



Clarion

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Happy Ascension Day! It's not a greeting we say too often but maybe we should. We wish each other "Merry Christmas" at the birth of Christ and perhaps "Happy Easter" at his resurrection, then why not "Happy Ascension Day" at his glorious reception into heaven (this year on Thursday, May 18)? It's every bit as important as those other events and in this issue a meditation by Jeff Poort will help us see why.

The saving kingship of Jesus Christ is what keeps us steady in the many uncertainties and sufferings of this life, a recent example of which Jim Witteveen writes about in his editorial. Only Christ can save us from evil. This is something many church fathers like Polycarp heartily believed and were willing to die for, as Keith Sikkema relays to us in a moving story. A timely and comforting hymn about the glorious new Jerusalem that awaits comes to us from a name most familiar to *Book of Praise* singers, William Helder.

Rick Ludwig, a first alternate delegate to last year's general synod, in a piece titled "Trustworthiness" gives us his take on the "state of the union" with respect to our federation of churches in the wake of that synod. Thoughtful suggestions are offered. Wes Bredenhof presents us with one short article on self-control and two regular book reviews which help us sort out publications worthy of our attention. The issue rounds off with *Clarion Kids*, two classis press releases, and one letter to the editor. Enjoy!

Peter Holtvlüwer

The February 24, 2023, issue of *Clarion* contained an article on the visit of Deputies for Ecumenical Relations regarding their visit to Indonesia. During the process of preparing this for publication, errors were made during the layout process. A different, outdated map of the country was used, and photos were misidentified. The publisher apologizes for any confusion and disappointment resulting from this.

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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:

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- L**oving in manner
- A**ttuned to current issues
- R**eadable and Reliable
- I**n Submission to Scripture
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EFFECTIVE TREATMENT REQUIRES AN ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS

On March 27, one week ago as I write this, six of our brothers and sisters were murdered in Nashville, Tennessee. Three of the victims were only nine years old—Evelyn Dieckhaus, Hallie Scruggs, and William Kinney, all students at the Covenant School, a ministry of Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA). The other three victims were Cynthia Peak, Katherine Koonce, and Mike Hill—the school’s principal, a custodian, and a substitute teacher.

BLAME GAME

Any mass shooting is a tragedy, but this one hits close to home, despite the geographical distance between Canada and Tennessee. Some of the responses to the shooting have not been surprising and are in keeping with responses to similar tragedies in recent years. But the shooter’s identity as a transsexual former student at this school, together with the “Transgender Day of Visibility” held on March 31, have made this shooting unique. On March 30, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre made the following declaration: “Our hearts go out to those in the trans community as they are under attack right now.” It has been said that this event led to seven victims—those who were killed by the shooter, as well as the shooter herself.

Any time an event like this occurs, you can be sure that the “blame game” will begin almost immediately—in the media, on social networks, and in the political sphere. As always, the most immediate response is that the problem is easy access to firearms, and that restrictions need to be tightened up in order to prevent such a thing from happening again. Or, on the other side of the same argument, the problem is that no one in the school had a firearm with which they could defend themselves. Or, the problem is mental illness which leads some people to perform this kind of irrational act. And in this particular case, “victim-blaming” suddenly became acceptable once again, and blame was cast upon the shooter’s Christian parents, the Christian school, and Christian teaching about sexuality that served to “radicalize” the shooter.

CALL A SPADE A SPADE

There appears to be more than enough blame to go around. But there are two words that are rarely heard, if ever, in public discourse when a horrific event like the Covenant School shooting occurs: sin and evil. Some actions are simply evil and can only be described as such. The kind of evil that led to the death of six innocent people and that of the person who murdered them can not be explained away, minimized, excused, or rationalized. While there may be any number of proximate causes that led the killer to do

what she did, the ultimate cause is the sin and evil that the world has redefined as mental illness. Because, the thinking goes, no one in their “right mind” could ever possibly do something like this.

When evil actions are attributed to mental sickness, those who have not been diagnosed with a brain disorder can distance themselves from the atrocities that have been committed, because a “normal” person could never do anything so heinous. What’s more, post-crime diagnoses also serve to make the perpetrator less responsible for his or her actions—and thus just as much a “victim” as the actual victims of the crime.

But when it comes right down to it, why do people commit murder? The apostle Paul reveals that the root cause of murder (and every other sin) is the natural condition of humanity apart from Christ: dead in trespasses and sins, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air. Apart from Christ, people live in the passions of their flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and are by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:1-3).

THE ONLY SOLUTION

Compare the diagnosis of Scripture with the diagnoses offered by twenty-first century western society. We live in a highly medicalized culture, in which the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) is described as the “Bible” of the psychological and psychiatric professions. Behaviours and lifestyles are first defined as disorders, only to be redefined in subsequent editions in response to the political and social currents of the day. You name it, and there is a medical explanation for it, and a treatment available for the right price.

Into this world, we bring the unchanging message of salvation, which is only to be found in Jesus Christ. We acknowledge that the root cause of the evil that we see and experience in this world is the sinfulness of man, and that the only solution to the problem can be found in the Saviour. We recognize that the capacity for evil is found within each one of us, but also that citizenship in the Saviour’s kingdom is open to all who repent and believe, and in so doing submit to the King. Only when the reality of sin and evil is acknowledged will the true solution be sought and found. This is the message that we proclaim, and that we must hold fast. **C**



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THE GRAVE AND HELL WERE CAPTIVE LED

“You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train.”

PSALM 88:18

The picture in Psalm 68:18 is that of a victory procession. In ancient processions, a victorious, returning king would often bring the spoils from the conquered nation through the city in a parade with his victorious army, together with the captives of the enemy nation. Sometimes they would even drag the opposing king along, humbled in chains. It was a celebratory parade through the city often leading to the temple or worship centre so that the deities could be given praise and the first of the spoils. The people could join in the celebrations and perhaps receive gifts from the spoils. There are large murals in the ancient Near East depicting these kinds of processions and commemorating them to the honour of the victorious king.

In Psalm 68, however, the psalmist David does not place himself as the king that is leading the procession. Instead, it is the LORD God who is the true king leading captives (v. 18). It is his procession (v. 24). The gifts are being received among men, meaning the spoils are being enjoyed, and the LORD is receiving the praise he is due.


Therefore, as we celebrate Ascension Day, it is legitimate to think of Jesus Christ going up to heaven as a victory procession in fulfillment of Psalm 68. The apostle Paul thought of this too in Ephesians 4. Psalm 68:18 is fulfilled in Jesus Christ as he ascends on high and then pours out gifts, the spoils, on his people.

Jesus Christ’s ascension is also like a victory parade in that he has just won the major victory for the people of God. He is returning from the battle against sin and death. When he rose from the dead, he conquered the grave. It had no power to hold him. Jesus comes to heaven, to the throne room of his Father, which is the *heavenly* temple, and everyone celebrates as he takes his place of authority at the Father’s right hand.

This victory parade imagery is well-reflected in the hymn, “The Lord Ascended up on High” (Hymn 40, *Book of Praise*), when it says:

“The grave and hell were captive led
when he went up, our glorious Head,
to his eternal dwelling.”

It is a poetic reflection on our Lord’s victory procession. You can imagine our Lord parading the grave itself, all chained and imprisoned, into heaven, so that all may see death’s loss of power, and so rejoice. It is as though hell itself has no power to scare God’s people anymore, because Jesus Christ can bring it captive and powerless into the presence of all the saints. They will not have to contend with it anymore, because Jesus Christ has already done that in their place.

Everyone remembers the great celebrations and parades following big events in world history, whether it was the end of World War 2, or the coronation of a queen or king. As Christians, we have the opportunity to remember every year on Ascension Day the great victory parade of Jesus Christ as he entered heaven to take his rightful place at the right hand of his Father and so officially inaugurate his kingly reign. Let us not fail to find comfort in the glorious truth that the grave and even hell itself have no power over those who confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and King. 

FURTHER READING

Ephesians 4:1–16

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Why would imagining the grave or hell in chains give you comfort?
2. Should Christians live with absolutely no fear of death or hell, or is there room for a “healthy fear” that would motivate us to serve? Compare Matthew 10:28.
3. What does Paul’s quoting of Psalm 68 in reference to Jesus Christ say of his views on the divine nature of Jesus?



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Trustworthiness

RICK LUDWIG

One of the more challenging positions in professional baseball is the role of the pinch-hitter. You sit in the dug-out, cheering on your teammates, constantly remaining at the ready to jump into the game at a moment's notice, to be immediately placed on the hot seat. You have done all the preparations, batting practice and warm-ups, studied the scouting reports, and visualized all the best outcomes. Get up to bat and produce a big hit and mission accomplished! Score an out and you sit down again in the dug-out corner, hoping for another opportunity soon, while you continue to cheer on your teammates.

Serving as a first alternate delegate for a general synod is not nearly as dramatic, but has a similar feel, as I recently experienced. You make all the preparations, but only peer over the edge of the dugout to watch the play unfold. You have read all the reports, appeals, and overtures, as well as the letters from the churches submitted to address them. At the end of the day, you can review the score card, but it does not have the same feeling as actually being in the game. No chance to make a contribution. Only lots of time to ruminate about how it all unfolded. At the same time, you continue to cheer on the team as you look to God for his blessing on all that was accomplished.

GENERAL SYNOD GUELPH 2022

The results of General Synod 2022, held in Guelph, Ontario are summarily recorded in the published *Acts*, providing decisions with grounds, without the usual observations tallied up by the committees. That brevity helps keep the decisions more concise but does not necessarily let the reader in on what influenced the decisions that were made. Having access to all the background information helps to an extent. One can note that a number of decisions were debated back and forth until the topics were well tried, and then the majority opinions carried the day. In the end, the *vibe* of the synod decisions *in toto* is one of circumspection. Overtures were denied, standing committee reports were sent back for refinement, and caution was exercised. One of the undercurrents that washed over it all was the old Russian proverb "Trust but verify." Remarkably, this is the same adage that was regularly touted during the nuclear disarmament negotiations between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in the 1980s!

Whether you agree or disagree with the decisions of GS 2022, one thing seems undeniable to me: there is an increasing lack of trust among the churches in the federation on a number of issues. The delicate balance between local initiative and federal agreement

The delicate balance between local initiative and federal agreement is being tested

is being tested along the lines of mission-minded requests for local autonomy and the maintenance of a homogenous orthopraxy. This plays out in the songs and liturgical forms that will be accepted for worship, the functional nature of local relationships with other Reformed and Presbyterian churches, as well as in identifying the baseline for confessional church membership. All these topics came home to roost in Guelph. The churches lined up in support or in opposition to the proposals and the delegates observed that the house was divided and opted to slow the pace. The more pressing concern for the day seemed to be the coalescence of the federation rather than risk increasing the divide.

TRUST RELATIONSHIPS

At the heart of this seems to be an issue of trustworthiness. All good relationships hinge on the critical element of trust, particularly when a relationship moves towards embracing some form of diversity. When one rule or practice doesn't function well for all parties, will the foundation of trust allow for the understanding and acceptance of differing approaches towards the same goal, within the same framework? Can the churches stand side by side while appreciating differing local needs? Or will they even risk vilifying each other in the service of Christ? These concerns creep out for me from the letters written by the churches to GS 2022. And yet issues of trust and unity are not new for the church of Christ.

The apostle Paul confronts the matter of trust head-on in his first letter to the church at Corinth. After sifting through their misguided allegiances to various church leaders, Paul refocuses the church on God's wisdom from above as it is revealed in Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. He reorients them to their foundation in Christ, not on the apostles. And yet, in chapter 4 he acknowledges that even "as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed . . . it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (v. 1-2 NIV84). Trust needs a firm basis. Trust also needs a track record. It is built, not simply assumed. Trust is earned and exercised in relationship. Trust decreases when it is not evidenced on a daily basis or when it is taken for granted. Trust only increases when it is proven repeatedly in action over time.

Proving their trustworthiness was necessary for Paul and the apostles, so much so that Paul argues that the basis for any trust in

what they have taught is that they only attest to "what is written" (God's Word). As for their personal accreditation, they have been intentionally lowered in status as opposed to being esteemed. They have been made the "scum of the earth," taking their position at the "end of the procession," as men "condemned to death" for the sake of the gospel. They have sacrificed it all personally so that their testimony could be trustworthy and not based in any way on their own accomplishments. Paul urges the Corinthians to turn away from any personal arrogance and adopt his posture for the sake of the gospel. Trusting relationships thrive in the church when we can move ourselves out of the centre so that they rest on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ.

TRUST IN THE FEDERATION

As churches living and working in federation with each other, we can benefit from Paul's guidance as we seek to develop trust amongst ourselves. At the heart of this trust is "what is written" in God's Word. I think this is still evidenced in the federation: a high view of Scripture's inerrancy and an affirmation of the Reformed confessions as a bedrock for holding to the truth in what we confess. The churches have built up this trust over time, built on a foundation that predates this federation of churches. Where we may be faltering in our trust, however, is in our handling of the framework for our federation, the adopted Church Order.

At the local level we can agree that the Church Order has subordinate status to Scripture and even our confessional statements; yet it still has a primary role in the function of the federation of churches. In this respect no church in the federation should claim a minimalist approach or tentative relationship to the agreed upon order. Everyone is *all in* by nature of the agreement. Any suggestion that there is a local disdain for the agreement is a first step in trust erosion. All the churches should affirm and demonstrate a healthy respect for the Church Order. This is only truly evidenced in actions, not by lip-service. Where there is room for discussion and differences is in what the Church Order actually says and how it is applied, not in whether or not it should be honoured.

FUNCTIONAL CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges in discussing the function of the Church Order today amongst the churches is that the discussion is usually raised in the manner of an appeal or a request for judgment. This usually takes place at the broader assemblies. Rarely is a forum constructed for healthy dialogue where everything is not already in the balance requiring adjudication. This often includes a time pressure to resolve the question at hand and a limited interaction

or debate only based on the material served for review. I have observed that there is little room for building trust in this type of scenario. It often results in a further divide, even when done in a brotherly and constructive way. The ones judged against may feel misunderstood, and the ones seeking judgment can feel vindicated, while at the same time experiencing further distancing in relationship. It is difficult for trust amongst churches to be advanced this way and many times the tension is only exacerbated.

Another challenge to building trust amongst churches in the federation is a relatively new development of churches living in perennial “appeal mode.” It has become tolerable to not conform

Understanding is a first step towards building trusting relationships

with the decisions of broader assemblies as long as you state (when asked) that you intend to appeal the decision. This usually occurs when an adopted practice is already in place and the church is unwilling to alter it based on the decision of a broader assembly. A few turns through the general synod wheel, and even if a judgment remains against it, the practice is well entrenched in the local church life, and it seems unreasonable to change it at that point. It is hard for other churches in the federation to not see this as a type of filibuster to hamper the process of coming to mutual agreement. This practice does not build up trust among the churches.


The opposite is true as well. A continued and sometimes dogged disregard of a local church’s stated desire for flexibility in practical matters (e.g. song selection, function of liturgical forms, supervision of the Lord’s Supper) without a clear desire to understand their needs can be very disconcerting and serve to isolate churches in the federation. I have observed this frustration expressed by delegates at broader assemblies where the process makes them feel alienated from the other churches and the decisions proffered seem to them far from gospel-centred. If a primary concern for the local advancement of the gospel is evident, a more generous posture towards a reasonable accommodation can result. Understanding is a first step towards building trusting relationships. Times set aside for listening and learning are needed.

ANOTHER WAY

Discussion forums, like *Clarion* magazine, can help. Yet here also a polemical approach is often taken, where one expression for

differing needs or an alternate application of an article is offset by a contrary position. This serves to suggest that all matters regarding the Church Order must be set as right or wrong, in line or offside, without room for local context and new developments. Discussion is not the same as debate, and where each have their place, debate has often ruled the day in matters of church polity. Debate has a way of delineating rather than drawing together. It often has the outcome of separating instead of uniting. It is not designed to build up trust.

Creating more opportunities for discussion amongst the churches in the federation on matters of varying practical needs on a regular basis may serve the churches well as they engage the next round of reports, appeals, and proposals at the broader assemblies. Perhaps churches in each classis could take the initiative to bring forward proposals in public discussion forums. This is a more open-handed approach that welcomes both scrutiny and constructive input. Maybe churches could even bring their proposals to classis, not for judgment, but for advice as they develop them. In this way they engage the neighbouring churches and also keep the other churches in the federation in the loop via the Acts of Classis. Taking the mystery out of *why* a church may be looking at a matter from a different angle may help build trust and consolidate efforts to accomplish an agreeable way forward. More trust-building approaches to problem solving in the federation can serve to heal a developing rift and help us all ensure we remain gospel-centred together.

Each new season hope springs eternal for baseball players and their teams as they imagine that this may be their year. A fresh opportunity with a clean slate to make a difference. The fan base can unite again and share in this dream with them. Thankfully, the church of Christ is not under that same pressure or uncertainty. The victory has already been won. The day of triumph is coming. The full team is assembling as history unfolds and we may all play our parts as we are gifted and called upon. Here there is no room for division or mistrust, but much need for encouragement and perseverance. Perhaps that is what is most clearly underscoring the decisions rendered at GS 2022. Let’s come together to heed the advice and work diligently on being trustworthy. 



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< My parents (Lloyd and Nellie Bredenhof), pose here for a picture with the RCMP Cessna Citation.

SOMETHING

My Dad could Teach You

WES BREDEHOF

My dad spent thirty-five years in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, most of them in the cockpit. While he started off his career as a regular Mountie working out of detachments in rural Alberta, in 1975 he started flying RCMP aircrafts out of Regina, Saskatchewan. Most of his flying life was spent in the captain's seat of the venerable DHC-6 Twin Otter. This nineteen-seat twin turboprop was the hardy Short-Take and Landing (STOL) backbone of the RCMP fleet for many years.

Most of the time, my dad flew single-pilot. However, whenever I had time off from school, Dad would often let me tag along. Usually sitting in the right seat, I flew with my dad all over Western Canada. During these flights, I was able to watch how Dad did his piloting.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

Dad was the safest pilot I've ever known. I never felt in danger when I was with him. He finished his career with tens of thousands of hours and an immaculate safety record. Dad was always strictly by-the-book. He never cut corners, never took shortcuts, never took risks, never broke the rules just because no one was looking. What I saw in the cockpit was *self-discipline*.

Let me give just one example of that. One of the key ingredients for aviation safety is the checklist. In the old RCMP Twin Otters, the checklist was mounted in the middle



In this picture, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau stands to the right of centre. My father (Lloyd Brendenhof) is on the far right.

of the yoke. It was low-tech, just a little black box with rollers at the top and bottom. You would twist the knobs of the rollers to make the type-written paper checklist inside go up or down. In two-pilot operations, the co-pilot would read off the checklist items while the captain would action them. However, the RCMP didn't always do two-pilot operations on the Twin Otter. So, if he wanted to, a single-pilot could fudge on the checklist. He could just try doing it from memory or skip certain items if he thought they were unimportant. No one would know. But Dad never did that. Even when he was flying single pilot, he always rigorously followed the checklist routine. I'm convinced this self-discipline is what helped him have the good safety record he did. There's a saying, "There are old pilots and there are bold pilots. But there are no old, bold pilots."

If you were flying somewhere, wouldn't you want a pilot like my dad in the cockpit? If someone you love was boarding an aircraft, you'd want to have a pilot with the greatest measure of self-discipline. The safest pilots are the most self-disciplined pilots.

SELF-CONTROL


There's safety in learning self-discipline. God says in Proverb 26:28, "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." Self-discipline or self-control is like a wall, providing safety and security.

One aspect of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23 is self-control. The opposite of self-control is found in the dangerous works of the flesh in the preceding verses, things like sexual immorality, fits of anger, drunkenness, and orgies. These things are like a demonic form of the explosive C-4, highly destructive. If we're Christians, the Holy Spirit can grant us this gift of spiritual self-discipline to keep us safe. We ought to pray for it, but we're also to strive for it. This is why 2 Peter 1:6 says we're to make every

effort to supplement our faith with self-control. We're called to do it. But how?

Sinclair Ferguson once said that the hardest word for Christians to learn is "No." We have to learn to say "no" to our sinful desires, to control them and rein them in. One of the ways we can do that is by developing healthy spiritual disciplines, like reading and memorizing Scripture. The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to help us grow in self-discipline. When you say "No" to a sinful desire, you can apply God's Word to reinforce your renunciation of that desire. For example, if you struggle with sinful sexual desires, you can memorize and apply 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own. You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body."

THE SAFEST WAY

Finally, let's remember how Jesus was and is the ultimate self-disciplined man. He was always in control of himself and that's part of the gospel. There's safety in his self-discipline. In the eyes of God, all his righteous self-discipline is credited to me. And—this is so wonderful—all my lack of self-discipline was nailed to the cross with him. I'm forgiven. Now because I love him, I want to live as a self-disciplined disciple of his. It's safest for me, but also safest for everyone I'm called to pilot as a leader in my home and in my church. Pray it with me, "Lord, with your Holy Spirit, please give me more self-discipline. Your way is always the safest way. Amen." 



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PROFILES

DR. JASON VAN VLIET

The academic year 2022–23 at CRTS reached the finish line at the end of April. This also means we have the distinct joy of presenting this year’s graduands. Six brothers in the Lord introduce themselves and their loved ones in the profiles that follow. Five of them are presenting themselves to classis to become eligible for call, the Lord willing, and one graduand plans to do some further studies before presenting himself to classis in due time. All praise and thanks be to our heavenly Father who, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the King of the Church, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, has brought them to this point. They can provide you with the details better than I can. Enjoy reading their profiles and please remember them in your prayers!

FAUSTIN EMADJEU

Greetings to all. I am Faustin Emadjeu, and this is my wife, Magdalena. I have lived in many places over the years. I was born in Cameroon, where I spent the first ten years of my life. Afterwards, I went to the Ivory Coast, where I lived with my parents until the end of high school. From there, I moved to Bangalore, India, to study for a triple-major Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology, Biochemistry, and Genetics.

After my B.Sc. I pursued a Master of Science at the University of Bremen in Germany. I met my beloved wife, Magdalena, in a Bible study group there. A few months after we got married, we moved to Canada so that I could study at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. We reached Canada in 2018, and after I completed the biblical language requirements, I started seminary education in September 2019.

In my earlier school days I had a natural predisposition towards mathematics and sciences. During the summer holidays, I would either work for my father or start my own businesses and share the income with my household. I thought I had a clear idea for my life: I wanted to obtain a Ph.D. in science and work for a while to



accumulate capital. With the capital, I would have progressively invested in becoming an agri-businessman, preserving and distributing agricultural products in my home country.

But the LORD had other plans. Once in Germany, I became sick with a skin condition, cholinergic urticaria, for about two and a half years. In time, the LORD granted me to use my biochemistry knowledge to manage my condition; thanks to the LORD, I have been well since. During the time of my sickness, my desire to study Scripture increased. From childhood, I had the habit, despite my great ignorance, of turning to the LORD in times of difficulty. However, in Germany, I increasingly realized far beyond what I had experienced before how tremendously comforting Scripture can be in life’s difficulties. During that time, the LORD increased my diligence in Bible reading and study. The LORD, in his abundant mercy,

opened my eyes to the Reformed doctrines of salvation through Bible reading. I started embracing doctrines such as election, predestination, and total depravity. I was progressively becoming Reformed without realizing it! In some conversations, I was labelled a “Calvinist.” However, I did not know what that meant! As I searched the internet, I discovered “Particular Baptists,” also known as “Reformed” Baptists like McArthur, John Piper, and Martyn Llyod Jones. Later I discovered Ligonier and R. C. Sproul.

In time, the LORD granted me to use my knowledge of biochemistry to suppress the pain brought on by my sickness. After my recovery, I had an overwhelming sense that God had allowed me to be so sick and financially stricken because he was reorienting my life. Simultaneously, I became increasingly disillusioned with the corruption at the university and in the science research labs. Meanwhile, I was married to Magdalena. After much prayer and deliberation and with much encouragement from others, we decided to move to Canada so that I could pursue studies at CRTS.

Looking back, we are deeply grateful that God gave us the courage to move to Hamilton. I do not stop being amazed at how God has led us here and inclined my wife’s heart to make her willing to leave her homeland to accompany me. By God’s grace, these have been very fruitful years. We learned far more than we expected. We did not know it is one thing to be a “Reformed” Baptist and another to be truly Reformed. Until then, we didn’t know a community where the gospel is applied so thoroughly and consistently to all of life.

Our years at the seminary have been years of learning and growth. The LORD, in his compassion, made my learning increasingly enjoyable. There is still much to learn, and we are thankful for the community of learners around us. The internships during the seminary break allowed us to get to know other CanRC congregations. My first internship was with Pastor Gerrit Bruintjes of the Bethel congregation in Toronto. The following summer, I completed my mission internship with Pastor Paulin Bedard in St. George, Quebec. (By the way, French is my first language.) Pastor Ken Wieske of St. Albert in Alberta mentored me for my preaching internship. We are very thankful for these congregations who received us with great kindness and to the men from whom I could learn so much. I am especially grateful to Pastor Ken, who was a great encouragement while I was still learning the biblical languages and later during my preaching internship.

Now that my seminary training is ending, I realize more acutely that there is still so much to learn! Reflecting on my seminary years, I am filled with profound gratitude for the professors who instructed us.

I hope to present myself to classis by God’s grace this spring to become eligible for a call. We are looking forward to what the Lord has prepared for us. He has led us faithfully thus far and is worthy of all our trust. To God be the glory.

CALEB KOS

Hello! My name is Caleb Kos and pictured with me is my dear wife, Shanelle (nee Bergsma), and our son Titus. Wow, the time has flown by! After completing our first semester at CRTS, I remember joking with my classmates that we were “one-eighth of the way through seminary!” And now we are looking forward to being examined by Classis Alberta this June, the Lord willing, in order to be declared eligible for call in Christ’s church.

How did we get here? Well, I grew up in Neerlandia, Alberta, the oldest of four children. Growing up “country,” I enjoy dirt biking, hunting, volleyball, and judjitsu. And I love board games. (Perfect for the –40° Alberta winters. . . .)



During my junior and senior high years at Covenant Canadian Reformed School, I had a couple of teachers encourage me to consider the ministry. I began to consider studying for ministry more earnestly during Grade 12. I was preparing to do profession of faith and my pastor Reverend Louwerse was also encouraging me to think about the ministry. However, I needed some time to decide, so I worked in construction for two years before applying to Concordia University of Edmonton, where I completed my Bachelor’s degree.

That summer, just before I packed my belongings into my car and drove to Ontario, I met Shanelle. She grew up in Carman, Manitoba, and loves working in various health care settings. After



almost a year of long-distance dating and hour-long phone calls, Shanelle moved to Ontario. Somehow—between last minute renovations on our future basement suite and moving my belongings out of my prior bedroom at 11:00pm the night before our wedding so that the new tenant could move in two days later—we managed to get married during February of my second year at seminary! Then, eight months ago, God blessed us with a little bundle of joy whom we named Titus.

I'm so thankful for the camaraderie and mentorship we have experienced at CRTS. It has been a wonderful experience to work, study, and learn with and from men and women who clearly love Christ and want to serve him. Your joy has been instrumental in fanning into flame my joy and delight in Christ.

I have also been blessed to enjoy several internships. I benefitted from internships with Reverend Wierenga (two weeks in Fergus with my uncle!), Pastor Holtvluwer (ten weeks in my home congregation, Ancaster 🍌), as well as Pete Wright and Bert Degier (evangelism in Edmonton, AB). I also enjoyed four weeks of learning and serving in Pilgrim CanRC, London, ON. These experiences have excited me to serve Christ, share the gospel, and love Christ's bride. I've also seen how those who do not know Christ live in darkness, and I pray that many more may come to hear and embrace the Good News.

The next number of months hold many uncertainties for our future. This has really made us grow in appreciation for the way our churches call students. It is true for all of us, but this experience has made it crystal clear to Shanelle and me that we are entirely dependent on our heavenly Father to guide and provide for us. We have been both forced and blessed to meditate on God's faithfulness to us in the past, as we grow in trusting him in the present. We look forward to seeing which path God will guide us down in the future.

MATTHIAS SCHAT

Hi! My name is Matthias Schat, and I am a fourth year MDiv student at CRTS. This is my wife Kailee, and our little son, Elijah. Both Kailee and I are originally from Perth in sunny Western Australia, where we were members of local congregations of the Free Reformed Churches.

My path to studying for ministry has been more like a winding than a straight road and has taken us around the world. Pastoral ministry was not something I was pursuing after school or during my first degree at university. Instead, after completing my undergraduate degree in Western Australia, I moved to Scotland in 2015 where I lived and worked for two years. God blessed me richly

through my time in my local Free Church of Scotland congregation in Edinburgh. It was during my time in Scotland that God really placed on my heart a desire to begin studying for pastoral ministry. Upon arriving back in Perth in 2017, I began supplementary language studies to prepare for attending CRTS while also working.

After getting married in 2019, God opened the way for Kailee and I to move to Canada to begin studies at CRTS. God has been truly gracious and good to us in the last three-and-a-half years, and we have felt very much at home here in Ontario.

During my time at seminary, the Lord has blessed me with some wonderful internships. My introductory internship in 2020 was with Pastor Jake Torenvliet at Redemption CanRC. The following summer, I undertook a ten-week preaching internship under Pastor Marc Jagt in Fergus North. This past summer, Kailee and I were privileged to go to Scotland to undertake a mission/evangelism internship in a church plant of the Free Church of Scotland in Inverness. I was blessed to work there under church planter Rev. Chris Davidson. It was so wonderful to see God's work in this very different context, and to witness the fruits of gospel ministry there. After arriving back in Canada, we could also spend five weeks serving Living Word CanRC in Guelph, working under the supervision of the consistory there during their time of vacancy. I am so thankful to God for the blessings of these great mentors and these wonderful learning opportunities.

My time at CRTS has been an incredible blessing. It is such a joy to spend time studying God's Word, and to experience firsthand how the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms lives and changes hearts. It has also been an amazing opportunity to bring God's Word to his people since being given permission to speak an edifying word, and to spend time walking alongside the communion of saints in this special way.

God willing, I'm hoping to go before classis to become eligible for call in June. While we're enjoying these last few months of seminary life, we are also looking forward to finishing and seeing where God leads us. In all things may he be praised.



TIM SLAA

Hello everyone! My name is Tim Slaa and this is my wife, Alana (nee Wierenga), and our little daughter, Keziah. My journey began in Elora, Ontario, where my father was the pastor. But being a preacher's kid meant it wouldn't be long before we were off, and we moved from Elora, to Kerwood, and then to the mountains of Smithers, BC. There my siblings and I quickly grew to love the many outdoor opportunities that Smithers offered and took every chance we could to go hiking, canoeing, fishing, and hunting. But alas, every kid must grow up! So, as my high school years drew to an end, I set my mind on becoming a teacher, while at the same time my heart was becoming set on a certain girl named Alana.

Being from small-town Smithers meant I would need to uproot and find a university education some hours away. After two years of study in Prince George and working construction in the summers, I transferred down to the Fraser Valley, where I was still quite intent on pursuing teaching. But before long, the Lord began to prod me in a different direction. This was not the first time I had considered ministry. I distinctly remember listening with rapt attention to the missionaries from Brazil when they would come to Smithers for a presentation. I decided to finish my history degree and then see where things were at. Needless to say, the desire had grown, and so I headed back up to Smithers to marry my by-then-fiancé. Within a few weeks we had packed up our few belongings in the car and made the long trek to Hamilton.

While our hearts were still pining for the mountains of Northern BC, we settled in and made Hamilton our home. I spent the first year studying Greek and Hebrew, while also working at landscaping and painting part-time. When I realized I could finish the requirements in one year, I also (quickly) finished Latin. Suddenly there I was in September of 2019 making my way to CRTS for my first day of class, more than a little nervous, and perhaps for good reason. I remember in those early days being forced to yell

Shakespearean insults at another student, which supposedly was to help build confidence in public-speaking.

But time has flown and by God's grace he has granted much growth and a love and enthusiasm for his Word, although I'm still left wondering how I managed to become one of that strange group called "fourth-years." Time certainly did not pass by without the challenges of occasional doubts, many hours sitting behind Zoom sessions during COVID, as well as griefs to bear. But the Lord has also been very good to Alana and me during this time, shaping us in many ways and through many individuals. We will be forever thankful for the internships in Grassie, Taber, and Houston, and the mission field in Cyprus, as well as the friendships we could form in these homes-away-from-home. We are also so grateful to the Lord, who answered our many prayers this past December by granting us a beautiful baby girl! Since Keziah arrived, she has taken over our home, where we answer her every beck and call.

In the midst of this whirlwind, my time at CRTS is coming to a close. While we will greatly miss the friendships and mentorships that we've gained over the years, we look forward to whatever the Lord has in store for us. And so it is with some trepidation, but also excitement, that I hope to present myself to classis this coming June to become eligible for call. To God alone be the glory!



MARK VANDERLINDE

When people ask me where I'm from, I usually say I'm from much of Western Canada. For various reasons, I've called three of the western provinces my home. I was born in London, Ontario, but three years after that my family moved to the city of Winnipeg. I grew up there until my early teens, when the family moved to

British Columbia. After I graduated from Credo in BC, we moved back to Winnipeg. Soon afterwards I went on my own to Alberta but returned to Winnipeg a few years later. Sheri and I met at a Bible Study weekend in BC and were married in 2017. Since then, God has blessed us with a spunky Zoë, a shy Sarah, and a rambunctious William.

I felt drawn to the ministry already in high school but decided to pursue the trades for a few years afterwards. After realizing that I was not meant for a career in the trades, I inquired of Sheri what she thought of me pursuing the ministry. We decided to commit to getting a Bachelor's degree to see how the life of a student would go. After the first year, it became clear that post-secondary education would be a fruitful direction to take. So after three years I obtained a Bachelor's degree, majoring in theological studies.

Four years seems like such a long time ago. We came to seminary when our first child was only one year old, but now she's going on five and we have two more children! On top of that, I've acquired a fair number of books (both physical and electronic) and have learned so much from the professors here. More than that, however, I learned a great deal from my classmates who came to seminary at the same time as I did and who have also shaped me in ways that go beyond mere knowledge. My life has changed in many ways since I started my undergraduate degree. And now it's about to change again! Some people told me that seminary is four years to walk with God and learn as much as you can. I have found this to be true. This has indeed been a special time in which I have grown in faith and knowledge and love for Jesus Christ.

The various internships I've completed have been very encouraging to me in regards to pursuing the ministry. More than once I wished I could just keep working in the internship, but my schooling had to be completed. I'm indebted to those that God has placed on my path: the Reverends Ben Schoof, James Zekveld, and Clarence Vander Velde, as well as their wives and families who showed Sheri and me what it is like to be a pastor but also what it is like to be the family of a pastor. I would also like to express gratitude for the many churches that have welcomed me on to their pulpits and into their catechism classrooms. These have been informative, encouraging, and overall quite enjoyable.

For now, I do not know where the Lord will take me. My plans, the Lord willing, are to go before classis this summer and become eligible for call. It will not be easy to say goodbye to Hamilton and to Providence church, which has become our home. But I also look forward with eagerness to whatever God has in store for me.




ADAM WERKMAN

Hi! My name is Adam Werkman, and this is my wonderful fiancée, Coby VanderZwaag.

I grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, but my family also spent two years in Coaldale, Alberta during my high school years before moving back to Winnipeg. I knew I wanted to be a minister from the time I was very little, writing my own sermons (with three points!) by the time I was seven. After graduating from Immanuel Christian School, I majored in Classics at the University of Manitoba.

I have enjoyed my four years of study at CRTS and being part of the community here in Hamilton. I have been incredibly blessed by the people God has put on my path and the experiences I was able to have during my time here. I had the opportunity to do an internship with Rev. Tyler Vandergaag in Taber, Alberta and an internship with Rev. Gerrit Brintjes in Richmond Hill, Ontario. Most recently, I was able to spend two very hot weeks in Lokichogio, Kenya, teaching alongside Rev. Jan DeGelder at a Bible school run by Middle East Reformed Fellowship. I am also thankful for the congregations who welcomed me into their midst on many Sundays for pulpit supply and for the hospitality and friendship that was extended.

During my time at CRTS, I met Coby and, the Lord willing, we will be married on August 26th! Besides planning a wedding, I will be spending my summer doing an internship at Grace Canadian Reformed Church in Brampton. After that, I will be spending the next year at Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto, studying towards a Master of Theology degree.

I am look forward to continuing in the study of God's Word and to being able to serve as a minister in the future, the Lord willing. 

What Glorious Things of You Are Spoken

Based on Revelation 21, 22:3-5

Cm Fm C7

1. What glo - rious things of you are spo - ken, O new Je - ru - sa - lem!
 2. From heav - en's throne a voice re - sound - ed and this good news pro - claimed:
 3. The One who on the throne was seat - ed said, "I make all things new.
 4. As - tound - ing was the glo - rious vi - sion of new Je - ru - sa - lem.

Fm Cm G7 Cm

John the a - pos - tle stood in won - der when he first heard of them.
 "God will now live a - mong his peo - ple and make his home with them.
 Write down these words, for what I tell you is trust - wor - thy and true.
 Its loft - y wall had firm foun - da - tions, a - dorned with pre - cious gems.

Fm C7

Both heav'n and earth as new cre - a - tion he saw in proph - e - cy.
 He in their midst will be re - main - ing through all e - ter - ni - ty!
 I am the Al - pha and O - me - ga: what I be - gan is done!
 Of shin - ing pearls the gates were fash - ioned; the streets were paved with gold.

Fm Cm G Cm

Gone were the for - mer earth and heav - en; gone al - so was the sea.
 and shall ful - fil all he has prom - ised. Their faith - ful God is he!
 This all who are in me vic - to - rious as her - it - age will gain.
 The cit - y, flaw - less - ly pro - por - tioned, was won - drous to be - hold.

Text: William Helder, 2023

Tune: Naomi Shemer, Yerushalayim shel zahav (Jerusalem of Gold), 1967

16 Fm Eb Ab

He mar-velled at the awe-some sight when down from God, from heav-en's
 He in his love and ten-der care will from their eyes wipe ev-'ry
 I will show mer - cy to all those whom I as my own peo-ple
 It has no need of sun and moon. Its source of light is God a -

20 Eb Cm Gm Eb G Cm

height, the Ho - ly Cit - y was de - scend - ing. Hal - le - lu - jah!
 tear. All grief and sor - row will be ban - ished." Hal - le - lu - jah!
 chose and be their lov - ing God and Sav - iour." Hal - le - lu - jah!
 lone; his glo - ry spreads its light all o - ver. Hal - le - lu - jah!

24 Fm Eb Ab

He saw it like a bride ap-pear who to her lov - ing spouse draws
 "Pain they no long - er will en-dure, and e - ven death shall be no
 "To those who thirst I'll free - ly give the wa - ter that brings true re -
 His saints will in that ho - ly place serve him and see him face to

28 Eb Cm Gm Eb G Cm

near, a - dorned for him in ra - diant splen-dour. Hal - le - lu - jah!
 more, for all the for - mer things have van - ished." Hal - le - lu - jah!
 lief, for it will quench their thirst for - ev - er." Hal - le - lu - jah!
 face. There they will reign with him for - ev - er. Hal - le - lu - jah!

Bishop Polycarp *of Smyrna*

~ 69 – 155 AD

The first half of this article appeared in the previous issue.

KEITH SIKKEMA

The next day is a blur. Germanicus doesn't show up. The letter still lies on the shelf, and what happened only comes to Polycarp by bits and pieces.

AWAY WITH THE ATHEISTS!

The Jewish and pagan mob had hauled Germanicus before the governor. He had acknowledged that he was a Christian and refused to burn incense for the emperor. Some in the mob had wanted him dead—they wanted the spectacle of a living human fighting for his life and losing. It was good entertainment, and the gods sure would like it and send them good fortune! Also, Germanicus was only a worthless Christian, and why should one care about a dog who didn't care about the welfare of the city? Yet, some felt sorry for the handsome youth: Should he be ripped to bits by wild beasts? Even the governor asked Germanicus: Would you, vigorous youth, not rather avoid being torn apart? Would you not rather live? But Germanicus had thought of what he learned from Polycarp: “The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death” (Rev 2:11). He willingly surrendered to the beast and entered into eternal glory.

Was he weak and sinful? Yes, he was! But he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ who equipped him for glory! By God's grace he had conquered and did not fear. By the crowds' insistence, the bloodthirsty beast devoured his flesh. The mob cheered, but it was not satisfied: Germanicus did not fight, and they wanted more. How could this young man become a Christian? Was it because of the old Bishop perhaps? Sure, it must be the old man Polycarp!

Someone had started chanting, “Away with the atheists! Let's get Polycarp!”

The mob joined in, “Away with the atheists! Let's get Polycarp!” They left the stadium to find him at his house, chanting as they went, “Away with the atheists! Let's get Polycarp!”

There were Jews among the mob, and pagans, idol-priests, carpenters, shopkeepers, and silversmiths. There were people of all kinds, even some who didn't know what it was all about, but they joined anyway. “Away with the atheists! Let's get Polycarp!”

Some people rushed forward. They were friends who went to warn Polycarp, so he might escape. There was a way, there were people who would help him, faithful church members. They ran ahead, through side streets and back alleys, and panted as they

Must a shepherd run for his life when the wolves come?

came to his house. “Father! You must escape! The mob wants to kill you! Don’t you hear the tumult in the distance? Get out of the house, at the back!”

Polycarp must hurry, but must he really go? He remembers what he wrote to the Philippians, “Pray also for kings and powers and princes, and for them that persecute and hate you, and the enemies of the cross. . . .” He has done that. He is not afraid to die if that is the Lord’s will, but must a shepherd run for his life when the wolves come? (John 10:1–18; Acts 20:29) Must he not remain in the city? What did Jesus mean when he warned his disciples to “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matt 10:16) when persecution comes?

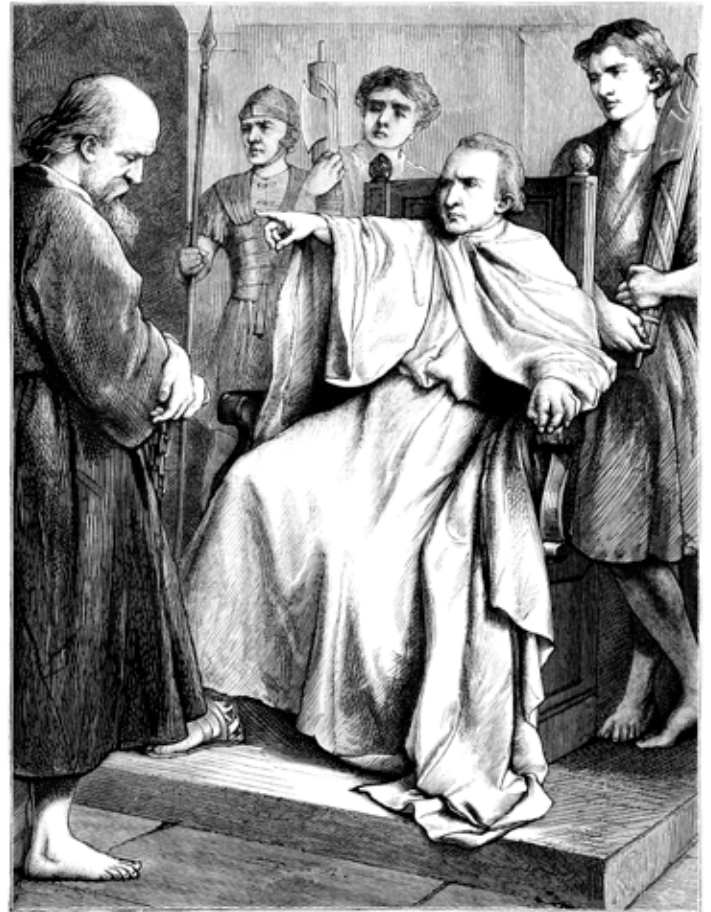
“Father! You must escape!” By the time the mob gets to his house, he is safely outside, on the way to a friend’s farm up in the foothills. His enemies are too late, but will they give up?

FUGITIVE

Polycarp is safe, praying constantly to the Lord for peace¹ in the churches. Does he have a vision that he must die at the stake?² Anyway, his friends urge him to find another safe place, further away. He goes—before the mob finds the place where he was at first. Disappointed, they capture two servants, and torture one of them until they know where Polycarp may be found. Some return to ask the governor to send soldiers, while the others continue in pursuit.

Polycarp has another opportunity to escape, but stays where he is, in an upstairs room, praying and waiting for the Lord’s will to be done. In the evening, fearless soldiers arrive in force at his hiding place, ready to capture the dangerous outlaw.

When they get inside to seize the fugitive, an old man is coming down the stairs. He wears a woollen robe, he is balding and has a grey beard, his skin is wrinkled, and he seems kind and cheerful. The soldiers are puzzled—is this really the man they must capture? Their surprise does not end there: Polycarp asks his hosts to prepare a good meal for the soldiers, for they must be hungry, and he asks for time to pray. The soldiers let him. They sit to eat and drink and cannot help but hear his prayer. He stands and prays for the people he loves, for the churches everywhere, for the congregation at Smyrna, for readiness to receive the crown



of life, and for his captors. The soldiers are touched: This man is not like a dangerous outlaw at all—why must he die? Who is his God? Regardless, he must come, but they allow him to ride on a donkey’s back. On the way, Smyrna’s police captain, Herod, and his father meet them, and invite Polycarp onto their chariot. Polycarp accepts—but when they try to persuade him to say that Caesar is lord, and burn some incense, he refuses. That ends their kindness, and they thrust Polycarp out of the chariot. Polycarp hurts his shin as he falls and has to walk.

They arrive at the stadium in the morning, and the mob chants: “There he is! Away with the atheists! Away with the atheists!” In time, the governor arrives, dressed in his white and purple tunic, and motions with his hand for the crowd to settle down. He then

¹ Not long prior, Polycarp had discussed the Quartodeciman (14th of Nisan) issue about the date of Easter with Bishop Anicetus of Rome. Asiatic churches (Turkey today) generally held it on the same day as the Jewish Passover (14th of Nisan); others did it on the Sunday following. Anicetus and Polycarp disagreed in a brotherly manner and remained friends. In the AD 190s the issue flared up with hefty claims of heresy (and even excommunication) from Rome. Today, Easter is not universally celebrated on the same date. Why not? How do we determine the date?

² The legend says that, in a vision, the pillow on which he slept was on fire, that he took it to mean that he would be burned to death, and that he shared it with his hosts.

*“Four score and six years have I served him, and he has done me no wrong;
how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”*

addresses Polycarp, “Consider your age . . . repent, and say ‘away with the atheists!’” The crowd echoes, “Away with the atheists!”

I AM A CHRISTIAN

Polycarp looks at the crowd and at the governor without fear. He knows what they mean, but, really, they deny the only true God—*they* are the atheists! He points and motions at the crowd, looks up to heaven, and says loudly and boldly, “Away with the atheists!”

The governor looks at him, confused. “Swear,” he says, “revile Christ!” Polycarp shakes his head, “Four score and six years have I served him, and he has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”

The governor tells Polycarp to swear by the genius of Caesar—but Polycarp will not: “Just understand, your honour, I am a Christian. If you like to learn more about our doctrine, I will gladly teach you!” Now the governor gets it and tells Polycarp that he has wild beasts—but Polycarp asks him whether it is good to repent from a good thing to something bad. He does not fear wild beasts.

“In that case,” the governor says, “You will have to burn in the fire!”

Polycarp responds, “You threaten the fire that burns for an hour and then is quenched. For me it will lead to eternal glory! You don’t know the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly, the atheists—why do you delay? My safety, comfort, and hope is bigger than earthly comforts—it is in God’s eternal care through Jesus Christ!”

The governor has heard enough and proclaims the verdict, three times, “Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian!”


The crowd cheers! They want a lion, but the priest will not let them. Polycarp must burn!

The pyre gets prepared. The pagans and the Jews help to bring straw and firewood and place the fuel around an upright pole in the centre. Soldiers take Polycarp’s robe and belt and want to nail him to the pole. He tells them it is not necessary, and they just tie him with a rope around his hands behind the pole.

Polycarp prays before the fire is lit, “Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ . . . the God of angels and of powers and of the whole creation and of the entire race of the righteous who live in your presence, I bless you that you have deemed me worthy of this day and hour, that I might receive a portion in the number of the martyrs . . . among these may I be received before you this day, in a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as you, the faithful and true God, have beforehand prepared and revealed, and have fulfilled. Wherefore I praise you also for everything; I bless you, I glorify you, through the eternal high priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom, with him, in the Holy Spirit, be glory unto you, both now and for the ages to come, Amen.”

CONCLUSION

The pyre is lit, Polycarp dies a martyr, and, later that day, members of the church collect his remains “to lay them in a suitable place.”³ That’s it.

That’s *not* it: “He was faithful unto death, and Jesus Christ gave him the crown of life” (Rev 2:10). The King of the universe still reigns and gathers his church today until he returns in glory. We also remember Polycarp today: “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith” (Heb 13:7). Through weak people like Polycarp, the Lord Jesus Christ gathers, defends, and protects his church, from the beginning of the world to the end (LD 21.54). 



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³ Legendary elements take over in Eusebius’s narrative here, with early hints of the veneration of saints. (The RCC maintains to this day that prayers of intercession can be rendered to those they designate “saints.”) It says that the flames took the form of a wind-filled sail without touching the martyr’s body, which glowed like gold and silver refined in a furnace, and that it gave off a fragrance as of frankincense and spices (some suggest the wood had been dipped in oil); that an executioner pierced him with a sword, and that the stream of blood extinguished the fire (if it had been a downpour, it might explain why some refer to a second effort to burn his remains). In the evening, members of the congregation came to take care of his remains, which, to them, “were more valuable than precious stones and more to be esteemed than gold, and laid them in a suitable place, where [Christians] can come together as they are able, to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, for the commemoration of those who have already fought and for the training and preparation of those who shall hereafter do the same.” “St. Polycarp-day” commemorates his martyrdom on Feb 23, 155. See <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-polycarp-of-smyrna-156> for how that may be done today.

CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 29

Bread and wine are used in Lord's Supper. Do they change to become the real body and blood of Christ? No, the bread and wine do not change in any way. But they do make us think! Have you had bread for lunch recently? Well, bread makes you feel full. And your body uses what is in the bread to give you energy. And wine, if used carefully, can be good for people as well. Bread and wine fill, or nourish, our bodies, but the Lord Jesus nourishes our souls. Our souls were empty, dead, and deserved hell. But Jesus "fed" our souls by dying on the cross. Now God sees us as righteous because of what Jesus did. Now all God's people can have eternal life. Our souls are no longer empty and dead but filled with joy and thankfulness.

Let's review two things we've learned about Lord's Supper over the past while

A=1 B=2 C=3 D=4 E=5 F=6 makes us think of Jesus's ,
 G=7 H=8 I=9 J=10 K=11 L=12 2 18 5 1 4 2 15 4 25
 M=13 N=14 O=15 P=16 Q=17 R=18 makes us think of Jesus's .
 S=19 T=20 U=21 V=22 W=23 X=24 23 9 14 5 2 12 15 15 4
 Y=25 Z=26

Unscramble the words to help remember what Baptism and Lord's Supper have in common.

Baptism and Lord's Supper are both (A A C E M N R S S T) _____ .

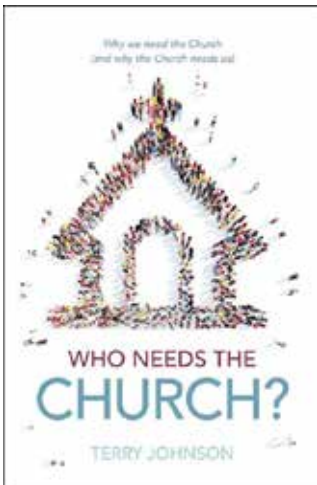
Baptism and Lord's Supper remind us that we have been (E F G I N O R V) _____ .



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 and find your question and an answer in Clarion!

AMANDA DEBOER



YOUR INDISPENSABLE SPIRITUAL MOTHER

Who Needs the Church? Why we need the Church (and why the Church needs us), Terry L. Johnson. (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2022). Hardcover. 126 pages. \$16.95 CDN.

John Calvin famously said that “he who would have God for a Father must have the church for his mother.” Like many others did, Calvin based that assertion on Galatians 4:26. Similarly, our Belgic Confession insists in Article 28 that “there is no salvation outside of” the church of Christ. That’s a position that’s been held by the church for thousands of years. The church, our spiritual mother, is indispensable. You can’t do without her.

That’s the driving theme of this little book from Terry Johnson, a Presbyterian pastor in Savannah, Georgia. He’s addressing the problem of what he calls “our collapsing ecclesiology” (ecclesiology is the doctrine of the church). He writes this in the first paragraph of chapter 1:

It’s Sunday morning. You wake up, prepare a hot beverage, eat breakfast, and finish your morning routine. Now what? Go to church? Maybe, maybe not. May depend on what else is going on. Or what I feel like. Or what is available online. Attending public worship services has become optional for a growing number of professing Christians, as has commitment to the visible, institutional church (p. 9).

As I’m writing this review, it’s the day after Christmas, December 26, 2022. This year Christmas fell on a Sunday. It was astonishing to see how many churches cancelled their worship services because Christmas fell on a Sunday. They said that few people would come anyway, so there was no point. Church leaders are dropping the ball—Terry Johnson is quite right to speak about a “collapsing ecclesiology.”

Who Needs the Church? is a short, simple, and clearly written primer on a key element in the biblical doctrine of the church. It consists of nineteen bite-size chapters in three parts: What Scripture Teaches, Clarifying Perspectives, and Historic Perspectives. Everything in these chapters is consistent with the Reformed confessions.


One of the points I appreciated in Johnson’s book is his strong emphasis on the local church. He writes: “Behind the diminished regard for the church today is an overblown doctrine of the church’s

invisibility” (p. 85). He rightly notes that “nearly every reference to the ‘church’ in the New Testament is to actual congregations” (p. 87). Believers are meant to be members of local churches of Christ.

For such a small book, it addresses a wide range of questions. Some of them include:

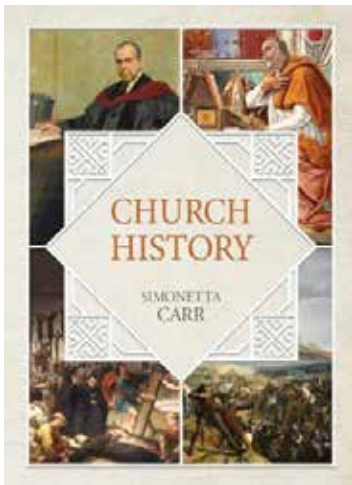
- Can one be too committed to the local church? What about outsiders?
- Is there a place for parachurch organizations?
- Is the concept of church membership actually biblical?
- What is the job description of the church?

While Johnson does cover a lot of ground, it’s certainly not exhaustive. Readers may still be left with some questions. For example, while he does speak about bad behaviour and hypocrisy within the church and the place that should have in our thinking about membership in a local church, he doesn’t address the problem of what to do about a spiritually abusive church. The closest he comes is to say, “Authoritarian, unaccountable, autocratic church leaders cannot sustain the long-term spiritual well-being of believers” (p. 43). So, if you have such leaders in your church, can you go elsewhere? He doesn’t say.

Some churches provide welcome packs for visitors and these packs sometimes include books—this book would be ideal for that. It could also be worthwhile for new members or inquirers’ classes. Sadly, there’s one audience this book likely won’t directly help: those church members on the fringe, only occasionally attending church and otherwise uninvolved. Many of those folks just don’t care and so they’re not likely to read this kind of book. But those who shepherd them should and by doing so they’ll be equipped to address these issues in a biblical manner. 



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MAKING CHURCH HISTORY FASCINATING

Church History, Simonetta Carr.
(Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2022).
Hardcover. 265 pages. \$47.33 CDN.

When I was a lad attending our local Christian school, I endured several years of church history class. Some of the students approached it with indifference, but some, like me, had an intense loathing for it. Some of it had to do with the textbook. It was a three-volume translation from the Dutch. While perhaps it resonated with Dutch boys and girls in the 1960s, in translation it fell flat with Canadian kids in the 1980s.

Today's Reformed students need an illustrated reference book in the style of DK. For those who don't know, Dorling Kindersley publishes these well-crafted hardcover books exploring all sorts of topics. They captivate your attention and keep it—you can't help but flip the page and continue. They're perfect for curious children *and* adults.


Simonetta Carr has delivered just such a church history book. If this book will be used in Reformed classrooms and kids still

hate church history, it won't be because of the book. When my copy arrived and I cracked it open, I was instantly beguiled. There's nothing like it.

Carr is a former elementary school teacher and accomplished author. Among other books, she's written many "Biographies for Young Christian Readers," also published by RHB. She's a member of the Christ United Reformed Church in the San Diego area.

All of this is presented carefully and with an eye to recent scholarship. I appreciate, for instance, that she doesn't repeat some of the Reformation legends with no solid basis in historical fact—i.e. that Luther said, "Here I stand, I can do no other . . ." or that Hus prophesied the coming of a swan (Luther) that couldn't be cooked.

While it is certainly expansive, there were a couple of notable gaps. While the early church history of Australia gets a brief mention, Canada is overlooked. That's unfortunate, since our country does have a rich Christian history going back to the days of New France. With respect to Dutch church history, Carr stops with Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck at the turn of the twentieth century. Since she's writing for a broad audience, I don't fault her for that—however, those hoping to use this as a textbook might want to keep that in mind.

In her blurb on the back, Rosaria Butterfield calls *Church History* a "visual encyclopedia." She says she's eager to use it in her home schooling. Whether you use it in the home or in the classroom environment, I'm sure it'll be not only helpful, but also enjoyable. Kids might actually start to love church history! 

Church History is an overview from the early church to today, aimed at young readers from the age of nine and up. Some of its features:

- Global in scope, including church history in Asia, Africa, and South America
- Numerous helpful maps
- Timelines throughout
- Insights into men *and* women of church history
- Richly illustrated
- Key terms are typeset in bold, directing the reader to the glossary

It also includes these regular features in each of its nine parts:

- "Great Questions of the Church"—various issues the church has struggled with
- "Think About It"—questions to get young readers thinking
- "Did You Know?"—great little non-trivial facts



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Dear Editor:

I read with interest the article by Rev. J. DeGelder entitled “The Spirit of the Church Order” in the first 2023 issue of *Clarion*. I appreciate his reference to the “biblical convictions” and the “biblical principles that form the underpinnings of the rules we have adopted. . . .”

However, I am puzzled by the statement that “it does not say anything about guests who might come from other denominations, or perhaps from no church at all.” Would it not be helpful to refer to the original wording of Article 61 of the Church Order? An early translation of this article is published in the *Acts of Synod Orangeville 1968*, page 124, as follows:

None shall be admitted to the Lord’s Supper except those who, according to the usage of the Church with which they unite themselves, have made a profession of the Reformed Religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly character, without which also those who come from other churches shall not be admitted. Does not the original wording of this article clearly state the requirements for the admission of guests to the Lord’s Supper which come from other churches? Why was the wording of this article changed by General Synod Cloverdale in 1983?

I would appreciate an interaction with these questions.

Yours sincerely,

John Vantil

Abbotsford, BC

Note from the editor In a future issue Rev. DeGelder is planning to write about Article 61 in his column, *Governing the Church*. It is his plan to interact with Mr. Vantil’s letter and question at that time.

CLASSIS ONTARIO WEST

ANCASTER, MARCH 8 AD 2023

OPENING OF CLASSIS

On behalf of the convening church at Ancaster, Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer opened the meeting in a Christian manner. In prayer he remembered a number of matters related to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS): the long-standing health concerns of Dr. Gootjes, the steadily improving health of Dr. VanRaalte, the ongoing health concerns of Dr. N. H. Gootjes, the needs of sr. Dinie Gootjes, sr. Margaret DeJong, the students to be examined at this classis, and the *colloquium doctum* of Dr. Reuben Bredenhof. He also prayed for the needs of the church at Kerwood surrounding their continuing vacancy. Thanks was expressed for the removal of border restrictions and the ordination of Rev. Timothy van Beek in the Pilgrim church at London.

The credentials were found to be in good order and Classis was declared constituted.

The following brothers formed the moderamen as per the suggestion of the previous classis: chairman—Rev. Darren Feenstra; vice-chairman—Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer; clerk—Rev. Kenneth Kok. Rev. Feenstra thanked the church at Ancaster for convening Classis and completing all the preparatory work. After two additions, the agenda was adopted. The chairman read the classis Form of Subscription and the newly ordained Rev. Timothy van Beek signed it.

DISCUSSION & EXAMINATIONS

Classis engaged Dr. Reuben Bredenhof in a discussion on doctrine and church order. Following a closed session discussion, Classis deemed the *colloquium doctum* sufficient and subsequently Classis decided to approbate the call to Dr. Bredenhof from the Cornerstone church at Hamilton to be set aside as Professor of Ministry and Mission at CRTS.

Each of three CRTS students in turn presented a sermon and each was deemed sufficient to proceed with the examination of doctrine and creeds. After being further examined, the following brothers were granted permission to speak an edifying word: Damon Bosveld, Joshua Schouten, and Marc Vermeulen.

FRATERNAL GREETINGS

Rev. Steve Swets of the Rehoboth United Reformed Churches, present as a fraternal delegate, brought greetings from Classis South-Western Ontario of the URC. Rev. Tim Collins of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, present as a fraternal observer, gave greetings from the Canadian Presbytery. A member of Classis offered prayer for both churches. A letter of regret for being unable to send a delegate was received from Covenant East Classis of the RCUS.

REPORTS

Church visitation reports were received for the churches at Grand Rapids, Glanbrook, Kerwood, London, Hamilton (Providence), and Ancaster. Gratitude was expressed that the reports indicate that each church continues to function as a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTION PERIOD

All the churches indicated that they are continuing the ministry of the office-bearers as well as honouring the decisions of the broader assemblies. No church sought the advice of Classis.

APPOINTMENTS

The church at Chatham was appointed to convene the next classis on May 24 & June 7 (anticipating the usual two-part classis to accommodate various student examinations). Suggested officers for the next classis are Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer (chair); Rev. Kenneth Kok (vice-chair); Rev. Jeff Temple (clerk).

CLOSING OF CLASSIS

Personal question period was made use of. The chairman declared that censure according to Article 34 CO was, thankfully, not necessary. The Acts and the Press Release were each read and approved by the assembly. After singing, the chairman led in thanksgiving prayer and Classis was declared closed.

For Classis Ontario West March 8, AD 2023

– Rev. P. H. Holtvlüwer (vice-chairman at that time)

CLASSIS ALBERTA

CONVENED BY DEVON CANRC

ON MARCH 14, 2023

On behalf of the convening church at Devon, Gus Rus welcomed the delegates and observer Rev. Tad Groenendyk, from the United Reformed Church of Leduc. He called the meeting to order and led the opening devotions. Several matters regarding vacancies, calls, and retired ministers were brought before the Lord in prayer.

The credentials were examined and found to be in good order. Classis was constituted. The officers suggested by the previous classis took their place: Rev. G. Veurink as chairman, Rev. M. TenHaaf as clerk, and Rev. J. Ludwig as vice-chairman.

ARCHIVES, VISITATIONS, RELEASES

After the agenda was adopted, the church at Immanuel reported that the Classis Archives had been inspected and found to be in good order. A report from the classical treasurer for the year 2021 was received with thankfulness.

Church visitation reports to Calgary, Edmonton-Providence, St. Albert, Edmonton-Immanuel, Devon, and Barrhead were received with thankfulness to the Lord that all things are being done in full harmony with the Word of God.

Two churches requested honourable release: Hope Neerlandia for Rev. J. Ludwig, who accepted the call to Fergus-Maranatha and Taber for Rev. T. Vandergaag, who accepted the call to Guelph-Immanuel. After the necessary documents were reviewed by the chairman and clerk, Classis granted both requests. The chairman expressed gratitude to them for their faithful work and wished them the Lord's blessing in their new congregations. Rev. J. Ludwig and Rev. T. Vandergaag expressed their appreciation for the positive experiences they had during their time in Classis AB and wished the brothers the Lord's blessing upon their work. The church at Neerlandia was appointed to speak on behalf of Classis at the farewell service of Rev. J. Ludwig. The church at Coaldale was appointed to speak on behalf of Classis at the farewell service of Rev. T. Vandergaag. Classis appointed Rev. G. Veurink to serve as provisional counsellor for Hope until the next Classis AB. Taber requested Rev. C. VanSpronsen as their counsellor. This request was granted.

Barrhead, Devon, Hope, and Taber requested pulpit supply. Taber was granted supply once per month; the other churches once every six weeks.

ADVICE, LETTERS, PROPOSALS

The chairman asked all the churches the three questions set out in Article 44 and the churches responded appropriately. Edmonton-Immanuel requested concurring advice in a case of church discipline. Advice was given and the matter was brought before the Lord in prayer.

Classis dealt with a letter from Devon, on behalf of Rev. G. Girard, a military chaplain ordained in the Reformed Church of America and a member of the Devon CanRC, requesting "a transfer of ordination" to a church in the Canadian Reformed federation. Classis appointed an ad hoc committee with a mandate to investigate this further and report to the next classis.

A letter was received from Dr. W. Den Hollander, requesting that CRTS receive a copy of the Guidelines of Classis AB for the classical examination of students. This request was granted.

The church of Neerlandia proposed a change to Regulation 7A of Classis AB so that all material be submitted to the convening church five weeks before the date of classis. The proposal was adopted.

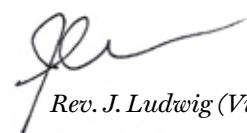
The observer from the URCNA, Rev. Tad Groenendyk, was given the opportunity to address Classis and pass on greetings. The chairman responded with some appropriate words.

A letter from the church at St. Albert was received regarding the treasurer's mandate. The letter contained four recommendations. After some changes, Classis adopted those recommendations.

CONCLUSION

The convening church for the next classis is Edmonton-Immanuel with the following dates: June 13, 2023 (alternate date, Sept. 12, 2023). Suggested officers for next classis are chairman: Rev. S. VanLeeuwen, vice-chairman: Rev. K. Wieske, clerk: Rev. G. Veurink.

Personal Question Period was made use of. Brotherly Censure, per Article 34 of the Church Order was deemed, with thankfulness, not to be needed. The Acts were adopted. The press release was approved. The chairman closed Classis by leading in prayer and requesting the singing of Psalm 99:1-3.



Rev. J. Ludwig (Vice-chairman at the time)

