local pastors and organists, including Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer, pastor of the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church; Rev. David Van Brugge, pastor of the Grace Free Reformed Church of Brantford; Rev. Steven Swets, Pastor of the Rehoboth United Reformed Church of Hamilton, and accompanists Carl Oosterhoff, organist of the Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church, and Tjeerd Klaver, organist of the Maranatha Free Reformed Church of Hamilton.



A number of guest presenters helped lead the psalm sing, including Jonathan Bergmann, ruling elder of Armor Bible Presbyterian Church in Orchard Park, New York, along with precentor Aaron Masters, and organist Daniel Minnick, members of the Armor congregation, as well as Mark Veenman, organist and music director of Grace Lutheran Church in Kitchener. Organist Daniel Minnick is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in organ performance at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester,

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*This world belongs to Jesus Christ—he is the King of kings and Lord of lords*

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New York. The event was organized through the supportive efforts of Member of Provincial Parliament, Sam Oosterhoff, a member of the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church.

Daniel Lindeboom, clerk of Council of the Grace Reformed Church of Dunnville, welcomed participants and opened the evening in prayer, directing the assembly to the Psalms, not only as an expression of the heart of the worshipper, but as prophetic account of the work of the Saviour. He cited German Lutheran theologian and Hebraist, Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890):

The Old Testament according to its very nature tends towards and centres in Christ. Therefore, the innermost truth of the Old Testament has been revealed in the revelation of Jesus Christ. But not all at once: His passion, resurrection and ascension are three steps of this progressive opening up of the Old Testament, and of the Psalms in particular.

Mr. Lindeboom also highlighted three recent publications, including the volumes, *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms: Daily Meditations for Individuals and Families* and *Christ's Psalms, Our Psalms Study Resource*, edited by Rev. Holtvlüwer, and the songbook, *Anglo-Genevan Psalter in Four Part Harmony*, composed by organist, Carl Oosterhoff.

### CHRIST'S BIRTH

The first speaker to address the gathering was Rev. Holtvlüwer, who directed the assembly to the advent and birth of Christ, pointing participants to Psalms 8, 40, 98, and 132, citing John 1:5 and declaration of the light of God shining in the darkness. Just as David speaks of the proclamation of the infant in Psalm 8, so the light of the promised child shines into the spiritual darkness of

fallen humanity in Bethlehem. The assembly responded, accompanied by organist, Carl Oosterhoff, by singing Psalms 8, 98, and 132 from the *Anglo-Genevan Psalter*, the songbook approved for public worship in the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. Mark Veenman, an accomplished musician and soloist, led participants in a liturgical chant of Psalm 40 from the *Lutheran Service Book*.

### CHRIST'S SUFFERING

Following the first presentation, Rev. David Van Brugge approached the podium, directing the assembly to the suffering and crucifixion of Christ, meditating on Psalm 41 and the lament of the psalmist—the suffering saints take comfort in the redemption of the suffering of the Saviour. The assembly responded, accompanied by organist, Tjeerd Klaver, by singing the sorrowful prayers of Psalms 88, 22, and 89 from the 1912 edition of the *Psalter*. Rev. Van Brugge, an organist and experienced teacher, provided historical annotations for each of the versifications of the three psalms in the songbook that continues to be used by the Free Reformed, Heritage Reformed, Netherlands Reformed, and Protestant Reformed churches across North America.

### CHRIST'S RESURRECTION & ASCENSION

Representing the Presbyterian tradition of Scottish psalm singing, Jonathan Bergmann addressed the assembly, directing participants to Psalms 16, 68, and 110 and the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

“The suffering of the cross was endured because it led to the ultimate enthronement of Christ, the eternal Son of David, at the right hand of God,” noted the ruling elder. The assembly was pointed to prophetic witness of David of the resurrection and ascension of Christ as chronicled in Psalms 88, 22, and 89. The gathering responded, led by precentor, Aaron Masters, by singing Psalms 88, 22, and 89 from the *Scottish Metrical Psalter*, first published in 1650 and approved for public worship in the Church of Scotland. The strain of unaccompanied voices filled the sanctuary of the Ancaster church with praise in four-part harmony.

### CHRIST'S RETURN


Rev. Steven Swets led the final presentation of the evening, directing the assembly to Psalm 24:7–10 and the return of Christ and consummation of all things, pointing to the Name, victory and entrance of the King. “This world belongs to Jesus Christ—he is the King of kings and Lord of lords and the Psalms speak of his



Mark Veenman

eternal reign,” noted the local pastor. “The Psalmist refers to the promised Messiah in Psalm 24 as the King of Glory.”

Rev. Swets chronicled the sovereign rule of Christ from the hill of the LORD to the ends of all the earth. Just as David celebrated the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, so the exalted Christ will return in glory, with honour and strength. The assembly responded, accompanied by organist Daniel Minnick, by singing Psalms 24, 72, and 102 from the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, published by Great Commission Publications and approved for public worship in the United Reformed Churches in North America and The Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Holtvliüwer closed the evening in prayer, reading Psalm 100, the assembly responding by singing the verses of Psalm 100 from all four of the accompanying psalters. Participants assembled for fellowship following the psalm sing, gathering around a number of book and resource tables set up by Reformed Book Services in the foyer of the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church, the tracker action pipe organ in the sanctuary, built by David E. Wallace & Co. in Gorham, Maine, resonating with the fading notes of the postlude. 

**Michael Zwiep** is a member of the  
Vineland Free Reformed Church



# LEAGUE DAY

*2022—Ontario*

ELSA DEGELDER

Autumn in Ontario is a season marked by great beauty such as the dazzling blaze of colour of the leaves, the heady scent of freshly harvested fields, the dramatic clouds in the fall sky, the gregarious swoop and turnabout of starling murmurations, as well as the classic V-formations of Canada geese, honking their way south across the Canadian landscape.

## A BEAUTIFUL SCENE

It was a beautiful scenario of a different kind, however, that played itself out over some three hundred households across the vast, October-glorious landscape of Ontario on the morning of October 19, 2022. Canadian Reformed women were heading out from their

homes to attend this year's League Day, some of them coming from such distances that daylight for them would've barely been a suggestion on the horizon.

Already by 9:30, when the doors of the Agricultural Hall just outside Grassie were officially slated for opening, the parking lot was rapidly filling, and the steady stream of ladies coming in spoke of an eagerness for the rich gift of sisterly friendship that, by God's grace, has been one of the joys we've long come to enjoy at League Day.

The hall was simply and classically set up and decorated, and each corner of the room had tables set out with a veritable feast of breakfast and snack foods for us, generous urns of good, dark



President of the Women's League, Trish Gelms.

coffee as well as tea options for the discerning tea drinker. A palate for the senses, indeed! The hosting ladies of Attercliffe Canadian Reformed Church did exceptional work in the preparation, and their care and attention to detail showed in so many thoughtful ways as the day progressed.

The hum of conversation rose steadily in general proportion to the influx of ladies, one of those delightfully predictable things that, I would cheerfully speculate, hasn't changed much since our churches' first Ontario League Day, sixty years ago. There is always such joy in meeting with sisters in the faith.

Trish Gelms, President of the Women's League, officially led us in opening the day with singing and prayer, welcoming us to this League Day. As one of the points of reminiscence, she asked who of the ladies here had attended the first League Day sixty years ago? It was indeed wonderful to see how many of these dear ladies were able to stand up in answer.

Another beautiful aspect of League Day is roll call; it's always good to see the sisters representing our various churches throughout Ontario, including those who come from out of province.

Sara Kingma gave us a brief overview of what was going on with the book publishing company once known as ILPB but now is called *The Study*. Though it's seen several changes over the past few years, including being under Reformed Perspective Foundation's oversight, it now is on its own, still as a non-profit organization, and is currently awaiting official decision on their new name. Sara had set up a book table in the foyer and had several books on display for us to skim through at leisure throughout the day. Though we wouldn't be able to leave this League Day with the books in our possession, we'd be able to order those books, knowing already some of the treasure they held.

Jodi VanWoudenberg

## GODLY WOMEN IN GOD'S WORD

This year's League Day theme was *Godly Women in God's Word*; how to study the Word effectively, whether for participating in or leading study society. It's about the blessing of seeking fellowship with God by means of our personal devotional life, and Attercliffe's minister, Rev. Rodney Vermeulen, delivered his speech, letting us know by way of introduction that he wasn't there as some kind of expert, but as a fellow Christian, walking in faith before the LORD.

What are our personal devotions all about? Why do we do them? Who is the focus of our personal devotional time? We often tend to place ourselves at the centre of our relationship with God. We want to feel closer to our Father in heaven and that, of course, is a good thing! Wanting to do that is God's grace at work in us, but it becomes problematic when we go to our personal devotional time to solve the problem of not feeling close enough to God. Not that emotions don't matter—they do!—but we must instead, from the start, consciously and pointedly remove ourselves from the centre of focus. When it comes to our time in God's Word and our time in prayer, we have to make it all about God. Then, in making it all about him, we anticipate his blessing as he gives us that reassurance of his presence through the Word and through our time in prayer.

Taking the story of Job as an example, God never explained to Job why he had to endure those terrible trials. God at the end simply took Job aside, speaking to him in beautifully moving and







Rev. Rodney Vermeulen

poetic language of who he is, and what he has done, from when he laid the foundations of the earth. The Bible, too, has been preserved for us through the ages as God's self-revelation to us. Knowing him through his Word, by the working guidance of the Holy Spirit, ultimately leads to a thankful and obedient walk with God: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2). We are to meditate upon God's law, his promises, and his deeds throughout time. In the end, what we feel will be shaped by what we know about God; you cannot love what you do not know. We come to our personal devotions not with the motivation in the first place of "I've got to feel better," but we humbly go to the Word and we humbly spend time in prayer to have God, through the Spirit, reveal himself to us.

Rev. Vermeulen rounded out his speech by going over several practical details for deepening our study, that we may better know our God and Creator. All of this was followed by some time of small-scale discussion at our table, after which there was a time for people to ask clarifying questions or offer up helpful comments for general consideration.

## MANAGING OUR TIME

And then it was lunch! A set of tables at each corner of the room were generously decked out with a rich bounty of salads, fruits, wraps, and sandwiches. Following prayer for a blessing on the food, we all ate heartily of that delicious food and were well-satisfied. Also during lunch, we collected money to be sent to this year's recipient: Middle East Reformed Fellowship.

Then, suddenly, amidst great flurry, two young ladies from yesteryear sprang excitedly to the stage, conversing animatedly about what they could expect at League Day. Much laughter ensued over their hilarious presentation of the way things were back then—tables with ashtrays?—and it marked a lively finish to our break before we set ourselves, with refreshed diligence, to listening and learning in our afternoon session.

Our afternoon speaker, Jodi VanWoudenberg, delivered her speech, *Managing Our Time as Women of God's Word*, which looked at how we may find the time to do this study. It may seem like one more thing we can check the box on after we've done it, as though it were a load of laundry that needed doing. But studying God's Word in true devotion to him cannot be a check-box kind of thing; God wants our hearts. "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer 29:12–13). To pursue a relationship with the LORD is to be busy in his Word and in prayer, also to meditate on him and his Word throughout the day. It is work, and not all of the parts of the Bible are exciting, and may seem to us even unlovely, but it's God's revelation to us. Studying God's Word is a matter of mind over heart, utterly counter-cultural in a world where people are taught to "follow their hearts" and do whatever they want to. We need to be self-disciplined in managing the time the LORD has given us to use it for his glory.

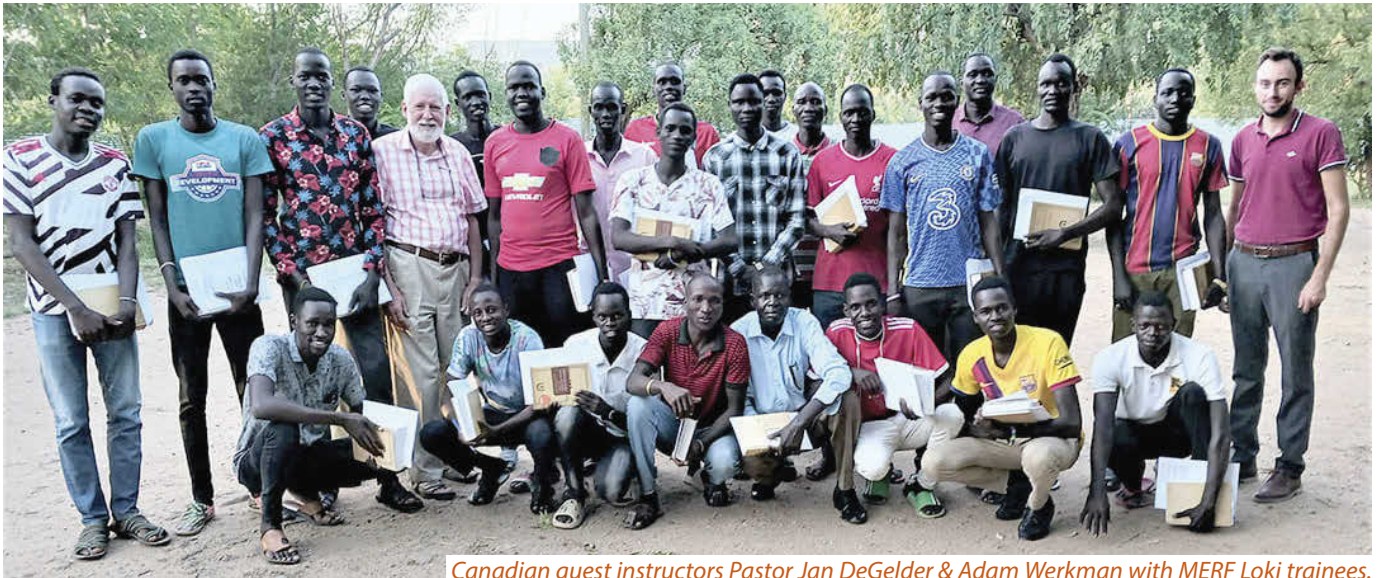
We sang again and enjoyed a brief discussion once more at our tables for several minutes, followed by a brief general discussion and comments. We closed this beautiful day with singing Hymn 55, "Now Thank We All Our God," followed by prayer of thanks for the riches we have been given. ☪



www.merf.org



## Ministries in South Sudan & Northern Kenya



Canadian guest instructors Pastor Jan DeGelder & Adam Werkman with MERF Loki trainees.

South Sudan is a vast landlocked country in East Africa, east of Ethiopia and north of Kenya. It is home to about 13 million, half are below 18 years of age. The land is largely flat, crisscrossed by streams and rivers that flow into the White Nile. It is probably one of the least developed countries of the world. Many different tribes live in mud hut villages along the waterways, gardening and raising cattle. Cattle are the focus of the traditional primitive culture and intertribal cattle raiding still occurs. Reformed missionaries first went to what is now South Sudan in 1890, when it was still part of the predominantly Arab Muslim Sudan. The government expelled all missionar-

ies in 1964. Over the past 60 years, large numbers of tribal South Sudanese people abandoned paganism and began to identify themselves as Christians.

The rapidly growing Evangelical/Reformed communities lacked trained spiritual leaders. In 2003 MERF established a ministry center in Lokichoggio (Loki), a strategic and secure town just south of the border in northern Kenya. Facilities were erected that are suitable for both biblical training and gospel broadcast production. After decades of armed conflict, South Sudan became independence in 2011. In 2013 civil war broke out between major factions. Finally, in 2020, after much

death and destruction, a peace agreement was signed.

Northern Kenya has a semi-arid climate. It is largely undeveloped and unreached with the gospel. It is home to the Turkana. Turkana people, primitive herders of camels and goats, were mostly unreached by the gospel. Evangelism in Loki soon established a local Turkana church. MERF-trained Turkana evangelists are actively sharing the gospel with their own people in the region.

In Loki, South Sudanese Pastor David Wat, leads MERF's Loki ministry team made up of faithful South Sudanese and Kenyans. The team rejoices in the Lord's guidance, care and blessings.

### Nuer Gospel Radio Broadcasting

Three Nuer language radio broadcasters together prepare daily gospel radio programs in Nuer, the language of several million South Sudanese people. Thousands of listeners are widespread over South Sudan. Some are displaced by conflict and living in refugee camps. A number of refugee camps are inside South Sudan and others are in Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Sudan. Large numbers have come to faith in Christ. Broadcaster Isaac Yoak says, "God's Word is providing Nuer people with the knowledge of the way of salvation. We broadcast Catechism questions and answers twice weekly. The



Above: A flooded South Sudanese family compound. Bottom left: Recording Nuer gospel broadcast. Bottom Center: Turkana ladies at MERF Loki.

*“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*

— Galatians 6: 10

*Bible radio programs help people live in today’s difficult world. Guided by God’s Word, listeners are strengthened, as many still suffer the consequences of devastating wars. Please keep them in your prayers, especially those now affected by widespread flooding in South Sudan.”*

**South Sudan  
Diaconal Aid**

This year MERF aided thousands of displaced South Sudanese returning to their destroyed hometown of Nasir and its surrounding tribal villages. They are rebuilding their communities and making a new start for their families. Nasir was attacked, destroyed and deserted for several years during the civil conflict in South Sudan. Inhabitants fled to Ethiopia or other parts of South Sudan. Now

peace has enabled them to return. MERF was able to meet the request of returning church leaders for aid to purchase building materials and food to sustain the people until crops are harvested. They express much joy in the Lord’s mercy and for what he has provided through MERF’s supporters.

**Lokichoggio, Kenya  
– Biblical Training**

MERF-Loki Ministry Center manager, Pastor David Wat says: “We give thanks to the Lord for His guidance and blessing upon our biblical training program. Trainees come and go back to their local congregations safely and peacefully. This year 75 church leaders from South Sudan and Kenya were trained in three different intensive 3-month Bible courses. The training went very well. Qualified African pastors were appointed to do much of the teaching. We thank God for their commitment to Scriptures and sound teaching. We are also thankful for wonderful ministry of Pastor Tim Burden, the Augustine Program Coordinator. We are so happy that he arranged for retired Pastor Jan DeGelder to come back to Loki for more teach-

ing. He brought with him from Canada a capable theological student, Adam Werkman to co-teach with him for 3 weeks. Course graduates are now preaching the gospel and teaching God’s Word in South Sudan and the Turkana tribal areas of Kenya. They need your prayers.”

**Lokichoggio, Kenya  
– Turkana Church  
& Evangelism**

Pastor Peter Makuac Nyak reports: “The church has continued to grow. New people join us for worship most Sundays. The congregation meets at the enlarged chapel on MERF’s compound in Loki. The place is now crowded on Sunday mornings. We thank God for the new members who have joined our fellowship. In August, twenty-five new people enrolled in the class preparing for bap-

tism. They are eager to have deeper knowledge of the Christian faith.

In addition to four regional Turkana evangelists, local evangelistic efforts continue twice a week in the villages around Loki. One hundred and twelve Sunday school students are learning the Bible and Christian songs in the Turkana language. Our plan is to build some simple shelters in every village for the growing local fellowships. They will also be available for Turkana schooling. Loki and the surrounding villages have experienced extended drought. This is causing much hunger. The Lord has blessed to meet the needs of many through MERF’s provision of grain every three months. We ask you to join us in prayer for the most vulnerable who face many challenges.”



**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)**

# GRACE HOMAN

On January 17, 1956, the LORD added Grace Henderika Homan to the family of the late Jan and Rienje Homan. She was welcomed by three brothers and a sister. Very early on her parents found out that Grace had Down syndrome. And just as with their other four children, they made it their business to train Aunt Grace the best they could in the ways of the LORD. These life truths remained a part of Aunt Grace for the rest of her life.



By nature, Aunt Grace was a very content, happy person. From childhood on, hugs were given freely, and many of us can remember her enthusiastic giggles that would reverberate throughout her entire body. She had a sensitive heart and if others were sad she would be quick to hug them and tell them it was OK.

As a child she enjoyed pinging on the piano many of the psalms her mother sang. The words and music would become engrained in her mind, and many years later she could still sing and play many of these psalms from memory. She also took her music skills and applied them in the Anchor Band, where she served not only as the keyboard player, but also keeper of time and disciplinary assistant.

For the first part of her life she lived at home with her parents. As time went on it became apparent that this was not a long-term solution. It was during this time that the Anchor Association for the Handicapped was formed, and Aunt Grace ended up being one of the original residents of the first Anchor Home. This was a blessing for her, and the family is very grateful for the work that Anchor has done. The dedicated, professional care that the staff at Anchor Home provided Aunt Grace during her many years as a resident was a wonderful blessing and is reason for great thankfulness.

It was with regret that this past May, Aunt Grace left Anchor Home and moved to a Long Term Care home to receive care suited to her declining health. Looking back, this was but a short stay, as the LORD called her home five months later.

We know that Aunt Grace is now in concentrated perfection with the Lord, and there is no greater comfort than this!

*John Homan*

I have also included this poem for everyone to read. Connie VanAmerongen lived with Grace at Anchor Home for almost twenty years. Here is a poem she wrote about Grace.

### *My Name is Grace Homan*

“My Saviour Knows My Name!”

God is so good to me; I’ve been redeemed;  
Redeemed by the precious blood of JESUS.

“All I have needed, His Hand has provided....”

Cared for by my Faithful Lord and Saviour;  
Enveloped in the Everlasting Arms of His Love!

Written with Lots of Love,  
by your Friend, *Connie :-)*

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Congratulations to Ron, Trevor, and Connie on celebrating a birthday in February! We wish you all the Lord’s blessing in the coming year and a wonderful day celebrating.

**3** Ron de Witt will be **50**  
3217 Twin Oaks  
Burlington, Ontario  
L7M 3A8

**6** Trevor Buys will be **43**  
c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road  
Beamsville, Ontario, LOR 1B2

**12** Connie VanAmerongen will be **58**  
c/o Anchor Home  
361 Thirty Road  
Beamsville, Ontario, LOR 1B2  
[conniev1965@gmail.com](mailto:conniev1965@gmail.com)

# CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 24

Last time we talked about how we are righteous before God. Do you remember how, or who, makes us righteous before God? The Lord Jesus. But there is something we do called good works. Can't our good works at least help us to be righteous before God? No, they cannot. In order to be righteous before God, our works have to be totally perfect. And we can never do anything perfectly. Still, good works are important. But why? Well, good works are the things we do to thank God for sending the Lord Jesus. They are worked in us by the Holy Spirit. Good works can be small, like helping your sister with her bread. Good works can also be bigger, like making a card for someone that is sick. The Holy Spirit works in us to think, "I want to do this to say 'thank you' to God." And the Lord is pleased when he sees our good works.

**CAN WE DO GOOD WORKS TO HELP US GO TO HEAVEN? FIGURE OUT THE HIDDEN MESSAGE TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION.**

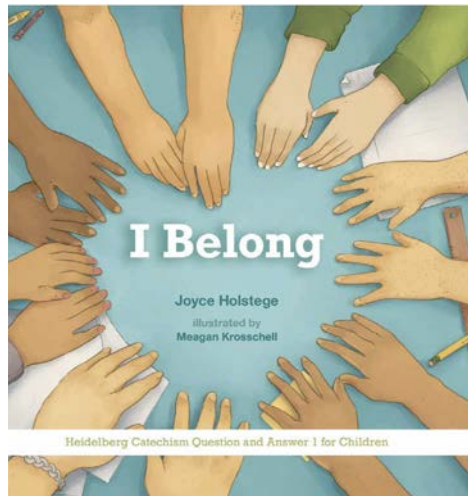
A=1 B=2 C=3 D=4 E=5 F=6 G=7 H=8 I=9 J=10  
K=11 L=12 M=13 N=14 O=15 P=16 Q=17 R=18 S=19 T=20  
U=21 V=22 W=23 X=24 Y=25 Z=26

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**HEY KIDS!** Do you have questions about something you have read in the Bible or heard in a sermon? Maybe you are wondering about something you have read in a Lord's Day. We have a new column coming called KIDS' QUESTIONS. We warmly invite you to ask Mrs. DeBoer your question! With your parent's permission, email [deboerca@gmail.com](mailto:deboerca@gmail.com) and find your question and an answer in Clarion!

**AMANDA DEBOER**



## I BELONG


*I Belong: Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 1 for Children*, by Joyce Holstege (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2022). 49 pages. Approx. \$26 CDN.

*I Belong* is a book that delves into the comforting truths of Lord's Day 1, explaining these truths on a child's level. Joyce Holstege has written twenty-two beautiful devotionals for covenant children. The author goes phrase by phrase through the Lord's Day, making each phrase the focus of a devotional. Allow me to share two examples. One is on the phrase, "That I with body. . ." The author explains this truth in a devotional called, "My body belongs to God." Another one focuses on "not a hair can fall from my head," with the title "Since I belong to God, God has planned everything for my life." It is clear that the author intended to be God-focused. One of many such examples is, "Your body was made by God and it belongs to Him. Use your body to praise God—you were wonderfully made by Him!" Holstege is very good at including information that children can relate to. She includes Bible stories in some devotionals. Others have practical life examples that children would understand, such as sharing toys or how we pray. Both the reading of and listening to these devotionals is enjoyable. The illustrations, too, were well thought-out and attractive for a child. All of this was evident to me while reading with my own daughter. She would exclaim, "I want to read another one!" Indeed, *I Belong* will be a blessing for many children with its gentle and methodical way of explaining biblical truths.

Here are a few more comments on specific aspects of the book. First, the author made it easy for parents to find Lord's Day 1 by having it printed on one of the book's first pages. The re-reading and memorizing of this Lord's Day are encouraged in a "Note to

Parents." Second, the devotional on the phrase "and in death" talks about the fact that when you die you are not with your parents anymore. Perhaps, for some young children, a small amount of parental discretion may be needed. If your child is emotionally ready for this, a beautiful discussion on God's ways in our death may follow. Third, a couple of devotionals talk about God (and Jesus) as our friend. It would be important to explain to a child that this type of friend is different than the friends he plays with. The LORD is always much higher and greater than we are.

Finally, it is no surprise to me that author Joyce Holstege is a teacher. She has a calm, clear way of explaining concepts on a child's level. Holstege belongs to the Protestant Reformed Church in Michigan. She speaks of covenantal truths in this book. One example is, "[God] will always be your God and you will always be His child." If you are interested in the history between the CanRC and PRC, it would be helpful to read chapter 6 of *Inheritance Preserved* by W. W. J. VanOene.

Overall, this book is enjoyable and the author writes truthfully and humbly. I recommend this book for parents to read with their children ages 6–8. 



**Amanda DeBoer** Wife, mother, and author of *Teach Them Your Way*, *O Lord*, a Bible story book for children ages 2–4  
[deboerca@gmail.com](mailto:deboerca@gmail.com)

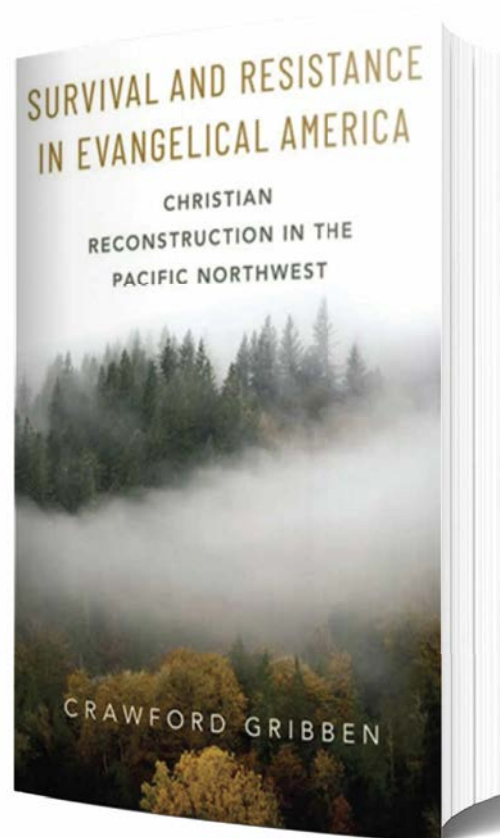
## A REVITALIZED YET TEMPERED CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION

*Survival and Resistance in Evangelical America: Christian Reconstruction in the Pacific Northwest*, Crawford Gribben. (New York: Oxford UP, 2021). Hardcover. 210 pages. Apprx. \$40 CDN.

Back in the 1990s, theonomy and Christian Reconstruction were hot topics in the Canadian Reformed Churches, particularly in northern Alberta. Theonomy is the view that contemporary governments are obligated to uphold the Mosaic civil laws. Christian Reconstruction includes theonomy as one of its tenets, but more broadly promotes the reformation of civil society according to biblical norms. Rev. Richard Aasman and others wrote compelling critiques of these views and it seems that its popularity was soon exhausted.<sup>1</sup>

However, Crawford Gribben's study of developments in the Pacific Northwest of the United States proves such a conclusion premature. What's more, one just has to note the ongoing popularity of Douglas Wilson in some corners of the Canadian Reformed Churches to see how the movement is still alive. It's not the same as it was in the 1990s, though. It's now tempered, much more subtle, and far more creative.

Dr. Crawford Gribben teaches history at Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland. His previous writings, like this one, focus on the history of Christian movements. Throughout this book, it's evident that Gribben has an insider's understanding of Reformed Christianity. This is essential for properly situating Christian Reconstruction in its context.



<sup>1</sup> Richard Aasman, "Theonomy and Christian Reconstructionism" in *Clarion* 43.5-7 (March, 11, March 25, April 8, 1994). Also see *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique*, eds. William S. Barker and W. Robert Godfrey (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990).


*Survival and Resistance in Evangelical America* is history written by an academic in a responsible scholarly fashion. It's backed up by research in interviews and careful reading of primary sources. Nevertheless, it's an absorbing, pleasurable, and easy read. Should you get tripped up on any of the technical vocabulary, Gribben has included a short glossary.

The book surveys the origins of Christian Reconstruction with its first generation of leaders—R. J. Rushdoony, Gary North, Greg Bahnsen, and others. Previous research by others suggested the movement was dead by the turn of the millennium. Gribben's argument is that Christian Reconstruction has found new life in "the American Redoubt." This area of the Pacific Northwest includes eastern Washington and Oregon, and all of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Gribben lays out the history of how this revitalization took place through migration. Men like Douglas Wilson creatively used tools such as education and media to draw increasing numbers of like-minded people to the Redoubt, and especially to Moscow, Idaho. This would become a place to withdraw and begin the reconstruction of American society from the ground up. Gribben notes that there has been considerable diversity amongst those drawn to the Redoubt. Some are Christians drawn to Wilson's brand of reconstruction. Others are anti-government survivalist types, including racists and kinists.<sup>2</sup>

This book is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand why Moscow and Douglas Wilson are so influential. For me it also raises questions of how this influence should be assessed. For example, Gribben fairly presents Wilson's controversial take on American slavery. Wilson has argued that Southern slavery was mutually beneficial to blacks and whites. Gribben correctly describes that as a "revisionist account" (p. 55).

Gribben mentions in passing a "controversy about pastoral care" (p. 146) in Wilson's church in Moscow. He refers to how Rod Dreher had planned to include Moscow in his book *The Benedict Option*, but changed his mind after this "serious pastoral problem" arose (p. 7). What Gribben doesn't say, and what is a matter of historical record, is that there's not just one pastoral problem. There's a pattern and readers can learn about that for themselves from public primary source documents at a website, "The Truth About Moscow" ([moscowid.net](http://moscowid.net)). There are some weighty issues there.

The author also mentions in passing that there's been controversy "about that community's proposals regarding the meaning and effect of baptism and its consequences for the Reformed doctrine of justification . . ." (p. 147). That's referring to the connection between Federal Vision theology and pastors such as Doug Wilson. Though I don't fault Gribben for this, what's left unexplored is the connection between theonomy and Federal Vision theology.<sup>3</sup>

Back in the 1990s and into the 2000s, I was a subscriber to a free magazine coming out of Moscow, *Credenda Agenda*. I was intrigued by Wilson and the other writers. Though I've since lost respect for Wilson and co., I'm still fascinated by their story. It's a story not yet finished. When it is, Gribben's book will be an essential resource. 



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<sup>2</sup> "Kinists" believe that racial and ethnic differences should be maintained. They're therefore against so-called interracial marriage. Sadly, there are also kinists who claim to be Reformed Christians.

<sup>3</sup> For more on that, see my booklet *Federal Vision: A Canadian Reformed Pastor's Perspective* (Grandville: Reformed Fellowship Inc., 2014), pp.11-13.



**DEAR EDITOR,**

Pastor Bredenhof (Oct.14, 2022) has made us aware of a book by John Dickson called *Bullies and Saints* on the sometimes-sad history of crimes done “in the name of Christ.”

I was born completely entangled within the Romanist religious system and am now a Reformed pastor of over thirty years. I respond differently.

The Belgic Confession states there is a true church and a false church. “We believe that we ought to discern diligently and very carefully, by the Word of God, what is the true church—for all sects in the world today claim for themselves the name of ‘the church’” (Art. 29).

Discerning “diligence” sees what some do “in the name of Christ” as rooted in their “condemnable idolatry” (LD 30), not biblical Christianity.

The Vatican; the Crusades to the Rwandan genocide; burning Wycliff’s bones to the Inquisition to what happened in boys’ homes in the Philippines; the attempt to blow up the British Parliament Buildings to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln; the Thirty Years War and the Hundred Years War and WW2 (see *Hitler’s Pope*); the smuggling of hundreds of thousands of German Nazis, Italian Fascists, and Croatian Ustasha war criminals into RC Argentina; the list goes on and on and was done “in the name of Christ.”

And the true church was not spared; the Massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day, the murder of the Huguenots at Fort Caroline, the Spanish in the Netherlands (see Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*); all was done “in the name of Christ.”

Truly “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14). We would never apologize for what The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has done. In comparison, their corruption is miniscule. Therefore, as the Day approaches, “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes” (18:4).

*Gregory J. Girard*

**DEAR EDITOR,**

I’d like to offer a response to Br. Harry Alkema’s letter (Clarion, Sept 16, 2022). Let’s take a walk through the FOG.

Frankness: In the previous issue of Clarion (Sept 2), Rev. Kampen has an excellent article entitled “Google or God?” I am “astonished” that brother Alkema so quickly falls for the “gospel” of Google. Br. Alkema cites one medical authority; however, if there is one thing which we have all learned about medical health: get a second opinion. The medical profession has historically advocated for this, but in the past two years this advice has taken a back seat.

Openness: It is astonishing how many officials have used (misused) statistics to frighten the population, taking the higher numbers of deaths among the most vulnerable i.e., seniors, and based remedial policies to fit everyone. See Real Talk on Reformed Perspective website (Episode 46—Putting COVID to Bed Ft. Ed Bosveld). Early in this “pandemic” an aspiring actuary pointed out that the probability of anyone dying in a car accident was more likely than dying of COVID-19. This was not the Milan/Bubonic Plague. It would be shameful to make this comparison. So why mandatory vaccinations? Reports show more COVID vaccine injuries in the Canadian Military than COVID hospitalizations.

Grace: Yes, we need to be gracious as the Lord has been gracious to us. Some have been severely affected by COVID in various ways. We should not minimize the impact, but may the Lord continue to help us see the reality of our situation and may we never lose sight of his grace in all situations. The leader of the People’s Party of Canada quipped about a “pandemic amnesty.” He states that he is not ready for that yet, but in the church community it may be worth taking the lead.

*Blessings,*

*Aubrey Vandergaag*

# CLASSIS ONTARIO WEST NOVEMBER 2, 2022

On behalf of the convening church of London, brother Frank Oostdyk welcomed the delegates and opened the meeting in a Christian manner. After the examination of the credentials, Classis was constituted and those chosen to serve as executive took their positions. The deputies of Regional Synod were also in attendance and were welcomed. The agenda was adopted.

## EXAMINATION & ADVICE

The church of London requested a peremptory examination for candidate Tim VanBeek, who had been called by the church to become their minister. The necessary documents were found to be in order and Classis proceeded to the examination. In closed session Classis judged the sermon proposal on Luke 16:1-13 to be sufficient to continue the examination; the deputies agreed. Classis proceeded to examine him in Exegesis Old and New Testament, Doctrine and Creeds, Church History, Bible Knowledge, Ethics, Diaconiology, and Church Polity. In closed session Classis judged that br. Tim VanBeek sustained the examination; the deputies of Regional Synod agreed. He was informed of this decision. After singing and a prayer of thanksgiving, opportunity was given to congratulate him and his wife on reaching this important milestone. Classis approbated the call extended to him by the Pilgrim Church of London.

Question period as per Article 44 of the Church Order was held. All the churches answered the first two questions in the affirmative and last one in the negative, except for one church which requested advice on matter of discipline. Advice was given.

## PREACHING CONSENT & CLOSING

Opportunity was given for Rev. John VanWoudenberg, minister of the Trinity Canadian Reformed Church of Glanbrook, to sign the form for subscription. Updated classis regulations as per the May/June 2022 classis were received for information.

A letter was received from brother Jakob Mars, member of the Cornerstone Church in Hamilton and third year student at CRTS, in which he requested permission to speak an edifying word within the Canadian Reformed Churches. Permission was given.

The following appointments were made. The convening church for next classis: Ancaster. And the suggested officers for next classis: chairman: a minister from Cornerstone, vice-chairman: Rev. P. H. Holtvliuwer, and clerk: Rev. K. Kok.

After adopting the Acts and approving the press release, the chairman led in prayer and Classis was closed. 

*Rev. John Louwerse, vice-chair at that time*

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