



Clarion

407 KEEPING THE LITURGY FRESH

409 NO NAPPING NOW! *412* THE GREAT DIVIDE

WHAT'S INSIDE

Sometimes we plan a theme issue and sometimes a singular theme pops up providentially within an issue. You will find the latter in the following pages and the theme is: *be aware of the antithesis*. It comes out quite plainly in Rodney Vermeulen's *No Napping Now* as well as in Wes Bredenhof's *The Great Divide*. It's also present in the meditation of Gerrit Bruintjes with respect to handling the prosperity of this life. Contrary to a popular slogan, there is a "them" and there is an "us" which calls for great wisdom in dealing with those who oppose Christ.

Rick Ludwig in a *Load of Care* offers us a thoughtful piece on the tensions felt in our federation in and around Article 55 of our Church Order. Jan DeGelder continues his series on church polity by discussing whether the Church Order speaks to the matter of receiving guests at the Lord's Table. In addition, we have two mission pieces: an interview with missionary Ed Dethan sheds some light on the radio ministry in Timor and an update on a Pakistani ministry based in Canada called Christ for All Ministry. It's good to celebrate the Lord's faithfulness and so we also rejoice with our brethren in Carman on the 50th anniversary of Dufferin Christian School.

Our issue rounds out with our regular features, including some intriguing book reviews. We also have a new song writer featured in one of his compositions, *O Jesus Messiah*. Enjoy your reading!

Peter Holtvliuwer

contents

- 407** EDITORIAL Keep the Liturgy Fresh
Peter Holtvliuwer
- 408** TREASURES, NEW & OLD
Too Full For God?
Gerrit Bruintjes
- 409** No Napping Now!
Rodney Vermeulen
- 412** The Great Divide
Wes Bredenhof
- 415** A Load of Care
Rick Ludwig
- 418** GOVERNING THE CHURCH
A Holy, Visible Sign and Seal
Jan DeGelder
- 420** DISCIPLINING THE NATIONS
Sahabat FM An interview with
Rev. Edwer Dethan
Dick Wynia
- 424** 50th Anniversary of Dufferin Christian School
Elizabeth DeWit
- 427** CFAM Spring Newsletter
- 429** CLARION KIDS
Amanda DeBoer
- 430** O Jesus, Messiah
Tim Schouten
- BOOK REVIEW(S)
Wes Bredenhof
- 432** No Shortcut to Success
- 433** I Have a Psychiatric Diagnosis
- 434** Unique Appology
- 435** PRESS RELEASE
Classis Cen ON, June 9

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
- N**urturing Christian living

CLARION (ISSN 0383-0438) is published 16 times per year (tri-weekly) by Premier Printing Ltd., 1 Beghin Ave, Winnipeg MB R2J 3X5.

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2023 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada	\$ 59*	\$ 104* *plus tax
USA (USD)	\$ 74	\$ 134
International	\$ 104	\$ 178
Digital	\$ 40*	

Digital can be added to print subscription at no cost.

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KEEP THE LITURGY FRESH

Every Sunday we gather for worship according to a set routine. We call this the “liturgy.” Reformed churches have long held to the biblical teaching that in the church’s worship God speaks and his people respond. Some fine books have been written to explain why we do what we do and I would encourage consistories to take time to study one or more of these resources. Elders who understand the liturgy well can then teach members about the various components. In this way each congregation can avoid thoughtless or rote participation and engage in active, heartfelt worship from start to finish.¹

AVOIDING AUTOPILOT

While a good understanding of liturgy is vital to offering sincere reverence and in turn being edified, so is freshness. By that I do not mean randomly deleting or changing out the elements of the service. Rather I mean being more intentional to present every element of the service in a way that captures afresh the congregation’s attention.

I speak as a minister largely to fellow ministers. I know how easy it is to go on autopilot; that is, to move from one point in the service to the next in the same way you did the week before. And the week before that. It’s comfortable to choose from a handful of familiar texts as a call to worship, or in response to the law (i.e. in confession or assurance of pardon). Without thinking, you can end up choosing the same forty or fifty songs over the span of a year (ask your congregation if there are psalms you never sing!). It’s natural to use the same stock phrases to introduce songs or voice your prayers (have you ever listened to yourself pray?).

The trouble with using such repetition or unwittingly limiting text or song selection is that the liturgy can soon feel dull to the congregation. Stale. Same-old. Like we’re just going through the motions until we get to the preaching where at least there is something different every service (hopefully!). When liturgy becomes a lifeless routine, people easily tune out. Liturgy is a good thing, but it needs to be kept fresh in everyone’s mind.

EXPLANATION


One way to do this is for the pastor to *briefly* (no long-windedness, please) let the congregation know what is happening and why as the service moves along. When it’s a song, tell the congregation its particular purpose at that point in the liturgy and how the lyrics fit that purpose. Especially if it’s a psalm whose lyrics may be hard-hitting (e.g. laments, words of cursing), a line to explain

what the psalm is about and how to think of it while singing is appreciated. In particular, mentioning how the psalm reveals Christ is another very helpful way for the congregation to sing the psalms with understanding and devotion. A little teaching here goes a long way.

Consider too the other elements. Do congregants know that the prayer ahead of the sermon is primarily aimed at asking for the Spirit’s illumination? Or that the prayer after the morning sermon is for both thanksgiving and congregational needs? Do all understand the congregation’s opening confession of trust and the LORD’s greeting of peace? When I was a kid and the minister spoke both, I never knew that two things were going on. Think of children and teens as well as newcomers. Using different wording that is varied but informative can really bring the young in faith into the loop and keep worship fresh for all.

FAITHFUL FLEXIBILITY

Without removing any element of the adopted liturgy, some can be done in different ways. For instance, the law can be read from either Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5. Or it could be sung (Hymn 11). Or in Lord’s Supper services the summary of it found in the Form could be read instead. I know one church that occasionally reads the Ten Commandments at the end of the second service to emphasize the law as the rule for thankful living. The song associated with the law could be used as either a confession of sin, assurance of pardon, or as praise for God’s commandments. The LORD’s opening greeting or parting blessing could be taken at times from different Scripture texts. Instead of singing the Apostles Creed (Hymn 1 or 2), why not alternate it with the minister speaking it or the Nicene Creed? Or occasionally doing so in unison as congregation?

These are just some possibilities. With some faithful creativity, a deliberate effort to choose songs widely from our *Book of Praise*, and little explanations to the congregation, under God’s blessing the weekly liturgy can be kept lively and fresh for all as we worship our glorious God. 



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¹ Three suggestions are: *The Beauty of Reformed Liturgy* by G. Van Dooren (1980), *Aiming to Please* by Wes Bredenhof (2020), and *Worship Matters* by Cornelis Van Dam (2021).

TOO FULL FOR GOD?

“And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today.” (DEUTERONOMY 8:10–11)

Deuteronomy 8 is a powerful sermon from Moses that prepares God’s people for living with plenty.

For many generations, the Israelites had nothing. They were slaves in Egypt, hungry and thirsty in the desert, and their wardrobes were bare. They learned to rely on the LORD their God as their deliverer, protector, and provider. Now, soon their poverty would turn to riches, as the LORD their God was bringing them into “a land where bread will not be scarce, and you will lack nothing” (Deut 8:9). They would finally eat and be full, and their houses would be upgraded; flocks would grow, treasure boxes would fill, and everything they had would be multiplied (8:12–13). Their lives would be full.

Moses warns them that when life gets good, they must not forget their God. Their greatest threat would not be thieves stealing their stuff or enemies taking their possessions. Their greatest threat would be a heart prone to pride and a mind prone to forgetfulness. “Your hearts will become proud” (v. 14), and you will say, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me” (v. 17), and “you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (v. 14). Their lives would become so full that they would no longer have room for God.

Moses encourages them that when they live the good life, they should remember what God did for them. They should remember how he delivered them from Egypt, shepherded them through the desert, and guided them into the promised land. As they remembered what God did, they should also remember what God said, being careful to do everything he commanded them (vv. 1, 6, 11, 19). Forgetfulness of God’s deliverance leads to lax obedience of his commands. Remember that your life begins and ends with praise and worship of God.

Moses’s warning is a generational problem that requires careful education. Children would be born in Israel, growing up without knowing the harshness of Egyptian slavery or the desperate need for God’s miraculous intervention. Their knowledge of God as the fountain of every blessing would only be obtained through careful instruction and signs of his deliverance. Remember! Do not forget! Be careful to follow God’s will!

Moses’s warning rings out to prosperous generations of God’s people through the ages. If, while following Jesus Christ, we have much and our lives are full, we must not forget the Lord our God and our need for Jesus Christ. It is hard to recognize our sin and misery when life is good. It is hard to acknowledge our need for

the only Saviour Jesus when alternative solutions are everywhere. It is hard to be obedient to our Lord Jesus when the material possessions of this world fill us. It is hard to understand why Paul might say Christians are pitiable if the resurrection were not true (1 Cor 15:19). Hopeful longing for eternal glory seems unnecessary when many can say at the end of life, “I have lived a good life.” The Christian life of many is so full and satisfying, what more could we need?

Yet, God tells us that we are strangers and aliens in this world (1 Pet 2:11), pilgrims longing for a better country—a heavenly one (Heb 11:16). The gospel of Jesus Christ does not teach us to find our best life now but to deny ourselves, pick up our cross, and follow him (Matt 16:24). God encourages us to make every effort to enter into the rest of God (Heb 4:11).

When we experience the fullness of earthly life, we should walk with great caution and humility, clinging only to Christ and not forgetting all his benefits. In the joy of that message, we should eagerly and thankfully strive for the obedience of faith and the fullness of love for God and our neighbours. Finally, we should carefully communicate the great reasons for thankfulness to the next generation. May our offerings of praise be joyful, and may our worship be thankful. **C**

FOR FURTHER READING/STUDY:

1 Peter 2:3–11

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Forgetting God often starts with laxity in the first four commandments. As you consider these commandments, where might you be forgetting God because of your fullness?
2. When you are full of life’s pleasures, and you think you can relax, on what should you be diligently working (2 Peter 1:5)?
3. How might you communicate to your children the reality of sin and misery if they’ve never experienced life outside the covenant?



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NO NAPPING NOW!

RODNEY VERMEULEN

The last number of years have left me with an unsettled feeling. Feelings, I know, do not always accurately reflect reality. That said, allow me to share something of my feelings. I'll frame them as questions in an effort to make them clear. The questions might initially seem unrelated but here goes: are we (by "we" I mean Reformed Christians) awake to what is going on in the world? Do we reckon sufficiently with the reality that the devil (and thus also the world) hates the church? Are we alert to the reality that the devil, through the culture, is attacking truth in increasingly fierce and innovative ways, particularly over the past few decades? Are some of us living in ignorance of these realities, or is it possible that some prefer ignorance since ignorance is at least a plausible excuse for not responding appropriately? Have the incredible blessings we've received as second, third, and fourth generation

immigrants given us an ill-founded sense of security that dulls us to the possibility that we are under attack as church?

You see, napping has been easy for the longest time. As Reformed churches we've consistently confessed the antithesis even if we don't use the word that often anymore. We've regularly read passages in Scripture such as John 15:18-19 even if we didn't experience that hatred directly. We nod our heads at Paul when he tells us to be "patient in tribulation" (Rom 12:12). But the fact is, napping has been all too easy. We built our churches, we constructed our schools, we purchased and renovated homes for our special needs brothers and sisters. Personally, and as families, we've laid the bricks of our own houses, we've conceived of and started successful businesses, we've booked and been on vacations, our garages and homes are filled with possessions sufficient to

Are some of us living in ignorance of these realities, or is it possible that some prefer ignorance since ignorance is at least a plausible excuse for not responding appropriately?

make us blush on occasion. All of it is evidence of God's blessings, blessings beyond measure.

But material blessings, like the warm sun when you are lounging by the lake, tend to put you to sleep. Things are changing, and have been for a while. And while we've always sought to honour the command to be alert and awake (1 Thess 5:6-8), napping has been easy. Too easy.

SPIRITUAL WAR

In the feedback for one of my sermon proposals at seminary, I was warned not to ascribe too much power to the devil. It was a warranted criticism. However, we need to be careful not to throw the devil out with the criticism. Scripture makes clear that he is quite the adversary. Not to be taken lightly. That Jesus calls him the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) helps us understand the hatred of the world for the church. The world's hatred for the church is the devil's hatred of the head of the church. It's a hatred born out of the reality of certain defeat as foretold already in Genesis 3:15.

And note well, hatred isn't too strong of a word. It's the word that Jesus uses in the passage already mentioned, John 15:18-19. One could give a multi-page treatise on the Greek word for "hate" and its use in Scripture, but it means exactly what you think it means and then some. If you need to see what that hatred looks like allow Genesis 4 to paint in your mind the scene of a "very angry" (v. 5) Cain standing over the bloody and dead body of his brother Abel (v. 8).

Both the emotion and the resulting action of that Genesis 4 scene is precisely what the devil and the world feel and want for the church and her members. This explains Paul's graphic depiction of this war. The scheming devil (Eph 6:11) wants every Christian to make his or her faith submit to the cultural dictates of our day. He wants every church to either capitulate or be bulldozed into oblivion. He wants every Christian institution (think: our schools, special needs homes, and the like) to proudly fly the acceptable cultural banners of the day. Going "woke" isn't a choice, it's a demand that won't accept "no" as an answer. Listen to Paul's words, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (v. 12).

NO NEUTRALITY

We know that Jesus taught that the world hates us. We are aware of Paul's inspired description of this battle. We also are informed from the Gospels, particularly Matthew's, about what characterizes the "last days." We shouldn't claim to be surprised by all that is going on. And nor is there really any excuse for ignorance.

But, you might be wondering, why is it particularly Christians whom the devil and the world hates? Why is it particularly the faithful Christian church that hell targets? That's because the Christian church and her members know the truth. The light is the only thing that exposes the lie for what it is (John 3:19-20). To put it more practically, the only thing standing between the supposedly utopian vision of a completely God-less world, and the realization of that vision, is the faithful church and her faithful members.

What does it look like to not nap?

It's true, at different times of history we experience the intensity of the battle differently. But there is never not a battle. And right now, in our cultural moment, the battle is pretty intense. A simple but incomplete list of words and phrases will illustrate the point: abortion; euthanasia; sexual revolution; LGBTQ+; transgenderism; drag queen story hour; transhumanism; climate change; eugenics; BLM. And another, also incomplete list, this one of organizations, will further illustrate the point: World Economic Forum; United Nations; World Health Organization; Rockefeller Foundation; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Nothing on either list is neutral. Nothing on either list is simply a passing fad. No, each is part of, or promotor of an ideological position that is antithetical to the Word of God. Each is part of, or promotor of an ideological position that, although seeking to do a sort-of worldly good, is in fact a tightly woven fish net designed by the evil one to catch every possible human being and dump them you-know-where.

NO NAPPING

Hence the repeated New Testament exhortation to be awake and alert. Napping just isn't an option, not now, not ever! That's why after describing the nature of the spiritual battle we are in and the armour of God that equips us to stand firm, Paul writes, "To that end, keep alert with all perseverance. . ." (Eph 6:18). When describing the times preceding his return, Jesus tells us to always be ready to receive him (Matt 24:44). And being ready involves staying awake (v. 42-43).

Prayerfully engage, because the victory is won

Understand well, being awake and sober is a defining characteristic of a true believer. It's an identifiable difference between "children of light" (1 Thess 5:5) and the "others" who "sleep" (v. 6). By definition Christians are not nappers. And let's not forget that even covenant members can be found napping with devastating consequences. You'll recall Jesus's parable about the ten virgins in Matthew 25.

All of this leads to the all-important question, what does it look like to not nap? We need to begin by being determined to test everything we hear and see going on in our world against the one and only standard of truth—God's Word. It simply isn't an option anymore to accept at face value what the news media, our governments, or some global organization tells us.

Without seeing a spiritual monster around every corner, we do need to remember that everything is ideologically driven and that nothing is neutral (1 John 4:1-3). In that we'll be greatly helped by reaffirming the doctrine of total depravity. No, that doesn't mean that every human being who is in that category of "others" (1 Thess 5:6) is as evil as they possibly can be. Praise God for that! But it does mean that real people will do very evil things and real organizations will have very evil plans. They may even believe themselves to be noble in the doing of the evil. Remember that Jesus said this: "Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God" (John 16:2).

Here's a good rule-of-thumb to help determine if something being pushed by our cultural elites and their media allies warrants closer scrutiny: if it's wildly popular and the topic of constant conversation among the nappers, then as non-nappers we probably should subject that issue to the truth-test of God's Word. To

say it differently and more simply: if something is popular with the godless, then the godly need to be on alert.

But in order to be able to conduct that truth-test, we need to do more than read tweets and share the latest memes. We urgently need to carve time out of our busy schedules to be in God's Word as well as read good books which help us understand our cultural moment and how we as non-nappers are called to respond. We need to be avid students of history since those well-versed in history, understood through the lens of God's Word, frequently have greater clarity about the present. And if the I-am-not-a-reader excuse just escaped your lips, then purchase the audio version and find podcasts hosted by fellow non-nappers.

And then, engage! One very simple and practical thing most of us can do is join something like ARPA Canada's email list. Make use of their easy-mail system. Be informed. Stay alert. Engage.


And finally, don't be discouraged. Prayerfully engage, because the victory is won.

CONFIDENCE

There's a lot at stake. So many Christians have succumbed. So many churches and church-run organizations have capitulated. The cultural banners of the day are flying in places you'd never have thought possible.

But, by grace and in prayer we are called to stand firm. It's a call that comes from him who has already secured the victory. He said this: "In the world you will have tribulation." But then he immediately added this: "But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

And Jesus could say that because he has nailed that victory in place. Paul says it this way: "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him" (Col 2:15). Hell has it in for the church. But the Christ who triumphed promised "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18).

Now is not the time to nap but to be awake and engage with confidence. 



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The Great **DIVIDE**

WES BREDEHOF

I grew up during the Cold War and was quite aware of it. In fact, in St. Albert, the city where I spent most of my youth, we had an air raid siren in a central location. A Canadian air force base was right next to our city, so we would've been an attractive target for the Soviet Union. During those Cold War years, we often heard stories of defectors. Many brave people risked their lives to come to the West from communist countries. You'd hear stories, for example, of people who tried to tunnel underneath the Berlin Wall to find freedom.

What few people know is that there were also Westerners who defected to communist countries. One of the most famous of these was James Dresnok. He was an American soldier in South Korea, but in 1962 he defected to North Korea. He traded freedom for life under a totalitarian regime. Dresnok went on to become somewhat of a celebrity in North Korea, often appearing in films as the requisite evil American. He died in 2016, still behind communist lines.





We can understand defecting from a communist country to the free West. *But the other way around?* Why would anyone ever do that? It seems completely irrational.

There's another major defection in world history that's equally irrational. It made zero sense for Adam to defect from God to Satan in Genesis 3. He traded freedom, joy, and peace for slavery, misery, and war. That was a completely insane defection. Following this defection, there's been a great divide in the human race. Human beings are now divided on the basis of their attitude towards the King of kings. In principle a line has been drawn between traitorous defectors and loyal citizens. On each side of this line, there's movement, but it's in opposite directions. By God's grace, the loyal citizens are heading for the New Jerusalem. The traitorous defectors are on their way to the lake of fire. In Reformed theology, we have a special name for this great divide: *the antithesis*.

ANTITHESIS


This is a concept found throughout Scripture. It's quite evident in places like Ephesians 5. The Holy Spirit mentions those who are "sons of disobedience" (v. 6). The storm of God's wrath is forecast to hit them. But on the other hand, there are those who once were darkness, but are now light in the Lord (v. 7). Since that's what they are in principle, Paul calls them to "walk as children of light." What's true in principle has to become increasingly true in practice. The key thing to recognize is that Scripture speaks in terms of these two categories of human beings. They're radically opposite to one another in terms of who guides their lives (God/self), the purpose for their lives (God's glory/something worldly), and the destination of their lives (heaven/hell).

Christians recognize this reality. True, at times it may seem counter-intuitive. After all, there are inconsistencies on both sides of this great divide. For example, Christians sometimes think, act, and speak selfishly and non-Christians selflessly. However, this doesn't detract from the general principle of the antithesis God has described in Scripture as reality. The way we limited creatures see things doesn't always line up with the way the omniscient God sees things. But if you're omniscient, surely you have the best possible grasp on reality, and then you're worthy to be trusted by those who aren't omniscient.

The antithesis has applications across a range of areas, but one of the most important is apologetics. When it comes to defending and promoting the Christian faith, we need to recognize that there's no neutrality amongst human beings. The unbeliever is hostile to God. He or she is on the wrong side of the antithesis, a hateful covenant-breaker, rebel, and traitor. An unbeliever might vigorously claim neutrality, but we take God's Word over the unbeliever's word. This person is lined up against God.

BATTLE PREPARATION

By God's grace, Christians are on the other side of this great divide. They didn't place themselves there; God put them there. Through Christ they've been reconciled to God, placed in a friendly relationship of fellowship with him. We call that relationship the covenant of grace. As I said above, in practice, Christians are still sinners. There's something of the antithesis that even runs in our own hearts. But the difference is in how we hate it and don't want it to be this way. We pray for God's grace to help us battle daily against our remaining sinfulness.

Scripture calls us to always be ready to give an answer for the hope we have in Christ (1 Pet 3:15). As we do that, we can never pretend our unbelieving friends are neutral or indifferent about God and the biblical worldview. There's a baked-in hostility we need to take seriously. This is essential to a Reformed method of apologetics. It's certainly not the only ingredient, but it's an important one. Here's why. Apologetics is like a battle. If you don't have realistic and accurate intelligence about the other side and the battlefield, success becomes more remote. With Scripture, we literally have a "God's-eye-view" of the situation. Why wouldn't we take that seriously? Only if we have an accurate grasp of what's going on can we properly employ the spiritual weapons God has given, particularly the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. 

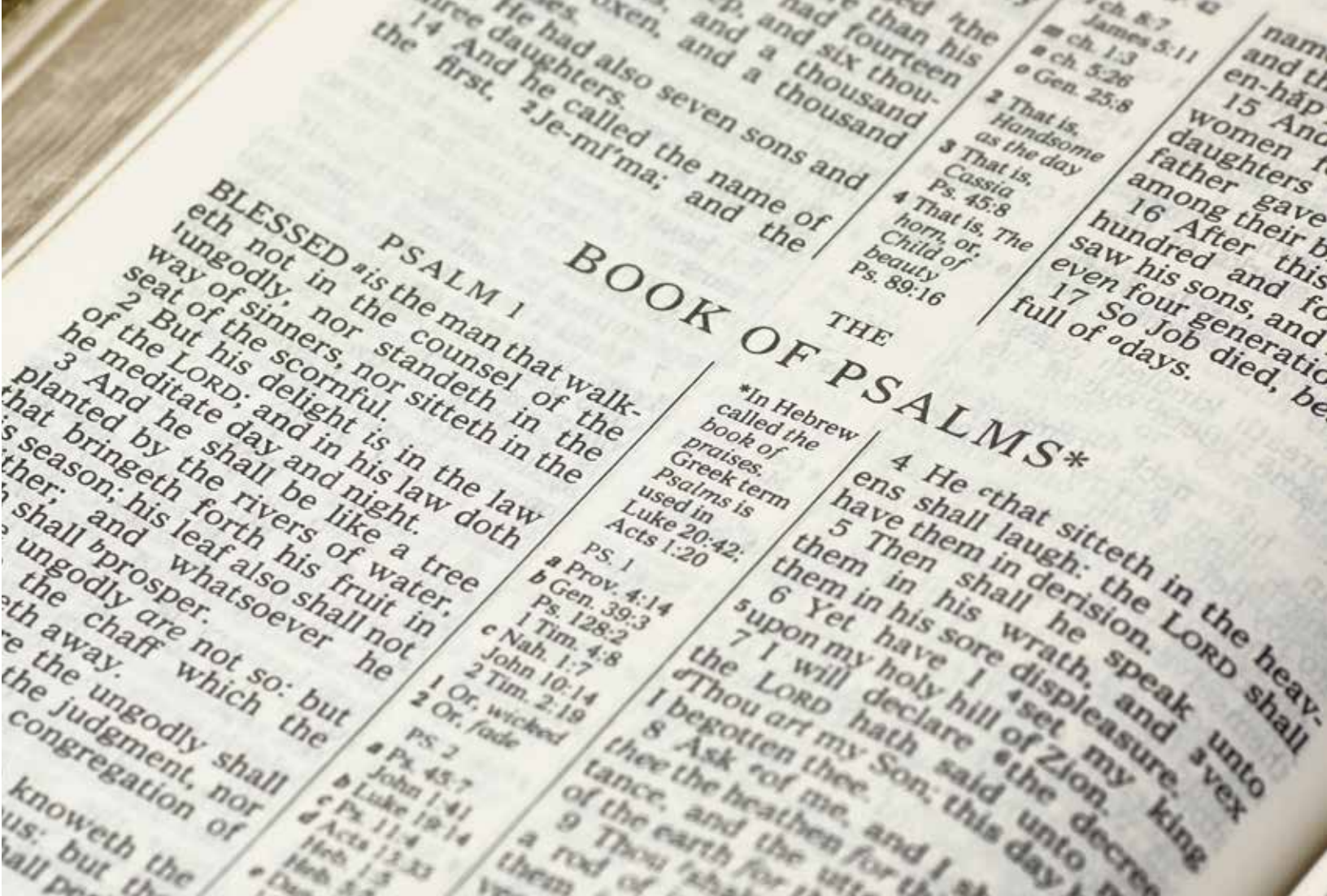


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A Load of Care

RICK LUDWIG

The poem-turned-song, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” is a popular hymn sung at Christian funerals as an encouragement for lonely days ahead for those who have lost a loved one. Because of my chosen profession, I find myself singing or humming along with this tune at least on a monthly basis. Interestingly, it also triggers some hymn angst from my youth. It is a hymn that is not adopted for our church worship and perhaps it has some holes in it. How close a friend can Jesus be if he is also our Lord and Master? Is the language of this hymn too familiar? Or, are we not

as comfortable as we could be in coming in this close a confidence with our Saviour? Is it a bit too focused on our circumstances, or on us, to be a worship hymn? All worthwhile questions to consider. I have to admit that, now in my fifties, some of this anxiety has waned as I increasingly look for solace in his arms along with the rest of the group as we sing about the benefits of taking it all to the Lord in prayer.

Most recently, one line in the third verse of this hymn caught my attention and got me thinking about the divided opinion in

Not addressing these questions will simply exacerbate a developing drift in opinion and practice

our federation of churches around songs approved for worship. “Cumbered with a load of care.” That’s a poetic way of saying encumbered; an antiquated word meaning restricted or burdened so that free movement is difficult. That also prompted me to think about Article 55 of the Church Order. Is it possible, with all good intentions, we have “cumbered it with a load of care”? It seems to me, in the recent side-shuffle at General Synod 2022 in denying the two parallel regional synod overtures regarding the removal of the hymn cap, and the slowing of the pace on new worship song approvals, we may be applying the content of this article in a weighted manner, going beyond what is agreed upon by the churches. This is causing frustration for some churches who are advocating for more song selection and is instigating a firm pull back by other churches who are preserving a rich heritage. It reminds me a bit of the tug-of-war that was a highlight of our local church picnics many years ago. There rarely seemed a clear winner as everyone tumbled to the ground dragging each other through the dust towards the mud-pit in the middle.

AN AGREEABLE ARTICLE

Article 55 is short and to the point: “The metrical Psalms adopted by general synod as well as the hymns approved by general synod shall be sung in the worship services.” At first blush this seems pretty clear. The churches agree that the psalm versification and music will be collectively adopted, and that hymns will be approved by general synod (the churches in common) to be sung in the worship services of each local church. Since the songs for worship also elucidate the theology of the church (like the creeds and confessions), it makes sense to make this a joint effort following the “many eyes” hypothesis. I don’t see any churches wishing to embrace unscriptural or confessionally weak psalm renditions or hymns. As such, I am pretty confident all the churches can work together under this simple direction to ensure the ongoing quality of psalms and hymns. However, it is the convolution of many years of practically working out this article that gives rise to disagreement. Disagreements about the Church Order application usually find their root in a perceived imbalance of federative

versus local oversight. This is no exception. You can be intent as a church to observe the Church Order and maintain unity, but still struggle with what the articles of the Church Order actually say. And when the decisions of a general synod firmly push back against previous decisions and broadly approved overtures, this tends to raise the antennae for all the churches.

The history of the Canadian Reformed Churches is one of Dutch immigration and settlement in a new country with a different language and a diverse culture. It became clear to the church fathers that adapting to the new country of Canada was important, while not giving up on a rich heritage of Reformed worship from their European experience and history. In respect to Article 55, this largely meant taking the Dutch Psalter and translating it to an English version. There was no objection to appointing a Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* from general synod to general synod to work this out over time. Through various editions, updated translations, and some additions over time, the *Book of Praise* emerged as a completed work, with thanks to the many who have put hours of careful and dedicated thought and work into it. This *Anglo Genevan Psalter* has been diligently taught in home, church, and school of a second, third, and now fourth generation of children and has served well in maintaining an appreciation of faithful psalm singing in worship along with a select variety of scriptural hymns.

AN ACHILLE’S HEEL?


But what encumbrances may have come along the way to our understanding of Article 55 over these years of settlement, translation, and reorganization? Is the *Book of Praise* now a *fait accompli* for the churches, or a canon of worship music closed for periods of time at the discretion of the general synod? Have the churches agreed to forego the local responsibility in selecting the songs for their worship services under the general supervision of a Standing Committee? Have the churches asked the broader assemblies to regulate the number of psalms and hymns sung in each local worship service and would that even be appropriate? Should the churches be limited in addressing the broader assemblies with

proposals of metrical psalm versions and hymns that may complement or even replace existing adopted or approved content? Have the churches agreed to be bound to one song book without any opportunity for local augmentation? These are some of the questions the churches need to wrestle with in order to clarify what Article 55 does commit each church to do. Not addressing these questions will simply exacerbate a developing drift in opinion and practice. An encumbered Article 55 will not be a unifying strength of the federation but possibly its Achilles' heel. Uncluttered clarity is needed to help solve a growing rift.

And why is this a festering issue now? The churches who have intentionally engaged their local neighbourhoods in outreach, moving beyond the structures of a more homogenous immigrant church body, are the ones asking for some flexibility. This is largely to help engage newcomers with some of the North American lexicon of metrical psalms and hymns that they might find more familiar to help them participate with more engagement in the worship services. I have observed this to be a reality in Streetlight Church. "I know this one," is spoken under a number of breaths preceding a robust singing response for the whole gathering. This persistent request is also in recognition that this emerging group of visitors and new members do not have the benefit of years of instruction in the *Anglo Genevan Psalter* in home, church, and school and stand at a distinct disadvantage in learning it quickly, let alone accessing the benefits of their homes and schools to assist them in this. These churches are asking for general approval to help them with a local need. They are also requesting an ongoing dialogue in the federation in investigating new metrical psalm renditions and hymns that are being produced in a Reformed context to be considered for worship as well, keeping in step with our modern times of increased accessibility to music as it is developed. For the churches in the federation who do not find themselves in this same position, the *Book of Praise* may continue to be unaugmented for as long as is locally desirable or suitable at their consistory's discretion. These requests are not intended to pre-empt what we have. Rather, local challenges are prompting a general request to allow room for local solutions.

Does dissatisfaction with the *status quo* authorize a frustrated church to go it alone in respect to Article 55? Should any church commandeer a part of the Church Order and simply adopt their own practice, ignoring the historical developments? I think we can agree that this is also a troublesome road to go down, whether alone, or with a few allies. Appealing and engaging is the agreed upon route for working things out. Boycotting will always draw a line in the sand that is difficult to erase. Article 55 is also meant to foster unity and faithfulness and it needs to be worked out together. Working things out together will always take two sides to be a party to it and to respect the terms of engagement.

AN INTOLERABLE SITUATION

I had the opportunity recently to fill in as catechism teacher for a pastor on sabbatical, and part of the curriculum I was assigned had to do with Dutch church history, including the Secession of 1834. What fascinated me was that the issue of psalm-singing and the addition of hymns was hot on the table already then. Nothing new under the sun. What I discovered to be most egregious to the churches of the Secession was *not only* that their allegiance to exclusive or predominant psalm-singing was under duress, *but additionally* that the general synod was directing the churches as to what should be sung in the local church worship services—a minimum of two hymns per service! A heavy hand of the general synod interfering in the local church affairs has always been an intolerable situation for Reformed churches. Getting this right in respect to Article 55 not only has to do with adding more hymns in the worship service or not, it also has to do with maintaining a healthy balance between federative agreement and local governance. After all, our spiritual forebearers sacrificed much to maintain *both* of these important scriptural principles. 



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A HOLY, VISIBLE SIGN AND SEAL

In the April 28 issue of *Clarion* this year there was a letter to the editor, submitted by John Vantil. At that time, I promised to interact with his questions within the framework of a closer look at Article 61 of the Church Order, which regulates “Admission to the Lord’s Supper.” In his letter, Vantil responded to a column I had written earlier, with the title “The spirit of the Church Order,” and he was puzzled by my statement that “it [i.e. Art. 61] does not say anything about guests who might come from other denominations, or perhaps from no church at all.”

But there is no need to be puzzled here. I used the reference to Article 61 to illustrate that the Church Order does not always answer all our questions—in this case, the question of how to respond to the request of a visitor who is not a member of a sister church and who asks to be admitted to the Holy Supper. It was simply an observation that Article 61 says nothing about this.

Of course, that does not mean that we cannot have a closer look at this issue and see if we can find out more about why this is the case and what the implications are. Vantil does exactly that when he asks: “Would it not be helpful to refer to the original wording of Article 61 of the Church Order?”

The issue of admitting guests or visitors to the Lord’s Supper celebration, and the responsibility of the elders in this, is often a matter of discussion. We see a variety of practices, not only

between the CanRC and its sister churches, like the OPC and the URC, but also within the federation of CanRCs.

DOES ARTICLE 61 MENTION GUESTS?

Article 61 has two parts. The first describes the responsibility of the consistory when it comes to admitting people to the Lord’s Supper. The condition to be met is twofold: (1) public profession of the Reformed faith, and (2) a godly lifestyle. This is in line with what we confess in Q/A 82 of the Catechism: “Are those to be admitted to the Lord’s Supper who by their confession and life show that they are unbelieving and ungodly?” The answer is: “No.”

The second part stipulates that those who come from a sister church can partake in the Lord’s Supper celebration, without making profession of faith again, provided they can show written evidence that they meet the conditions in the first part of this CO article.

This second part is usually interpreted as referring to what we have come to call “travel attestations” for guests. But that is questionable. The word “guest” is never mentioned—neither from sister churches nor from non-sister churches. Perhaps it doesn’t even refer to guests.

Here it becomes interesting to follow the suggestion of Vantil’s letter to the editor, mentioned before: how does the current wording of Article 61 compare to the previous version (before the revision of 1983)?¹ It says this:

None shall be admitted to the Lord’s Supper except those who, according to the usage of the church with which they unite

Readers are invited to send questions regarding church polity and the Church Order to Jan DeGelder (jdegelder@cogeco.ca).

¹ Acts GS Orangeville 1968, p. 124

themselves, have made a profession of the Reformed Religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly conduct, without which also those who come from other churches shall not be admitted.

Here also the last part of the sentence does not speak about “guests,” who are visiting when the Lord’s Supper is being celebrated. The words “coming from other churches” have always been interpreted as referring to people who move from one church to another in the federation. They don’t need to profess their faith again to become communicant members, with the right to be admitted to the Lord’s Supper in their new congregation, as long as they can prove that they have made profession of the Reformed Religion and are reputed to be of godly conduct.

How will they be able to prove that? Here church order commentaries make the connection with the old Article 82 (which has become Article 62 in our current CO): “To those who depart from the congregation, an attestation or testimony concerning their profession and conduct shall be given by the consistory.”² This is about the attestation or testimony given to those who move to another town and thus join the Reformed church in that place. Again—the words “guest” and “travel attestation” are nowhere to be found.

Of course, this does not prove that there were never any guests at the Lord’s Supper anywhere. But it makes clear that the Church Order does not regulate it. What we would call today a “travel attestation” came up in the nineteenth century as a document for “boatmen” or “bargemen” (Dutch: *schippers*), who travelled with their barges over the rivers and canals in Holland, transporting cargo from town to town. They usually had their family on board, and, since they were perhaps once or only a few times per year in their hometown and home church, they carried a document with them to declare that they were church members in A, so that wherever they came they would be received in the local Reformed church, got pastoral care, had a baby baptized, and—yes—could attend the Lord’s Supper.³

AN ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE

What are the implications of the conclusion that our Church Order’s Article 61 does not mention “guests” or “visitors” when it speaks about “Admission to the Lord’s Supper”?


Some would say that therefore it is entirely up to the local consistory how to admit those visitors to the Holy Supper celebrations. This may sound reasonable, but it is an argument based on what the Church Order does not say, an argument from silence.

Such an argument is always weak. It would make just as much sense to say that, since Article 61 does not mention any guests, guests should simply not be part of the celebration at all.

There is actually more that points in the direction that the Lord’s Supper is for the local congregation and that guests are not in the picture. For instance, Article 35 of the Belgic Confession says that “we receive this holy sacrament in the congregation of the people of God with humility and reverence as we together commemorate the death of Christ our Saviour.” And in Q/A 82 of the Catechism we confess that, when the unbelieving and ungodly are admitted to the Lord’s Supper, God’s wrath is kindled against the whole congregation. Furthermore, the Form for the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper instructs us that “for the sake of Christ, who so exceedingly loved us first, we shall now love one another, and shall show this to one another not just in words but also in deeds.” You will exercise and experience this fellowship in your own local church community (cf. 1 Cor 12).

However, historically speaking, the exclusion of all guests would be a step too far. Dutch ecclesiastical assemblies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries dealt already with questions about guests at the Lord’s Supper. They stressed the responsibility of consistories to insist (!) on a written testimony that those who would like to partake had been admitted to the Lord’s Supper in their home (Reformed) church.⁴

All this still leaves the question: how do you make a decision about admitting guests, when Article 61 does not say anything about it? Think of what we saw in a previous column about “the spirit of the church order.” What is not written can never be interpreted as the opposite of what has been written. In other words: the freedom of the consistory of the local church to admit guests to the Lord’s Supper cannot be a freedom that contradicts what has been stipulated already about admission to the Lord’s table.

After all—would it not be strange and inconsistent if an entirely different standard would apply for guests from non-sister churches than for members of our own churches or from sister churches? 



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² Acts GS Orangeville 1968, p. 126

³ Acts GS Dordrecht 1893, Art. 189

⁴ J. Reitsma and S. D. Van Veen, *Acta der Provinciale en Particuliere Synoden*, Vol. 1 [1892], Enchuysen, 1573, Art. 21, p. 19, and Vol. 7 [1898], Groningen, 1613, p. 214.

SAHABAT FM

AN INTERVIEW WITH REV. EDWER DETHAN

DICK WYNIA

Rev. Dick Wynia, pastor of Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church and a member of the Board of Reformed Faith and Life-Canada, interviewed Rev. Edwer Dethan, missionary of the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church, who is working in West Timor, Indonesia. This interview focuses on one aspect of that work: the use of a radio station, Sahabat FM, to broadcast gospel teaching into the surrounding area. Reformed Faith and Life-Canada funds the broadcast of several evangelistic programs on the station. Sahabat FM allows Rev. Dethan to reach out to listeners near and far (via internet) with the good news message of salvation in Jesus Christ and gives students of the Elpida School (established in conjunction with the mission work) opportunity to learn something about broadcasting.

DW: Please describe your work in Indonesia

Let me begin by praising our God who has saved us through his Son, Jesus Christ, the head of the church. It is through his strength that we are able to do mission work around the world. And it is because of his command that Smithville Canadian Reformed Church started the mission work in Indonesia. We arrived in Kupang, West Timor in October 2003 to begin the work of reaching out with God's Word to the citizens of my hometown.

The Lord has blessed this work beyond imagination; over the next years, nine churches were instituted and divided into two classes. After much consideration, discussion, and prayer, the churches decided in 2016 to form a federation called Gereja Gereja Reformed Indonesia Timor (GG-RIT). It was not easy to start a new federation in the Indonesia context. However, the churches really felt it very important to have their own federation for the sake of unity among themselves; from there on they also hoped for more contact with other churches in Indonesia. The federation then appointed deputies for establishing and facilitating church relationships within Indonesia.



After the worship service in one of the churches planted through the mission work in Timor.

Where are the churches located?

GG-RIT churches and mission posts are mainly located on the island of Timor. The first congregation was established in the city of Kupang; the other churches are located in various places where there was no other Reformed church. The Lord willing, this year, we will open more mission posts on other islands.

When and how did the idea of a radio station arise?

The Lord is an amazing God, who works in amazing ways. We had not thought of radio as a means to do mission work. However, God in his providence allowed me to meet several people with a passion for radio ministry in 2006. It was fairly simple to purchase the transmitter and antenna. Much more challenging was the process to obtain the broadcasting license. Of course, this was a whole new venue for us; we had no experience whatsoever in this sort of thing.

Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world. All government ministries are controlled by Muslim leaders and, at that time, the minister for broadcasting happened to be an extremist Muslim. That made it nearly impossible for us to obtain a license. The station was banned from broadcasting for more than six months. Many times, a delegation came from Jakarta to investigate our station. They had a thorough look at our vision and mission and content. Upon review they rejected our request, because the content of the programs was by and large Christian. That was very disappointing, and we asked ourselves, "Now what?"

Matthew 10:16 gave us the answer: "I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Reformatting the programs was the way to move forward! Originally, we had most of our slots filled with preaching and teaching the gospel, but we began to fill the schedule with programs that featured more dialogue. The presenter would raise

a question or current issue, have the listeners call in with comments and/or questions, and answer this from a biblical perspective.

This change was sufficient for a license to be issued! The Lord surely works all things for the good of those who love him (Rom 8:28). Radio Sahabat FM has been operating with a legal license since 2007. Each year we have to submit a report showing we remain within the boundaries of the broadcasting rules and regulations.

How does the radio station function in the work of Mission Timor?

Most of our churches are in remote areas and have no electrical power. The roads leading to these villages are often in poor condition and even inaccessible during the rainy season. Radio is frequently the only connection with the outside world. Social media is making an entrance in Timor, yet radio remains the most effective way to communicate. Radio does not depend on the power supply or internet connection.

It is a challenge sometimes to get good reception, since Timor is a mountainous island. One of our listeners said, "We love the Sahabat programs, they are so upbuilding, always directing us to God's Word. Rare is the day when we do not tune it. Unfortunately, there is just one spot in our house where reception is clear. In the evening, when all work has finished, we gather in the living room with our neighbours and our children take turns holding the antenna just so that reception is clear!"

Who works at the station? How far does the radio signal reach?

The staff at Sahabat FM consists of a station manager, two full time announcers, and a number of part time announcers. Whenever there is a need for a technician, we hire someone for the job.



Edwer Dethan with some guest in the Sahabat studio

Sahabat's range covers most of the island of West Timor and its surrounding islands (Rote, Semau, and part of Flores Islands). We know this based on incoming calls and messages, and surveys done by the announcers. Listeners can also tune in via livestreaming. While internet access is limited throughout much of Timor, people living in other parts of Indonesia and Indonesians living abroad use livestreaming to keep up with news from back home and staying connected with local listeners.

How important is Radio Sahabat to your mission work?

Radio Sahabat is a vital tool to the mission work. It opens doors we would not otherwise be able to open. The challenge with radio ministry is that you never know your whole audience and simply have to pray and trust that the Lord will work in his mysterious ways. Listening to God's Word via radio allows the interested to remain anonymous for however long they wish. There are no expectations; decision making is left completely with the individual. This is ideal for many who are struggling with a difficult past and/or current sins. The announcers always encourage people to take up contact directly with Sahabat FM for follow up. Those that do call in and are interested in further discussion or want to join a church are referred to the pastor of a Reformed church in their area.

Indonesia is a nation of many islands and many dialects—does that create a barrier to your broadcasting efforts?

There are over 800 languages spoken across the Indonesian archipelago. Bahasa Indonesia is the official language spoken by about 94% of the 260 million inhabitants. It is mainly the older people who struggle with Bahasa Indonesia, especially in the area of Soe.

The Reformed ministers and evangelists working in this area are competent in the local language and thus able to translate the programs they listen to and discuss together.

Is radio/internet broadcasting especially beneficial in this Muslim-majority country?

The advantage of radio/internet broadcasting in a Muslim-majority country is that we are able to reach those that would otherwise be very hard to connect to. Most of the songs played on Sahabat FM are contemporary songs, sprinkled in between are short two minute "Wisdom of today" devotions which act as advertisements for the gospel! Many people tune in to listen to the music and get gripped by the gospel messages in this way.

What role does Reformed Faith and Life-Canada play in the broadcast ministry of Radio Sahabat?

Reformed Faith and Life-Canada has been a great blessing for the broadcasting ministry in Indonesia. We are thankful that through RFL we can air our sermons, Bible study discussion programs done by church leaders, and lectures from STAKRI (a theological training school established by Mission Timor in Kupang). Besides, those programs we also have Wisdom of today, a two-minute spot during which a specific Bible verse is explained and applied to real life situations. The aim of these spots is to reach people in all walks of life and bring in focus the Bible as the solution to life's problems.

Another great program that's loved by our listeners is Kids' Club. That's a weekly children's program aimed at listeners between the ages of 6 and 12. This program has been a great blessing not only for members of our churches, but others in the community as well. Some parents love to listen to the Bible stories, too! One



Pastor Edwre and Femmy



Meeting people, making friends, and talking about Reformed faith

of our listeners, Sus Merry, says, “every Wednesday afternoon, I have three of our children with me, together with two other children from the neighbourhood, to listen to the Bible story from Sahabat radio. I want to listen to the story so that I can retell it again to my children if they miss anything. Some stories I already knew but some are new to me. I’m so thankful that I can listen to those stories.”

How did Cyclone Seroja affect Radio Sahabat?

Cyclone Seroja was a severe tropical tornado which traveled through West Timor on April 4, 2021. A trail of destruction was left behind, with 20,000 homes and five bridges destroyed. The power supply network was destroyed, and it took weeks for this to be restored. The Sahabat FM tower toppled over, lifting up the transmitter and then sending it crashing back down as the tower fell to the earth. Fallen trees severely damaged the roof of the station. The impact was enormous and it took months to restore the station to working order. Funds were raised, especially through Reformed Faith and Life–Canada, for a new tower and transmitter. Funds were also provided through Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund to repair the building. We are so thankful that after the station was off the air for more than a year, it’s up and running again!

Do you hear from listeners? How would you describe a typical listener?

We do get a general idea of who the listeners are, where they come from, and what they like based on the number of calls and text

messages we receive, the survey we’ve done, plus coverage areas and social media comments. We estimate that there are about 10,000–15,000 listeners.

Sahabat FM serves the general public, therefore it is hard to describe the “typical listener.” It could be a housewife listening in during chores, students doing their homework, or office workers playing Sahabat FM for background music. We often meet people “at random” while we’re doing groceries, or at birthday parties or funerals, who recognize Pastor Ed’s name from the messages played on air!

For many Sahabat FM has truly become the friend that accompanies them every day during their daily tasks and/or times of relaxation! Far more amazing is the fact that many have come to know the only true Friend, Jesus through the programs aired at Sahabat FM.

What’s your vision and mission going forward?

Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country of 280 million people. Internet usage is growing throughout Indonesia. So, we hope that through our current program at Sahabat FM we will be able to do more broadcasting using the tools available through the internet, to spread God’s Word via podcasts, or any other social media. 📺



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The school grounds with the celebration taking place in the back field.



Opening ceremonies before the dinner.



50th Anniversary of

DUFFERIN

CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

ELIZABETH DEWIT

Thankfulness and joy were the overwhelming emotions in Carman, Manitoba as people associated with Dufferin Christian School at some point in the past or the present gathered to celebrate fifty years of the LORD's faithfulness. The theme chosen, Psalm 103:17, "But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him," resounded in prayer, in music, and in artworks.

FINE ARTS GALA

Large golden "50" letters and blue and white balloons flanked the front of the Canadian Reformed Church of Carman West on Friday, June 2, 2023 on the occasion of the Fine Arts Gala, the first event of the anniversary celebration. The principal of DCS, Chris deBoer, opened this evening of music, reminding us that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord and understanding comes from knowing God.

During the performances from each grade, in song, in piano playing, recorders and bells, temple blocks, cymbals, and even pail drums, we saw something of how high, deep, and wide God's love is. Interspersed between performances, Mr. deBoer quoted tidbits from past Beacons and even from some student work of some forty years ago. A highlight was the anniversary choir of middle and high school students who sang the songs they performed for

the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools banquet. To close, the audience sang Psalm 150 followed by all the elementary students singing "Christ the Sure and Steady Anchor."

The following 33°C afternoon, the doors of the school opened at 3:00 pm to allow everyone to view the artworks displayed. The Canadian flag flew outside; inside the foyer, a lighthouse with Matthew 5:16 reminded us that we are to be a light in order that God may be praised because of us. The school motto "Growing in Grace, Equipping for Excellence, Learning for Life" was aptly illustrated in the artworks displayed on tables and in hallways. The school vibrated with colour, paintings, dioramas, murals, and photos, expressions of God's grace, God's creation, his faithfulness, and also of topics dealt with in the past year, including indigenous studies, perspective, and worldviews. There was art everywhere, students expressing themselves in portraiture, in landscape, and in various mediums. For a touch of nostalgia and a few chuckles, a revolving set of photos played in every classroom.

The entrance to the gym sported a new mural. Opposite the Stingers insignia, we now see a street at sunrise, featuring the school on one side and a church and home on the other. The effect is one of light and peace, in the solid triangle of our community over which God is Lord.

A choir of students led by Jeremy Kamminga perform for a full house.



The Grade 1 class performed "Encourage One Another" at the Fine Arts Gala.



The audience joined in singing "Praise God from whom all Blessings Flow."

ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY

At 4:30 pm, Gerry van Dijk welcomed the large crowd to the formal ceremony, giving a few details about the history of the school from its opening in 1973 with two classrooms for forty students in grades 1–6 to our present almost 300 students in a K-12 school. He praised the Lord for his faithfulness in bringing this about and maintaining it.

Former principals had an opportunity to address the gathering. Harold Ludwig spoke a few words highlighting the opening of an integration program, and the procuring of the first computer in the school. He, as well as those past principals unable to attend, wished us blessings in the coming years. Len Lodder noted that everyone has his own path and God directs our ways. What a wonderful love we receive from our God. Nathan Kok spoke with amazement that God, who needs no one, chooses to have a relationship with us. Great is his faithfulness.

Cor Lodder, local reeve, expressed thankfulness on behalf of the municipality and the town for the blessings brought to the area through education and growth of the children. He wished us God's blessings. Dave Gortemaker congratulated us on behalf of

Immanuel Christian School in Winnipeg. Not one word of God's promises has failed. These words are also true for us now. We can rest in those promises.

Congratulations were received from the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools. The Hon. Blaine Pederson, MLA, expressed congratulations on staying faithful to core values for fifty years and expressed the wish that we would remain faithful for the next fifty. Chris deBoer, our current principal, expressed the prayer that the Lord would bless our efforts. Lastly, Anton Borst, chairman of the school board, thanked all who were involved in planning this event. Anton reflected back on the Lord's blessings in the past, in financial blessings, in staffing for the school, and in the previous generations who saw the need for such a school. Will we be here in fifty years? Let the remember the Lord's steadfast love. To God be the glory.

Anton read Psalm 100 and led us in a prayer of thanksgiving and asked for a blessing over the meal to follow, a delicious supper of barbecued pork and cold salads. A social time and time for reconnecting followed. ☺

LOVING GOD through serving people.

Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.



Leadership Training Workshop for Pastors, Teachers, Evangelists, and Volunteers



Message from Founder, Chairman Naeem Zafar

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for your generous support. Christ For All Ministry has grown, expanded, and strengthened. Our team in Pakistan continues to support our Pastors, Teachers, Leaders, and Volunteers to grow and spread the word of God among deprived Christian families. One of our goals is to end poverty among Christians, as many Christians suffer in poverty. They face discrimination and persecution daily, so we support and comfort them in Christ. By the grace of God and your financial support, we have been able to add more Sunday schools and youth programs and provide support for Pastors to independent Churches in the areas we are working in. So they can help their congregations and give them the right tools and instructions.



Here we have a girl who is only 6 years old and is working at a Brick Kiln. Her story is like many other children in the Brick Kiln communities, where they must work at such young

ages to help their parents work off debts from medical expenses and inflated costs of borrowing.



Poverty Relief: Left Picture- Online Seminar for our Youth Skills Program with women at Sheikhpura Church. Right Picture - Prakash is running the Motorcycle shop, teaching youth skills they can use to help earn a living.



Sunday School



Opening a new Sunday school


Donations and information
We accept Cheques or E-transfers to donate@christforallministry.com
For projects information Naeem@christforallministry.com
Prayer Partner: www.christforallministry.ca
donate: Audio Bibles



Prayer Request: Prayer for the persecuted families. Pray for the safety of our team in Pakistan. For providing Audio Bibles to the many Brickkiln workers. **Prayer for recent brothers who were falsely accused of blasphemy cases.**

LOVING GOD through serving people.
Philippians 3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Multifunctional Digital MP3 Radio speaker



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with Audio Bible and Gospel Songs

Full Bible in Urdu
 MP3 player
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Make People of Pakistan
 Read and Listen to the Bible!



Bible project



Our Team has been able to provide Bibles to the churches that have recently been burned down or destroyed by mobs in Pakistan. Audio Bibles have been given to the community and they were so excited and grateful. Many of these brothers and sisters have been working in the Brick Kilns for many years and have not been able to attend church, now they can work and listen to the Word of God.



Independent small church in Clarkabad where Sohail David and his wife serve the congregation



Reaching the communities: Our team in Canada would love to share with you the work our ministry is doing and plans to do. You can sign up for our newsletter or have our team come and do a presentation to show you the amazing work being done for our Christian brothers and sisters. Contact us at info@christforallministry.com



Thailand is also dangerous for displaced Pakistani Christians, who fled because of persecution. We continue to look forward to helping these brothers and sisters with their special needs. (Kazuto Kishi agent CFAM Thailand)

Report from Treasurer Josh Poppe

We have been blessed with many generous donors, including Churches, Schools, Individuals, and Corporations. Thank you so much for partnering with us in the past year. This year, we aim to double our budget from ~\$50,000 to ~\$100,000. We have our existing Sunday Schools, leadership training, Home Groups, and skills training, which we continue supporting. We also have a waiting list of rural community congregations wanting us to help them run Sunday Schools, leadership training, Home Groups, and provide Pastors. We want our expanded budget to open new programs in these waiting communities. We need your support to help us develop Christ For All Ministry in these communities. At this point in 2023, we are still on track to double our budget. Please prayerfully consider donating today and sharing this newsletter with family and friends. As our incoming donations increase, we will add new communities desperate for help from their Christian brothers and sisters. Thank you.

Upcoming events:
 3rd Newsletter for sign-up in September
 1st October, CFAM a day of prayers, a new beginning for God's people, Genesis 8:5
 Dessert Evening Fundraising in October

CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 34

Do you know the first commandment? Go ahead and say it to your Dad or Mom right now!

Now, "gods" (with a small g!) means idols, right? Idols were made from wood or silver and carved into a shape. One example is the idol Baal. Today, God still tells us not to have idols. You don't have a Baal in your house, do you? So how do we have idols? Well, idols are anything we love the same amount that we love God. Idols are also things we

love and trust more than God. Sports can become an idol. Do you love sports? That's fine! Sports are a wonderful gift from God. But you should love God more. This means that you are busy thinking about how to praise God while you play. So, you are kind to the other team, even if they are winning a very important game! It also means that you do not become proud if you are good at soccer. Instead, you thank God for the talent he has given you. May God keep us from idols!

LEARN ABOUT THREE MORE THINGS THAT CAN BECOME IDOLS BY DECODING THE WORDS.

1.
20 22 19 8 15 23 19

2.
19 16 15 18 20 19 16 12 1 25 5 18 19

3.
15 21 18 16 1 18 5 14 20 19

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

WHAT SHOULD WE DO INSTEAD OF HAVING IDOLS IN OUR LIVES? UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS TO FIND OUT:

DEUTERONOMY 6:5

You shall love the Lord your God with all your _____ and with all your _____
(aehrt) (lous)
and with all your _____.
(ghimt)



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

O Jesus, Messiah

"But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom." Heb. 1:8

Unison

1. O Je - sus, Mes - si - ah, Our God and great Sav - iour, Your
 2. O Je - sus, Mes - si - ah, Our God and great Sav - iour, Your
 3. O Je - sus, Mes - si - ah, Our God and great Sav - iour, Your

glo - ry sur - pass - es the an - gels in might. Your name is more
 mer - cy is vast - er than o - ceans and skies. You did not a -
 love is ex - ceed - ing - ly sa - cred and strong. No man could de -

wor - thy than Abr' - ham or Mos - es; Your throne and your scep - tre are
 ban - don the re - bels who ru - ined And wrecked your cre - a - tion with
 mand or i - mag - ine such fa - vour: You lived a - mong sin - ners and

just and up - right. No man can as - cend to you, en - ter your
 lust - ings and lies. We've all fal - len short of your glo - ry and
 suf - fered their wrongs. You gave up your glo - ry to en - ter our

pre - sence, With un - ho - ly robes or un - ho - ly de - lights. Yet
 good - ness; We've all fal - len down so as nev - er to rise. Yet
 sto - ry, To take all our sor - rows and turn them to songs. Your

we en - ter bold - ly to claim your great fa - vour; We
 while we were sin - ners with no right to fa - vour, You
 death is our life, and your life is our vic - t'ry, O

rest in your right - eous - ness, live in your light.
 en - tered our world to suf - fer and die.
 Je - sus, Mes - si - ah, to you we be - long.

Text by Timothy Schouten, 2020

CHESED 12.11.12.11.D
 Paul S. Jones, 2012

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About the **Son** he says, "Your **throne**, O God, will last **forever** and ever;
 a scepter of **justice** will be the **scepter** of your **kingdom**.
 You have **loved** righteousness and **hated** wickedness;
 therefore **God**, your God, has set you **above** your companions
 by **anointing** you with the **oil** of joy."

HEBREWS 1:8-9



MISSIONARIES OUGHT TO BE PROFESSIONALS

No Shortcut to Success: A Manifesto for Modern Missions, by Matt Rhodes.
(Wheaton: Crossway, 2022). Paperback. 270 pages. \$25.54 CDN.

Before arriving on the mission field in 2000, I had spent four years in university and then four years in seminary. I was sent to serve in the tiny British Columbia village of Fort Babine. Almost all the people there were poorly educated, and some were illiterate. Some questioned the point of sending a man with my skills and education to such a place. However, if anything, as I look back at it now, I was vastly *underprepared*. I'm convinced now more than ever that missionaries ought to be trained at the highest levels in theology, mission, language, and culture.

Not everyone agrees in today's world of Christian missions. There are those who argue that the only factor that matters is the willingness to go. Everything else is unimportant. Matt Rhodes differs. He believes that Scripture teaches that those sent to the mission field have to work hard beforehand to prepare themselves and work even harder after they arrive. As the title says, there are no shortcuts.

Rhodes is responding to something called "Church Planting Movements" (CPM) in the evangelical mission community. The name sounds innocuous—aren't we all in favour of church planting? But that's not this. CPM-methodology features missionaries who often don't live on the mission field and who don't proficiently speak the language or understand the culture. These missionaries quickly make converts and gather them into churches and then move on to other locations—oftentimes within weeks or months. They report astounding results. For example, David Watson claimed that his CPM-style ministry in India resulted in 10 million believers and 627 churches. All he did was hand out Audio Bibles. Sadly, there is no convincing evidence to back up these wild claims. As Rhodes points out, Indian census data actually showed a net decrease in the number of Christians in the area concerned (p. 62).

DILIGENT LABOUR


But this isn't just about statistics. Rhodes shows how Scripture reveals a different path for aspiring and active missionaries. This path involves time, hard work, responsibility, and devotion to excellence. These are the ordinary means that the Holy Spirit uses to advance the cause of the gospel through Christian mission.

I appreciate the overall thrust of *No Shortcut to Success*. I also appreciate the way Rhodes weaves mission history into his writing. For example, he relates how Hudson Taylor (the famous missionary to China) "rebuked C. T. Studd and Arthur and Cecil Polhills for praying for the gift of tongues so that they could skip language study" (p. 141). That reminds us how the earliest Pentecostals actually

thought they were speaking in known human language and hoped to harness that gift for mission. As a long-tenure missionary in North Africa, Rhodes also draws on his own experiences. He has observed, for instance, that in his region most missionaries don't achieve language proficiency beyond that of a seven-year-old (p. 143). Early in his time in Africa, his team tried to achieve a gospel breakthrough with prayer and fasting. They failed. It was chalked up to deficiencies in their prayer and fasting. Rhodes recalls the reality: "None of us spoke Arabic well enough to share the gospel in easily understandable ways" (p. 243). Finally, I appreciated his helpful lists: what missionaries need to learn about a culture (p. 161), the characteristics of a mature church (pp. 191–193), and factors when considering a life in missionary service (p. 217).

HISTORICAL HICCUPS

I only have two points of criticism, both to do with history. Rhodes repeats the old story that "the Protestant missionary enterprise began with William Carey" (p. 251). As I and many others have argued, this is simply not true. In fact, the Reformation itself should be understood as a "missionary enterprise." Rhodes also repeats as fact the legendary encounter between William Carey and John Ryland. After Carey presented his plan for the evangelism of the world, Ryland allegedly said, "Young man, sit down; when God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do so without your aid or mine." Unfortunately, these words have often been quoted by Arminians to argue that Calvinism destroys missions. However, there is strong evidence suggesting that Ryland never said this or anything like it. The story is likely apocryphal.

If you're a young person with an interest in becoming a missionary, I highly recommend reading this book sooner rather than later. I'd also suggest it to currently serving missionaries, as well as mission board members—and anyone with an interest in mission. The exact form of thinking that's being addressed in this book might not be common in our circles, but the temptation to take short-cuts in mission is a perennial one everywhere, making this book relevant for us too. 

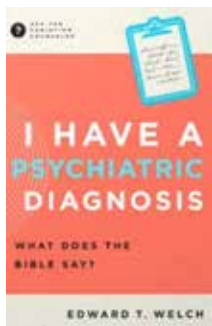


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GOOD NEWS FOR PSYCHIATRIC SUFFERERS

I Have a Psychiatric Diagnosis: What Does the Bible Say? by Edward T. Welch. (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2022). Paperback. 88 pages. \$16.99 CDN.

Psychiatric disorders may seem more common than they used to be. It's not necessarily the case that they are more prevalent, but they do seem to be diagnosed more often. As a result, I'm quite sure that a book with the title of "I Have a Psychiatric Diagnosis" is going to appeal to a wide spectrum of readers.

Dr. Ed Welch is a well-known psychologist, Christian counsellor, and author of many books. In this little book, he addresses those who have been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder or mental illness, along with those who love them. His goal is to bring Scripture to bear on this particular brand of suffering. He wants to bring psychiatric sufferers the good news of Jesus Christ, so they can have the right perspective on how God relates to their suffering. He aims to bring wisdom, rest, and hope. He succeeds in achieving these goals.

GOD IN OUR SUFFERING


Being just a small volume, Welch doesn't address every type of psychiatric diagnosis. He focuses his attention on anxiety and panic disorders, trauma, depression, and narcissism. Welch acknowledges the complex nature of each of these mental health struggles. With most of them, there are medical aspects involved. However, the author doesn't want readers to stop there. For example, he mentions breathing techniques and other suggestions for dealing with panic attacks. He writes, "These can all be helpful. Your work would seem to be done. God, however, is missing, which suggests that your work is just beginning" (p. 21).

With most of the chapters it's clear that Welch is writing for sufferers and those who love them. However, the chapter on narcissism is vaguer in terms of its intended audience. In the other chapters Welch usually writes using the second person, "you." But when writing about the narcissist in chapter 5, he switches to the third person, "they." It seems to be more about helping people deal with narcissists. As far as that goes, the author has many good insights. For example, it's always the narcissist's birthday (p. 71). And: "One feature of narcissists is that their lives are trapped in the present. They are poor at anticipating future difficulties and

rarely make plans" (p. 76). He suggests readers think of narcissists as people from a different country speaking a different language: "You have to figure out how to have basic communication with them" (p. 77).

EVOLUTIONARY CAUTION

I have one cautionary comment with the chapter on trauma. Again, Welch deftly lays out the complexities. For instance, he writes of the impact of trauma on the body. One of the books he mentions is Bessel Van Der Kolk's highly influential *The Body Keeps the Score*. This isn't a Christian book, but it does often get recommended by Christians in relation to trauma. I have recommended it myself, but only the first three chapters. The first three chapters give some excellent descriptions of how trauma lingers in the body. However, beginning with chapter 4, Van Der Kolk gets into analysis and considerations of treatment for trauma. It's in that part of the book that he introduces something known as polyvagal theory (PVT). Originally formulated by neuroscientist Stephen Porges, PVT speculates that evolutionary development has shaped how humans respond to stress. For a Christian, PVT is a problem because at its foundation is the assumption that Darwinian macro-evolution is true. PVT and Darwinism are joined at the hip and can't be separated. It would have been helpful if Welch had acknowledged this significant problem with Van Der Kolk's work.

This book isn't only for sufferers and those living with them. It'll also be helpful reading for all church leaders. These issues are ubiquitous—it's almost guaranteed that someone in your church is struggling with their mental health right now. Welch opens a window into what that's like and the best help available. 



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UNIQUE APOLOGY

The Air We Breathe: How We All Came to Believe in Freedom, Kindness, Progress, and Equality, Glen Scrivener. (Charlotte: The Good Book Company, 2022). Paperback. 232 pages. \$22.99 CDN.

This book was the winner of *Christianity Today's* 2022 Book Award in Evangelism and Apologetics. It's easy to see why. It's a unique form of apology or defence for the Christian faith. As such, *this* is the book you would want to hand to your unbelieving friends or family members.

Glen Scrivener is an Anglican clergyman. Born and raised in Australia, he now lives in the United Kingdom where he directs the evangelism charity Speak Life. Judging from this book, Scrivener is on the evangelical side of the Anglican spectrum.

The main argument of *The Air We Breathe* is this:


The extraordinary impact of Christianity is seen in the fact that you don't notice it. You already hold particularly "Christian-ish" views, and the fact that you think of these as natural, obvious, or universal shows how profoundly the Christian revolution has shaped you (p. 13).

Scrivener argues that the values of our Western cultures are Christian values, even when they have been hijacked and turned in the wrong direction. He dedicates a chapter to each of these values: equality, compassion, consent, enlightenment, science, freedom, and progress. None of these would be held in high regard in the West apart from Christianity's impact. Furthermore, none of these have any absolute demand on us apart from the absolute truth and authority of the Bible.

Scrivener is writing for three Western audiences: the "nones" (those claiming no religious affiliation), the "dones" (those who've rejected Christianity), and the "wons" (Christians). For the first two groups, the book concludes with the gospel message, encouraging unbelievers to read the Bible for themselves to encounter the person and work of Christ. For the last group, *The Air We Breathe* is a powerful reminder that Christians are on solid ground. Christianity expanded to have the influence it did because Christ

rose from the dead as a fact of history. This is a miracle. And: "To embrace the miracle is not to embrace nonsense. In fact, it's a way to make sense of life" (p. 218).

Having praised the book so much so far, I regret having to point out a few cautions. Scrivener casually throws in several references to Darwinian macro-evolution, as if it's a self-evident truth accepted by all. In Chapter 9, he assumes that all readers view George Floyd as a heroic martyr. In fact, he even suggests that Floyd could be seen as a "Christ figure" (p. 189). What happened to him was tragic and wrong, but it's difficult to see how he might be regarded as a picture of the perfectly innocent Lamb of God. Finally, in a similar vein, Scrivener has an overly high estimation of Martin Luther King Jr.. His life was "expended in sacrificial love" and he had "an unashamedly biblical vision" (pp. 184–185). Sadly, MLK was unfaithful to his wife and also theologically a gospel-denying liberal. It's true that biblical ideas influenced his civil rights activism, but we should also be honest about who he was as a man and what he believed.

Those points notwithstanding, *The Air We Breathe* takes a distinctive approach to apologetics, but one that can still be said to hew biblically. Of course, there's no silver bullet in Christian apologetics. Persuasion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, he works through means, including well-written books like this one. 



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CLASSIS CENTRAL ONTARIO

Burlington, ON Friday, June 9, 2023

Elder John Van Dyk, on behalf of Bethel Canadian Reformed Church, welcomed all the delegates and opened the meeting in a Christian manner. The meeting was being held in the facility of Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church. After examination of the credentials by the delegates of Jubilee Church, Classis was constituted and those chosen to serve as executive took their positions. The deputies of Regional Synod East were also in attendance and were welcomed. The agenda was adopted. Two brothers who were interning were welcomed to the meeting as well.

MEMORABILIA

The chair noted the continuing health concerns of Rev. Chris Bosch, Rev. John van Popta, and Rev. George van Popta. In addition, it was noted that Jubilee Church extended a call to Rev. Darren Feenstra which was accepted. Also, Bethel Church has extended a call to Rev. Cody Swaving for mission work in Papua New Guinea.

REPORTS, QUESTIONS, & REQUESTS

The church visitation reports for the Rehoboth, Fellowship, Redemption, Blessings, Mercy, Ebenezer, Jubilee, and Bethel churches were reviewed in closed session and a prayer of thanksgiving was made.

The delegates from the churches were asked, according to Article 44, C.O., whether the ministry of the office bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies were being honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the help of classis. All churches answered yes, yes, and no, respectively, with the exception that two churches (Jubilee–Ottawa and Blessings–Hamilton) sought advice from Classis, which was given.

Classis then considered the request from Blessings for concurring advice from Classis and the deputies of Regional Synod East regarding the retirement of Rev. Paul Aasman effective August 31, 2023. Upon reviewing the relevant information, Classis and the deputies from Regional Synod gave concurring advice. Appreciation was expressed to our brother for his faithful years of service. A word of prayer was then made. Classis appointed

Burlington Fellowship to represent Classis at his retirement service. Pastor Paul then addressed Classis with words of appreciation.

During coffee break, opportunity was given to brother K. C. Gilchrist, a member of Streetlight, to address Classis giving account of how God has directed his life in his service and informing Classis of his current ministry relating to the International Student Ministries (ISM). A word of prayer was then made asking for a blessing over his ministry.

Classis then considered the request from Blessings Church to approbate the call to Rev. Winston Bosch to serve as Minister of the Word at Streetlight Christian Church. When it was determined that all the documents were in good order, the request was granted. Classis was informed that the installation of Rev. Bosch is scheduled to take place on July 9, 2023 at 6:30 pm at Blessings Church. Mercy Church was appointed to represent Classis at the installation. A prayer of thanksgiving was made.

Classis dealt with a letter received from the Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER). The letter requested Classis to keep the Committee informed of any inter-church relations that may be occurring within the churches of CCO. Classis decided to receive the letter for information on the grounds that the request goes beyond the purview of the CER's mandate from General Synod 2022 (see Acts of General Synod 2022, Art. 108 3.6e. This is a mandate for CER specifically, not for the churches and classes individually). Classis directed the clerk to respond to the CER accordingly.

The date of the next classis was scheduled for Friday, September 15, 2023, at 9:00 am at Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church. The officers were suggested for the next classis. Question period was held. Censure according to Article 34 C.O. was deemed unnecessary. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved.

Rev. Tony Roukema led in closing devotions and the meeting was adjourned.

For Classis Central Ontario

Andrew Baartman (Vice-Chairman at the time)

