

A CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
TO ENCOURAGE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE, AND UNITE

72 | 14
Nov 3, 2023



Clarion

535 BE RECONCILED *537* WILL YOU REMEMBER ME?

550 MISSION TAMOR CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

WHAT'S INSIDE

November 11 is Remembrance Day in Canada and to mark that occasion we present a meditation on sacrificing for others by Randall Visscher, a reflective piece on God's remembrance of us by Rick Ludwig, and a person recollection by Plony Hofsink who lived through World War II as a child. While we remember the cessation of past wars, we realize that there are new wars raging in the world almost continually and so how good it is to know that our Saviour Jesus Christ promises to one day end all such conflict and bring us into everlasting peace in his kingdom. He has already reconciled sinners like us to God and so, as Matthew VanLuik points out in his editorial, that peace may begin now in our earthly relationships.

We have two pieces dealing with how the church is governed. Jan DeGelder continues his regular column by zeroing in on worship and what all churches have agreed to in Article 52. He also briefly (by request) interacts with a letter writer later in the issue. Karlo Janssen, another church order man whose published dissertation is on the Form of Subscription, recalls for us the sad but instructive history of what happened in the Netherlands when various churches (and even a classis) did not comply with the church order. Although it's a detailed read that will take time, the lessons it offers us are valuable.

Andrew Douma in *Persecution of Christians* sensitively informs us of the plight of believers in Pakistan and how we might think about and pray for them. Pastor Gerard Veurink has taken a call to another congregation and so an article relates to us his departure from Neerlandia. *Clarion Kids*, two book reviews, and an informative press release from the Board of Governors of CRTS bring this issue to a close. May your reading be edifying!

Peter Holtvlüwer

contents

- 535** EDITORIAL
Matthew Van Luik
- 536** TREASURES, NEW & OLD
Randall Visscher
- 537** Will You Remember Me?
Rick Ludwig
- 540** GOVERNING THE CHURCH
Jan DeGelder
- 542** When a Church Does Not Comply (1)
Karlo Janssen
- 546** Life in Holland During the Second World War
Plony Hofsink
- 548** PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS
Andrew Douma
- 549** The Lord is My Shepherd!
William Helder
- 550** Mission Timor Celebrates Twenty Years
Clarence Bouwman
- 554** Farewell to Rev. Veurink
Dorothy Peters
- 556** CLARION KIDS
Amanda DeBoer
- 557** BOOK REVIEW
Seasons of Sorrow
Wes Bredenhof
The Ten Commandments
Amanda DeBoer
- 560** LETTER TO THE EDITOR
- 562** PRESS RELEASE

Clarion

A trustworthy and engaging magazine, widely spread and read in Canadian Reformed households and beyond.

To equip God's people for his glory, in faithfulness to Scripture, as summarized in the Reformed confessions, Clarion adheres to the following core values:

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

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

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor in Chief: Peter Holtvlüwer
E: pholtvluer@clarionmagazine.ca
Managing Editor: Laura Veenendaal
Contributing Editors: Eric Kampen, Jason Van Vliet, Matthew VanLuik, Jim Witteveen

CONTENT INQUIRIES

E: editor@clarionmagazine.ca

ADMINISTRATIVE INQUIRIES

W: clarionmagazine.ca
E: publisher@clarionmagazine.ca
T: 204-663-9000

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

E: letters@clarionmagazine.ca
Letters to the Editor must not exceed 300 words and are to be written in a Christian manner. See clarionmagazine.ca for guidelines.

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE

E: submissions@clarionmagazine.ca
Only articles which agree with Clarion's guidelines will be considered for publication. See clarionmagazine.ca for guidelines.

SUBMIT A BOOK REVIEW

E: bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca
Reviews should be 600-700 words and concern books which fit with Clarion's purpose. See clarionmagazine.ca for more.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

clarionmagazine.ca/subscriptions

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.

Subscription renewals will be invoiced unless written subscription cancellation is received.

ADVERTISEMENTS

clarionmagazine.ca/advertisements
ads@clarionmagazine.ca

Full page \$434 | ½ \$234 | ¼ \$119 | ⅛ \$64
We reserve the right to refuse ads.

BE RECONCILED

We live in a world in need of reconciliation. Crime, violence, and murder are daily occurrences. Hostilities between people of different cultures are rampant. What would a world that is truly reconciled look like? Can you imagine a world in which everyone truly cared for each other? Can you conceive of a society in which no one held any anger, resentment, or envy in their heart against others? How wonderful if every husband and wife truly loved each other so that never an angry thought came to mind, or a spiteful word was ever spoken against the other.

What about a church in which brothers and sisters live in perfect harmony? Imagine a congregation in which there is no gossip, and no spiteful words are ever spoken, where each member understands each other's needs and all are fully supportive of one another. But the reality within the body of Christ is that many experience painful relationships. We are sinned against, we are hurt by people's comments, friends betray us, we are lied to, we have been taken advantage of, many have been abused by other members emotionally, physically, or even sexually. What we find in the church is not all that different from the troubles in the world.

HOSTILITY, RESENTMENT, AND VIOLENCE

We easily brush it all aside and argue that this is the result of sin. Indeed, the fact that mankind is not reconciled with each other, that we constantly hurt one another, is the curse of sin. Evil has entered the heart of all mankind so that everyone seeks their own advantage at the expense of others. Lamech said to his wives, "When others hurt me then I will avenge myself seventy-seven times." Sinful people do not seek reconciliation but revenge against those who have sinned against us.

This is the kind of world into which the heavenly Father sent his Son. Instead of receiving the Son with open arms, his people rejected him; they mocked and humiliated him, and finally they put him to death. The coming of the Lord Jesus exposed the corrupt heart of mankind. All mankind lives in open rebellion against God, seething with anger, bitterness, and resentment against their Creator.


GOD RECONCILING THE WORLD

God's purpose in sending his Son was to reconcile the world to himself, but the world rejected him. God works in amazing ways,

for reconciliation could only come through the rejection and death of his own Son. To be reconciled with God, mankind needs to pay the full penalty for their sins, which they could not do, and therefore the Lord Jesus offers himself as the complete sacrifice for the sins of his people. The good news is that God is reconciling us to himself. This is the heart of the Christian religion. We are unable to reconcile ourselves to God. Many believe that if they live the right way, if they follow the laws of God, they can restore the relationship with God. That is utterly false. It is the Lord who restores us to himself through the sacrifice of his Son.

Therefore Paul rejoices that Christ has given him the ministry of reconciliation, for "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them" (2 Cor 5:18). Herein lies the incredible power of the gospel to change us. We do not change ourselves, but God changes us when he restores us to a new and living relationship with him. In Christ a peace beyond human understanding overwhelms us, for we can now trust that we live in the comforting arms of our Father. The anger, bitterness, and resentment against God now turns into a great love and delight for our God.

And as God restores peace in our hearts, he makes it possible for his children to live in peace with one another. Now we can understand the urgency with which Christ speaks to us about being reconciled with one another (Matt 5:24). The church is a place where sinners strive to be reconciled, for if you experience being at peace with God then you will also desire to be at peace with everyone else. Today there are still so many who live in the church unreconciled with their brothers and sisters. You cannot let those situations continue in your life. Christ's challenge is to be reconciled and make peace with one another. Difficult, yes, but absolutely necessary. You will also discover there is no greater joy than to live unhindered in fellowship with one another.

Next time: what reconciliation is and what it is not. 



Matthew Van Luik

Minister Emeritus
Grace Canadian Reformed Church
mhvanluik@gmail.com

SACRIFICING FOR OTHERS

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us

ROMANS 5:8


History provides us with numerous examples of self-sacrifice: people laying down their lives for their family, friends, or comrades. As we approach Remembrance Day, we often come across accounts and stories of soldiers who gave their lives so that their comrades-in-arms might live. In part, this is due to the fact that armies often recognize these acts through citations and medals for bravery and valour.

One story of sacrifice comes to us from the Second World War, during the fall of Hong Kong. In December 1941, Company-Sergeant-Major John Osborn of the Winnipeg Grenadiers was part of a Canadian battalion sent to help defend Hong Kong against Japanese attack. Osborn's actions during the fall of Hong Kong would lead to him receiving a Victoria Cross, the highest and most prestigious award given to members of the British Commonwealth. The citation for his Victoria Cross reads as follows,

During the afternoon the Company was cut off from the Battalion and completely surrounded by the enemy who were able to approach to within grenade throwing distance of the slight depression which the Company were holding. Several enemy grenades were thrown which Company-Sergeant-Major Osborn picked up and threw back. The enemy threw a grenade which landed in a position where it was impossible to pick it up and return it in time. Shouting a warning to his comrades this gallant Warrant Officer threw himself on the grenade which exploded killing him instantly. His self-sacrifice undoubtedly saved the lives of many others.

As the apostle Paul mused, “perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die” (Rom 5:7). It's something Jesus called Christians to when he said, “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends” (John 15:13). Self-sacrifice on behalf of friends and loved ones does sometimes happen. But how many times do we hear or read of people dying for their enemies?

How often do people die for those they have reason to ignore or despise? Such stories are far less common. Yet we read in Scripture, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” A few verses earlier we are told, “When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6) And a few verses later we are told, “While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (5:10). We are reminded that Christ sacrificed himself for those who didn't deserve it, who weren't looking for rescue, but were up-in-arms against their God and Saviour.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to follow in the footsteps of our great High Priest. We are to follow the example of our Saviour, who offered himself as a sacrifice for the benefit of many. We cannot do the work that he did upon the cross, but we can learn from it and live in recognition of it. By looking to God's Word, we are continually reminded that we are to humbly serve and even sacrifice for both friends and enemies in recognition of the greater service and sacrifice rendered to us by Jesus Christ. 

FOR FURTHER READING:

John 15

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Are there people you think of as your enemies? What could you do to show love to them?
2. Are there sacrifices you hesitate to make in service to God? What's holding you back?



Randall Visscher

Minister

Refuge Canadian Reformed Church

randallvisscher@gmail.com



Will You Remember Me?

RICK LUDWIG

One of the recurring themes at funeral ceremonies throughout the ages and across cultures is the consideration of how our memories will serve us in easing the sadness of missing our loved ones who have died. Will we remember them? For how long? Can we choose what to remember and what to forget? Will our memories remain or eventually fade and let us down? This is also the subject of many contemplative poems and songs. Both those who are dying and those who are left behind wrestle with the balm and the bane of their memories.

I Thought of You Today
I thought of you with love today,
but that is nothing new.
I thought about you yesterday,
and days before that too.
I think of you in silence,
I often speak your name.
All I have are memories
and a picture in a frame.
Your memory is a keepsake,
with which I'll never part.
God has you in His keeping,
I have you in my heart.

Author Unknown

This reality puts a whole different spin on the graveside service

Recently I was assisting in my role as a funeral director at the graveside service for a family whose deceased mother was a Jehovah's Witness. It is not often that the funeral staff are included in their ceremonies so it was a unique opportunity for me to hear what comfort would be offered to them. The elder who spoke asserted the assurance of the resurrection of the dead, but in doing so he emphasized the importance of their mother remaining in God's memory. In fact, for all the attendees he suggested that the most important thing is that they be in God's memory, for to be excluded from God's memory is as bad as it gets. To be forgotten by God in your death is the ultimate abandonment. In other words, God has a divinely selective memory, and you want to get on the right side of it. To get on the right side of it, he added, requires changing the pattern of your life now in imitation of Jesus.

GOD'S MEMORY

I have to admit that made me very curious as to what God has revealed to us about his memory, as this seemed like a foreign teaching to me. One of the very early indications in the Bible is that God's memory is revealed in terms of his covenant relationship with mankind. After the destruction of the earth and its inhabitants by the flood, God sets the rainbow in the sky as a *reminder to himself* of his covenant of love. "When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth" (Gen 9:16).

This revelation of God's memory is echoed similarly by the psalmists: "He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations" (Ps 105:8) and "He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever" (111:5). The evidence of God's memory is displayed in his faithfulness to his Word and his promises. He has set up for himself a guarantee that he will remain mindful of his covenant, the loving relationship he has for his people and for his creation. Concerning his people Israel in the Old Testament, God likens himself to a mother who could not forget her nursing child in Isaiah 49:15-16, where he says, "Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me." One of the great assurances of the Christian faith, often spoken at a Christian funeral, is summarized by the apostle

Paul in the New Testament in his letter to the Romans (8:35-39) in that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. The God who knows us and claims us by name will not forget us!

GRACIOUS FORGETFULNESS

And yet the Bible does reveal that God can be forgetful. Intentionally forgetful. We can be thankful for that too. In respect to our sin, God declares that he will not remember it if we confess it and turn from it. The prophet Isaiah reveals that the same God who will not forget us chooses to not remember our sins. "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins" (43:25).

This is further worked out in the letter to Hebrews where the writer explains how the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus fulfilled the law and renewed God's covenant with his people. The blood of Jesus on the cross satisfied so that the blood of repeated offerings on the altar is no longer required. The law no longer incriminates us because it has been fulfilled in Christ. This has been so completely accomplished that the Spirit affirms: "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more" (11:17).


This all points to the reality that we can have great confidence in God's memory. He will always remember us, and he will choose to forget our sins. He will be faithful to his Word and promises. What is more, he is also sensitive to our weakness, our tendency to forget him. The Bible also serves as a chronicle of man's forgetfulness of God. The Old Testament is replete with accounts of Israel's unfaithfulness and the subsequent prophetic warnings about the consequences of falling away and forgetting God and his goodness. The New Testament writers pick up on this theme by urging Christians to forget what they have left behind and remember what Christ has done and accomplished for them. In fact, the establishment of the church is for the purpose of gathering God's people from all nations around this gospel teaching and continually reminding them of God's grace in Jesus Christ. The preaching and the sacraments serve to help us remember how God will not forget us for the sake of his Son, our Saviour! Jesus himself said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The perseverance of the saints is grounded in remembering God's faithfulness.

GOOD MEMORIES

This reality puts a whole different spin on the graveside service. No need to worry about God forgetting us or wondering if we have done enough to ensure that we will be remembered by him. Rather, we can offer each other an earnest reminder about God's faithfulness in remembering us by sending his only Son to die in our place. We can reflect on how the Son overcame death and the grave and how he was raised up and has ascended to the heavenly throne room for our benefit. We can recall how God will not hold our sins against us for Jesus's sake. Also, we can offer a timely reminder that the Son is also faithful, like our Father, and he will return to restore all things to himself. He will not forget the bodies of those he loves who have died, as their souls are present with him awaiting the great day of his return. At the graveside we give thanks for the wonder of our God's good and gracious memory.

And we can also be thankful for the memories God gives us of our loved ones as these do help ease us through the parting. Looking at photos and video clips that capture a snapshot of our times together helps us to recall the love we shared and the times we enjoyed as we

navigate through difficult days and the accompanying loneliness. They also remind us about what is temporary and what is lasting. They prompt us "to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Ps 90:12). And the longer we live, the memories of our deceased loved ones do fade in our minds, but we may be assured that they will not be forgotten by God. And neither will we. Consider the thief on the cross who begged for Jesus to *remember him* while they hung side by side in cruel agony. Recall what our merciful Saviour lovingly responded: "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

He will never forget us. How can we be sure? The Bible tells us so. 



Rick Ludwig

Streetlight Christian Church

rludwig@kitchingsteepeandludwig.com

GIVE THE GIFT OF CLARION

Subscribers get **25%^{OFF}** the first year of a gift subscription!

Go to clarionmagazine.ca/giftpromo to sign up or contact your local *Clarion* correspondent. You can choose to have the subscription roll over to the reader (at regular price) after one year.

>>	MY FRIEND
>>	MY BROTHER
>>	MY CHILD
>>	MY GRANDCHILD
>>	MY NEIGHBOUR



On the Day of Worship

The reader will have noticed that in this series we are not going through the articles of the CanRC Church Order in a systematic way. Sometimes it just reflects what people are talking about in our churches, what's "in the air." That brings us in this and the next few columns to the topic of "worship." Worship, and especially corporate worship, is something every church member is involved in. And many conversations about worship reveal an increasing variety of views and opinions when it comes to different styles and possible changes in how we worship.

Does the Church Order have anything to do with this? Some would argue that it is precisely our Church Order that is the culprit when it comes to stifling every desire to make changes in how we worship. But is that correct? Worship is covered in a few articles in the fourth part of the Church Order, Articles 52–56, and when it comes to the actual set-up of the worship service, it's even less. Contrary to popular belief, our Church Order says very little about worship.

This time we'll have a closer look at Article 52. In this article the churches have agreed on two things the consistory is responsible for: (1) calling the congregation together for worship twice every Sunday, and (2) regular catechism preaching.

WHY TWICE?

"Why do we have to go twice?" If you have children, you will eventually hear that question some Sunday morning. Or you have visitors worshipping with you, perhaps with a different church background, who wonder out loud, "Why twice?" But the question can also come up: What gives the consistory the right to insist on

worshipping twice every Sunday, when God does not issue such a demand in Scripture?

The last observation is correct. Gathering for worship is a biblical command for God's people, but nowhere does it speak directly about two worship services. In fact, even as an explicit rule in the Church Order it is relatively new. It was not mentioned before the revision of 1983. Of course, our churches did not invent the idea of two services per Sunday in 1983. From the very beginning of the Reformation, Reformed church orders reflect the practice that having two services was the rule. Shortly after 1563, the year that the Heidelberg Catechism was published, it was agreed that catechism preaching should take place "ordinarily," or "as a rule" in the afternoon service. It shows that in the old church orders two services on a Sunday were simply implied.

The practice of worshipping twice has deep roots. Already in the Old Testament the LORD called his people to praise and prayer at the times of the morning and evening sacrifices. Still—despite the fact that the early Christian church continued this pattern on the Lord's Day—one can say: that was commanded at that time, but there is no biblical instruction to do so today.

WHY NOT TWICE?

To begin with, as mentioned in a previous column, there are many other things we have agreed on in the Church Order that God does not "demand." But not having an explicit divine command does not imply that there cannot be a biblical rationale for doing something as church(es). In this case, with two services the church maintains the unique character of the Sunday as a *day* of worship,

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

which is in line with the intention of the fourth commandment. Especially in a time of increasing secularism, worshipping twice is also essential for giving explicit evidence of what a living, thriving, faithful, and missionally-minded church of Christ looks like. After all, worship is more about what we bring—praise and glory to our God—than about what we get or learn.

That's why the consistory does not just provide an *opportunity* for worship, but the consistory “shall *call* the congregation.” That flows from the responsibility of the shepherds for the spiritual well-being of the flock. So yes, worshipping twice on a Sunday may not be a direct biblical command, but we have agreed to it for good reasons, and if someone wants to reduce it to once, he had better come with some very good arguments.

KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE

The second matter agreed upon in Article 52 is regular catechism preaching.¹ What to some seems to be a typically Dutch Reformed tradition, was actually a widespread custom from very early on in the time of the Reformation. It even has its roots long before that. Instruction in the fundamentals of the Christian religion is as old as Christianity, and in the thirteenth century priests were instructed to explain in the preaching the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Sacraments. Remarkably, those are still the four parts of the Heidelberg Catechism. At times this kind of preaching was neglected, which resulted in a lack of knowledge of what the Christian faith is all about.

The main objection against catechism preaching has always been that you can only preach from God's Word and not from a human document. As such that statement is correct. However, catechism preaching, when done properly, is proclaiming God's Word. The difference is that it does not focus on one separate text, but on a summary of what several passages in Scripture teach about the doctrine of salvation as revealed in the Bible.


More practical criticism of catechism preaching has been that it becomes too repetitive. We know it already because we've heard it before. To some extent preachers can try to avoid this. It is not required to deal with all the details of every Lord's Day in one sermon. Something can be saved for the next cycle. When that Lord's Day is approached in a subsequent round, focusing on a different question and answer, or presenting a different emphasis, are good ways to bring in more variety and even help go deeper into certain aspects. That being said, repetition also has an advantage. When you still remember the multiplication tables as an adult,

it is because they were drilled into you by rigorous repetition in school. In this case it's important to keep fresh the knowledge of what we believe about God and his great works.

It has also been said that catechism preaching may explain doctrine but does not have practical personal application in the life of believers. But that's a fallacy. Doctrine is what you believe, and what you believe determines how you live. Everyone who is familiar with the Heidelberg Catechism can know this. How often do we not read, beginning with the famous first question: “How does this comfort you?” or “How does this benefit you?” or “What good does this do for you?”

LIVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE

One of the benefits of regular catechism preaching is that it helps to expose the congregation to what the Bible calls “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), the wide range of things God has revealed to us, and not only the preferred passages or topics of ministers. We all have our one-sided interests and things we like to emphasize, at the cost of other truths. That's also true for ministers. Preaching that covers a healthy balance of themes and topics from God's revealed Word will help the believers develop a good understanding of God's truth.

The flipside is that losing regular catechism preaching will lead to a loss of spiritual sensitivity to be able to discern between what is true and what is false in the world of ideas. In light of the above it is good to stress that Article 52 talks about “proclaiming the doctrine of God's Word” as an act of worship. That's different from catechism classes or classroom lectures. Catechism preaching must avoid the pitfall of presenting abstract theology. This is about the faith we share. Note also that all of this is the responsibility of the consistory, not just of the minister. This is especially critical in churches that don't have their own minister but rely on guest preachers. If a consistory does not consciously take ownership of regular catechism preaching, it can easily lead to a haphazard and sloppy approach. 



Jan DeGelder
Minister Emeritus
Flamborough Canadian Reformed Church
jdegelder@cogeco.ca

¹For this section I am greatly indebted to two papers on catechism preaching by Dr. N. H. Gootjes that were presented at the ICRC (Zwolle, the Netherlands, 1993) and published in *Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches*, September 1 – 9, 1993 (Inheritance Publications, Neerlandia, Alberta, p. 136 -163).

When a Church Does Not Comply

(1)

KARLO JANSSEN

An article of mine was published in the July 21, 2023 edition of *Clarion* about the connections which the Canadian Reformed Churches have in the Netherlands. In it I described the fusion of our former sister churches, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) and the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NGK) as a further reason for concern.

In the article I wrote:

The NGK and GKv were one church federation from 1944 to the late 1960s / early 1970s. *The NGK were expelled from the federation of the GKv for failure to maintain the church order.* The issues related to questions of doctrinal tolerance within the churches and the measure of autonomy for the local church. When the NGK formed their own federation of churches, their church order was known as “Accord for Living Together.” Instead of prescribing that the churches “endeavour diligently to observe the articles of this Church Order” (see CanRC

CO Article 76), the church order became a guideline allowing local churches the final say in everything without endangering their participation in the federation. It has been this reality that allowed local NGK to introduce women in office in the early 2000s and tolerate, if not condone, same-sex relationships.

The line in italics led to a request from *Clarion* for more articles. How exactly did the Dutch churches fail to maintain the Church Order prior to 1970? And what procedure is to be followed when churches and assemblies do not comply?

In this article I will briefly describe what sorts of things happened that saw the GKv divide. That will be the history. In a second article I will reflect on procedures to be followed when the impression exists that a church is not in compliance with the Church Order. That will be the church polity.

I would like to express my gratitude to my colleague Rev. J. DeGelder for peer reviewing the two articles. I remain responsible,

of course, for its contents, but the issue is sensitive and consensus on process is key to dealing properly with thorny issues.

1944 AND ARTICLE 31

To understand things well, we need to go back to the Liberation of 1944, the schism that preceded the GKv-NGK schism of the 1960s.

General Synod (GS) 1943 of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) adopted doctrinal decisions and determined that any office bearer not willing to accept them was to be deposed from office. This led to individuals, parts of congregations, and whole churches liberating themselves in August 1944 from such synod overreach. Those that liberated became known as the “liberated” (GKv). Those that did not liberate themselves became informally known as the “synodicals” (GKN(s)).

The “liberated” referred to themselves as churches “maintaining Church Order Article 31.” Article 31 expresses the procedure that one should follow if one feels wronged by the decision of an ecclesiastical assembly. An example would be when one’s conscience is unduly bound. The “synodicals” argued that during the process of appeal, one is bound by the major assembly’s decision *until* the decision is “proven” contrary to Scripture or Church Order as stated in Article 31. The “liberated” argued that one is bound *unless* the decision is proven contrary to Scripture or Church Order.

But who is to judge whether such a thing has been proven? Article 31 does not specify and the two sides differed. The “synodicals” believed that “by a major assembly” was to be understood after the word “proven” in Article 31, whereas the “liberated” understood instead that “by the appellant” was meant.

The “synodicals” tended to have a centralized view of the organization of the church federation. The “liberated” called it “hierarchical” and used the term “synodocracy” (meaning, “ruled by a synod”). The “liberated” tended to have a decentralized view of the organization of the church federation. The “synodicals” called it “independentistic.”

INDEPENDENTISM

Within the GKv there was a diversity of views on the extent to which the churches ought to be connected to each other. Some sought more independence than others. As life stabilized church-wise following the Liberation, and society-wise following World War II, these views began to be hotly debated. That should be no surprise, for these views had practical consequences, and the “liberated” felt strongly about “freedom of conscience.”

At bottom this debate was about the autonomy of the local church. All were agreed that the church is autonomous from the state. All were agreed that local churches are autonomous with respect to each other in their local decisions. There was hefty disagreement, though, about the measure and practice of autonomy between churches with respect to matters common to the churches in a specific region as regulated in the Church Order.

The flashpoints became subscription to the confessions, ecclesiastical accountability, and the functioning of the Church Order. One should realize that these discussions were not theoretical but related to specific concerns which tended to be of a doctrinal nature.

CONFESSIONAL SUBSCRIPTION

While the GKv Church Order of the 1940s–60s prescribed subscription to the Three Forms of Unity for office bearers, it did not specify *how* this was to be done. There was no reference in the Church Order to a Form of Subscription. This situation was “inherited” from the original Church Order of Dort down through the church order used by the GKN. When the GKN revised its Church Order in 1905, they adopted a Form of Subscription for ministers to sign at classis. This form was very similar to that adopted by the Synod of Dort in 1619.¹ GS 1905 further determined that the classes should adopt forms for elders and deacons to sign in the churches. But the Church Order at that time did not prescribe the signing of a particular Form of Subscription. This meant that practices and formulations used to subscribe the Three Forms of Unity were not uniform throughout the GKv.²

The Breda GKv decided in 1957 to adopt its own form rather than use the form adopted by classis. In 1960 its minister, Rev. Telder, published a book advocating “soul sleep.” This drew into question Rev. Telder’s faithfulness to the Heidelberg Catechism, which states in a secondary sentence that one’s soul is taken up to Christ “immediately after this life” (LD 22). Rev. Telder argued that there was no issue, for his subscription did not imply binding to such a secondary detail of the Catechism. In 1965 Breda rescinded the use of a Form for Subscription, reverting to “simple subscription”: simply placing one’s signature directly beneath the Three Forms of Unity. It maintained that the autonomy of the local church allowed it to do so.

The question of confessional fidelity also arose with other ministers: Rev. Oosterhoff of Beverwijk, Rev. Eenhoorn of Zwijndrecht-Groote Lindt, Rev. Mulder of Kampen, and Rev.

¹To be clear, this Form of Subscription was adopted by the Synod after the Church Order had been adopted and thus was never referenced within the original Church Order of Dort.

²This was also true for the CanRC at that time. See GS 2001 Art. 72 and GS 2007 Art. 111.

At bottom this debate was about the autonomy of the local church

Visee of Kampen. The fact that ministers in Kampen were involved is noteworthy, for Kampen was the location of the GKv seminary.

ECCLESIASTICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The historic Church Order of Dort prescribes that mutual accountability among churches be practised through the church assembly called a classis (plural “classes”). There are three instruments here which are still found in the CanRC Church Order: (1) that of annual church visitation by two of the more experienced ministers within the classis (Art. 46); (2) the questions asked during every classis regarding the work of office bearers and honouring the decisions of the major assemblies (which includes the Church Order) (Art. 44); and (3) decisions of broader assemblies (Art. 37), including those with respect to appeals (Art. 31).

The council (consistory with deacons) of the church at Breda supported its minister. When the churches at Bedum and the Hoogeveen appealed the teachings of Rev. Telder to Classis Noord-Brabant/Limburg (NB/L), Classis supported Breda. (Note: both Bedum and Hoogeveen were not part of Classis NB/L.) When Regional Synod (RS) of the South upheld the appeals, Breda continued to support its minister. However, Breda did not appeal the decision of RS of the South to GS 1964.

In 1966 the Breda GKv split into two. A majority within Classis NB/L recognized the church supporting Rev. Telder. This saw the classis split into two. RS of the South seated the delegation from the classis that did not support Rev. Telder.

Unlike Breda, the church council of Beverwijk did decide that its minister, Rev. Oosterhoff, was wrong, and attempted to suspend him from office. To do so, it needed the agreement of the church council of its neighbouring church, Haarlem. Haarlem refused, so Beverwijk suspended him of its own accord. When Rev. Oosterhoff ignored his suspension and continued in his ministry, the Beverwijk GKv split.

Classis Haarlem and RS Noord-Holland did not recognize the suspension of Rev. Oosterhoff. The Beverwijk GKv that held to the suspension of Rev. Oosterhoff was thus sidelined and became a “grieving” church. In the next stage of appeal, GS 1964–65 sustained the appeal of this grieving church. Subsequent to this, Classis Haarlem received the grieving church of Beverwijk. RS Noord-Holland, however, did not.

THE FUNCTIONING OF THE CHURCH ORDER

During the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s there were other situations which drew into question the role and authority of the Church Order.

In Noord-Holland two ministers, Rev. Doornbos and Rev. Brink, heftily debated the validity of the concept of a church federation, denying that neither Scripture nor the Church Order presumed such an organization. The debate became critical when Rev. Doornbos took issue with the view, expressed by some, that Christ’s blood had been shed “for the bond of churches” (Dutch: “*het kerkverband*”).

Elsewhere, Rev. Eenhoorn of Zwijndrecht refused to lead a worship service on Christmas Day as per a decision of the local consistory. He also refused to take the doctrinal concerns he had to classis, as the Form for Subscription required. He further refused to be called to account by classis, be it through church visitors or at a classis. Eventually, Rev. Eenhoorn was deposed. Two neighbouring churches refused to recognize his deposition, and one of them (Papendrecht) called him as minister. These two churches were then no longer received at classis.

A situation also developed on the mission field in Sumba, Indonesia. The missionary, Rev. Goossens, was recalled by the Zwolle church council and, upon hearing him, it was decided not to send him back to Sumba. Rev. Goossens returned anyway and, upon his return, the established churches in Sumba divided into two groups.

In 1955 the Wezep GKv decided not to accept a decision of Classis Harderwijk. It also decided not to appeal the decision. Classis Harderwijk, without involving regional synod deputies, determined that Wezep had placed itself outside the federation of churches. Though Wezep was received again a few years later, tension continued to exist.

OPEN LETTER

After the Liberation, the GKN(s) rescinded some of the decisions that had precipitated the Liberation. The GKv were divided over the question to what extent they should strive to reunite with the GKN(s).

Rev. Van der Ziel of Groningen-Zuid actively urged reunification, which led to his suspension (without the concurring advice of the neighbouring church, compounding the matter). His suspension was recognized by Classis Groningen, RS Groningen, and GS 1964–65. At general synod the matter proved so divisive that twelve (of

FURTHER READING

J. De Jong ed., *Bound Yet Free: Readings in Reformed Church Polity*. See also the book review by J. DeGelder in *Clarion*, Vol. 47, pp. 240ff, 260ff.

On the topic of confessional subscription in our tradition (both its history and church politically), see R. C. Janssen, *By This Our Subscription* (<https://theoluniv.ub.rug.nl/31/>).

Those interested in a more general study of the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions, see David W. Hall, *The Practice of Confessional Subscription*.

thirty-six) delegates left the meeting. Some of them later returned; for others, alternates came; also, the delegation of Regional Synod Noord-Holland, consisting of four men, was retracted.

The Van der Ziel situation had a polarizing effect on the GKv. On October 31, 1966, an open letter was published by Rev. B. J. F. Schoep, co-signed by twenty-four others of whom eighteen were ministers. This letter expressed support for Rev. Van der Ziel. As this open letter, among other things, suggested a breadth of doctrinal tolerance broader than that described in the Form of Subscription, those who signed the open letter were accused of doctrinal indifference.

GS 1967 AND GS 1969

Rev. Schoep was one of the delegates to GS 1967. When this synod convened, and, as per the custom, agreement with the confession was expressed by the delegates, the delegates from RS Drenthe queried the credibility of Rev. Schoep's agreement with the confession. As Rev. Schoep refused to respond to questions put to him (contrary to the Form of Subscription), he was not seated as a member of GS 1967. As a result, two churches in Noord-Holland declared themselves "not-represented" at GS 1967 and that, therefore, they would not accept its decisions. Classis Alkmaar supported these two churches in this. Eventually, each classis within the province Noord-Holland had two classes, and there were two Regional Synods Noord-Holland: "IJmuiden" and "Wormer."

When GS 1969 convened, it received the delegates of RS Noord-Holland IJmuiden and refused the delegates of Wormer, noting that the latter did not uphold binding to the confession and the Church Order.

OUTSIDE AND INSIDE

Thus it happened throughout the GKv that office bearers and churches took a position and broader assemblies decided whom to recognize. Those considered to be in noncompliance with the Church Order found themselves "outside the federation" and became known as "*buitenverbanders*." The "outsiders" initially formed a loosely knit group of autonomous churches which would meet in a "national meeting." They became known as the NGK. In 1982, the NGK adopted an "Accord for Living Together," which churches were free to abide by as they deemed appropriate.

Those considered to be in compliance remained "inside the federation" and became known as "*binnenverbanders*." These "insiders" continued as the GKv.


CANADA

This all happened during a time when the CanRC heavily relied on ministers coming from the GKv. It should come as no surprise that what troubled the GKv also troubled the CanRC.

The story here is that of the Winnipeg CanRC and its minister, Rev. C. De Haan. It revolved especially around the Form of Subscription and Rev. De Haan's functioning within Classis Alberta-Manitoba. Eventually the situation led to his suspension from office by a decision of the Winnipeg CanRC Council and the Carman CanRC Council. Unlike ministers in the Netherlands, Rev. De Haan did follow the ecclesiastical route of appeal, as did several other individuals who agreed with him. GS 1965 denied the appeals and upheld the suspension (GS 1965 Art. 183, 187, 195, 196). It determined that Rev. C. De Haan and those with him were not the church of Winnipeg (GS 1965 Art. 213)³.

CONCLUSION

The strife within the GKv between 1944 and 1969 was procedurally about the legitimacy of the bond of churches and the autonomy of the local church. The little volume *Bound Yet Free* presents some articles on this topic. In it, Prof. C. Veenhof articulates the NGK view and Prof. J. Kamphuis the GKv view.

Next time we will consider the proper procedures for dealing with a church (or broader assembly) not in compliance with the Church Order. 



Karlo Janssen

Minister

Willoughby Heights Canadian Reformed Church
Member of the Committee for Ecclesiastical Relations
rcjanssen@shaw.ca

³ These Acts, originally in Dutch, are being translated into English and are expected to be published on the CanRC federation website (canrc.org) in the near future.

Life in Holland

During the Second World War

What was it like to grow up in Holland in those years, from 1940 to 1945? I was born in 1937, and three and a half years later the war broke out in our country. What do I remember about those years? Well, I really had to think about that. Would it bring back some terrible moments? Our youngest daughter Debbie asked me to write what I do remember—and here it is. I sincerely hope that it will be truthful and that I do not mix up my experiences with what I heard from others.

FIRST MEMORIES OF THE WAR

On May 10, 1940, the Germans invaded Holland. After Queen Wilhelmina and the government had fled to England, the Dutch commander received a German ultimatum: surrender Holland or face the bombing of Rotterdam and other cities. The Dutch soldiers fought bravely but were no match for the superior and much stronger enemy. On May 14, at 1:30 p.m., the bombing started, and many men, women, and children lost their lives.

That evening my dad was standing by the window and looked at the blood-red sky. Goeree-Overflakkee was a small island close to Rotterdam; from our hometown of Melissant we could see the flames of the city. Then I noticed that my dad was crying, and my mother was saying, “This is the end of the world.” Dad took me in his arms and let me look at the sky—that was something I would never forget. But still life went on, and my sisters and I still went to kindergarten and sang patriotic songs. Our parents did their daily

work. We did not notice many German soldiers; they were busy building bunkers on the beaches and saltmarshes and mud flats of the island. Lots of men of the island had to work for the enemy.

One day my mom decided it was time to visit her father in the next town, Stellendam, and so she took me and my younger sister Aat with her and we went by train, which was still running. German soldiers were everywhere and also used the train. One soldier went to sit right across from us and asked my mother if he could hold me for a while, because he missed his own little girl so much. Mother did not like this at all, but when she saw tears in his eyes she gave in, and so I sat on his lap and played with his shining buttons.

By this time our crown princess Juliana and her children also fled the country and went to Canada and in Ottawa she worked hard for the liberation of her country.

My grandfather in Stellendam had a radio, and sometimes my dad went there to hear what Queen Wilhelmina had to say. But the Germans had set a curfew, so everyone had to be in the house at a certain time. Dad forgot the time, and he tried to sneak home on a different path with me on his bike. In the fields there were skull posters warning us not to go beside the road because of mines. Well, we were caught. We had to go back to the Stellendam police office with a policeman and several German soldiers. I was petrified and started to scream at the top of my lungs; they could not

hear each other because of my screams, and they let us go home with a stiff warning!

There was another time when Mom's helper, a young girl by the name of Tannetje, took me for a bike ride; she wanted to see how the bunkers were coming along on the saltmarshes. Before long she was talking to German soldiers, and they showed her the bunkers. There I was playing in front of one bunker waiting for her to take me home again. The next time she tried to visit those soldiers she was blocked by a family living on the dike to the marshes—they had a reputation of being rough and they would not let her through. That was the end of her visits and also as a helper in our family.

THE WAR YEARS

In our home we still had electricity and plenty to eat from the garden and fruit trees. We still had a warm peat stove in wintertime and petrol in the summertime. But as the war wore on, things were becoming scarce. Often there was no school for us because the German soldiers needed our school building. They would infest it with bed bugs and lice and then move out again. The mothers would clean out the school as well as they could, but a lack of soap and insecticides made it impossible to get rid of those pesky little critters. Every night except Sunday there was a ritual of my dad combing out our short-cut hair with a fine-tooth comb and I think he enjoyed it because he never forgot to tell us how many he killed!

We also had fun with our friends. We would hunt for some orange material or buttons and, since it was forbidden to show the Dutch flag or wear orange because the royal family came from the House of Orange, we proudly showed a piece of orange on our shabby clothes. We did this especially when Germans were marching in the streets, but they never paid any attention to us. We soon got tired of this.

Dad and Mom had two more babies during the war; Rika was born 1941 and Rena in 1943. Rena was very jaundiced, and it took a while before she started to grow. There was some malnutrition going on because we had sores that we could not get rid of and there were the chilblains on our toes. We were always cold, in school, at home—the last two years were very miserable, with hardly any wood or peat and no more electricity.

In the winter of 1944, the men of our town went and chopped down the poles that the Germans and their "helpers" had erected in the polders that were behind their defence line. Those poles were



Bertha Tieleman & Plony van Dijk 1944

then cut in pieces and put in gunnysacks. It was dangerous work. Those poles were there so that gliders with heavy machinery from the Allied forces could not land. My dad and older brother went a few times, but Mom was so scared the Germans would catch them that they did not go anymore, so no wood for the stove. Then we went to a "gaarkeuken," a place where they cooked and served food in great quantities. It was always the same potatoes, carrots, and onions, but it was hot, and we had to eat.


There were hundreds and hundreds of planes that flew over the island to bomb the cities and factories of Germany. Sometimes Mom would say, "Those poor women and children in Germany," but my dad would say, "How about those women and children of Rotterdam and London?"

Churchill, Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Stalin, and of course Hitler and all his generals all became household names. We also made a card game of all the different planes that flew over. Some still come to mind like Lancaster, Blenheim, Stirling, Halifax, Wellington, and Flying Fortress. My older brother Piet knew them all.

There was also the fact that one of my mom's brothers became a Nazi and we were never to mention "Oom Hugo's" name again. One day two German soldiers came in the house looking for Jews or people in hiding but when Mom told them not to go into the baby's room because she was sleeping, they laughed and did not go there. But there was hope that the war would soon end, and that life would once again be normal for Holland.

GOD DID DELIVER US

Many were the prayers sent up to God, and he did deliver us from the tyranny of the Nazis. When that freedom came, our town went berserk with happiness. It was a glorious time and we as girls were all dressed in white (made out of parachute material) with an orange sash and we flew the flag of red, white, and blue from every house. That was May 5, 1945.

Our island was spared heavy bombings but still many died for the cause of freedom. There was one hero in our town who was very involved in the resistance; his name was Cor Vogelaar. When he came back, we had another celebration; we danced around the music tent in our white dresses and sang our national anthem, "Wilhelmus van Nassau." 

*Plony Hofsink nee van Dijk
Smithers, BC*

PRAYING FOR PAKISTAN

In considering the plight of our brothers and sisters in Pakistan, one immediately realizes that to align one's heart and mind with their pain is to inevitably cause oneself pain. Is this actually necessary and helpful? After all, if we ourselves become despondent and depressed, have we not added to the aggregate pain in the world? Would we not be better off rejoicing in what we have and so be a conduit of joy rather than doom and gloom? The following verse has something for us to consider: "Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body" (Heb 13:3). The only way to pray as though you yourself were in prison is to meditate on the circumstances of those who are in prison. By application, is Scripture pointing us to pray for those who are persecuted as if we ourselves are persecuted? If we dare our hearts to feel their painful burden, will our prayers automatically become more aligned with the calling set out in this verse?

Pakistan is no doubt a country with which most *Clarion* readers are familiar. A Middle Eastern nation of 241 million, Pakistan is recognized as a democracy. In practice however, the "glory of Islam" is the ethos nailed into the pillars of Pakistani society. There is open discrimination of Christians with regards to employment, access to health care, and protection from the police. Some banks won't even do business with non-Muslims. Christians make up just 1.8% of the population but represent 90% of those employed in the garbage industry. Clearly, even if a Christian is not physically persecuted, mistreatment is a daily expectation. Furthermore, some are brutally abused or even killed for their faith.¹

PARVEZ MASIH'S STORY


In April 2021, in Lahore, Pakistan, a Christian brother named Parvez Masih had a poor Muslim man beg him for help. The poor man had a wife and children, no place to live, and nothing to eat, so Masih agreed to allow the man and his family to live with him. In no time it became apparent that the Muslim man abused his family under the belief that the Koran allowed it. The home environment was threatening and hostile for the whole household, so Masih asked the Muslim to leave. A short time later, the Muslim's wife lured Masih's twelve-year-old daughter away from her family, which was facilitated by the familiarity developed while living together. Masih's daughter was sexually abused, forcibly converted to Islam, and became the second wife of the man who formerly received mercy at the hands of her father. She was told that if she didn't cooperate when questioned by authorities, her

brothers and parents would be killed. Masih reported the matter to police and was even able to obtain the services of a lawyer who was able to bring the matter before the courts.

The cultural bias against Christians was shown in the judge's decision. He would not allow Masih's daughter to be freed and return home because doing so would result in her conversion back to Christianity from Islam and thus would be blasphemous. Fearing reprisals from angry Muslims and hoping for personal rewards in heaven, the judge ruled that the daughter should stay with the Muslim family. The emotional pain that the Masih family is experiencing must be unbearable. Their daughter was kidnapped and given a lifetime sentence of sexual slavery; to make matters worse, the authorities have sanctioned this.²

From the comfort of western prosperity, some may point out that Masih's initial decision to allow this family into his home was reckless and unwise. After all, he knew the country he lived in, knew that the one in need was a Muslim and that any interaction with Muslims carried risk. Perhaps Masih was more worried about the glory of Yahweh than the safety of himself or his family. As a Christian he felt commanded to help the poor—perhaps God had a plan for him to share the gospel. He couldn't be sure, but neither could he turn a poor family away.

PRAYERS FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

When the topic of the persecuted church enters our minds, it rarely does so without stirring up conflicting emotions. If we are in Christ, the Spirit will not allow us to gloss over the tremendously difficult situations facing our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. Therefore, we feel an obligation to pray for them, for there is no getting around the scriptural calling of "making supplication for all saints" (Eph 6:18). Jesus was explicit in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5). This gives us assurance that God's judgment will come and the persecuted church will be robed in white while their oppressors face the everlasting torment of hell. 

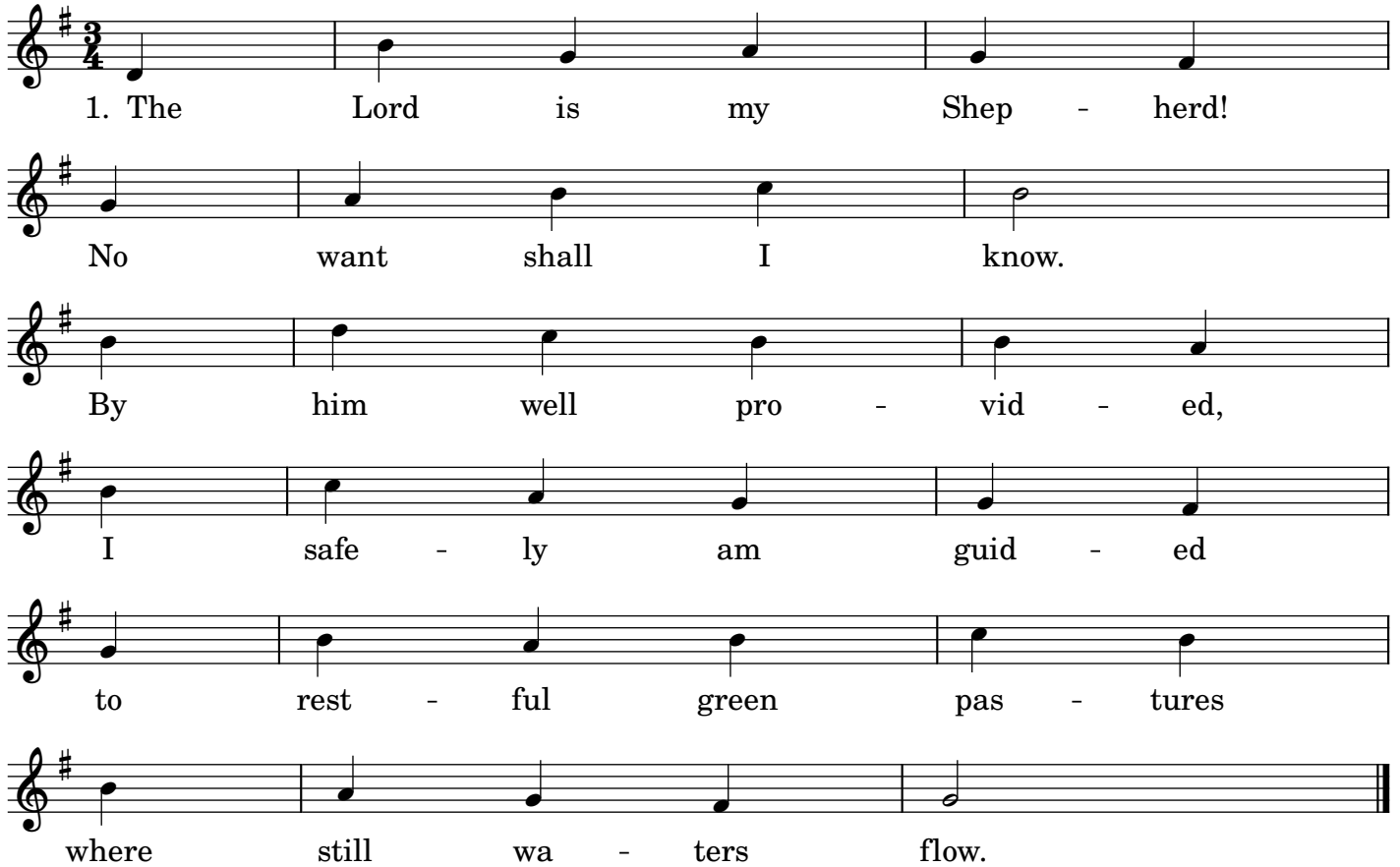


Andrew Douma
Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church
agdouma99@gmail.com

¹ <https://youtu.be/LfOCqAT4f0?si=1J9Nz6ONVh8uHj1>

² <https://mailchi.mp/morningstarnews.org/christian-parents-in-pakistan-denied-custody-of-kidnapped-girl>

The Lord Is My Shepherd!



1. The Lord is my Shepherd!
No want shall I know.
By him well provided,
I safely am guided
to restful green pastures
where still waters flow.

2. The Lord is my Shepherd!
My soul he restores.
In mercy he heeds me
and graciously leads me
in paths of uprightness.
His name I adore.

4. The Lord is my Shepherd!
Before all my foes
my Saviour is able
to spread me a table.
He richly anoints me;
my cup overflows.

3. The Lord is my Shepherd!
If darkness draws near
and leaves me forsaken,
by gloom overtaken,
my God will protect me.
Why should I then fear?

5. The Lord is my Shepherd!
He through all my days
with mercy will crown me;
his love will surround me.
God's house will forever
be my dwelling place.

Text: William Helder, 2023

Based on "De Heer is mijn Herder," a versification of Psalm 23 by J. J. L. ten Kate, 1862

Tune: J. G. Bastiaans, 1868

Mission Timor

Celebrates 20 Years

CLARENCE BOUWMAN

Twenty years ago, June 29, 2003, was a big day in Smithville. Edwer Dethan, an indigenous Timorese who'd recently completed his studies for the ministry of the Word at CRTS, was ordained on that day to be sent by Smithville as missionary to the Indonesian island of Timor. After some weeks of preparation, the youthful Dethan family landed in Timor to begin the work to which our brother had been called.

SOME HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Since the sixteenth century, Dutch traders and missionaries had had a profound impact on the people of the island. Reformed churches were started among people who once embraced a mix of Muslim and native religions. Lutheran and Mennonite churches also appeared. But over the span of decades and centuries, whatever orthodoxy and fear of God these churches initially embraced eroded into a humanistic blend of Christianity plus Islam plus paganism. In the mid-1800s, all Lutheran, Calvinist, and Mennonite churches were joined together to form the Indonesian Protestant Church. Not surprisingly, the IPC discarded confessional documents and became an instrument of the government to advance its own ends.

When Indonesia declared independence from Dutch hegemony in 1945, the land's new policy of religious freedom prompted several congregations to break away from the IPC. On the island of Timor, these breakaway churches formed a small federation that became known as the GGRM (Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Musafir), while on other islands the breakaway churches formed a larger federation known as the GGRI (Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia). Rev. Edwer Dethan had himself grown up in the GGRM and it was these churches that encouraged him to study at CRTS. In fact, it was the GGRM that requested to establish a sister church relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches in 2001 (which Synod Neerlandia 2001 declined pending further investigation).

Clockwise, from left to right, Radio Sahabat has proven to be a vital tool to encourage God's people in the multiple challenges of daily life; Members of the Dalam Tuak church socialize after the service; Rev. & sr. Dethan engage jungle villagers in conversation. Dressed up in their Sunday best, these people are heading for church







Before Smithville began her mission work in 2003, there had been ongoing tensions within the GGRM churches, which led to the formation of another federation called the GGRC (Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinisi). These tensions, however, were quite unknown in Canada, as was the resulting break. The understanding was that the GGRC was actually the GGRM with its name changed. For that reason, Smithville mandated her new missionary to work in as close a cooperation as possible with the members of the GGRC.

THE WORK

Rev. Dethan initially focused his work on East Timorese refugees living in a camp just west of the city of Kupang. Grateful mention needs to be made of the fact that a number of members from the local GGRC as well as GGRM congregations assisted in the work by attending a dedicated Bible study. In the Lord's providence, several refugees came to faith and became living members of the fledgling mission church. In fact, the Bible study prospered greatly, attracting the attention of local discontented members of the IPC.

As they listened to Rev. Dethan's preaching and devoted themselves to Bible study, the attendees embraced the gospel of redemption by grace alone through Jesus's blood—and steadily this mission post grew. Word of Rev. Dethan's work spread so that requests came from undernourished Christians in distant villages to please come and tell this gospel of grace to them too. Rev. Dethan was soon overwhelmed by the rapid developments on the field, to the point that he pressed upon the Mission Board the urgency of laying concrete plans for the future direction of the work. The Mission Board responded with a "Working Plan 2006,"

laying the foundations for a dedicated training centre for future office bearers and ministers.

Meanwhile, Rev. Dethan tracked down Indonesian versions of the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dort and had them published anew as a means to assist increased understanding of the doctrines of Scripture and how the church of the Lord should be run. He also tracked down the historic renditions of the Genevan Psalms and initiated seminars to teach the people the importance of singing the psalms themselves (and doing so as accurately as possible).

TRAINING

The demand for the gospel clearly required immediate action to establish a seminary. In 2007, a building was purchased in downtown Kupang, and potential instructors were hired for a new school that would train students with a view to becoming teachers and/or office bearers, including becoming ministers of the Word. Rev. Dethan's focus now shifted from mission work proper to teaching at this school (specifically Dogmatics and Homiletics).

Under the blessing of the Lord, this new school (known as STAKRI) has, over the fifteen years of its existence, graduated more than fifty young men to be preachers of the gospel or office bearers or other leaders for the churches in Timor and neighboring islands. Furthermore, more than 150 young men and women graduated from STAKRI to serve as teachers in various schools across Timor and on other islands, including in the New Hope orphanage home and the New Hope schools that operate within the churches that resulted from Rev. Dethan's work.

FEDERATING

Meanwhile, mission posts continued to grow, both in size and in maturity. In fact, the number of mission posts multiplied too. Since the beginning of the work, Smithville's stated intent had been that any churches spawned by the work of Rev. Dethan should join the GGRC.¹ The difficulty that now presented itself was that multiple synods of the CanRC rejected proposals from its Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (and supported by Smithville) to recognize the GGRC as a true church of the Lord and extend an offer of ecclesiastical fellowship to this federation.² This presented a dilemma for Rev. Dethan, Smithville, and the mission posts. The growing maturity of several mission posts required the ordination of elders and deacons and hence their institution as churches. But if Canada could not recognize the GGRC, Smithville could scarcely nudge these fledgling churches to join that federation; in fact, as instituted churches it would ultimately have to be their own decision to join the GGRC or some other faithful federation in the land.

Yet it was pastorally unhealthy for the instituted mission churches to function as independent churches. So, in 2012 they began to meet as two classes and in 2016 the churches met to form a (temporary) new federation of churches. They gave themselves the name GGRI-Timor. That's because the brethren were aware that in 2010 the CanRC had recognized the GGRI as a true church of the Lord and had extended to this federation the offer of ecclesiastical fellowship (which the GGRI accepted). This same synod appointed deputies mandated to work for unity with all churches in Indonesia who seek to be faithful to Holy Scripture and the historic Reformed Confessions.³ They were also mandated to take up contact with their counterparts in the CanRC and in the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Currently, the GGRI-T has more than 1000 members in nine instituted churches and eight mission posts.


LITERATURE

As part of his work in STAKRI, Rev. Dethan has begun a writing career. As there is very little truly biblical material available in Indonesian, and even less written from within the Indonesian context, he wrote and published a book on (part of) the Heidelberg

Catechism⁴ as well as a book on prayer. He's used a publisher that will push and sell these books across the Indonesian archipelago. Rev. Dethan also contributes regularly to a magazine published for the churches by STAKRI staff (and others). Due to the economic poverty of the people of Timor, this magazine needs financial support from Canada. The magazine is read in the homes and then passed along to unknown corners of the island. Currently efforts are underway, in conjunction with mission boards in Australia, to have this magazine distributed in the GGRI churches on other islands as well. Further, due to a lack of Reformed material for ministers, a team of STAKRI professors and alumni have translated *Leadership for Growing Churches: an Exposition of Titus* and *The Overflowing Riches of my God: revisiting the Belgic Confession* (both by Rev. Bouwman) into Indonesian. Other translation projects are also currently underway.

Connected to STAKRI is also the Sahabat FM radio station. Though destroyed by Cyclone Seroja in 2021, the station has of late been repaired and is now able to broadcast the gospel through most of Timor and far beyond. The result is that Rev. Dethan and the existing churches and mission posts receive many requests to teach and preach in far-flung communities.

CONCLUSION

After supporting the work of Rev. and sr. Dethan in Timor for twenty years, the Mission Board of Smithville (with the cooperation of the churches of Grassie, Lincoln, and Grimsby) wishes publicly to thank the Lord for the privilege we've received to be allowed to participate in this mission venture. We thank the Lord for Edwer and Femmy's dedicated service to the Lord of the church over these two decades. We also marvel that the Lord has blessed their work far beyond expectation. We look forward with eager anticipation to how the Lord will direct our brother's labour in time to come. After all, Indonesia—like Canada—is *his* land. 



On behalf of the Smithville Mission Board,
Clarence Bouwman
Minister Emeritus
Smithville Canadian Reformed Church
clarence.bouwman@gmail.com

¹ In a letter dated January 16, 2004 to the GGRC, Smithville wrote: "It is our and his hope that in the future, if, the Lord willing, the work of Rev. Dethan leads to the institution of a new church in Timor, this church may be incorporated in the federation of the GGRC."

² See Acts 2010: Article 108, 4.1; 2013: Article 127, 4.1; and 2016: Article 116, 4.1

³ The Acts state: "Deputies should investigate whether the contact church may be seen as a sister church. They may come with the proposal by looking at the Church Order, their Confessions and whether their life is according to what was said."

⁴ Inti Pengajaran Agama Kristen: Eksposisi Katekismus Heidelberg, Volume 1



Farewell to Rev. Veurink

Shortly after the schools closed up for summer holidays the congregation of Neerlandia Canadian Reformed Church gathered to attend a dessert evening on Friday, July 7. It was to say farewell to our pastor and teacher of the past six and three-quarter years. Rev. Gerard Veurink received a call from our church in the spring of 2016 and was installed as minister in October of that year. We were his first congregation, and we now have to say “goodbye” and “thank you” for all his faithful work in our midst over the years.

FAREWELL EVENING

The evening was hosted by the church Ladies Aid and was very well attended by the congregation. There was a beautiful array of baking to choose from. Trevor Peters was our MC and he started off the evening with the reading of Ecclesiastes 3:1–15. Grant VanAssen from Hope Canadian Reformed Church of Neerlandia and Ben Tiemstra from Emmanuel Reformed Church of Neerlandia (URC) said a few words on behalf of their respective congregations.

Letters were also read from Calgary Canadian Reformed Church, Coaldale Canadian Reformed Church, Edmonton Immanuel Canadian Reformed Church, and Barrhead Canadian Reformed Church. Presentations of speeches, songs, and games were made by various members and groups of the church. This included a quiz for Rev. Veurink on “How well he knew his congregation.” The Young Peoples group sang a song and presented a game. We were reminded that some of the things Rev. Veurink is known for are lame jokes, being a Calgary Flames fan, and his tie collection of almost 200 ties! Council presented a gift to Rev. Veurink on behalf of the congregation. He received a beautiful cast iron personalized firepit, a wall plaque with the Covenant Benediction written on it, and twelve new ties to be opened once a month over the next year.

During his time within our congregation, Rev. Veurink officiated for fifty-eight baptisms, sixteen weddings, four funerals, and fifty-one professions of faith. We can indeed see the blessings and sorrows experienced over these years. Rev. Veurink gave a speech

thanking the congregation for the opportunity to serve them and for the love and care shown to him over the years. The vice chairman of Council, John Kippers, had some closing remarks and closed the evening with prayer.

FAREWELL SERMON

On Sunday, July 9, Rev. Veurink gave his farewell sermon in Neerlandia and chose as text Psalm 90:16-17, "Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!" He impressed upon the congregation the need to see God's works, all he does for us, and how he has saved and redeemed us through the blood of Jesus Christ. The Lord has established his covenant with us, his people, and has given us all specific tasks to do in this life. We are all called to be faithful in the task he has given us and

to do it joyfully. We are not to just live for today, but as believers we are able to come to the end of each day and ask him to establish the labour of our hands. And at the end of our days when we come before God and have fulfilled our tasks truthfully and faithfully, God will say, "Well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over little, I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." Rev. Veurink also tied this sermon to his first sermon here in Neerlandia, presented on October 30, 2016. The text for that sermon was Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever," a theme that is always applicable.

We pray that Rev. Veurink will continue to be a blessing as God's servant in his new role as pastor and teacher at Barrhead Canadian Reformed Church. Even though he is no longer our pastor, we are happy that he has only moved one town away and will be seen in our midst on occasion.

Dorothy Peters



CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 37

Lord's Day 37 The Third Commandment

Last time we talked about people taking God's name in vain, or swearing. Now, there is another type of swearing that is allowed. This swearing is making a very strong promise that what you say is true. You see, sometimes in court a judge might tell a man to put his hand on the Bible and raise his other hand. Then he has to promise to only tell the truth. The person swearing with his hand on the Bible is calling on God to punish him if he lies. After this, the judge will ask the man a lot of questions. The judge wants to know the truth so that the person who did wrong can be properly punished. God says that this kind of swearing is allowed.

Draw a line to show which sentence is taking an oath in a way that is pleasing to God.

Wrong oath

Someone putting their hand on the Bible and telling the truth.

Proper oath

Someone putting their hand on the Bible and not telling the truth.

WORDSEARCH

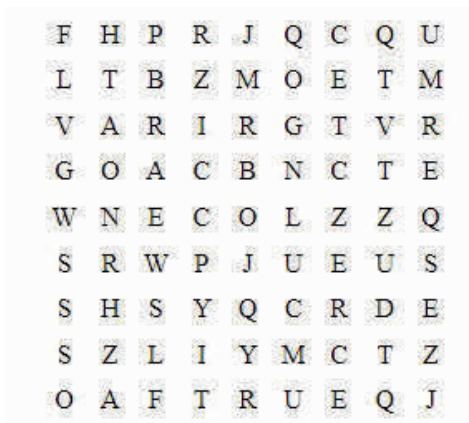
SWEAR

OATH

TRUE

BIBLE

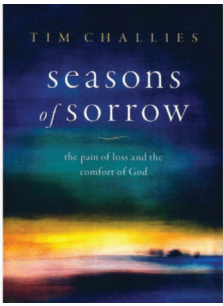
COURT



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



MOURNING A CHILD

Seasons of Sorrow: The Pain of Loss and the Comfort of God, by Tim Challies. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2022). Hardcover. 208 pages. \$30.85 CDN.

I've ministered to several parents over the years who've lost children (I still regularly think of all of you). Never having experienced that kind of a loss myself, I really don't know what it's like. However, after reading Tim Challies's latest book, I do now have a much better idea.

Seasons of Sorrow is about the loss of Tim's son, Nick. He was a twenty-year-old seminary student full of faith and vigour. On November 3, 2020, he suddenly collapsed during a sports activity and didn't regain consciousness. The following day, Tim wrote on his blog: "In all the years I've been writing, I have never had to type words more difficult, more devastating than these: Yesterday the Lord called my son to himself—my dear son, my sweet son, my kind son, my godly son, my only son."


The book follows Tim's grieving journey over the following year. It's divided up into forty-two bit-size chapters. Among those chapters you'll find prayer, meditation, and letter writing. It's vulnerable, raw, and honest. Challies doesn't shy away from openly wrestling with his doubts and questions—struggling to understand what God's Word has to say to him and his family in this tough place of grief. In some places, he deals with the practical questions around the loss of a child. For example, how do you respond when someone asks how many children you have?

I've always enjoyed Challies's crisp and clear style of writing. He has a knack for using just the right analogy or illustration. For example, he shares his thinking after the tough job of cleaning out Nick's room. He uses the analogy of all these immigrants coming to Toronto:

The younger people tend to come first, and then, as soon as they can, they fetch their spouses and children. Once the family has become established and has built up some

wealth, they reach back across the ocean to extend the invitation to their parents, grandparents, or other relatives. As one family member after another makes the journey, the people remaining in India or Nigeria or the Philippines must feel their grip on their own countries begin to loosen. As they watch a growing number of their loved ones make the journey to that far country, as their homes become emptier and emptier, their loyalties must become divided. By the time their own paperwork has been cleared and they themselves are boarding a plane, they must feel every bit as much Canadian as they do Indian, Nigerian, or Filipino (p. 104).

In the same way, Christians gradually watch their loved ones depart for the heavenly homeland. And: "Eventually, there may be more of them in heaven than on earth, more to draw me there than to hold me here." What a great illustration and a great insight!

A caveat: *Seasons of Sorrow* is not going to be a "one-size fits all" help for those who are grieving. While Tim lost Nick in a sudden, tragic way, his son died a godly man with his faith firmly in Christ. It happened in circumstances beyond any human control. People lose children under different kinds of circumstances. So, this book might not be for you, and it might not be for someone you care about who's grieving the loss of a child. Please keep that in mind if you're considering it as a gift for someone else. However, for the right believer who needs it, Tim's book will be a helpful guide on how to grieve the loss of a child in a Christian way. It'll give sound gospel encouragement to help keep you trusting the good God through your tears. 

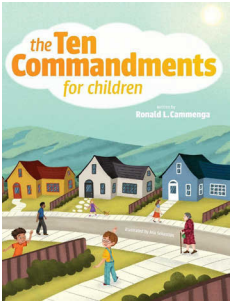


Wes Bredenhof

Minister

Free Reformed Church of Launceston

bookreview@clarionmagazine.ca



IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments for Children, by Ronald L. Cammenga.
(Jenison: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2023).
Hardcover. 63 pages. \$27.51 CDN.

In today's day and age, where God's law is more and more blatantly disrespected and ignored, it is so important to teach our children God's most wise ways for our lives. *The Ten Commandments for Children* by Ronald L. Cammenga is an effective resource in this regard. Cammenga not only teaches the commandments, but also explores their depth and practicality in an age-appropriate way. He has a kind, yet unwavering manner of writing that is very appropriate for the topic. *The Ten Commandments for Children* will undoubtedly be a blessing for many families.

This book has been arranged logically. The first seven devotionals talk about the commandments in general. This includes topics such as why we have the commandments and knowing our sins. After this, the author spends two to three devotionals on each commandment. There are twenty-eight devotionals in total.


For each devotional, Cammenga included five different sections to work through. One section is called "Let's learn a Bible verse" in which parents and children can read a short Bible verse aloud a few times. The other sections include the devotional, reading another, longer Bible passage, answering questions, and even singing a psalm! Cammenga used the 1912 Presbyterian Psalter for this, but the beauty of our *Book of Praise* is that it is easy to sing the same psalm. Parents could even look through the psalm suggested and find the stanza that best connects with what was taught in the devotional. It is clear through these sections that Cammenga's desire was for the devotionals to be truthful and God-honouring.

Because some sections go deeper than others, this book could be tailored to each family's need. For those who choose to use it as a bedtime devotional for one child, the parents could pick certain sections to work through, based on their child's age and abilities. Since my daughter loves singing before bed, we always included that as part of our devotional routine. Parents could also choose to

do all the sections as an addition to family devotions after dinner with multiple children.

Here are a couple comments on some different aspects of the book. First, it was good to see that Cammenga did not shy away from practical examples that may even tickle an adult's conscience, such as how we spend our Sundays. We can all be encouraged through this book in our thankful obedience! Cammenga also did not neglect to use the teachings of the Catechism. In one of the devotionals about the sixth commandment, the author defined what patience, peace, meekness, and kindness are. He also talked about loving our enemies. Does this not drip of Lord's Day 40's question and answer 107? What a wonderful way to strengthen the Church-Home connection for our children! Third, since this is a book for children there are, of course, illustrations. These are tastefully done and modestly presented. For each devotional, the different section titles all have their own colours. "Let's Learn a Bible Verse," for example, is always yellow. In these ways the book is presented attractively to the readers.

Finally, Ronald L. Cammenga is a professor at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. (If you are interested in learning about the CanRC and the PRC, chapter 6 of *Inheritance Preserved* by W. W. J. VanOene summarizes this relationship.) It is clear from the book that Cammenga is seasoned in teaching children. And he was, being blessed with eleven of his own to raise and teach! Cammenga has nicely, and wisely, come down to a child's level to explain the commandments.

Overall, in the age that we live in, it is very good to have a book for children that teaches the commandments and does not shy away from explaining practically how we should be obeying them. I would recommend this book for children ages 8-10. 

Amanda DeBoer

Dear Editor,

I appreciate the interaction with my letter by Rev. DeGelder in the September 1, 2023 issue of *Clarion* with his article entitled “A Holy, Visible Sign and Seal.” At the end of his article, Rev. DeGelder asks a very pertinent question: “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?”

The article contains a subheading: “Does Article 61 mention guests?” It seems to me that in the light of Rev. DeGelder’s closing question, we should rather ask, “Does Article 61 need to mention guests?” This was also the conclusion of Synod 1986 (see *Acts*, Article 132, consideration (d)) which reads:

“Although guests are not specifically mentioned in Article 61, Church Order, the conclusion of the Committee, Observation 5, cannot mean that Article 61, C.O., has no bearing on the admission of guests to the Lord’s Supper. Synod considers that Article 61, C.O., is the rule which governs the admission of all those who seek to partake in the Lord’s Supper.”

Therefore, as consistories, if we have not independently ascertained from credible sources whether the guest has made public profession of the Reformed faith (i.e., the doctrine of the Word of God, summarized in the confessions and taught here in this Christian church) and leads a godly life, do we not act in violation of this article?

I would, as yet, appreciate an interaction with this question.

Yours sincerely,
John Vantil
Abbotsford, BC

From the editor: While as a rule we prefer to let letters stand on their own, since the writer requests a response, Rev. DeGelder provides a brief one here:

The consideration of Synod 1986 “that Art. 61 C.O. is the rule which governs the admission of all those who seek to partake in the Lord’s Supper,” does indeed confirm that the consistory is indeed responsible for such admission. However, it does not specify how this responsibility should be implemented in practice.

J. DeGelder

Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

September 7, 2023

OPENING & ROLL CALL

The chairman of the Board, Rev. John Louwerse, welcomed all present. A special welcome was given to Rev. Dirk Poppe and brother Peter Witten, representatives from the Australian Deputies Training for the Ministry. He led in opening devotions. All governors were present. This includes Revs. John Louwerse, Joe Poppe, James Slaa, Jeff Temple, Clarence VanderVelde, Julius VanSpronsen, and brothers Adrian Bartels, Alan Datema, Herman Post, Peter Vandersluis, and Kasper VanVeen. Dr. Jason Van Vliet was present as Principal and administrative assistant Leanne Kuizenga was present to take the minutes of the meeting.

MEMORABILIA

Information was shared about the personal circumstances of emeriti professors, as well as widows and families of professors. It was noted that the Lord has taken home our late professor Dr. Nicolaas H. Gootjes. His wife Dini and family were remembered in our opening prayer.

MINUTES & AGENDA

The minutes of the meeting held on January 12, 2023 were approved. The agenda for the meeting was established. The action log was reviewed.

DECISIONS, REPORTS, AGENDA ITEMS

1. Since the last meeting of the Board, the opportunity came up to purchase a home next door to the seminary. Upon the recommendation of the Finance and Property Committee, an email resolution was passed to acquire the residence at 113 West 28th and to make arrangements for a mortgage on this property. In the short term this home will be used for seminary student housing. In the long term the seminary could explore other uses for the property, should the need arise. The house is rented out for the fall semester to three students, and with some renovations could house a total of six single students.
2. A decision was made by email resolution to approve of the 2022 audited financial statements for the seminary, to have them submitted to the Canadian Revenue Agency by June 30.
3. A letter was received from a couple in southern Ontario suggesting that our seminary students get involved in some teaching and mentorship of young people at Guido de Brès Highschool. This proposal was passed on to the Senate for consideration.
4. A letter was received from the Independent Reformed Theological Academy (IRTA) in South Korea, expressing gratitude for the fact that three of their exchange students completed their term of studies at CRTS during the past year. An update was given on their students who have graduated and begun work in the ministry. To show their gratitude, the IRTA donated \$3000 to CRTS. This letter and their donation were received with thankfulness.
5. A letter was received from Dr. Reuben Bredenhof indicating his thankfulness for the generous time of transition provided to him to allow him to prepare for his teaching role at CRTS.
6. The seminary's strategic plan was reviewed. Various committees reported on initiatives. Faculty workload seems to be manageable due to the reorganization of some courses and the service of our teaching assistant, brother Ray Kingma. CRTS needs to give more attention to a faculty succession plan. There is a real need for ministers and graduating students from CRTS to pursue further studies to get training to potentially serve as future professors. We have three of our five professors reaching the age of retirement in the next ten to fifteen years. CRTS decided to raise awareness of the issue through an article in *Clarion* and a letter to the church councils.
7. Over a period of years, the Board has discussed governance at CRTS, and the role that the Board should have in this. Boards of various organizations function in different ways, with some being more involved in the hands-on work and others setting a vision for the organization and leaving the implementation of the vision mostly to others. The Board decided that to make a significant governance change would not materially benefit CRTS at this time and would impact the work of the Board negatively.
8. The committee report on an Australian affiliate campus was put into discussion, along with a brief report of the committee's discussion with the Australian Deputies Training for the Ministry. The Australian deputies expressed their deep appreciation for the work at CRTS and the good cooperation between our churches. They explained the reasons for their desire to have an affiliate campus in the Australian churches. The Board had a good discussion with the deputies on this and the deputies will write a letter to the Board for further consideration at the January 2024 meeting.
9. The chairman reported on an evaluation of the principal's work. The Board is thankful for the competent leadership Dr. Jason Van Vliet provides at CRTS.
10. The minutes of the Academic Committee meeting held on September 5, 2023 were presented for information. Revs. Joe Poppe and Julius VanSpronsen reported on lecture visits to CRTS from March 15–17, 2023. They also reported on visits with the professors and students. The Board received this report with thankfulness.
11. The Finance and Property Committee presented an annual report on their activities. They presented the CRTS proposed budget for 2024, and it was approved. The Finance and Property Committee presented the financial statements for 2022, and these were formally approved. With thankfulness it was noted that approximately \$1.29 million was raised for the Partnership in the Gospel campaign, to fund the renovation project at CRTS. Due to cost increases and additional expenses the Finance and Property Committee is seeking to raise an

additional \$350,000 to cover all expenses for this project as well as for the renovation of the faculty office areas (planned for next summer). It is a great blessing that this fall faculty, staff, and students are all able to work and study under the same roof again. Thankfulness was formally expressed to the Maranatha Free Reformed Church of Hamilton for their willingness to host our CRTS community during the construction project. The annual assessment for 2024 was set at \$100 per communicant member, an increase of \$3 per communicant member. Part of the increase is due to increases in inflation; part is also due to the decision to set aside at least \$3 per communicant member to build a budget for future repairs and maintenance.

12. CRTS's health and safety policy was reviewed to ensure that the entire CRTS community fulfills CRTS's occupational health and safety commitments.
13. Margaret Alkema joined the meeting to provide background and answer questions regarding our contact with the Association for Theological Schools (ATS), and in her role as assessment coordinator. As part of CRTS's ongoing self-evaluation a report was prepared to implement more effective evaluation tools for measuring growth in spiritual formation, to measure the sustainability of the assessment plan, and to develop a system for the regular evaluation of the overall Master of Divinity program. A report was provided outlining the work that has been done on these issues. The way program learning outcomes are assessed has been revised, dealing with one of three program learning outcomes in depth each year. A comprehensive review of the curriculum was completed and has led to the reorganization and streamlining of various courses. Changes were made to how the spiritual formation program will function, with students being required to be more involved in the process of self-evaluation and reflection during their time at CRTS. The Board expressed its thankfulness to faculty and staff for all the work that went into preparing this extensive report. It will be submitted to ATS later this fall.
14. The Board took note of the ATS Institutional Peer Profile and a Strategic Information Report, comparing CRTS to other similarly sized seminaries. The Board discussed the Annual Report of the Assessment Coordinator, minutes from assessment day 2023 and a metrics report we use to gauge

how the seminary is doing in specific matters. It is at this assessment day that much of the work detailed in the report to ATS (above) is done. It was noted that enrollment in the freshman class is down significantly from our targets. While we have been grateful for increased enrollment in the previous few years, such enrollment is needed to continue to provide the churches with men who can serve in the ministry. It was noted with gratitude that five men have inquired about the new mature student enrollment policy. These reports were received with thankfulness. Margaret Alkema presented a report on her involvement at a conference hosted by ATS to help participants serve as peer reviewers. She was thanked for all her work, especially as it related to being our assessment coordinator, and left the meeting.

15. The Governance Committee proposed a series of changes to the CRTS handbook due to decisions made by the Board, Senate, and various committees. Noteworthy are changes to help faculty peer reviews function better, and the development of a new Crisis Management Policy. The proposed changes were adopted by the Board.
16. Dr. Jason Van Vliet presented a principal's report. He highlighted the CRTS community's thankfulness for the renovated facilities, new enrollment for the coming year of a total of twenty-nine students, gave an update on faculty and staff, and some issues relating to the coming school year. The Board spent some time considering which faculty would serve best in various administrative roles.
17. Dr. Jason Van Vliet presented a report titled, "Encouraging Men to Study for the Ministry." It was based on input from the Board and Senate, as well as survey results from the recent Considering the Ministry event. CRTS already hosts a triennial prospective student day and plans to expand the website with a "considering the ministry" section. CRTS would like to see local churches and pastors encourage their men to consider studying for the ministry. The Board decided to send a letter to the church councils throughout the federation, encouraging them to propose that each classis establish a Committee for Students of Theology. The task of this committee would be to encourage men to study for the ministry and to mentor those who express an interest in doing so.

18. Our faculty provided a report on the courses they taught in the 2022-23 academic year. This fifteen-page report provides a comprehensive report on the primary function of our professors in teaching and preparing men to serve in the ministry. This report was received with much thankfulness.
19. The Registrar, Dr. Arjan De Visser, provided a report on student enrollment. Six senior students are graduating this September, and four new students are enrolled in the freshman class beginning their studies. The Lord willing, we will have twenty-nine full time students at the beginning of the 2023-24 academic year.
20. Our librarian, sister Margaret Alkema, provided a Librarian report. A total of a little more than \$57,000 was spent on the library this past year. A significant portion of the funds are used to support digital subscriptions. This report was received with thankfulness.
21. The Website Committee reported on the use of the CRTS website, CRTS's social media presence, and the Heidelberg Catechism website, which continues to be used widely throughout the world. Plans for updates were shared. This report was received with thankfulness.
22. Minutes of the Convocation Committee were provided. Feedback on last year's convocation included that the program was too long, and that the live feed was not great. The plan for this year is aiming to finish the formal program in about ninety minutes, and Redeemer College has been contacted about the live feed issues. An update was given on plans for this year's convocation.
23. An update was provided by the Faber-Holwerda Bursary Fund Committee. Dr. Arjan De Visser was thanked for his work on this committee and Dr. Ted Van Raalte was appointed in his place. The Publication Committee reported on the publication of a book by Dr. Cornelis Van Dam titled, "In Holy Service:

Essays on Office—Personal and Ecclesial." Dr. Jerry Visscher was thanked for his work on this committee and Dr. John Smith was appointed in his place.

24. The Foreign Student Bursary Fund presented their report. With thankfulness they reported that the churches, as well as various individuals, have responded very generously to the special request for financial support for the South African students. They reported that during the second half of 2022 and the first half of 2023 a little more than \$175,000 was raised. Gratefulness was expressed for the positive response to this need among the South African students. Funds will continue to be required as these students attend CRTS in the coming years.
25. Dr. John Smith reported on a tour of the churches in Alberta in June. Our librarian, Margaret Alkema reported on her attendance at an Association of Christian Librarians Conference. Dr. Reuben Bredenhof reported on a trip to Brazil, in which he familiarized himself with the mission work there, and on his attendance at an OPC church planter training conference. Dr. William den Hollander reported on a trip to the churches in South Africa. Dr. Ted Van Raalte reported on his attendance of a two-week intensive course in Christian apologetics at the International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism, & Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. These reports were received with thankfulness.

PRESS RELEASE & CLOSING

The completion of the Press Release was delegated to the vice-chairman in consultation with the Executive and the Principal. Brother Kasper Van Veen closed the meeting with prayer.

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary,

Rev. Joe Poppe (Vice-chairman/Corresponding Clerk)

