



# Clarion

*255* JESUS...CHRIST    *257* JUSTIFIED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

*260* PREFERRED PRONOUNS

# WHAT'S INSIDE

**H**appy Pentecost Day! Sunday, May 28 marks fifty days after our Lord's resurrection (as part of our annual commemoration of these saving events) and what a difference the outpouring of the Spirit makes! Winston Bosch meditates on this and Rick Vanderhorst explains an aspect of this which we don't often pay attention to. Jason Van Vliet's editorial shows that the Spirit's arrival even affected the way the apostles referred to our Saviour. Edifying stuff!

Jan DeGelder's column *Governing the Church* is back with a piece about "term-eldership" over against "life-eldership" and why many Continental Reformed churches go with the former. Andrew Douma's column *Persecution of Christians* returns too, this time with a look at North Korea. Scary. Yet as he brings out: the Lord is at work there too. While the devil works there with physical oppression, in North America he uses various means of spiritual oppression such as sowing doubts about the human body God has created. My own article "Preferred Pronouns?" attempts to help us navigate the confrontations we increasingly face over transgenderism. But there is much good news too! Naeem Zafar, a Pakistani brother connected to a CanRC in the Fraser Valley, introduces us to Christ For All Ministry, a gospel effort in the midst of Islamic peoples in parts of Asia and even Canada. And in MERF News we read about the encouraging Augustine Program that is doing much good in north-eastern Africa. May the Lord add his blessing to all such faithful mission work!

Understanding our quickly changing culture is difficult but Lucas Holtvlüwer points us to a podcast that offers much help with this. Wes Bredenhof in a pair of book reviews holds out us to the desirability of delving into the Puritans and (perhaps surprisingly!) diving into the world of jazz. Calvin Vanderlinde also reviews a book by one of our *Clarion* editors. *Clarion Kids* teaches our younger members the value of the Lord's Supper as they observe it. You'll also find *Ray of Sunshine* and a classis press release. Plenty of meat and potatoes in this issue and even some sweet dessert—I hope you find it a pleasant and satisfying meal!

*Peter Holtvlüwer*

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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
- O**pen to constructive criticism
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# JESUS . . . CHRIST

Have you ever stopped to think about how you, or others around you, refer to our Saviour? Do we tend to say “Jesus”? Or “Christ”? Or “Jesus Christ”? Or do we identify our Redeemer with a healthy combination of various names and titles? Most significantly, why is this important?

## NAMES & TITLES

For starters, we should distinguish between a *name* and a *title*. The angel instructed Joseph and Mary to give the baby laid in a manger the name Jesus (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:31). So, as he grew up, his parents, siblings, and peers would have called him *Jesus*.

At the same time, as Peter once confessed, “You are the *Christ*, the Son of the Living God” (Matt 16:16). Christ is not a second or last name for Jesus but rather a title, connected to his office and acknowledged in faith. Jesus is the Messiah, anointed to be our chief Prophet, only High Priest, and eternal King (LD 12). Jesus also has other titles, such as Teacher (Matt 22:36) and Lord (1 Cor 2:8).

In some circumstances we shy away from our titles. When a minister goes fishing with an old high school friend, he may say, “Just call me Alex. You don’t have to address me as Reverend or Pastor while we’re out on the lake.” Conversely, other contexts call for the appropriate awareness and use of title and office. For example, when elders at a consistory meeting place a church member under discipline, they do not do so as Joe or Harry, etc. Rather, as *office*-bearers, appointed by Christ, they exercise the keys of his kingdom.

Now, the point here is not to get sidetracked into a debate over when and how we should use first names and titles when we speak to each other. Rather, we want to focus on how both the name and titles of our Saviour are used in God’s Word.

## REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL PROGRESS

Turning to Scripture, we notice a fascinating redemptive historical trajectory within the New Testament. Usually that phrase, “redemptive history,” recalls the Lord’s gracious work in bringing us forward from the Old Covenant, full of shadows, into the New Covenant, centred on the Substance of our salvation (Col 2:17). That is correct! Yet redemptive history progresses *within* the New Testament as well. Simply put, we know more about God’s grand

plan of salvation by the time we come to Revelation 22 than we did when we started in Matthew 1.

This holds true for the name and titles of our Deliverer as well. The table below highlights some intriguing statistics about the relative percentages of total occurrences in the NT.


	Jesus (name only)	Christ/Lord (title only)	Jesus Christ (name & title)
Matthew–John	88%	18%	2%
Acts	7%	12%	10%
Romans–Revelation	5%	70%	88%

In short, whereas at the beginning of the NT the name Jesus by itself appears most often, later his name *and a title*, or a title by itself, appears more frequently. We do not base theology on statistics, but a clear direction emerges: the Holy Spirit guided God’s people to confess that this man, named Jesus, is the Christ and our Lord. Indeed, the apostle Paul went from city to city teaching, “This *Jesus*, whom I proclaim to you, is the *Christ*” (Acts 17:3, emphasis mine).

## PREACHING, TEACHING, & SINGING

What is the takeaway? Maybe your ears are hearing different things than mine. That is always possible. But I hear us—as preachers, teachers, church members, and song singers—using the name Jesus *by itself* more frequently and using his titles, such as Christ and Lord, either combined with his name or by themselves, less often.

Please do not misunderstand. Using the name Jesus by itself is not wrong. But the *direction* within God’s Word is to combine, in joyful confession, his name and title: this Jesus is the Christ! Are we tracking in the same direction?

Let’s be intentional about our language. Let’s follow the redemptive historical line in God’s Word. Let’s preach, teach, and sing of Christ Jesus our Lord! 



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# PENTECOST CHANGES THE WAY WE RELATE TO GOD

*“We serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”*

ROMANS 7:6

**P**entecost changes the way we relate to God. One key to understanding this is that Pentecost was, and still is for Jews today, both a Jewish harvest festival (Exod 34) and more importantly a celebration of the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai (Exod 19).

Once you know this, you can see the parallels between the giving of the law and the coming of the Spirit. The law is given fifty days after Passover at Mt. Sinai; the Spirit is given fifty days after the cross on Mt. Zion. The law is given after Moses ascends into the presence of God; the Spirit is given after Jesus, a prophet greater than Moses, ascends into the presence of the Father. The law is given to the twelve tribes of Israel with the presence of fire; the Spirit is given to the twelve apostles with tongues of fire. And then there is this: Exodus 32 tells us that the giving of the law at Sinai was immediately accompanied by death—that of 3000 people worshipping the golden calf. Acts 2 tells us that the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost is immediately accompanied by new life when the gospel is preached; 3000 souls are saved. Amazing!

And so, Pentecost changes the way we relate to God by replacing the giving of the law with the giving of the Spirit. This is why Paul can say in Romans 7:6 that we now serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code. In 2 Corinthians 3:8, he refers to the entire new covenant as the *ministry of the Spirit*. Do you see how Pentecost changes things?

This is why the New Testament speaks of the Christian life in terms of living in the Spirit (Gal 5:25), walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:25), being led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14), bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), being filled with the Spirit (Eph 6:18), sowing to the Spirit (Gal 6:8), rejoicing in the Spirit (Luke 10:21), abounding in hope by the power of the Spirit (Rom 15:13), praying in the Spirit (Eph 6:18), worshipping in the Spirit (Phil 3:3), being in the Spirit (Rev 1:10; Luke 2:27), speaking words taught by the Spirit (Luke 12:12; Acts 6:10; 1 Cor 2:13), obeying the restraints of the Spirit (Acts 16:6-7), being comforted by the Spirit (Acts 9:31), serving in newness of the Spirit (Rom 7:6), setting our minds on the things of the Spirit (Rom 8:5), putting to death the deeds of

the body by the power of the Spirit (Rom 8:13), being strengthened by the Spirit (Eph 6:13), preserving the unity of the Spirit (Eph 3:3), loving in the Spirit (Col 1:8), having the joy of the Spirit (Acts 13:52; Rom 14:17; 1 Thess 1:6), guarding through the Spirit the treasure that has been given to us (2 Tim 1:14), preaching the gospel by the Spirit (1 Pet 1:12), casting out demons by the Spirit (Matt 12:28), and listening to what the Spirit says (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Pentecost changes the way we relate to God. The Christian faith is Spirit-led, not law-driven. To be a Christian is to have a relationship with Christ through his Spirit, not through the Mosaic law. No, that doesn't mean we throw out the Ten Commandments, but it does mean the focus has shifted from the law to the Spirit. Serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code!

There are many implications for what this means in our lives. Perhaps the best place to start is to simply follow guidance of Lord's Day 44 of the Heidelberg Catechism: pray today for the grace of Holy Spirit in your own life, as you strive under his influence to be renewed more and more after God's image. Happy Pentecost! 🎉

## FURTHER READING

Exodus 19, 20, 32; Acts 2; Romans 8:1-11

## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. How is sin described in Matthew 12:31-32, Acts 5:9; 7:51; Hebrews 10:29? Is this how you think about sin?
2. In Galatians 5:14-15, Paul notes disobedience to the law. What is the prescribed solution in verses 16-26?



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# *Justified by the* Holy Spirit!

RICK VANDERHORST

One of the most precious truths we hold to as Christians is the doctrine of justification by faith. This doctrine is so precious because it's at the heart of our salvation. In justification, God counts people who are sinful in themselves as righteous in Christ (Rom 4:4, 5). It's through our justification that we are reconciled to God and have peace with him (Rom 5:1; 2 Cor 5:21). The amazing part is that God gives this new status as a free gift of his grace; we receive it only by believing in Jesus Christ. As we confess in Article 23 of the Belgic Confession, "[We] rely and rest on the only obedience of Jesus Christ crucified; his obedience is ours when we believe in him."

## THE REFORMATION "SOLAS"

This teaching was at the heart of the Great Reformation of the sixteenth century. A summary of the Reformers' teachings on these points is found in the "solas" of the Reformation. There is *sola gratia* (by grace alone), which affirms that salvation is God's gift of grace and not based on any merit of our own. There is *sola fide* (by faith alone), which states that our justification is by trusting in Christ's saving work apart from anything we ourselves have done. Next is *solo Christo*, which emphasizes that our salvation is in and through the work of Christ alone. Finally,<sup>1</sup> there is *sol*

*Deo gloria*, which proclaims that God alone receives all the glory for our salvation.

We can be so thankful that the Lord raised up these teachers for his church. He did this so that we would not be "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14). It is of utmost importance because the devil will never stop attacking this foundational teaching. He knows that our justification by faith in Jesus Christ is at the heart of our salvation. Because this truth is so precious, we must stand on guard against attacks which seek to undermine it. Not only that, but I believe we can be proactive here. We should work to send any errors about justification by faith into the ash bin of church history.

In order to stand even more firmly on this doctrine, I believe we can add one more "sola" to the other "solas" of the Reformation. We can say that we are justified by the Holy Spirit alone (*solo Spiritu*). That might sound strange at first, especially since I already stated that our justification is in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. However, studying what Scripture reveals about the person and work of the Holy Spirit serves to support and even to strengthen the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. Let's now turn to the Bible to see how this works.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this article, I will leave aside *sola Scriptura*—Scripture alone.



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*Studying what Scripture reveals about the person and work of the Holy Spirit serves to support and even to strengthen the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone*

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## **JUSTIFICATION & THE HOLY SPIRIT**

When we study the Bible's teaching on justification, unsurprisingly we see the focus placed on the work of Christ. This makes perfect sense because Jesus Christ is our Saviour. His merits alone are the basis of our righteousness before God. However, this focus should not make us overlook a significant connection in Scripture between our justification before God and the person of the Holy Spirit.

When we look at Scripture passages about our justification in Christ, we see the person of the Holy Spirit popping up repeatedly. Consider the following: In 1 Corinthians 6, the apostle Paul warns the Corinthians that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom. But then he reminds them of their new identity as Christians, "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ *and by the Spirit of our God*" (v. 11, emphasis mine). This verse attributes these benefits, including justification, first of all to Christ. However, notice how these benefits are also connected to the Holy Spirit. This is not an isolated example.

We see the same thing in Titus 3. After describing the sinful lifestyle we once lived, the Apostle Paul describes how God saved us "by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (vv. 5-7). In these verses we see again that our justification happens in Christ but that this justification is also inseparably linked to the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.

We could also point to the beginning of Romans 5 to see the same pattern. In the previous chapter Paul had been arguing that Christians are justified by faith in Jesus Christ apart from their works. Romans 5 then describes the benefits that flow from our justification: We have peace with God through Jesus Christ, we stand in God's grace, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and we can even rejoice in our sufferings. Why are these benefits that flow from our justification guaranteed? You might think the inspired apostle would point back to Christ but in verse 5 he tells us it's

because *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

All these verses demonstrate that the giving of the Holy Spirit confirms a person's justified status. It's impossible that a person to whom God has given the Holy Spirit would be at the same time in an unjustified state. After all, how could God's love by the giving of the Holy Spirit be poured into the heart of an unjustified person who is still unreconciled to God? It simply cannot be. Instead, the giving of the Holy Spirit is a definite marker of a person's righteous standing before God and of his adoption as a son of God (see Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:6, 7).

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT & JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE**

We have just seen that the presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer's heart is a definite marker of that believer's justified status. In order to see how this confirms that justification is by faith alone apart from any of our own works, we need to see from Scripture the timing of the giving of the Spirit.

The best place to see this is in the book of Acts. One of the main focuses of the book of Acts is the inclusion of the Gentiles into the New Testament church. The first instance of Gentiles being gathered into the people of God is found in Acts 10. In that chapter, Peter preached the gospel to a group of Gentiles gathered together at Cornelius the centurion's house. After briefly explaining the events of Jesus's life, including his death and resurrection, Peter ends his message with this good news of Christ: "To [Jesus of Nazareth] all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (v. 43). Look now at what the very next verse describes: "While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word."

All this is highly significant for understanding justification by faith alone. The Holy Spirit was poured out on these Gentiles in Acts 10. In that moment, the truths of the texts we looked at in the previous section applied to them. These Gentiles were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:11). They were justified by God's grace (Titus 3:5-7). God's

love was poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to them (Rom 5:1–5). They were also children of God and could cry out “Abba, Father” (Rom 8:14–17; Gal 4:6, 7).

The next question to answer is, “*When* did these Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit?” The answer is that they received the Spirit when they were listening to Peter preach the gospel. They did not do anything to receive the Spirit or to gain a justified status before God. They were only listening to a sermon, and, as we will see in a moment, they merely believed in Jesus Christ. These things show us without a shadow of a doubt that justification is by faith alone apart from anything we have done or will do.

Now, perhaps you might be wondering if I am reading things into the text of Scripture. Am I perhaps saying more than the Bible itself says? However, further reading in the book of Acts confirms that this is the correct understanding of this event. Acts

miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—just as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness?” (vv. 2–6). The Galatian Christians *did not do anything* in order to receive the Spirit. Rather, he came upon them as they heard the gospel. This shows that justification is by faith and by faith alone.

#### FURTHER BENEFITS & CAUTIONS

One further benefit of seeing the connection between the Holy Spirit and justification by faith is that it guards against the error that a person can be justified and at the same time not grow in holiness and obedience. Just as a person who has the Holy Spirit is necessarily justified, so also a person who is justified necessarily has the Holy Spirit. Because this is true it means that people who have been justified by faith in Christ will be sanctified—they will

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*This teaching has the potential to introduce some kind of hyper-spirituality into justification*

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15 describes the council in Jerusalem and comments on the events of Acts 10 in further detail. The apostles and elders had gathered in Jerusalem to discuss matters relating to justification and salvation. Some men had come from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the Gentiles that they needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. In response to these errors, Peter referenced the event that took place in Acts 10 and said, “God, who knows the heart, bore witness to the Gentiles, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, *having cleansed their hearts by faith*” (15:9, emphasis mine). That is to say, these Gentiles merely believed in Christ and so they were justified. God confirmed this by giving them the Holy Spirit. It was an undeniable mark that they were justified and accepted by God. That’s why Peter went ahead and baptized them, giving them the sign and seal of justification.

This is the same argument the apostle Paul makes in the book of Galatians. At the end of chapter 2 he describes how our justification is only by faith in Christ and not by works of the law. At the beginning of chapter 3, he then solidifies this point by referencing the giving of the Holy Spirit. He writes, “Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? . . . Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works

bear the fruit of the Spirit and grow in holiness. The Holy Spirit ensures it will happen. Even though much weakness still remains in true believers, it’s also impossible that a person with the Holy Spirit would not also be changed.

One caution to all this is that this teaching has the potential to introduce some kind of hyper-spirituality into justification. Someone might begin to focus on the Holy Spirit over and above Christ when it comes to justification. Another danger is that people might begin to focus on themselves, looking for signs of the Holy Spirit’s presence before they count themselves as justified before God. This would be a serious mistake. Justification happens through faith in Jesus Christ. That’s where the focus must remain. The way the Scriptures connect the Holy Spirit to justification is only meant to reinforce that point and to assure us that when people do believe in Christ they most certainly are justified by God. 



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SHE / HER

HE / HIM

THEY / THEM



# PREFERRED PRONOUNS?

PETER HOLTVLÜWER

As the idea of transgenderism takes hold in our society, we Christians are more and more confronted by its outworking. We see a young man packing bags in the grocery store wearing pink ribbons in his hair and dressed in little girl's clothing. A friend on Instagram now includes in her bio that she is bisexual. A co-worker tells us she is transitioning into a man and asks that we use her preferred pronouns, *he/him*. During class introductions a fellow student at university announces himself as "gender-fluid" and his preferred pronouns are *xe/xem*. This is reality in our western world and many Christians are wondering: how should I respond to this? Should I use someone's preferred pronouns?

## CREATION NORMS

Before we can understand how best to respond, we need to be clear about what God says about these issues. As the world bombards us with its thinking, our own thoughts can become fuzzy and we may no longer be so sure what is biblical and what is unbiblical. Questions pop up: what does the Bible say about gender? How many genders are there? Can a woman actually become a man like

## *Transgender is a self-contradiction*

we're told? Is it possible for a male to become a female? Should we speak about a pregnant or menstruating "person" (rather than "woman")? Can a man give birth, as is being claimed?

Part of our uncertainty may come from the fact that the Bible never uses the word "gender." However, it does use exclusively masculine or feminine pronouns to refer to humans, and that's the same category as gender. Contrary to current ideas, gender in the Bible *is* binary: God only created a "he" and "she" as human beings, male and female (Gen 1:27). And from them have descended the entire human race made up only of girls and boys, women and men.<sup>1</sup> Up until the last couple of decades, this was how the whole world understood gender—as an either-or reality based upon our biological sex. But lately certain influential thinkers like to "argue that gender is not a fixed attribute but a free-floating variable that shifts according to personal preference" to the point that gender is a "fiction" or "fantasy" that can be made and remade at will."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I'm aware that a very small percentage of humans are born "intersex" meaning that their biology does not correspond completely to either male or female. But this is abnormal, a result of sin's corruption in creation, like being born lame or with another physical defect. It is a problem to be solved (with medical aid), not a third kind of gender.

<sup>2</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, as cited in Nancy Pearcey, *Love Thy Body* (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 2018) p. 201. Pearcey has written an excellent book addressing the false idea underlying such things as abortion, homosexuality, transgenderism and more. I encourage young adults, parents, and office bearers to read it.

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## *Jesus never let anyone think he supported rebellion and never affirmed anyone in their ungodly lifestyle*

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This is what is feeding the transgender movement and the push for preferred pronouns.

But reality cannot be changed. The Creator's design for the human race from the start has been male or female and the one *cannot* become the other. *Transgender* is a self-contradiction, for no female can change her chromosomes, her genetic make-up, or her genitalia to become a functioning male. No male can menstruate, become pregnant, or give birth. It's all pretend or worse: it's all lies. These are the imaginations of individuals who believe that gender is what you feel. But God says in Scripture that gender is what he has made your body to be, and it is only one of two: either male or female. And God's creation norms cannot be overturned.

### REBELLION

What we as Christians have to see clearly is that transgenderism, like homosexuality, is on the frontlines of rebellion against God. To be sure, mankind has been in revolt against the Creator in all kinds of ways ever since the garden of Eden, but never is it more obvious than when humans try to undermine or reverse the foundations established by God in the beginning. Homosexuality does this when it advocates that two of the same sex may not only have sexual relations but may even become married whereas God gave the gift of marriage to one man and one woman and granted only such couples the right to sexual intimacy (Gen 2:18–25). Transgenderism does this when it denies that one's body, one's created biology, has nothing to do with one's gender, that "maleness" and "femaleness" are simply made-up categories (among a slough of other genders) that we are free to choose from according to our feelings, whereas God made mankind male and female (Gen 1:27). While homosexuality is a direct attack on God's institution of marriage, transgenderism is a direct attack on God's creation of the human body.

### HOW TO APPROACH?

So, as we Christians become clear-headed about the evil of transgenderism, our unbelieving neighbour may have no clue. Our transgender co-worker or fellow student may be very nice, easy to get along with, and seem the furthest thing from someone who lives in a spirit of rebellion. And even if they are antagonistic or hard-headed about their chosen lifestyle, we still want to reach them with the gospel, so how do we do that? Do we just go along to get along? Should we try the soft approach of using their preferred

pronouns until we can get to know them better? Should we seek to understand their story and build up a relationship of trust before explaining to them that their embrace of transgenderism is a sin they need to be saved from? The most important question to ask is: would the Lord be pleased with this approach?

Let's consider what a transgender person is asking of us when he/she requests us to use his/her preferred pronouns. This is not just the use of a label, tag, or nickname that carries little meaning and is nothing more than a preference (e.g. Elizabeth asking to be called "Liz" or Lawrence "Larry" or "Shorty" or the like). As we saw above, pronouns have inherent meaning and refer to one's gender, which is equivalent to one's biological sex. So, when a woman asks you to refer to her by male pronouns, she is asking you to say something about her that is 100% false *and to say this to others*. (After all, you only use someone's pronouns when speaking about him or her to other people.) This is a rather aggressive, in-your-face request, for she is asking you to *publicly affirm* her rebellious act and in that way support her in it. When a man asks you to refer to him by plural pronouns (they/them) or made-up pronouns (xe/xem), he is asking you to cooperate with him in the lie that one person can in some way be plural or that gender can be anything you want it to be. Should Christians do this?

Let's take a different but similar scenario. Suppose you meet a gay neighbour at a community barbeque, and he asks you to say to everyone in the group that you support his chosen lifestyle—would you do it? Or imagine that a co-worker chooses to get drunk every Friday night, is proud of it, and asks you to tell the office staff that it is perfectly acceptable for him to do so if he wishes—how would you respond? It's one thing to stay silent in the face of your neighbour's ungodly lifestyle (in an effort to live peaceably), but how can a Christian voice *affirmation* of what God clearly rejects as hateful toward him? This is what is being asked of us when it comes to using someone's preferred pronouns and I cannot see how the Lord would be pleased if we did so. Does the Lord not call us to have nothing to do with "the unfruitful works of darkness," but instead to "expose them" (Eph 5:11)?

### LOVE & RESPECT

Someone might ask: but doesn't God command us to love our neighbour as ourselves? And are we not to respect them as people made in the image of God? Absolutely! But this same God also commanded us to love the LORD our God *above all others*, and



to do so with all our heart, soul, and mind. So it cannot be that respect for or concern for our neighbour can trump obedience to God. And since God's Word is clear that transgenderism is rebellion and lying is of the devil (John 8:44), we should never support our neighbour in their sinful lifestyles.

Would it be loving our neighbour to go along and support them in their sin? Did the Lord Jesus ever do this? He could certainly approach with tact and discretion as he did to the Samaritan woman, but he never let her think that her living with a man was anything but sin (John 4:18). He was merciful and willing to forgive an adulteress caught in the act, but he told her to go and sin no more (John 8:11). He consistently called everyone to repent (Mark 1:15). Jesus never went along to get along. He was not afraid to rebuke Nicodemus for his ignorant lack of faith or Peter (his close disciple!) for his satanic opposition (John 3:10; Matt 16:23). Jesus was never soft on sin. He never let anyone think he supported rebellion. He never affirmed anyone in their ungodly lifestyle. And neither should we.

## KINDNESS & TRUTH

Love and respect for our neighbours can very well mean speaking the truth to them—never with a motive to hurt or destroy but always with a motive to make them see their need for the Saviour, the need to give up their sin and embrace Jesus Christ. Would your transgender neighbour really think you kind and loving if for months you made him/her think you were okay with his/her lifestyle because you chose to use his/her preferred pronouns? Would he or she not think you disingenuous and even hypocritical for initially showing support for something you later reveal you don't actually agree with? I think that even on a human level such a neighbour would feel betrayed and would at least respect up-front honesty spoken in kindness.


Now that we have clarity on the biblical principle, what do we say to the request to use preferred pronouns? How do we proceed? The situations that can crop up are innumerable so we will need to rely on the Lord for wisdom, grace, and tact to apply the principle. In some instances the relationship with the individual may be of a passing nature, the kind where you hardly interact with the person and you may never need to refer to them by pronouns. Perhaps then little if anything needs to be said. But when it's closer to home and involves someone you interact with regularly and have to refer to in conversation with others, I would suggest a few things: First, take this matter to the Lord in prayer and pray both for the individual and for yourself as you prepare to interact. Only the

Holy Spirit can open locked hearts and give Christians the needed words to say, and God has promised to help us in producing fruit that glorifies his name (John 15:7–8).

Second, look for an opportunity to speak privately to the individual about his/her request so that you can explain why you are unable to comply (without creating embarrassment for him/her in front of others). In a genuine spirit of compassion, you could explain your concern for this person's physical well-being (i.e. attempting to change gender is incredibly harmful to one's body; even simply identifying as the opposite gender is harmful to one's psyche) and for their eternal well-being (going against God's ways leaves one under his judgment). Make it clear that because you care for this person, you cannot in good conscience support him/her in this. You could also add that you want to be as peaceable as you can with everyone and so you will do your best to avoid referring to him/her by any pronoun.

Third, look for ways to act kindly and helpfully to this person so that he/she will experience that you truly do have their best interests at heart. Where it is feasible, open the door to hospitality. If you have begun your interaction in open honesty, having cleared the air about how you (and, more importantly, God) looks at his/her lifestyle choice, and then the person feels your genuine care, that may well open the door to further conversation and a sharing of the gospel.

## STAND FIRM

There is no doubt that dealing with our transgender neighbours will be far from easy. It is intensely personal for them. By asking us to use their preferred pronouns, they are aggressively demanding that we openly express agreement with their rebellion and underlying lie. This is Satan's latest effort to not only undo creation (if such were possible) but to bring Christians along for the ride. So, we need to root ourselves in God's Word and not be afraid to stand our ground by refusing to go along. Kindly, yet clearly and firmly, we can resist the tide of evil and by God's grace be a beacon of light and hope in our decaying culture. 



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# Temporary Shepherds?

Article 2 in our Canadian Reformed Church Order reflects the three offices view. In Reformed churches we have ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons. I will skip the debate on whether Scripture teaches three or two offices.<sup>1</sup> The second view considers a minister to be an elder with a special task. Our OPC brothers speak about “ruling elders” versus “teaching elders.”

In the previous article, we explored what it means that a minister of the Word is bound to the service of the church for life (Art. 12). In contrast with this, the churches have agreed in Article 24 that our other office bearers, elders and deacons, “shall serve two or more years, according to local regulations.” The word “more” is as such open ended, of course. In the Canadian Reformed Churches it is usually three years; in the Netherlands the rule is 4. In theory you could make it five, or ten, or even twenty-five. Although, it is obvious that the more years you add, the more you stretch the intention of Article 24. In this article, the CanRC has clearly chosen what is called “term-eldership.”<sup>2</sup>

## DEFINITE OR INDEFINITE?

Why is that? Does that contrast make sense? After all, when the brothers enter into their respective offices, the first question for

all of them, ministers, elders, and deacons alike, is: “Do you feel in your heart that God himself, through his congregation, has called you . . . .”

In Presbyterian churches elders usually serve for life. They have, as they say, “indefinite tenure.” That’s understandable. Holding the view that the office of minister or pastor is fundamentally the same as the office of elder makes it more difficult to defend the idea that the one kind of elder must serve for life, whereas the other can serve only for a limited number of years.

It is good to realize a few things about churches that have elders serving for life: First, in Presbyterian churches the office can still be terminated. If you move away, you will lose your office. Just as we saw in the previous article about ministers, the office of elder is tied to a person serving the local church, and not just to that individual. Second, in these churches not all those who are ordained for life will always serve simultaneously or continually. An elder can be given the opportunity to step back from active service for a while. But he will continue to be an office bearer. For instance, during his time of respite he could still be delegated to a general assembly. And when he returns to active service, there is no need for re-election or another ordination.

<sup>1</sup> For those interested: Arguments for three offices are given by Dr. Jack DeJong in *Two or Three. A look at the Reformed view of office* (Clarion Vol 43, 280–283, 304–306, 1994). Arguments for two offices are given by Dr. Benjamin L. Merkle in *The organization of the Church* ([thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-organization-of-the-church](http://thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-organization-of-the-church)).

<sup>2</sup> The same is true for deacons. But it gets a bit convoluted to add this all the time. When I use the expression “term-eldership” in this article, it also refers to deacons.



Since the Reformation, the continental Reformed churches have chosen to ordain elders and deacons with a limited tenure. Beginning with John Calvin in Geneva, in the early years, elders were appointed for a term of one year. For us, in the twenty-first century, a one-year term of office does not sound very effective. But then, in those years persecution took its toll. It could be dangerous to serve as elder. And the demands were heavy and intense. There was a lack of ministers, and elders were expected to make many more home visits than we are used to today. Then, with all of that, they still had to provide for their families.

Another reason for short terms of service was that the churches, which had come out of the Roman Catholic abuse of power, wanted to avoid the dangers of clericalism and hierarchical leadership.

When the circumstances changed, with more and better educated ministers as well as religious freedom for the churches, gradually the rule became accepted as we still have it today, that elders and deacons serve for two or more years.

At the same time, throughout the centuries, synods have acknowledged the need for flexibility. Consistories could and can determine shorter or longer terms, depending on local circumstances, and on what is at some point in time beneficial for the wellbeing of that church. That's why we have the provision in Article 24, "according to local regulations."

## SCRIPTURE OR PRACTICE

The important question is, of course: does the Bible say anything about this matter? It is interesting to note that defenders of both views, term-eldership or eldership-for-life, have tried to back up their position with Scripture.

Some have pointed out that in the NT (or in the OT) we read nothing about a temporary office or periodic retirement. There is no indication that someone was released from office. Also, the gifts of the Holy Spirit to serve as elder or deacon do not suddenly expire after three or four years, so why should a man lose his office?

All of this is true. Yet, others have argued that nowhere does Scripture demand life-eldership. In addition, retired office bearers can continue to use the gifts the Holy Spirit has equipped them with, for the good of the congregation in different ways.<sup>3</sup>

What's the implication? The most one can say is that Scripture is leaning towards office bearers serving the church for life. But the fact remains that the Bible does not give us any specific rules

or commands either way. This leaves us with the practical reasons that became decisive for the regulation we have agreed on in Article 24 of the Church Order.

However, as it turns out, also when it comes to practical arguments, they can go either way.

*In favour of eldership for life:*

1. It takes time to build up expertise and skills to serve fruitfully.
2. It leads to greater continuity, which makes for stable and consistent leadership.

*In favour of term-eldership:*

1. Very few can continuously give this much of their time for the work in the church, while holding a full-time day job and taking care of their family.
2. It avoids misuse of power and influence by a few domineering individuals.

The practical reasons given in favour of life-eldership, like accumulating experience and skills, continuity, stability, and consistency, are certainly valid. Such things are valuable to strive for. But these can also be achieved when capable brothers, after they have retired, are re-elected for another term. We all know that this happens quite frequently.

In the meantime, a limited term for elders and deacons does also allow for regular input of the congregation when it comes to the question: who are and who are not going to serve as elders and deacons.

To sum it up: Within the framework of Article 24, the local church has much freedom to regulate this matter in a way that is most beneficial for the well-being of that congregation. At the same time, the rule that "the place of the retiring office bearers shall be taken by others, unless . . ." makes clear that, with all the flexibility built in, the principal choice of our churches has been for term-eldership and not for elders-for-life.

And if anyone still thinks that our elders should serve for life—talk to their wives. ☑



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<sup>3</sup> "Everyone is duty-bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members [of the church]," (LD 21.55). This is also valid for retired office bearers.

# ON BEING CHRISTIAN IN NORTH KOREA

While speaking on a vomradio.net podcast, a North Korean missionary posed a question to Christians in North America. He asked us to consider whether our lives would change in any meaningful way if the government made it illegal to openly speak about the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> To emphasize his point further, he imagined this hypothetical law was somehow made effective retroactively—to say, the beginning of 2023. How many encounters would come to your mind that the government would be able to prosecute you for? Humbling, isn't it?

This same pastor believes the western world is being persecuted in a different way—through its wide-spread adoption of social norms. Even though there is no law preventing us from speaking to a cashier at the grocery store about Jesus, the norm amongst western Christians is to acquiesce to the social authority of our times and keep the gospel to ourselves. Yet, Jesus says, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15) which should carry far more authority in our hearts than what society thinks of us.

## NORTH KOREA

North Korea is a country where speaking in public about Jesus Christ could get you killed or put into a labour camp. In fact, according to Eric Foley, Voice of the Martyr, “North Korea is the only country in the history of the world that was intentionally created as a distortion of the Christian faith.” North Korea is a dictatorship which puts their founder and President Kim Il Sung at the same level as the Most High. Even though he died in 1994, praise and reverence for him continue as if he were immortal. Christian hymns have had the lyrics altered to give praise to Kim Il Sung instead of God. Weekly meetings are mandatory for all citizens at which portions of Kim Il Sung's *10 Principles for Life* are read. The first principle reads, “We must give our all in the

struggle to unify the entire society with the revolutionary ideology of Great Leader Kim Il Sung.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, have no other gods but him.

Kim Il Sung imagined a country completely cut off from the rest of the world and in devotion to him. The gospel message would obviously be tonic for the soul of disillusioned and oppressed North Koreans, so Bibles are forbidden and discussion of God with anyone is punishable up to death. Schools indoctrinate children in devotion to the state and even give practical training if, during their life, they are ever approached by missionaries. In fact, Korean law requires every individual to report if a missionary has spoken to them. Punishments extend to the offender's entire family, possibly for three generations.

North Korea isolates its citizens by controlling any connection to the outside world. They do this by owning all media so that it constantly praises the government, banning the internet, and constantly monitoring the communication and movements of its citizens. If one is born in North Korea, one will, in all likelihood, never be permitted to leave the country and would seldom see visitors, as entry into the country is strictly controlled. The only reality one would know is what to us westerners seems like a dystopian nightmare.

As I read about and became aware of how brutal North Korea is to its citizens, I thought of the imprecatory psalms in the Word of God. These psalms yearn for justice against those who do evil and plead for judgment against nations who do not call on the name of the LORD (Psalms 5, 17, 79). We have freedom and we have wealth, which may make comprehending these psalms difficult; however, with North Korea as a backdrop, their pertinence becomes evident. May we read them with renewed zeal and plead with God on behalf of the North Koreans.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vomcanada.com/alaba-kulito-video/video/kp-why-persecuted.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dailynk.com/english/what-are-the-ten-principles/>





## THE SPIRIT AT WORK

Despite North Korea's attempt to keep its population in a permanent sense of despair and disillusionment, there is no place on earth that can escape the presence of the Spirit of God. In Psalm 139:7 we read, "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?" In this verse and following, David wrestles to understand the omnipresence of the Spirit of God. Speaking of the Spirit, David says, "If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there." So, it follows that North Korea is not abandoned or forgotten by God and his Spirit is indeed working there.

God raised up a missionary named John Short as his instrument. He was born in Barmera, Australia in 1939 and at the age 25 our brother moved to Hong Kong, with the initial intention of ministering to any Chinese dissidents who successfully crossed into Hong Kong. Over time, he and his wife built a publishing business and shifted their focus to translating the Word of God into the dialect that the North Koreans speak. (In order to strengthen its isolation, Kim Il Sung systematically altered the Korean language through education and edict.) Despite this language obstacle, the Spirit has blessed John's work and the gospel has been made available to North Koreans.

At age 74, our brother was detained by the North Korean police while at a hotel in Pyongyang, North Korea. John had managed to enter North Korea as part of a guided tour that left from China. Under cover as a tourist, he had left copies of the Word of God and cassette tapes in many public places. After his arrest he was subjected to daily interrogation, but by the hand of God was released fifteen days after being captured. The main piece of intelligence that they wanted from John was the names of those who had helped him translate the Bible into the North Korean dialect. Our brother remained faithful and meek throughout this

ordeal. There is a three-part interview that John did with Voice of the Martyr Radio in which he explains this ordeal. I was struck by how respectful he was of his captors and his unwavering assurance that God was sovereign, even as he sat in a room that was guarded 24/7. I was intrigued at how our brother used fasting as a means of deeper prayer and intimacy with the Spirit. When asked how much fear he had during his detainment he responded, "Fear and faith cannot exist within my heart at the same time. When we live by faith, trusting the LORD, moment by moment, fear has no room in the heart."<sup>3</sup> The link to the entire interview can be found on the Voice of the Martyr Radio website.

The heroics of John Short in witnessing for Christ stimulates me to wonder at what we can do here in Canada. The same Spirit that empowers and protects him is with us also. Do our hearts seek opportunities to share the gospel, or do we secretly believe we are not gifted to evangelize or that it won't make a difference anyway? The cashier at the grocery store could be a child of God and simply doesn't know it yet. Wouldn't it be amazing if the Spirit opened their eyes to the truth through a simple and routine encounter with something you said? "Yes, but what do I say?" you may ask. Mark 5:19 gives us a good start. "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." The world needs to seek the LORD while he may be found (Isa 55:6); perhaps you and I need to speak of the LORD while we are still able. 🙏



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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.vomradio.net/episodes/detail/arrested-in-north-korea>

# *Introducing*

# CHRIST FOR ALL

## *Ministry*

Christ For All Ministry (CFAM) is an evangelism work among Islamic peoples primarily in Pakistan, Thailand, and increasingly within Canada. CFAM is supported by a number of Canadian Reformed, Free Reformed, and other Reformed churches across Canada.

CFAM works to take the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to nations with hostility towards Christians by equipping our Christian brothers and sisters in their walk of faith. Our ministry works with the local body of believers to support their spiritual and physical needs so that their lives can be transformed as well as the lives of those around them. CFAM believes that as Christians we are all called to do good and serve others with every opportunity, especially our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (Gal 6:9, 10). CFAM also believes that we need to use every opportunity we have to spread the gospel of Christ and to reconcile others to God because we are all ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor 5:20).

CFAM works with Christian brothers and sisters who are persecuted, discriminated against, living in poverty, and facing forced conversion into Islam. We also assist young girls who are raped while working for Muslims in factories or in their homes as domestic workers. 65% of Pakistani Christians work at brick kilns, including children. Many in rural areas are uneducated, lacking resources for jobs and access to skill-building programs; they have no schools, churches, or education. They frequently have no permanent pastor, elders, or deacons.

### TEACHING & SUPPORTING


We support them through skill-building programs, food assistance, and providing clean water. We also help to establish Bible study groups, home groups, and Sunday school. In addition, we are partners with seven independent churches where we are supporting the congregation with a variety of Bible study groups and a Sunday school to empower youth to become future leaders. The people in these areas often live in extreme poverty, with no access to basic facilities. We hold youth seminars on leadership skills every month. In addition, we provide training for Sunday school teachers every four months.

We have leaders and paid Sunday school teachers. We have a mobile Sunday school in four locations. Where our Sunday school teachers go every Sunday to teach them, especially in brick kiln

areas, we have three pastors working with us. They go to the field and preach in these areas, such as Shiekupura, Faisalabad, Clarkabad, Nankanasab, and Punjab in Pakistan.

In numbers, currently we assist more than 500 families, with more than 450 children in different Sunday schools, including brick kiln children. This past year we provided Bibles to 100 people, and recently we started an audio Bible app for those who do are not able to read because of a lack of education. Most Christians at brick kilns work seven days a week and have no opportunity for church and Sunday school, so we provide them with an audio Bible to listen to during their work hours. In addition, our youth learn skills such as motorcycle mechanics.

### PERSECUTION IS REAL

To give you a sense of how difficult it can be for believers in Pakistan, currently more than 2000 Christians are in jail on charges of blasphemy. To proclaim (even in conversation) Christ as Lord and Saviour is considered blasphemy. Many Christians have been forced to leave the country due to persecution, becoming refugees in terrible conditions in places like Thailand. This happened to me until I was brought to Canada through the sponsorship of Langley Canadian Reformed Church. That is how the door opened for me to begin this ministry. With thanks to God, many refugee families have been sponsored and arrived in Canada from Thailand. As future pastors and leaders, we have plans to continue providing skill-enhancing programs to Christians in Pakistan. We hope to provide training in a computer lab, in sewing, and in other useful skills. We plan also to provide English classes through learning Bible verses. In this way our nation will develop and be biblical, educated, growing in Christ in proper behaviour, understanding the true meaning of Christ's love, and becoming reconciled with other people. By God's grace, despite the challenges, the Christians we support in Pakistan are becoming a strong community. The help of the Christian community in Canada and the United States is very much needed and appreciated. 

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Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through him who strengthens me.



Memory Verse Challenge Program

Youth Program is Growing

Mobile Sunday School

**Message from Chairman**

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you very much for your generous support over the years. We are excited to share with you that the ministry has grown greatly over the past few years. Check out our new website to see all the details at [www.christforallministry.com](http://www.christforallministry.com). You can now join our ministry in many different ways, like becoming a **prayer partner** to pray for the persecuted brothers and sisters, helping to donate **MP3 Audio Bibles for Brickkiln families**. You can also be a partner with us as a **representative in your own church** to support these brothers and sisters.



**Reaching Brickkiln children and families** to bring the word of God among them. These families are working long hours 7 days a week, including children, in order to barely support themselves. In Pakistan, it is illegal to employ someone under 16 years of age, but almost 70 percent of Brickkiln laborers in Pakistan are children. Often, they work all day and are denied education, and there are cases where children inherit debts from parents becoming bonded laborers from childhood.



Sunday School Teachers Workshop

**Prayer request:** Pray for our team in Pakistan as they continue to serve these children and encourage parents to send their children to Sunday School.



Online Seminars with Youth and Parents



Home Visits to Encourage Parents to send Children to Sunday School

**Donations:**  
Write a Cheque , E-transfer  
[donate@christforallministry.com](mailto:donate@christforallministry.com)  
Help Canada:  
[christforallministry.ca](http://christforallministry.ca)  
For project information Contact  
[Naeem@christforallministry.com](mailto:Naeem@christforallministry.com)  
Prayer Partner:  
[www.christforallministry.ca](http://www.christforallministry.ca)

**Bible Project: Now using Audio Bibles on MP3 devices**

Please pray for our Bible Project. Pray that our team will be able to provide Audio Bibles on MP3 players to the many Brickkiln workers who work long hours 7 days a week. With these Audio Bibles they will be able to listen to and learn the Word of God while they work and can share the Word with others around them.







**CHRIST FOR ALL**  
MINISTRY

March 2023

LOVING GOD through serving people.

Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through him who strengthens me.



**Women's Prayer and Fellowship Group**

Many women joined in prayer and fellowship during a recent gathering. Women are an important part of the family as they teach their children and help them grow. In Pakistan women are often ignored and marginalized. CFAM is reaching these women to share the Gospel with them, and help them to fulfill their role of teaching their children about Jesus Christ.



**Youth Skill Program**



**Celebrating Christmas with many children in need distributing gifts among the Brickkiln families - December 2022**



**Excited to begin** supporting and working with an independent church and enrolling 100 new children in Sunday School, many of whom work in the near by Brickkiln.

**Expansion to Thailand:** Kazuto Kishi is our official representative in Thailand. Kazuto is a man of God who has known Naeem Zafar for over 10 years. He has the heart to serve among Pakistani Christians.



**Fundraising Event - Dessert Evening October 2022**



Thanks to our Sunday school teachers who are working hard teaching the word of God to these children.

[christforallministry.com](http://christforallministry.com)





www.merf.org



## MERF's Augustine Program

By Pastor Timothy Burden, Coordinator



MERF Lokichoggio trainees come from South Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania

The Augustine Program provides intensive biblical training for God's servants in MERF fields. It was developed for those in church leadership lacking opportunity for Bible and Christian doctrine education, especially in war-torn South Sudan. Over the years, the program has extended to train church leaders in Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania and beyond.

During Covid, online Bible study resources were developed. Now some are being adapted to Indonesian languages. Most engaging to both young and old, the 6-minute illustrated simple catechism video series is on YouTube: [www.merf.org/thecat](http://www.merf.org/thecat) (Please enjoy & share the link.)

### Augustine

Was born in 354 A.D. in the Numidian city of Tagaste, now Souk Ahras, Algeria. His search for truth led him to Carthage, Rome, and Milan, where he was captivated by the preaching and Christ-like love of Ambrose. He began reading Paul's Epistles. One day, after a conversation that led to deep personal conviction of sin, specifically his addiction to lust, God powerfully spoke to him through Romans 13:13-14 and he came to faith in Christ.

Returning to North Africa, he became the Bishop of Hippo and served God's people through his powerful pastoral preaching of Scriptures.

His belief that the Bible is

the authoritative Word of God and that God feeds souls through the preaching of His Word, led him to open a training school for clergy. This had a great impact on the church in Africa. Augustine was also the first man in church history to write a manual for preachers. This positively impacted preaching during the following centuries.

The same conviction, that the Bible is God's authoritative word and that God's people are fed by the preaching of it, lies behind the four units of MERF's Augustine Program. The course was established in 2003, but is regularly reviewed, revised and developed to maximize clear presentation of the biblical content. Preparations are underway for PowerPoint presenta-

tions and workbooks on Isaiah, as well as for a survey of the Pentateuch. Most importantly, study materials are designed as tools to be taken home to teach others.

The Augustine Program is taught intensively over a period of three months in MERF's Lokichoggio ministry center, located in Kenya. (MERF's Center was established just south of the South Sudanese border due to the continual unrest and armed conflicts in South Sudan.)

### Lokichoggio

Here most of those enrolled in the course are pastors, evangelists or choir-men from South Sudan. Others from northern Kenya and Tanzania join them in classes of 25-30 trainees. The course runs

three times a year with different visiting teachers from faithful churches focusing on the various units. As well as attending himself, one senior Tanzanian pastor has regularly sent young men to be trained. This has led to continued engagement to encourage churches in Tanzania.

**Tanzania**

Repeated requests for more materials for church leaders brought about MERF's current project of establishing a Reformed lending library in Mwanza in northern Tanzania on Lake Victoria. This has so far been hampered by transport difficulties. *Please pray that the consignment of books will arrive.*

Also, as MERF Augustine Program coordinator, I will be addressing church leaders on the Five Solas of the Reformation at a July Reformed Church of Tanzania conference. These studies will then be included in Unit 2 of the Augustine Program. My wife, Rosalind, will lead teaching sessions for ladies.

Two other Tanzanian



Ethiopia study group

Lokichoggio graduates have teamed up using the Augustine Program material in an organized training program for pastors and evangelists from villages in the Mwanza region. Men come for two weeks of training at a time on sections of the program. So, rather than an intensive three months, the whole course will be spread over an extended period. Arranging trainee accommodation for two weeks is a problem. *Please pray for a resolution.*

**Ethiopia**

The Ethiopian team has a very active training program. They hold 3-day training courses at the invitation of churches in vari-

ous parts of the country. Weekly evening classes and 21-day courses are held at a purpose-built training center.

These 21-day courses lend themselves to using units of the Augustine Program material either by a visiting teacher or the Ethiopian team leaders themselves. They have translated parts of the material into Amharic.

**Testimonies from a teacher & students**

**Pastor Miramoe Nickleby** "By God's grace we had 25 students of different nationalities participating in the learning sessions. I managed to teach the Pastoral Epistles & Homiletics. We had won-

**MERF-Canada**

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*derful times in each session; every learner participated fully in reading the Bible and doing class tests/assignments. Through this system, some of the trainees who had difficulty in reading the Bible learned to read efficiently."*

**Gilo Otholi Oboya** "I have been equipped with head, heart and hand knowledge to work to serve, guided by the serving style of the Lord Jesus. The persistent efforts of teachers enable us to know how to spell the words and read God's word and preach it. Your commitment means a lot to me personally. Thanks."

**Joseph Lokoyo Manath** "I gained more knowledge. Christians are justified by faith. When I go back to where I came from, I will encourage the brothers who are in our church to continue to grow in understanding the Word of God."



Pastor and Mrs Timothy Burden

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

— 2 Timothy 2:2



Augustine Program Workbooks





## RAY OF SUNSHINE

Rachel Vis

### ANCHOR CAMP FAVOURITES

I asked a few campers who have been to Anchor Camp in the past what their favourite part about camp is. Here are their answers:

*"I like waking up in the mornings, not knowing what is going to happen that day."*

— DERRICK VANDERHORST

*"Swimming and hayrides!! Hayrides are fun!!"*

— AVA PIEROTTI

*"Singing by the campfire."*

— DEREK KOK

*"Playing games like monopoly, life, and settlers."*

— JEANNETTE WIERENGA

*"I like to make jokes and do pranks and play the drum."*

— BRENT BAARTMAN



### WELCOME SPRING!

Do you know what the beginning of spring means? That plans for Anchor Camp 2023 are well underway! Campers have sent their registrations in and are eagerly awaiting to hear from YOU!!!

Without the dedication of many volunteers this wonderful time of rest and relaxation and respite for many families could not happen. What does it mean to volunteer at camp? We run for almost two weeks at the end of June—this year it's June 19–30. You can volunteer for one or even both of the weeks if you want. We enjoy camp at the beautiful Campfire Bible Camp facility in Markdale, Ontario. We are very thankful for such a beautiful setting, with a large hall for us to eat and do activities in, and many cabins to sleep in.

Most of our campers get their own volunteer while sometimes a volunteer has several campers, depending on the needs. Every day we do singing and devotions together. Then we either do activities at camp like swimming, playing games, scavenger hunts, crafts, hay wagon rides, and so much more. We also take the bus and do a few fun outings as a group.

We also have a team of cooks and we are thankful to say that for this year all those positions have been filled! (Thank you so much!) We have a small team of cleaners to keep everything ship shape. And then there are nurses to keep us healthy and make sure our medical needs are met. And of course there is the *pool!* We always need certified lifeguards. We also require activity directors who make sure we have lots of fun activities to do throughout the day. Bus drivers bring some of us back and forth to camp, take us to church on Sunday, and also drive us around for some outings. There is also the camp committee, which does all the planning to make sure everything runs smoothly. So, you can see that there are many opportunities for people to get involved in this wonderful ministry!

And the most important part of camp is the joy that the campers experience. Many look forward to camp all year! Hopefully this gives you a snapshot of what Anchor Camp is and that volunteering is something you can prayerfully consider. We do have requirements for volunteers—generally 18+, members of URC or CanRC congregations, have a vulnerable sectors check, and a heart to serve!! Please email [anchorsummerncamp@gmail.com](mailto:anchorsummerncamp@gmail.com) if you are interested in volunteering or have any questions.

### JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to all of you celebrating a birthday in June!

We wish you the Lord's blessing in the year to come.

*"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."*

(PSALM 139:14)

**17** Joan Koerselman will be **66**  
2113-16 Ave  
Coaldale, AB  
T1M 1J8

**26** Devon Niezen will be **23**  
7000 2nd Line  
Arthur, ON  
NOG 1A0

**20** Lars Huijgen will be **32**  
2629 Aspen Drive  
Coaldale, AB  
T1M 0A2

**30** Beverly Breukelman will be **61**  
222 5-19th Street  
Coaldale, AB  
T1M 1G4

# CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 30

Let's pretend you said something unkind to your classmate. Perhaps that night, in bed, you began to feel very sorry for speaking that way. Then praise God, because this is the Holy Spirit working in you! God's children should be unhappy with their sins. God says that those who are sad because of their sin may come to have Lord's Supper. But these people do not have to stay sad! They know that all their sins have been forgiven. How amazing! Does this make you want to say "thank you" to God? Then pray for the Holy Spirit to give you faith and help you stop sinning. God blesses people who do this with the sacrament of Lord's Supper. Now, even though these people are adults, children can be encouraged too! When you see Dad holding the bread, you know for sure forgiveness has been given to him and to you. That's how sure you can be that the Lord Jesus died for your sins.

**LET'S DO ONE LAST REVIEW. DRAW A LINE TO SHOW WHICH SENTENCES ARE TALKING ABOUT BAPTISM OR LORD'S SUPPER. (Hint: There is a tricky one in there!!)**

God uses water to show that just like water cleans your body,  
so Jesus's blood cleans your soul

This is a sacrament

Just as the bread and wine fill, or nourish, our bodies, the Lord Jesus  
nourishes our souls

Adults are the ones who have this sacrament, but children can  
be encouraged by watching. Just as children see what is happening,  
that is how sure they can be that Jesus died for them.

This sacrament is normally given to babies. This shows that God's  
promises are even for babies who don't understand any of it!

**BAPTISM**

**LORD'S SUPPER**

**COLOUR IN THE LETTERS:**

# LORD'S SUPPER



**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**

# THE VAN MAREN SHOW

If you are someone who takes an interest in following the cultural and social changes taking place in our world, particularly as they impact family, church, and education, today's podcast review will be right up your alley. *The Van Maren Show* will be sure to keep you up to date on the latest happenings at “the front lines of the culture war.”

## OVERVIEW

*The Van Maren Show* is a podcast hosted by Jonathon Van Maren that covers a wide range of topics related to culture, politics, and the pro-life movement. The show features interviews with experts, activists, and thinkers who offer their insights and perspectives on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, gender ideology, and religious freedom. In addition, the podcast explores how these issues intersect with broader cultural trends and debates and seeks to provide listeners with a deeper understanding of the challenges facing today's post Christian society.

The name Jonathon Van Maren will likely be a familiar one to many *Clarion* readers as he has been active in the social commentary space for over a decade. However, for those not as familiar with Jonathon's work, he is the Communications Director for the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform (CCBR) and has written for many publications including *First Things*, *National Review*, *The American Conservative*, and *The National Post*, in addition to his work as a contributing editor to *The European Conservative*. He has authored four books (*The Culture War*; *Prairie Lion: The Life and Times of Ted Byfield*; *Seeing is Believing: Why Our Culture Must Face the Victims of Abortion*; and *Patriots: The Untold Story of Ireland's Pro-Life Movement*) and co-authored two more (*A Guide to Discussing Assisted Suicide* with Blaise Alleyne and *Life Under Glass: The Ethics of Embryo Adoption* with Justina Van Manen).

The podcast is released on a weekly basis every Wednesday and typically runs between twenty-five to forty-five minutes, with certain episodes running north of an hour. Notable past guests include American author Nancy Pearcey, Canadian journalist Andrew Lawton, and American commentator and author Andrew Klavan.

## PRO-LIFE ISSUES & CANADIAN POLITICS

A substantial portion of *Van Maren's* content is dedicated to covering the pro-life movement's efforts around the globe, which is an important niche that he does a great job of filling, as it is difficult to find information on international pro-life matters. Some recent examples of this work include the episode with Dr. Miriam Sciberras discussing her work in Malta's fight to prevent abortion from being legalized, and the episode with Romanian pro-life activists Alexandra Nadane and Teodora Paul discussing “the fast-growing pro-life movement in their country, the challenges of defending the unborn in a formerly communist country, and how they recruit young people to help build a culture of life.”

Another important niche *The Van Maren Show* fills is that of socially conservative commentary regarding Canadian politics, as there is a dearth of that sort of commentary available, particularly in the post-Trudeau media bailout age. A recent March episode featuring Les Landry, a Canadian man who had applied for assisted suicide as he could not afford to live without disability benefits, and a December episode featuring Vince Byfield, discussing the legacy of his father Ted Byfield in Canadian politics and culture, are good examples of this.

Overall, *The Van Maren Show* offers a broad range of topics and guests to choose from yet still manages to provide specific and insightful commentary as a leading voice in international pro-life coverage and also domestic Canadian politics from a Reformed worldview. I would encourage all readers to add this podcast to your weekly listening schedule as there is much to learn from and be encouraged by Van Maren's work in this medium. 



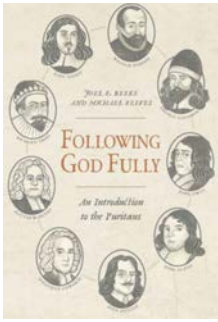
**Lucas Holtvlüwer**

Co-host

Reformed Perspective's Real Talk podcast

[lucasholtvluer@gmail.com](mailto:lucasholtvluer@gmail.com)





## NOT JUST ANY OLD DEAD WHITE GUYS

*Following God Fully: An Introduction to the Puritans*, by Joel R. Beeke and Michael Reeves. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2022). Hardcover. 151 pages. \$27.27 CDN.

Back in the day, the story goes, there was a Canadian Reformed pastor who warned his congregation against reading the Puritans. I don't know whether the story is true, but an anti-Puritan animus has certainly existed in our circles. They said the Puritans were legalistic, rationalistic, too introspective, and, naturally, un-Reformed. If you, dear reader, were sold that bill of goods, this book may very well challenge or even change your perspective.

### OVERVIEW

Joel Beeke's life-long interest in the Puritans hardly needs mention—he is, after all, well-known as the founder and president of *Puritan* Reformed Theological Seminary. He's been reading them since he was a boy—introduced to them by his godly father. Beeke has also written extensively about the Puritans in other books. His co-author, Michael Reeves, is the president of Union School of Theology in Oxford and has also written many books.

These days, even apart from any theological considerations, there's a great suspicion around old dead white guys. But the Puritans are not just *any* old dead white guys. These men were passionate Christians. They blended an eager commitment to biblical doctrine with an equally zealous drive to live a holy life. Beeke and Reeves introduce us to some of these men, what they believed, and how they lived.

In a series of nine short chapters, the authors describe some of the “Puritan Stalwarts,” including Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, and John Bunyan. I'd liked to have seen Thomas Watson included in there, but alas. . . . In subsequent chapters (all similarly short), the authors summarize Puritan teaching on the doctrine of God, the order of salvation, and the doctrine of the church. There are five chapters on “Puritans in Daily Life.” *Following God Fully* concludes with three chapters reflecting on the relevance of the Puritans for today. By the end, you've had a delicious appetizer which should make you hungry for more. The last chapter gives you some direction on where to go next to quench your appetite.

### FRESH POINTS AND FOIBLES


I've been reading the Puritans (and about the Puritans) since I was a university student. Yet this small book taught me some new things. For example, chapter 39 on marriage mentions the role the Puritans played in the development of the desirability of romance in marriage. Prior to their era, many marriages were arranged without any consideration for whether there was love between bride and groom.

Beeke and Reeves are honest about the foibles and failures of the Puritans. Were some of them legalistic? Undoubtedly. Did some of them own slaves? Sadly, yes. Were some of them unnecessarily wordy and unclear in their writing? Read John Owen. However, for every Puritan who was legalistic, there are many more that weren't. There were literally hundreds of Puritan pastors and authors. There will always be some bad apples in the bunch. But to write them all off would be short-sighted and unfair.

### CHOICE QUOTES

To finish, let me just share a few choice quotes to give you a flavour for what's in store when you read *Following God Fully*:

- Quoting Richard Sibbes: “Though I have daily experience of my sins, yet there is more righteousness in Christ, who is mine, who is the chief of ten thousand, than there is sin in me” (p. 60).
- Quoting John Owen: “. . . holiness is nothing but the implanting, writing, and realizing of the gospel in our souls” (p. 78).
- “Joseph Alleine said one way to remember the preached Word is to ‘come from your knees to the sermon, and come from the sermon to your knees’” (p. 110).
- “We need the inward disposition of the Puritans—the authentic, biblical, intelligent piety they understood, taught, and lived—we need that piety in our hearts, lives, churches, and nations” (p. 149).

The Puritans have much to offer, even after all these years. If you want to grow in your understanding of Christian doctrine and how to become more Christ-like, you'll soon find that they have few peers amongst modern-day authors. 



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## DEEP MISERY TO INEXTINGUISHABLE JOY

*A Supreme Love: The Music of Jazz and the Hope of the Gospel*, by William Edgar.  
(Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2022). Softcover. 207 pages. \$33.99 CDN.

It was Ross Porter's fault. Back in 1993, he started hosting a radio program on CBC called *After Hours*. The program began at 10:00 PM, just as I'd get off work at the local service station. I'd walk home, turn on the CBC, and eat my supper listening to jazz. That's when I first learned to love this genre.

Taste in music is subjective, I know. But if you're like me and appreciate jazz, you'll love this new book by William Edgar. Even if you don't yet appreciate jazz and you're musically curious and open-minded, this book could open up some new horizons. *A Supreme Love* is not only a great introduction to the history and aesthetic of jazz, it also explores the connections between jazz and the Christian faith.

### CHRISTIAN ROOTS

I doubt anyone is better suited to write a book like this than William Edgar. He is professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America. He's also a jazz pianist and composer. He's lectured on African-American aesthetics and the history of jazz.

*A Supreme Love* traces the background of jazz in the African-American experience. In Part 1, Edgar skilfully summarizes the tragedy of slavery and how it led to the development of various musical themes and genres. Part 2 explores the "background genres" of folk, spirituals, gospel, and blues. Part 3 gets into the origins of jazz itself. Edgar notes: "The traditional view is that jazz was born in the red-light district (Storyville) and much of it in brothels. Yet more recent research calls this account into question" (p. 108). Regardless of its origins, there's no question that today jazz is as much "art music" as is classical. Part 3 reveals how jazz divided into other sub-genres such as bebop and cool.


There's one linking thought through all these chapters and it's how jazz "owes a great deal to a Christian worldview . . ." (p. 2). Edgar isn't arguing that jazz is "Christian" music, but that you can't

appreciate it fully without understanding its Christian roots. Like the salvation story embedded in the Christian worldview, "the jazz aesthetic moves from deep misery to inextinguishable joy" (p. 19). Edgar argues, and he makes a good case, that "there is something about the music itself that is profoundly connected to the truths about life and the truth found in the Christian message" (p. 168).

### READ AND LISTEN

To get the maximum benefit from *A Supreme Love*, you'll need to read it alongside YouTube on your TV or device. One of its features is the mention in the footnotes of many musical pieces that can be found online. This helped introduce me to some great works that I've never before encountered, including a beautiful mass by Dave Brubeck entitled *To Hope*. The appendix provides even more listening suggestions.

Edgar is both a practitioner and aficionado and his enthusiasm is contagious. There is one instance where I think his enthusiasm leads to possible overstatement. In chapter 12, he states that jazz was possibly "an important contributor to the fall of communism in 1989." I've heard of pop music playing that role, but not jazz. Unfortunately, there's no footnote or other substantiation to support this claim.

Sadly, so much modern popular music is superficial, not to mention vapid, puerile, and obscene. Jazz has always been a refreshingly different genre, and it still is today. If you want to understand it from within a Christian worldview, read Edgar's *A Supreme Love*. And if you don't appreciate jazz already, maybe he'll put you on to it. 



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## HOW IN THE WORLD DID WE GET HERE?

*How in the World Did We Get Here?* by Jim Witteveen. (Self-published, JimWitteveen, 2022). Hardcover. 183 pages. \$15.00 CDN. Audiobook, \$10.00 CDN. Available at [dan1132.com](http://dan1132.com).


If it seems that over the past few years our society resembles a runaway train that has gone off the rails, this new book authored by missionary and podcaster Jim Witteveen will correct that misconception, disperse the fog, and help the reader detect the tracks the train has been traversing all along but at an increasingly accelerated rate.

The author holds to what he calls “conspiracy-realism,” and with each passing chapter peels back the layers of the onion of our contemporary cultural situation to expose converging conspiracies and ideological undercurrents which have led us to where we are. No reader of this book will remain naïve about how propaganda, the education system, sexual revolutions, eugenics, the environmentalism movement, and the newest kid on the block, technocracy, have been deployed within various anti-christian schemes in order to reshape the world. This book will also introduce the reader to a range of pivotal figures such as Margaret Sanger, Alfred Kinsey, Julian Huxley, Klaus Schwab, Mark Zuckerberg, and also explain various new and potentially unfamiliar concepts such as “astroturfing” (70), “transhumanism” (130), and “Singularity” (143).

Though the content matter is heavy, the book is surprisingly easy to read and well laid out. Certainly the author may be commended for his concise and engaging writing style and sense of humour (sometimes tucked away in the footnotes) while the

printer (FriesenPress) deserves credit for the hardcover format and Ashley Zekveld for the artistic cover design.

The book’s greatest strength, however, is that it tackles these topics from a Christian perspective. It does so in multiple ways. It warns against being deceived or co-opted into supporting the latest cause or movement which consists of false piety, false prophecy, and a false view of salvation (125). It calls Christians not to resign to a state of passivity but rather urges them to actively confront evil (129). It points readers to where comfort is found in the wisdom of God in Christ which will prevail over the futile efforts of every foolish human endeavour which tries to circumvent it (148). The final chapter, in particular, provides a number of practical ways to combat the spirit of the age and equips Christians to effectively engage (and disengage from) the world which has become increasingly adversarial towards a biblical worldview.

This book is an excellent resource for every (prospective) student of a liberal arts university or anyone who simply aspires to be like the men of Issachar in 1 Chronicles 12:32, who understood the times and knew what ought to be done. 



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# CLASSIS MANITOBA

## WINNIPEG GRACE, MANITOBA

**MARCH 24, 2023**

### OPENING & MEMORABILIA

On behalf of the Winnipeg Grace CanRC, Rev. Rick Vanderhorst welcomed all gathered for Classis. He led the gathering in opening devotions. Matters of joy and concern taking place in our classical region were remembered in prayer. Included in our prayer were the retired pastors and their life circumstances and continuing service (Rev. & sr. John & Agnus VanRietschoten, Dr. & sr. Andrew & Inge Pol, and Rev. Klaas Jonker). The Lord willing, CRTS student Reese Gaillard will be undergoing an internship this summer with Pastor James Slaa for seven weeks, and Mitchell Bosveld will be doing an internship with Rev. Carl Van Dam for four weeks. Rev. Steve Vandeveld has received and accepted a

call to the Owen Sound Canadian Reformed Church. Rev. Rick Vanderhorst has received a call from the Dunnville East Canadian Reformed Church. Rev. James Zekveld has received a call from the Trinity Covenant Church (Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches) in Fort St. John, BC. Finally, the vacancy in Elm Creek was remembered.

Special welcome was given to Rev. Hank Bowen of First Reformed Church of Aberdeen, SD of the Northern Plains Classis of the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS), who was in attendance as a fraternal delegate. His wife Patty was also in attendance. All the primary delegates were in attendance. One of the delegates from Denver Emmanuel was not present in

person but via Zoom. Classis was therefore constituted. Rev. Rick Vanderhorst was appointed president, Pastor James Slaa appointed vice-president, and Rev. Joe Poppe was appointed clerk. Rev. Hank Bowen was seated as a fraternal delegate, and Rev. James Zekveld, missionary of Winnipeg Redeemer was also present and was seated as an advisor.

## REPORTS & PROPOSALS

The classis treasurer submitted a report. 2023 mileage rates for travel for classical purposes was set. 2023 assessment of \$5.00 was decided on. Carman West church reported on the inspection of the books of the treasurer. With thankfulness it was noted that the books were in good order. The Redeemer church reported that the classical archives in the Grace church are in good order. Classis received with thankfulness a report of the Deputies for Contact with the Manitoba Provincial Government.

In closed session, reports of church visits to Carman East, Carman West, Elm Creek, Winnipeg Grace, Winnipeg Redeemer were read. Supplication and thanksgiving prayer was offered after each report. After the reports were read, it was a blessing to have a general discussion on classical church visitation with our fraternal delegate Rev. Hank Bowen.

Classis dealt with and decided on a proposal from the Winnipeg Grace church to add guidelines for preparatory examinations and update peremptory examinations to the classical regulations.

Classis considered a report from the Carman West church. Carman West had been instructed by a previous classis to advise on supporting needy churches outside of Canada. This had to do with the rules of Canada Revenue Agency, which requires that all funds donated to organizations outside the country must be registered Canadian charities. The Carman West church was thanked for their report and Classis considered their task completed. Classis mandated Carman West to present a proposal to the next classis on how funds be solicited to support the Needy Churches Fund. In addition, Carman West should propose changes necessary to the classical regulations with regard to the Needy Churches Fund mandate.

## ADVICE & GREETINGS

Question Period was held as per Article 44 of the Church Order. One church requested advice in a matter of discipline with a view to proceeding to the second public announcement.

Our fraternal delegate Rev. Hank Bowen was given the opportunity to address Classis. He encouraged the brothers through the reading of Scripture (2 Timothy 3), expressed thankfulness for the relationship with Classis Manitoba, and then informed us of numerous happenings and activities amongst the churches in the Northern Plains Classis of the RCUS. It was a great blessing to hear of the joys and successes of our brothers and sisters south of our Manitoba border, but also to learn of and share in their struggles and disappointments. A letter of encouragement was read from Rev. Archibald Allison, stated clerk of the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

## RELEASE & CLOSING

The church of Denver requested that their pastor Rev. Steve Vandeveld receive honourable release from Classis, with a view to his recent acceptance of the call he received from Owen Sound CanRC. When it was determined that all the documents were in good order the request was granted. On behalf of Classis, Rev. Rick Vanderhorst spoke words of gratitude for all of Rev. Vandeveld's work and activities in this classical region. It was noted that Rev. Vandeveld has served in this classis for the past eleven years, first in Carman East and then Denver, CO. Rev. Vandeveld expressed appreciation and thanks in response.

The convening church for the next classis will be Winnipeg-Redeemer. The date will be May 26, 2023, DV, at 9:00 AM. Alternate date is September 22, 2023. Some standing committee appointments were made. Classis also suggested officers for the next classis. With thankfulness the president ruled that brotherly censure was not deemed necessary (CO Art. 34).

The Acts of Classis were adopted and the Press Release was approved. Rev. Vandeveld led in closing devotions and Classis was closed. 

For Classis,  
*Pastor James Slaa*

