



Clarion

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PRINCESS OF WALES 589 SUMMIT REFORMED YOUTH CONFERENCE

WHAT'S INSIDE

The days are shorter, cloudier, and often darker this time of the year here in the northern hemisphere, and that can bring spirits low. Those struggling with depression or anxiety often find their troubles compounded in these months. Several articles inside acknowledge the real faith-struggle genuine believers can go through and how the Lord helps us through. Eric Kampen's editorial focuses on the flagging feeling of assurance and how to retrieve it. The meditation of Gerrit Bruintjes points us to the great value in setting aside time to remember Jesus Christ. Rick Vanderhorst walks us through David's struggles in Psalm 25 to help us find our feet again in the covenant relationship. An unusual (for us) reflection on a musical by Rick Ludwig also brings encouragement as he relates how the gospel of forgiveness can show up in the most unlikely of settings.

Over the last few months there have been retreats and conferences in our Reformed community, two of which are reported on inside. Keith Davis summarizes how things went at Summit in Calgary while Daniel Shin gives us a picture of the restorative gathering of pastors and their wives in the Muskoka district of Ontario. Such gatherings are a privilege and a blessing. One of our congregations now has its own bricks-and-mortar home after forty years of renting space—read John van Popta's piece to rejoice along with Burlington-Fellowship.

While we in Canada continue to receive many material blessings, Christians in Pakistan are losing theirs as the CFAM Newsletter informs us. Prayer and financial giving are two things we can do to help. Bill Helder's poetic rendition of "Turn from Us Your Wrath, O Lord" is a welcome song for any suffering persecution.

Wes Bredenhof gives us two fresh book reviews while Rachel Vis offers birthday greetings in *Ray of Sunshine* and Amanda DeBoer teaches our kids about the day of rest. Last but not least you'll find the press release from Classis Manitoba which evidently was a busy and productive meeting. May the Lord be with us all and especially lift up the spirits of the downtrodden.

Peter Holtvlüwer

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Clarion

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

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

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- L**oving in manner
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- R**eadable and Reliable
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DOTTED LINE FAITH

A well-known incident during our Lord's time on earth is his walking on the water and Peter asking to join him. After the Lord told him to come, Peter eagerly got out of the boat. It didn't take long, however, before Peter became afraid, and he began to sink. All turned out well because the Lord Jesus immediately reached out his hand and kept Peter from drowning, saying, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matt 14:22–33)

FLUCTUATING FAITH

The incident gives us some insight into Peter's character. He comes across as impulsive, with moments of boldness and faith followed by moments of cowardice and lack of faith. We think of his bold confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, soon followed by him rebuking the Lord for talking about his upcoming suffering and death, as well as his avowal to be ready to die for Jesus only to deny him three times not much later.


If we are honest with ourselves, we will see similar swings in our own faith life. There can be moments where we are very confident in faith, while not much later we are filled with doubts and uncertainties. We confess that true faith is a sure knowledge whereby we accept all that God has revealed in his Word as true, as well as a sure confidence that the promises of the gospel are for me, personally (LD 7), but all this can be shaken as we go through the trials and temptations of life. One moment we feel like we are walking on water, so to speak, while the next we feel like we are sinking, gasping for air.

This reality is also expressed in the chapter on the Perseverance of the Saints in the Canons of Dort. Article 11 has the heading, "This Assurance Not Always Felt." While the title is not very reassuring, it is assuring in the way it states that "believers in this life have to struggle with various doubts of the flesh and, placed under severe temptation, do not always feel this assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance." This is reassuring because it confesses that if believers have these ups and downs, they are not alone. Lacking assurance does not mean that you are not a child of God. The article also adds the comforting words that "God, the Father of

all comfort, will not let them be tempted beyond their strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, and by the Holy Spirit will again revive in them the certainty of perseverance."

CONNECTING THE DOTS

The struggle for assurance, for confidence, is a reminder of being a people of little faith. We should note that little faith is still faith. The Lord did not tell Peter he had no faith. Peter had faith, but it was there one moment, enabling him to walk on water, and it was gone the next, leading him to sink. Faith can be compared to the dotted line we see when traveling on the road. At high speed, the line may almost appear solid, but as you slow down, it is obvious that there are spaces between the segments. Looking at our life as a whole, and as that life may be seen by others who see us speeding through life, we may, thankfully, see there is faith, but when our life is slowed down, then we start to see the spaces between the line segments. The spaces may be even, or perhaps, there are times when the spaces are longer, even to the point we can't see the next segment yet. It is not that there is a living in unfaithfulness. Rather, it is the case that the assurance and confidence of faith is lacking.

While it may be reassuring to read about the reality of dotted line faith, it will also have the effect of longing even more for the feeling of assurance, for the line segments to become a more solid line. The way forward is laid out in the second last article of the Canons, where we are encouraged to use the means of grace. It states that "as [God] begins his work of grace, so he maintains, continues and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats and promises, and by the use of the sacraments." Faithful use of these means will help us connect the dots on the line of faith. 



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REMEMBER — LEST WE FORGET

“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David.”

(2 TIMOTHY 2:8)

Remembering is important for Christians living by faith in Jesus Christ. This faith is a confident assurance in the knowledge of the truth about God the Father and our creation, God the Son and our salvation in Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification. We don't acquire this knowledge through daily observations while working at a job site, studying at school, building a loving, nurturing home, or whatever might fill our days. The routine of daily life doesn't always quickly remind us of the truth about life.

Paul commands Timothy, “Remember.” It's a reminder that we tend to forget and need to spend time remembering. To remember is to recall something already learned and keep it securely in mind. This stored memory is knowledge and confidence that can influence daily behaviour.


Paul encourages Timothy to remember, “Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David.” Paul commands him to remember because life is hard. Paul himself is suffering in “chains as a criminal.” Timothy will experience his share of “suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:3). Every faithful follower of Jesus Christ will experience suffering in their walk of faith. Christ leads some through a painful childhood; others through a difficult marriage; others through the challenges of parenting or childlessness; others through a life of ignominy, loneliness, or feelings of uselessness; others through periods of poverty and temptations to get-rich-quick schemes; others through wealth with its deceptive lures and related responsibilities; others through sickness; and the list could go on.

Paul commands, “Remember.”

As the Christian walks the difficult earthly road of suffering, remember Jesus Christ. Remember your salvation in Jesus, remember Christ's anointing by God as prophet to guide you, as priest to cleanse you, and as king to fight for you. Remember, as the offspring of David, he is the eternal King of Kings and Lord of Lords. “Remember Jesus Christ, resurrected from the dead.” Remember all this and be reminded that the heavy suffering you feel is light and momentary, achieving for you an eternal weight

of glory (2 Cor 4:8, 9). Remember that this is already yours by faith in Christ Jesus.

Many Christians are tempted to say, “Of course I'm a Christian, I know the gospel. I don't need to hear it again. I've learned these things before, tell me something new.” Yet Paul commands them to let a part of their lives be devoted to remembering. The truth we remember may not be new; however, by remembering, we learn that these “ancient truths ever true” are “changing me and changing you.”

So much of Christian encouragement and pastoral counselling is showing how the gospel learned yesterday does impact the difficult present day. Remembering Jesus Christ changes how we live, how we deal with our painful pasts, how we deal with the difficult present, and how we deal with suffering today because remembering Jesus Christ affirms our future. Christ is risen from the dead! Because he lives, we also will live (John 14:19). Let this remembrance strengthen you today. 

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Why does Paul focus here on remembering the resurrection? Why is it important to remember the resurrection in times of suffering? (Read 2 Timothy 2:1–7, 9–10; 2 Corinthians 4:7–18.)
2. Consider God's compassion and understanding with Israel, in giving them a day for remembering. What principles can we learn from this commandment? How is physical rest important for remembering spiritual rest in Jesus? (Read Exodus 20:8–11; Deuteronomy 5:12–15; Isaiah 58:13–14; Hebrews 4:11–13).



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How To Live in Covenant with God

(Part 1): Relying on God's grace

RICK VANDERHORST

As we study God's Word, listen to sermons, and read the confessions, there's one word that pops up again and again: *covenant*. Covenant might be a familiar word, but what does it mean? If I ask my catechism students what God's covenant is, sometimes I hear the answer, "A promise and an obligation" referring to the two parts of the covenant we hear about in the Form for the Baptism of Infants. While this tells us some things included in God's covenant, it doesn't get at the heart of it. Simply put, God's covenant is the relationship God has with his people. At the heart of that covenant relationship is the promise: "I will be your God and you will be my people."

Now, that is a basic understanding of what God's covenant is. However, the question we want to answer in this series of articles is, "What does a covenant relationship with God look like?" Perhaps you have wondered that before too. How do I live in covenant with God? How do I know if my relationship with God is on the right track?

AN INSIGHTFUL PSALM

Answering those questions could take up an entire book. However, in order to understand what a covenant relationship with God should look like, a great place to start is by studying Psalm 25. I would encourage you to read this psalm (memorize it even!), pray this psalm, and aim to put it into practice. Doing this will set your covenant relationship with God on the right foundation.

When we study Psalm 25, we see three themes emerge for living in covenant with God. These three themes will form the basis of the three articles in this series. The first theme we will study in the rest of this article is this: *In order to live in covenant with God we need to rely on God's grace.*

UNEQUAL COVENANT PARTNERS

Think for a moment of the partners in God's covenant. The LORD is the almighty God who is perfectly holy and righteous. He is so holy that sinners cannot stand in his presence and are terrified when they enter his presence (see for example Isaiah 6:1-5). Now look at us. We are weak and unholy people conceived and born in sin. We do not deserve any of God's favour but only his just wrath.

What does all this mean for God's covenant? It means God's grace must form the basis for God's covenant relationship with us. Because everyone on earth has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the only way a relationship with God can be established is if God himself comes down to our level and makes that relationship. You see, God has every right to withhold fellowship from everyone. He could fence himself off from all humanity and simply say, "Forget about all you sinners there on earth." The good news is that he doesn't do this! He has chosen to establish a relationship with his people. It's only by God's grace that the covenant relationship is made in the first place.

The only way a relationship with God can be established is if God himself comes down to our level and makes that relationship

NECESSITY OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

But that's not all. We also continue to rely on God's steadfast love and grace as our relationship with God goes on. When you reflect on the person of God—his greatness, his holiness, his justice—you can't help but think of your own shortcomings and sins. This means our relationship with God can continue only if God is gracious and forgiving.

King David understood these things clearly and so this truth is emphasized in Psalm 25. In fact, no less than three times in this psalm David asks God for forgiveness. The first time is found in verses 6 and 7, where David prays, "Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!" Three times we see that word "remember," which is a word so often connected to God's covenant faithfulness. He asks God to *remember* his steadfast love, to *remember not* the sins of his youth or his transgression, and to *remember* him according to his steadfast love. David asks the LORD to keep these things in the forefront of his mind, so to speak. Given David's sin, it's the only way the relationship can continue.

You see, when you are in relationship with a holy God who cannot look upon sin, it's impossible not to be aware of your sins and feel the urge to ask for forgiveness. This is especially true because as part of his covenant God calls us to walk before him and be blameless. We see this very thing in verse 10: "All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies [or his laws]." Of course, God always keeps his part of the covenant; it's impossible for him not to be faithful. The problem is that so often we are not. We fall short everyday. That's why David, upon reflecting on God's steadfast love for those who keep God covenant, immediately cries out, "For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great." If God is going to maintain the covenant relationship based on our performance, both David and all of us would be in trouble.

THE SINS OF OUR YOUTH

Throughout our lives our relationship with God is characterized by God's grace. In verse 7, David specifically asks the LORD to forgive the sins of his youth—sins he committed as a boy and as a teenager.


You see, God makes his covenant with children too, children who are born only with a sinful nature, children who are prone to idolatry, children who as they grow up find more freedom and

often use that freedom to pursue sinful desires. David looks back on his youth and sometimes he's appalled at what he sees.

Perhaps as you look back on your life you experience the same thing. Maybe you look back to when you were a youth and you think, "I barely even had a relationship with God at all. So often I ignored God in my heart and in my life; I was just focused on my social life. And some of the sins I committed, how could I commit such wickedness and not even think twice about it?" David is struck by some of those things, and so he asks God, "Remember not the sins of my youth." We all need our gracious God to forgive the sins of our youth.

THE BASIS OF FORGIVENESS

So, David asks for forgiveness from God three times in this psalm. But notice the basis for this request. He does not try to bargain with God saying, "Lord, if you forgive my sins then I will do this or that. Let's make a deal for the forgiveness of my sins." No! He simply appeals to God's gracious character: "Remember your mercy! Remember your steadfast love! According to your steadfast love, remember me. For the sake of your goodness O LORD! . . . For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great."

And the wonderful thing is that God does display his mercy, his grace, and his goodness. God's gracious character is seen in this fact: God himself gave the sacrifice needed for the covenant relationship to be there. He gave his own Son to be the sacrifice. And Christ in his love willingly became that sacrifice. And make no mistake, this sacrifice was essential. There are curses in God's covenant, curses for disobedience. And this is the very reason why we rely on the sacrifice and obedience of Jesus Christ in our relationship with God. You see, in his life on earth, and in his death on the cross, Jesus was treated by his Father as the covenant breaker. The Father did this to pay for our sins. That's the reason why God can pour out his covenant blessings and love upon us. If it were not for this sacrifice, we would be without hope. But because God gave this sacrifice by his grace, we can say with David, "To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul, O my God, in you I trust" (vv. 1-2). 



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When a Church Does Not Comply

(2)

KARLO JANSSEN

Last time we reviewed some of the situations and events that saw the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (GKv) divide into two groups in the late 1960s and early 70s. They became known as those inside the federation and those outside the federation. The latter group was considered by the former to be, in some way, in non-compliance with the Church Order.

In this article we want to reflect on procedures that should be followed when a church, or a broader assembly, is in non-compliance with the Church Order.

CANRC CHURCH POLITY

I have had the privilege of serving as minister in both the GKv and the CanRC. I have also had the privilege of studying church polity at the seminaries of both the CanRC (1993–1997) and the GKv (1998–2009). One thing I have observed is that there are four slight differences between GKv and CanRC church polity.

One difference is that CanRC church polity is more independent¹ than GKv church polity. The CanRC are more decentralized than the GKv were. Maybe it was originally because of the size of Canada. Perhaps today it is because of our adjustment to the North American context. I think it is also because the spread of

¹Editor's note: In Reformed church polity, every church is autonomous but voluntarily agrees to work cooperatively with sister churches in a federation. When a church tends to act on its own with little regard for the other churches and the agreements made in the Church Order, this is known as "independentism." A church polity that leaves more up to the decision of the local church than another polity is said by comparison to be "independentistic."

How should a church or broader assembly that is not compliant with the Church Order be dealt with in the CanRC?

opinions that saw the GKv break into two did not have the same impact in the CanRC, and thus that spread of opinions has always been present within the CanRC.

Simply put, the practice of CanRC polity, and even the text of its Church Order, displays a position on the spectrum of centralization-decentralization that is between that of the NGK and the GKv. This is made clear, for example, by the revisions of the Church Order by the GKv in 1978 and the CanRC in 1983. Many of the changes made by the GKv were also adopted by the CanRC and yet there were also differences.

CHURCH VISITORS

One such difference is with respect to the role of church visitors. The GKv Church Order stipulated that the goal of church visitation is, among other things, “collaboration through counsel and action in the peace, edification, and wellbeing of the churches”². The CanRC Church Order equivalent states “that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ’s church.” While GKv church visitors had a duty to “advise and act,” in the CanRC church visitors may only “advise” (“counsel” is essentially the same as “advise”). In the GKv, church visitors had more “clout” than in the CanRC.

Another such difference relates to the expression “autonomy of the local church.” In the CanRC there is a strong emphasis on local church autonomy; it is the first bullet point on www.canrc.org/government. In the GKv, especially during the 1970s and 80s, the emphasis was more on the churches together. For example, in checking a popular guide on the Church Order, I am not able to find anything on the autonomy of the local church (*Wegwijs in de Kerkorde* by K. Harmannij).

BOND OF CHURCHES

This nuance also expresses itself in how to refer to a group of churches connected to each other. The Dutch call this a “*kerkverband*”—“*verband*” being a noun derived from the noun and verb “*verbond*.” As a noun, “*verband*” translates as “covenant;” as a verb, it translates as “connected, bound.”

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), where I was catechized, tended to use the phrase “bond of churches.” Coming to

Ontario for seminary studies in 1993, it struck me that the CanRC preferred to speak of a “federation of churches.” Reviewing English materials from our earliest years (e.g. the Brief Report of GS 1965), one also encounters the expression “confederation of churches.”

The expression “bond of churches” emphasizes a measure of *organic connectedness*.

The expression “federation of churches” expresses a measure of connectedness *through agreement*, emphasizing *connectedness* of the churches.

The expression “confederation of churches” expresses a measure of connectedness *through agreement*, emphasizing *autonomy* of the churches.

Line the three up and you have GKv polity, CanRC polity, and NGK polity.

THE SOURCE OF THIS CANRC POLITY

Church polity is not every one’s cup of tea—some may even regard it as a necessary evil. The practice of polity is thus very much shaped by resources: for elders it will be published materials while for ministers it will be their seminary training as well as published works. For CanRC polity, a main resource is Rev. W. W. J. VanOene who lectured at CRTS during the 1970s. The title of his much-appreciated explanation of the Church Order is suggestive of the concept of churches federating together: *With Common Consent*. And his News Medley column in *Clarion* would often comment on local affairs with a church political finesse that shaped many of our current older elders.

Before coming to Canada in 1952, Rev. VanOene served in two charges in the Netherlands. The second of these was in Schiedam, where he served alongside Rev. C. Vonk. In 1968 Rev. Vonk found himself outside the federation.

Rev. VanOene’s polity (and that of Rev. C. Bouwman in *Spiritual Order for the Church*) contrasts with that of Dr. P. Deddens, Prof. J. Kamphuis, and Dr. D. Deddens in the Netherlands (as well as Dr. K. Deddens in Hamilton and Rev. G. van Rongen in Australia) in that he strongly emphasizes the autonomy of the local church and advocates a decentralized polity, while the others advocate a more centralized polity, especially after the 1960s. For example, Rev. G. van Rongen described a “great Reformed principle” as: “the

² Dutch original: “het met raad en daad meewerken aan de vrede, de opbouw en het welzijn van de kerken.”

bond of churches is a matter of a voluntary act of free churches in accordance with what holy Scripture states concerning the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace to be maintained.”³

As a student of two men not yet mentioned, Dr. J. de Jong (Hamilton) and Dr. M. te Velde (Kampen), I am more inclined towards GKv polity than CanRC polity. I also sense that there is something of a shift in a majority of the CanRC towards GKv polity. In part it is because we are seeing such a shift in the URCNA (especially after the formation of what was first the Communion and is now the Confederation(!) of Reformed Evangelical Churches). In part it is because we are beginning to experience that emphasizing the autonomy of the local church can be at the expense of the bond of churches.

We’ve begun to have the discussion on the extent to which unity requires uniformity: for example, women voting, Bible translations, *Book of Praise*, and more generally matters of worship.

NON-COMPLIANCE

That was a long run-up, but necessary, because the question I now wish to address is how a church (or broader assembly) that is not compliant with the Church Order should be dealt with *in the CanRC*.

While things can be learned from the GKv, one cannot answer that question by simply looking at precedence in the GKv. The CanRC are too distinct from the GKv for that. One has to reflect on principles, purposes, and the adopted text of the Church Order.

A NON-COMPLIANT OFFICE BEARER

If an office bearer refuses to comply with the Church Order in the execution of his office or refuses to heed the admonitions of the consistory with the deacons (i.e. the church council), he is to be suspended from his office, for he is guilty of public schism and deserting his office (CO Art. 72). This decision is to be taken by the judgment of the combined councils of the church in question and the neighbouring church (Art. 71). Classis regulations should make clear who that neighbouring church is. “Suspension from office” implies that the individual retains the office but cannot exercise it while his case is being carefully considered.

If the combined councils cannot agree on the suspension, the matter needs to be brought as quickly as possible before a classis. The CanRC Church Order makes no mention of the possibility of a classis convened before the appointed time (Art. 44), but it does where a regional synod is concerned (Art. 47). Analogous to that,

I believe it proper for an extraordinary classis to be convened with the advice of the neighbouring church appointed to convene the classis. A classis contracta will not suffice.

Alternatively, the combined councils could involve church visitors in their decision, especially if the situation concerns a minister. I fear, though (based on personal experience in the CanRC), that the prevailing thought in the CanRC would dissuade the involvement of church visitors.

If the office bearer in question is an elder or deacon, the decision whether to depose the office bearer is to be taken by the combined councils. If the office bearer in question is a minister, the decision whether to depose the office bearer is to be taken by a classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod (Art. 71).

A NON-COMPLIANT CHURCH

Non-compliance with the Church Order by a church can become apparent in several ways. It may concern a public act of the church, for example, not using the adopted liturgical forms during a public worship service. It may become evident during church visitation, as it concerns an internal matter, for example, admission policy for the Lord’s Supper. It may become clear when a church frankly admits that it is not honouring all the decisions of the major assemblies (as I once did on behalf of my church, indicating at the same time that the decision in question was being appealed).

When non-compliance is evident, and the non-compliance is considered questionable in the light of Scripture and the Church Order, it is first of all the task of church visitors to fraternally admonish the office bearers (Art. 46). The report of church visitors to classis should end with an explicit statement concerning their findings. I am personally in the habit of ending a report with: “Church visitors can thankfully report that church x continues steadfastly in the Word of God, abides by the agreements in the Church Order, and that the office bearers perform their duties faithfully.”

Given that church visitors are accountable to classis, a classis can do as a whole what church visitors can do as classis deputies. This being so, if non-compliance becomes evident at a classis and is considered unjustifiable, I believe it would be proper for the chairman to fraternally admonish the delegates from the church in non-compliance. It could be that an *impression* of non-compliance arises at classis without it being clear. The instrument to deal with this is to mandate church visitors to investigate and report back to classis.

³ G. VanRongen, *Decently and in Good Order* (The Reformed Guardian, WA, 2005), p.11.

The Church Order does not specify what should happen if a church ignores the admonition and refuses to change its ways. Some might argue that by that fact it places itself outside the bond of churches and should no longer be recognized by classis (as happened with Wezep by Classis Harderwijk). I believe that the church should be suspended from the federation by a decision of the classis with the concurring advice of regional synod deputies. This would be an example of a “case of special difficulty” mentioned in Article 48. The church would consider itself a “grieving church.” Expulsion from the federation should be by a decision of a following classis, again with the concurring advice of regional synod deputies from each of the other classes within the regional synod (and not the bare minimum of just two).

I feel the need to share something at this point. My thoughts are shaped not only by theory but also by experience. When serving in the GKv I was a delegate to the extraordinary classis Kampen, convened with a view to a split in the church of Kampen-Noord that led to the formation of the grieving church known as the Ichthus Congregation (which eventually became a founding church of what is today called the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, GKN). As a Th.D. student of church polity at the GKv Seminary (and for two years a lecturer in church polity), and with the seminary professors side-lined (as they were members of Kampen-Noord), I and some other colleagues (one of whom later left the GKv for the GKN) spent many hours thinking through the application of principles of Reformed church polity.

Our Church Order does not provide for every conceivable situation. It describes patterns for dealing with situations and relies on church assemblies to use wisdom to determine how best to proceed. This reflects the biblical practice of seeking “wisdom in the gate” (Job 29:7-13; Prov. 24:7; cf. Ruth 4:1-12).

A NON-COMPLIANT BROADER ASSEMBLY

What if a minor broader assembly (i.e., a classis or regional synod) is non-compliant? This is where distinctions between the polities of the GKv and CanRC have the most impact. While researching the Dutch split of the 1960s, I came across a complaint on the GKv side that a classis or regional synod had not appealed a decision taken by a major assembly. This struck me as odd. Since both classes and regional synods are broader assemblies that only exist for the duration of their agenda, and its agenda is set by the churches, how would a classis or regional synod submit an appeal? Indeed, how can a classis or regional synod that no longer exists be “grieved” or “wronged”?

In CanRC polity, only individuals or churches submit appeals. If there is a conflict between a minister and his church, and the

minister appeals a decision of the church council to classis, and classis denies the appeal, and the minister then appeals to regional synod, and regional synod upholds the appeal, it is the *church*, and not the *classis*, that has the right of appeal to general synod.

Further, at a classis the question is asked of the *churches* whether they are abiding by the decisions of the broader assemblies. That question is not put at a regional synod to the classes, or at a general synod to the regional synods. Moreover, though there are regional synod deputies to assist classes (Art. 48), their labour is not to engage in inquiry like that of church visitors (Art. 46) but more like that of a church counselor helping out a vacant church (Art. 45). And there are no general synod deputies to assist regional synods.

This is a warning for us

IN MOST CASES

In most cases, the issue will not simply be non-compliance by a broader assembly, but the failure of a broader assembly to deal with alleged non-compliance by a church. In that situation, the church needs to be dealt with through the ecclesiastical route. The most appropriate way for this to happen is for an appeal to follow the ecclesiastical route, in which the parties are a church member and the church council, or the church council and the council of another church.

As the concern is about compliance with the Church Order common to all the churches in the federation, the “council of another church” does not have to belong to the broader assembly to which the appeal is addressed. Thus, in the 1960s the Bedum GKv, within Classis Groningen and RS Groningen, could appeal to Classis Noord-Brabant/Limburg and RS of the South. This is also why the Orangeville CanRC had the right to submit an appeal to Classis Central Ontario regarding a church within that classis.⁴

IN THE ODD CASE

In some cases, the non-compliance may be limited to the activity of a classis. For example, a classis may be slothful in ensuring that church visitations take place annually or church visitations within a classis may be no more than procedural rituals of little consequence. A church of a non-complying classis has the right to raise this concern at a classis. It is to be raised by way of an instruction, so that it is clear at classis that the matter is being raised by a church, and not by an individual office bearer.

A church that is outside the non-complying classis has the right to raise this too. Under GKv polity, such a church could

⁴ Classis Central Ontario of September 13 & Oct 10, 2019.

have turned to regional synod, provided it had concrete evidence of non-compliance. Under CanRC polity, such a church would be wise to first communicate with all the churches within the classis, urging them to ensure that due diligence is done. If nothing changes, that church can then submit an appeal to a classis meeting of that particular classis against the decisions of these churches not to make work of this non-compliance. If classis denies the appeal, the church can then submit an appeal to the next regional synod of which the non-compliant classis is a part.

FINAL THOUGHTS


For some ten years I served as a minister in the GKv and for two years I taught church polity at its seminary. What struck me as I observed the culture and practice of the GKv was a resistance to accountability. One reason why the GKv has slid down the path it has is the failure of church visitation. Church visitors shirked their responsibility to admonish and if they did, churches often did not care.

This is a warning for us in the CanRC. Church visitation is a critical tool for the proper functioning of the bond of churches. Emphasizing the autonomy of the local church should never be

at the expense of unity which is experienced in a bond of sister churches. We are “bound yet free” and “free yet bound.”

If the tools outlined in the Church Order do not function, processes will derail and confusion if not indecency and disorder will result. If the tools do not function, we should either endeavour diligently to use them as intended or change, augment, or diminish the tools as demanded by the interest of the churches (Art. 76).

The Church Order is not a confessional document. It simply prescribes, to use the phrasing of the Belgic Confession, “a certain order to maintain the body of the church” (Art. 32). Note the indefinite article “a.” It is not the “law of the Medes and Persians;” it can be revoked or changed. But until it is, it is in force.

“Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God” (1 Pet 2:16–17a). 



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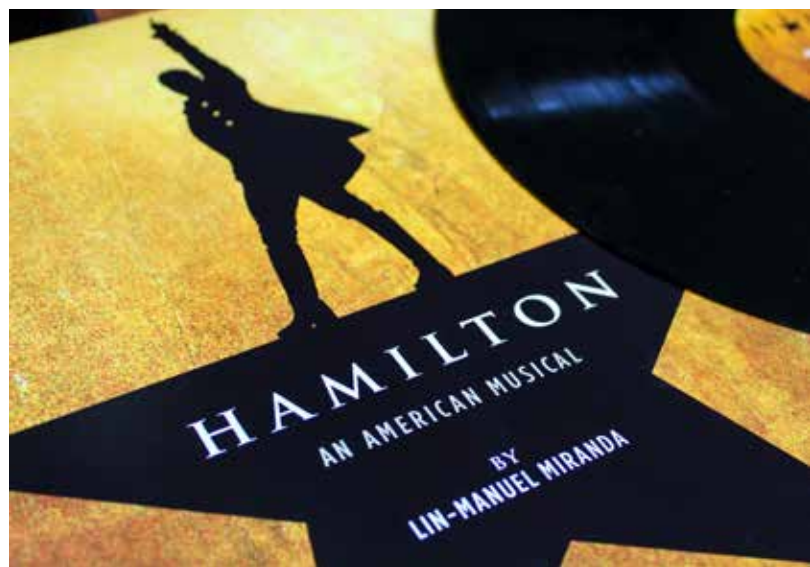




Gospel Glimmers *at The Princess of Wales*

This past summer the popular musical *Hamilton* ended its Toronto run at the Princess of Wales Theatre. It had been scheduled to play for a number of months in 2020 but was abruptly cut short after four weeks due to the pandemic restrictions on gathering. David Mirvish reprised it in February of this year and then extended it through the summer, closing it out in late August. I had the opportunity to attend the second-last show with my family and was not disappointed.

The blended musical, including hip hop, jazz, rhythm and blues, and Broadway music, tells an American history lesson in a revolutionary way. The story of Alexander Hamilton, creator of the American financial system and significant promoter and



interpreter of the U.S. Constitution, is presented by a non-white cast with a modern rap-style script. I must admit, I was mildly curious going in, not having viewed any trailers, but was immediately captured by the powerful presentation and effective communication of a fresh point of view. All the well-known players were represented including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Aaron Burr.

UNSATISFIED


Woven into the history lesson was a presentation of Alexander Hamilton as a passionate and driven man who loved his country and would stop at nothing politically and personally to see it succeed. He also loved his wife Eliza and their son Philip. Throughout the score there is repeated chorus about Hamilton's ambition and that he won't be satisfied. It is sung by Eliza's sister, who feels the wandering gaze of Alexander in her direction alongside his passion for the economy and the constitution. In the end he is not unfaithful with her but with another woman, which comes to light for the political advantage of his rival Jefferson. Hamilton admits to it publicly before he can be slandered but pays the price when his son is killed in a pistol duel while trying to defend his father's honour. From here everything unravels for Hamilton, alongside his bereft wife. To this point the play was entertaining, engaging, well-choreographed, moving in many parts, and a bit gritty in others. And then something more beautiful and unexpected filled the room.

UNIMAGINABLE

As Alexander wanders uptown, mourning the loss of his son, and pining for a restored relationship with his dear Eliza, he recounts in song how his life has changed. He walks in the quiet of uptown alone, he returns to church and sees the cross on the door and he prays to God. He reflects that he has not done this before. And then the choral group gently breaks out:

*There are moments that the words don't reach
There is a grace too powerful to name
We push away what we can never understand
We push away the unimaginable
They are standing in the garden
Alexander by Eliza's side
She takes his hand
It's quiet uptown
Forgiveness. Can you imagine?
Forgiveness. Can you imagine?
If you see him in the street, walking by her
Side, talking by her side, have pity
They are going through the unimaginable.*

The theatre audience was absolutely quiet as these words settled over us. It was riveting as the lyrics echoed, "There is a grace too powerful to name. . . . Forgiveness. Can you imagine?" I have attended many wonderful plays and productions, but I can't remember being so moved by the bursting forth of gospel light in such a dramatic way. Perhaps I was caught off guard that it happened in the theatre district of downtown Toronto. Possibly it was just so powerfully portrayed that such forgiveness is unimaginable. Maybe, in that moment, I truly saw myself and felt known.

There are moments that our words don't reach. Knowing and experiencing that you are forgiven of your sins and loved by God is one of them. We can be thankful that this is played out for us each week as we come together in worship. God has given us the script and props for it, so to speak. That helps make the unimaginable real and dear and brilliant and stunning. Blessed be the name of our Lord Jesus! 



Rick Ludwig

Streetlight Christian Church

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After 40 Years:

More Than We Asked for or Even Imagined!

JOHN VAN POPTA

When Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington, Ontario, gathered to worship the Lord on September 10, the congregants were filled with mixed emotions. The pews were full, and excitement was in the air. Something new was happening! You could feel the joy of the Fellowship members by the buzz in the air. However, there were also many visitors that morning whose joy was tempered: tempered by sadness. This brought to my mind the mixed emotions of God's people when the foundation stones of the Second Temple were laid in the days of Ezra (Ezra 3:10–13). The congregation praised God with shouts of joy, but there was an older segment that wept. Those seniors were reminded of the glory of Solomon's Temple. They remembered what God had done in the past.

The visitors that September morning were the remnants of the once thriving New Street Christian Reformed Church (CRC), which had recently been closed. They were worshipping in their former home, which Fellowship Church had just purchased from them. They shared in Fellowship's joy, and they praised the Lord that the ministry of the gospel would continue in the place where they had gathered for worship since 1959. They rejoiced that a congregation with many young families and scores of children could once again fill the pews. At the same time, they were saddened because of the closing of their church.



Hilmer Jagersma



Pastor Mark Stewart

A LONG SEARCH

Fellowship Church members had a special reason for celebrating and for thanking and praising the Lord. Their church had been instituted in 1983, and since then, they had never had their own building. They were always in a temporary home. Over those forty years, several attempts had been made to find or build a permanent place of worship. Properties were bought and sold. Building fund drives were organized. Committees were struck. Offers were made to purchase existing church buildings. However, none of these various plans ever came to fruition.

In the spring of this year, Fellowship consistory heard that there were several Reformed churches in the broader Burlington area that were considering closing down—including the New Street CRC. These churches were told of Fellowship's need for a home. Over the years, the New Street Church had experienced a steady decline in membership, with a mostly senior demographic remaining. Recently, it had become increasingly clear that it would be difficult for the church to continue. After several months of meetings, discussions, and much prayer, the New Street membership and consistory made the difficult decision to close their doors and sell their property. However, the membership had expressed a fervent desire that the building be sold to a church that was

committed to continuing a faithful gospel witness. Their consistory agreed.

Fellowship's consistory received a letter from the consistory of the New Street CRC inviting the church to submit an offer to purchase their property. Offers that included a commitment to continue and to support various present gospel ministries on-site would receive preferential treatment. A Baptist congregation rents the building for Sunday worship. A Friendship Group, a ministry to special needs adults, meets on Wednesday evenings. The Christian Counselling Centre (CCC) rents office space.

On May 29, the Fellowship consistory approached the congregation and presented the details of a proposed offer. This proposal received strong support from the membership. Things then moved very swiftly. Fellowship submitted an offer that included a commitment to support and to continue the ongoing gospel ministries and rental leases. The New Street CRC quickly accepted this offer. Real estate is expensive in Burlington, but because the New Street consistory, as well as the remaining membership, were thankful to the Lord that a Reformed church would be continuing faithful gospel ministry at their former campus, they were willing to accept Fellowship's offer even though it was significantly under market value.




Formerly New Street CRC, now Fellowship Church. In 1953, when the New Street CRC bought their first building from the United Church, the former owners left the church furniture and a piano. The New Street congregation “paid it forward” seventy years later! Included in the purchase of the church building, a manse which sits on two acres of land.

EFFORTS CROWNED

The consistory quickly organized a fundraising drive. The members gave so generously that within two weeks sufficient funds were made available for the purchase of the New Street property. Included with the purchase of the church building, on a two-acre site, is a manse. (Presently, the CCC leases part of the manse as office space.) With the purchase of the building comes a completely equipped audiovisual booth with sound system and projectors all set up for live streaming, a fully equipped kitchen and fellowship hall, several classrooms, as well as furnishings throughout the building, and even a grand piano! Moreover, families with young children will be thankful for the very generous nursery facilities after many years of using significantly inadequate spaces.

After forty years of planning, praying, and waiting, the Lord has provided a permanent home in just over forty days! On September

10, when Fellowship Church gathered, there was extraordinary joy in our hearts and thankfulness on our lips. That joy resonated in the auditorium as our voices united in praise. Pastor Mark Stewart expressed this joy and thanksgiving as he led us in prayers. Pastor Hilmer Jagersma articulated our joyfulness and gratitude as he preached the good news to us.

The Lord is good, and his steadfast love endures forever. He did more than we asked! Or even imagined! 



John van Popta
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August 7–11, 2023

summit
REFORMED YOUTH CONFERENCE

2023 Summit Reformed Youth Conference: *The Time of Your Life!*

KEITH DAVIS

The 2023 Summit Reformed Youth Conference kicked off with Pastor Keith Davis singing a parody of the song “The Time of Your Life.” The lyrics highlighted the fun activities of the upcoming week, and it encapsulated the comments made by many who have attended Summit over the years, calling it the best week of the summer.

“Another Summit’s here, a road trip to Cal’gry, Ten thousand emails sent—who is this Pastor D?! But now we’re here and it’s clear, this is ‘fire,’ There’s raisins, candy, speakers, sports, and even choir! It’s something unbelievable, Summit starts tonight, we hope you have the time of your life!”

THE BATTLE FOR TRUTH

The 2023 theme was “The Battle for Truth” based on John 18:38—Pilate’s cynical question to Jesus: “What is truth?” The main speakers, Pastor Bill Boekestein and Pastor Jason Tuinstra, led the five main sessions. They both delivered very timely and challenging messages that highlighted God’s unchanging truth amid a world that is constantly rejecting and redefining truth.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the 448 registrants attended four of the fourteen breakout sessions.

BACK HOME

After a one-year-hiatus (Summit 2022 was held on the campus of Olds College in Olds, AB), we were elated to be back on the campus of Mt. Royal University. The campus of Mt. Royal was able to house all the registrants, and the Bella Concert Hall was not only beautiful as the name suggests, but it is able to seat over

500 people and it is equipped with state-of-the-art technology. We also have access to Mt. Royal’s sound and light technicians, who run our daily videos (produced on site by David Visser and Kyle Vasas of Faith, Inc. David and Kyle spend all week on campus taking pics and videos. They edit and produce the four daily videos which are shown at each main sessions Tuesday through Friday).

The sound and light techs are especially appreciated for the amazing and professional atmosphere they provide for the

BREAK OUT SESSIONS & SPEAKERS

Rich and Angela Bout — *The Most Excellent Way*

Andrea Kampen — *What is A Woman?*

Simon Lievaart — *The Blame-Shifter*

Bill Pols — *Membership Matters*

James Roosma — *Speaking the Truth in Love*

Kelvin Tiemstra — *Living out the Truth*

Jason Vander Horst — *The Truth About Identity*

Jeremy Segstro — *Debunking the Myths about Evangelism*

Aaron Van Der Heiden — *Satan’s Oldest Trick*

Robert Van der Woerd — *The Truth about Worship*

John van Eyk — *Rejoicing in Suffering*

Ken Wieske — *True Love*

John Ysinga — *The Truth about Heaven*

Gary Zekveld — *Is the Bible Reliable*



Thursday night talent show. The talent show is always one of the highlights of the week. This year we had seventeen acts ranging from individual performances to group performances. The final act of the night was a wonderful parody from the Sound of Music “Good-bye, Farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, Adieu” followed by the Summit Choir singing “The Lighthouse.”

OUT-DAYS, ETC.


Following the main session on Thursday morning, the buses arrived to take everyone to their out-day activity. Taking advantage of Calgary’s proximity to the Canadian Rockies, we sent almost half of the registrants to white-water rafting excursions and to a hike on Baldy Pass, a beautiful mountain hike in the Kananaskis Country and Bow Valley region.

The other out-day options included a trip to Calaway Park (an amusement park) and Heritage Park (a historical village). For supper on Thursday night, we enjoyed a delicious catered meal in the Ross Glenn Hall that accommodated our entire group. For all the other meals we ate in three shifts in the cafeteria area named “The Table.”

All in all, I believe that the 2023 Summit Youth Conference lived up to the past reputation of being “the time of our life”—or at least the highlight of our summer!

2024 SUMMIT YOUTH CONFERENCE

Lord willing, the 2024 “Behold Our God” Summit Youth Conference will be held Monday to Friday (August 5–9) at Mt. Royal University in Calgary, AB. Featured speakers will be Dr. Eric Watkins and Rev. Terry Johnson, who will focus on the Identity and Attributes of God. Registration will open on or about March 1, 2024, and close on May 31. *Note: we will be capping registration at 500.

The Summit Reformed Youth Conference is a ministry of Bethel URC, Calgary. Summit is supported by personal donations and by the generous giving of local churches. If you would like to learn more about Summit, or have a special Summit presentation for your church, please contact pastor Keith Davis at kdavis@bethelurc.org. To inquire about how you or your church can support Summit financially, contact the Summit treasurer, Debbie Oostenbrink, at payments@summitrefcon.org. 



Keith Davis
Pastor
Bethel United Reformed
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Rest and Restoration in the Muskokas

DANIEL SHIN

“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” wrote Paul to encourage Timothy (2 Tim 2:1). What we can learn from this and various other parts of his letters to Timothy and Titus is that ministers need encouragement. It’s true, Timothy and Titus handled the Word of God and were no doubt encouraged through their study and meditation on God’s Word, but Paul still felt the need to encourage them through his letter and in person. So, we see that encouraging ministers, especially the young and inexperienced ones, is a biblical practice.

In line with this biblical pattern, we are thankful that we could attend the encouraging and restful Eastern Ministerial Conference (EMC) which was held in the third week of October (17–19). In attendance were some thirty plus ministers, together with their wives in many cases, for a total of sixty-six participants. They came from various NAPARC churches: Canadian Reformed, United Reformed, Heritage Reformed, and the Presbyterian Church of America. We all spent three days at the beautiful Muskoka Bible Centre south of Huntsville with many opportunities for conversation, laughter, prayer, singing, and relaxation. There near the lake we also had the privilege of seeing the fall colours on the trees, making use of MBC’s spacious and clean facilities, and of being spoiled with great food and fellowship.

BROTHERLY ENCOURAGEMENT

Not only were we fed abundantly with physical food but also with spiritual food. On the first day, Rev. Clarence Bouwman gave a fraternal address based on 1 Peter 1:1–9. He heartened us that while we are indeed exiles and outsiders in this world, that is not a reason to be discouraged but encouraged. The reason to be encouraged is rooted in why we are different from the world. Unlike the world, we were “born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1:3). Rev. Bouwman illustrated how different Christians are from the world by comparing the condition of a baby still in the womb to one born. The unborn baby is restricted in the dark womb, but the born child has the world opened up to him, with opportunity to learn and grow. Such is how we are who were born again. The world in its darkness has a restricted view that begins with birth and ends with death. But we Christians have the light of an eternal perspective. We were born again to a living hope.





MAIN SPEAKERS

The main guest speakers were Dr. Gregory K. Beale and his wife Dorinda. Dr. Beale is currently Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas, and is an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He has made a number of contributions to conservative biblical hermeneutics, particularly in the area of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, and is one of the most influential and prolific active New Testament scholars in the world.

Dr. Beale gave his first address on Revelation 18:4, “Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her [Babylon], my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues.’” This was God’s call to come out of the world, which is symbolized by Babylon. Surveying the Old Testament examples of how God’s people commonly responded to this call (Abraham from Chaldea; Lot from Sodom, Israel from Babylon during the exile), Dr. Beale warned us of the constant danger for believers to live in careless ease in this world, and how reluctant God’s people are to come out of this world. He also pointed out that the expression “dwellers on earth” in the book of Revelation never described Christians. He exhorted us not to live as “dwellers on earth” but to live as pilgrims always heeding the call to “come out of her, my people.”

On the second day, Dr. & Mrs. Beale together spoke about the blessings and challenges of being involved with ministry and raising children. As they answered questions, Dorinda and Greg stressed multiple times the importance of making time to read and meditate upon the Word. A minister must have a living relationship with his God this way and not depend on making sermons alone to feed his faith.


Dr. Beale’s final address was on Isaiah 6 with the title, “We become what we worship.” He explained why it was that Isaiah was commissioned to say to God’s people, “Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.” Referring to Isaiah 44, and Psalm 115, especially verse 8, “Those who make them [idols] become like them; so do all who trust in them,” he pointed out that it was because the people of Israel at that time had become idol worshippers and had become like idols. Like idols,

they had ears but could not hear and eyes but could not see. He also mentioned that when the Bible uses disability language such as ears that do not hear or eyes that do not see, it is a reference to idolaters. So, in the New Testament, human tradition had become idolatry for the Pharisees (Matt 13:13–15). What was especially powerful about Dr. Beale’s addresses was that he opened up not just one passage of the Bible but many as he unpacked a theme of Scripture.

In between the main talks some group activities like volleyball, euchre, and “Get Church’d” were organized for interested participants. Lots of fun! And there was ample time for walks around the grounds or simply resting. Each day began and ended with a time of prayer and Scripture meditation in the main auditorium.

TRANSGENDERISM

Additionally, one evening a panel discussion was held on a highly relevant and urgent topic, “Understanding and responding to the transgender issue.” Rev. Holtvliüwer was the moderator, and the panelists were Dr. Ted Van Raalte, Rev. Marc Jagt, and Rev. Winston Bosch. Each panelist was assigned a specific aspect to focus on. Dr. Van Raalte addressed transgenderism with a view to the underlying philosophy; Rev. Jagt did so with a view to pastoral situations; Rev. Bosch did so with a view to outreach.

Speaking on behalf of those who attended, I can say that the speeches, the fellowship, the rest, and all that was done at the Eastern Ministerial Conference was encouraging for us. Thank you, congregations, for allowing us to have this conference and supporting us! That said, we would like to urge still other ministers and congregations in Ontario (or close by) to consider next year’s conference. If you would like more information, please contact Rev. Pete van’t Hoff (petevanthoff@gmail.com). Next year’s guest speaker will be Dr. Craig Troxel and the location once again will be at the Muskoka Bible Centre on October 15–17, 2024, the Lord willing. 



Daniel Shin
Minister
Spring Creek Canadian Reformed Church



CHRIST FOR ALL
MINISTRY

September 2023

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalms 121:1-4



Urgent Prayer is needed for Christians in Pakistan



Christian families forced to spend night in open fields



Visiting houses that burned by mob



Message from Founder, Chairman Naeem Zafar

We are writing to address the recent tragic events that unfolded in Jaranwala, Punjab, Pakistan. The heart-wrenching incident involved the destruction of 22 churches and 100 homes, and the disruption of numerous lives. These distressing events have elicited deep concern within the Christian community in Pakistan. Amidst the adversity that our fellow brethren in Jaranwala are facing, we find solace in the unity displayed by Christ For All Ministry's team. Their unwavering support, which includes the provision of food and other essentials, serves as a testament to our commitment to stand together during challenging times. Our dedication to aiding them will continue until their lives are restored to stability. We kindly implore you to include the affected individuals and families in your personal prayers. Your spiritual support holds immense power to uplift and heal. For a more comprehensive understanding of the ground reality surrounding the Jaranwala incident, we invite you to explore our blogs. With hearts full of gratitude, we extend our sincere appreciation for your remarkable generosity and unwavering prayers. To our valued prayer partners, your steadfast companionship is deeply cherished. The outreach continues, particularly in providing essential nourishment to our brothers and sisters, offering solace to those who bore the brunt of the Jaranwala tragedy.

Moreover, we are delighted to share that a new Sunday school has become a reality, enriching our ministry's offerings and allowing us to nurture our community's spiritual growth. In our pursuit of supporting families, we have initiated two small businesses that aim to sustain these families through difficult times. Your incredible support has enabled us to positively impact numerous lives, fostering the continued growth of the Christ For All Ministry under the grace of God's providence. For a detailed breakdown of our financials, we encourage you to peruse the report by our Treasurer, Josh Poppe, on the following page. Once again, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your unending support and partnership in our shared mission.



Delivering essential supplies to 9 distinct local churches that fell victim to mob violence, we extended our support to these affected congregations. Additionally, recognizing the dire circumstances of the community amidst house burnings, we distributed Bibles to ensure they have access to the comforting words of God during these trying times.



A new Sunday School was started



In the picture, our team and volunteers serving the food at the Punjab incident

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CHRIST FOR ALL
MINISTRY

September 2023

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalms 121:1-4



Poverty Relief: Small Business Finance Support
Samuel Masih resident of Clerk Abad. CFAM helping Samuel Masih open a small business so he can get out of working in the brick kiln.. Please read the full story of Samuel's family by clicking here. <https://www.christforallministry.com/blog>

Bible Project demonstration how to use the audio bible



Kazuto Kishi, Representative of CFAM Bangkok Thailand team

On August 17th, I visited the Immigration Detention Center at Bang Kehn, Bangkok. A week earlier, CFAM received the information that Mr. Noman Riaz (a Pakistani asylum seeker in Thailand) had been detained for overstaying since last May. After discussing the matter, we decided to go to the IDC to meet with Mr. Noman. Initially, we intended to provide encouragement to him, as he was in a poor condition at the IDC. We brought along some basic daily foods for his comfort, such as bread, instant noodle soup, snacks, and more. Additionally, we aimed to gather more information not only about his situation but also about other inmates. This would enable us to take more concrete actions to support those who are facing difficulties. We are asking to help Numan and his brother for sponsorship. For full details click here <https://www.christforallministry.com/blog>



CFAM helped to buy a Donkey Cart for brother Saddique Masih so he could provide food for his family. We are thankful for Parkash that he is running his motorcycle shop smoothly and helping many other young to learn.

In our endeavours to provide assistance to refugees from Thailand, we are grateful for the support of individuals who signed a petition, resulting in a significant government response. Thanks to Tako VanPopta. For more information, please visit the link here:

<https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=441-01198>
If you are interested in sponsoring families please contact City of Refuge

Report from Treasurer Josh Poppe

We are profoundly grateful for the abundant blessings we have received from the support of various donors – be it Churches, Schools, Individuals, or Corporations. Your partnership with us throughout the past year has been instrumental in our endeavours, and we express our heartfelt gratitude. Our existing initiatives, such as Sunday Schools, leadership training, Home Groups, and skills training, will continue to receive our dedicated support. Additionally, we aim to equip individuals with the means to start small businesses, a critical step in alleviating the hardships faced by Christians living in poverty. We also provide help to our Christian brothers and sisters who are persecuted and living their life as refugees in terrible situations in countries like Thailand, and Malaysia. Please prayerfully consider to support us.



Toilet Construction at Dogar Brick kiln, Shah Kot for Bricklin families. We encourage you to read the full story <https://www.christforallministry.com/blog>

Prayer Request: Prayer for the persecuted families especially the recent incident in Punjab Pakistan. Pray for the safety of our team in Pakistan. For providing Paper Bibles to Audio Bibles to the people in Pakistan
Prayer for recent brothers who were falsely accused of blasphemy cases, especially in Sahiwal Punjab Pakistan
Prayer for the people of Canada as the families dealing with wildfire.
Prayer for Christian refugees who are suffering around the world especially those who are in Prison in Thailand.

Upcoming events:
1st of October, CFAM Global Prayers Day,
Dessert Evening Fundraising on 13 October at 7:00 pm



christforallministry.com
BN: 792298119RR0001

Turn from Us Your Wrath, O Lord

1. Turn from us your wrath, O Lord,
and in mercy heed our plight.
Through the trials here endured
heal our blindness, grant us light!
Cause your face to shine on us,
radiant like the morning sun,
and your chosen ones so bless
that they may in peace go on.

2. Lord, restrain the tyrant's might;
his unbridled fury curb.
Show your strength, put him to flight!
Then let none our peace disturb,
so that safely, without fear,
we again can make our way
to your church, to us so dear,
there to praise you night and day.

3. But if it your pleasure be
that we suffer longer yet,
give us patience, Lord, that we
to your wisdom may submit,
and let so your will be done,
which alone is wise and just,
for you are the Faithful One:
we our needs to you entrust.

Text: William Helder, 2023.

Translation of Adriaen Valerius, "Here, kere van ons af," *Nederlandtsche gedenck-clanck*, 1626.

Tune: John Dowland, "Now, O Now I Needs Must Part," 1597.



**RAY OF
SUNSHINE**

Rachel Vis

Happy Birthday to James and Ava!

We wish you the Lord's blessing in the coming year. May you have a great day celebrating with family and friends.

We also would like to remember James's sister, Julie. She would have been celebrating her 43rd birthday this December. The Lord called Julie home to his heavenly dwelling this year. We wish her family and friends all the strength they need, and the comfort that she is in complete happiness in her home in heaven.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 10** James Kamminga will be **39**
Box 1125
Carman, MB R0G OJO
- 17** Ava Pierotti will be **16**
7761 Regional Road 20
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

CLARION KIDS LORD'S DAY 38

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Do you go to church twice on Sundays? That is good, and it pleases the Lord! You see, God actually commands us to worship him at church every week. He wants us to worship him a certain way. We should listen to the sermon and use the sacraments properly. That means that these things cannot be done without thinking. We must always be thinking about what God is teaching us about himself! Another thing the Lord wants us to do at church is pray to him. When we pray at church we are praying with many of his people. This is called a public prayer. The Lord also wants us to give money to the poor. This is done during collections. Did you ever think about collection time as worship time? Well, it is! We are giving back to God. When we think about how good and awesome God is, then he is pleased by our worship.

WRITE DOWN WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO WHEN WE WORSHIP HIM IN THE SPACES BELOW:

Listen to the

Use the properly

Give to the poor

DECODE THE LETTERS TO FINISH THIS BIBLE TEXT

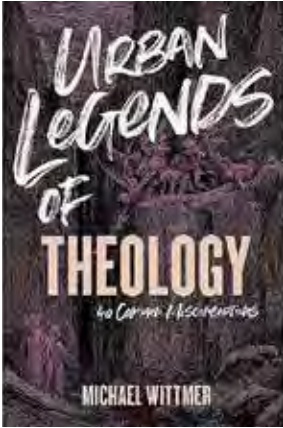
Bless God in the great _____
 3 15 14 7 18 5 7 1 20 9 15 14
 (Psalm 68:26a)

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



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



BUSTING THEOLOGICAL MYTHCONCEPTIONS

Urban Legends of Theology: 40 Common Misconceptions, Michael Wittmer. (Brentwood: B&H Academic, 2023). Paperback. 258 pages. \$26.99 CDN.

It was the days before the internet. A friend was visiting and somehow the topic turned to sayings thought to be in the Bible, but actually aren't. I mentioned "This too shall pass" as an example. This friend insisted that it *is* actually in the Bible, but she couldn't find it. We didn't have Google and we didn't have an exhaustive concordance on hand to settle the question.

It happens more often that we think something comes from the Bible when it doesn't. Or it can happen that we think a particular saying is in line with orthodox Christian theology when it isn't. This book is all about debunking theological myths or legends. Here are some examples:

- Theology puts God in a box
- The Bible is our only authority
- Satan is tempting me
- I should never feel shame
- Jesus never spoke about homosexuality
- We should not be motivated by fear

Each chapter gives an example of someone promoting the legend. Wittmer mentions many popular figures, including Rick Warren, Brene Brown, Lauren Daigle, Will Smith, John McArthur, and Oprah Winfrey. He unravels the legend, explains the biblical position, and concludes with a brief application.

Urban Legends of Theology says it delivers on forty common misconceptions, but it actually does more. Wittmer has ten "mini myths" scattered throughout the book, as well as six "suburban legends." The suburban legends are updated versions of the original. So, for example, in the chapter dealing with the legend "Doctrine divides but love unites," Wittmer also includes this suburban legend: "Western theology builds fences while Eastern thought digs wells." So, you're getting fifty-six myths busted for the price of forty—not a bad deal!

Mike Wittmer is a monergistic (aka Calvinistic) Baptist. So, when I got to the chapter about children dying before the age of accountability, I had a certain idea of where he was going to go with it. I was wrong. On the question of what happens to the children of believers who dies in infancy, he writes: "The Synod of Dort conveys a pitch-perfect note of cautious hope." While noting that he's still a Baptist, he goes on to write: "Acts 2:39 and 1 Cor. 7:14 give reason to think God extends his covenantal love to our children who die before they are able to express faith in Jesus." That was a happy surprise.

I did find one spot where I think Wittmer has swallowed an urban legend of mission history. One of his "mini myths" is "Calvinists have no incentive to evangelize." Here he repeats as fact a supposed encounter between William Carey and John Ryland. After Carey presented his plan for the evangelism of the world, Ryland allegedly said, "Young man, sit down; when God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do so without your aid or mine." However, there is strong evidence suggesting Ryland never said this or anything like it. The story is likely apocryphal.

Urban Legends of Theology will up your discernment game—and who doesn't need that game upped? The author writes with a light touch and the four-to-five-page chapters will engage your attention. It's a great read serving the cause of truth. And, in case you were wondering, "This too shall come to pass" is *not* in the Bible. It's apparently an ancient Persian adage. 📖

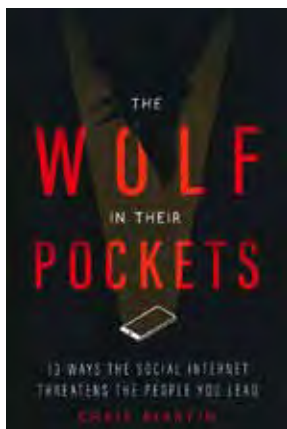


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YOU WILL BE DISCIPLED — BUT HOW AND BY WHOM?

The Wolf in their Pockets: 13 Ways the Social Internet Threatens the People You Lead, Chris Martin. (Chicago: Moody, 2023). Paperback. 217 pages. \$23.99 CDN.


Whether we use it or not, we have to face the fact that social media plays a huge role in the lives of many people. It's no different in the church. I remember speaking with a Christian couple once who were so proud that their teenage children weren't on social media. I didn't have the heart to tell them that their children had gone behind their backs. You can hardly blame the kids—not being on social media is akin to being a leper these days. Rather than going full Amish, we need books like this one to help us think critically about this technology and our use of it.

Chris Martin is the right guy to write this book. He's been thinking and writing about the internet for a few years, especially at his website www.TermsOfService.social. He makes it his business to know internet trends and to reflect on them from a Christian perspective.

As the author puts it, “This book is as much about discipleship as it is about social media or anything else” (p. 76). While its primary audience is church leaders, anyone with a discipleship role should read it. In other words, parents need to read this, and so do teachers. Pastors, elders, parents, and teachers are all involved with discipling in some way. Social media is in competition to disciple us and those whom we love. This book answers the question: what are we to do about it?

Through thirteen chapters, Martin outlines how those called to disciple others can take the social media bull by the horns. He covers various areas in which social media challenges our calling to follow Christ. Among them are friendships, humility, cynicism, authority, discernment, and sex. Each chapter has sound biblical teaching plus clear application. For example, when it comes to friendships, the author observes that church leaders cultivate what they celebrate. If church leaders celebrate friendships publicly, they'll cultivate them in the church culture. This will counteract the tendency of social media to promote superficial friendships merely as a means to an end.

The Wolf in their Pockets challenged my thinking about social media. I used to think that social media was a neutral tool, something that could be used for good or evil. However, Martin points out that it's not quite that simple. He writes, “The metrics of ‘success’ that lead to a social media platform's flourishing are diametrically opposed to the pursuit of human flourishing” (p. 112). Social media platforms flourish when people fight. In fact, in 2020 the *Wall Street Journal* published some internal research from Facebook. This research baldly stated, “Our algorithms exploit the human brain's attraction to divisiveness” (p. 113). Does that mean that Christians need to abandon platforms like Facebook? No, Martin doesn't say that. But we do need to be conscientious about our use of it, and there needs to be mutual accountability in place to counteract these negative aspects. Moreover, both online and elsewhere, Christian leaders need to promote a “culture of affirmation.”

I've been on Facebook since 2007. I've seen it used well and used poorly. I've used it poorly at times myself. Nonetheless, I still believe it's possible to use social media in an edifying and encouraging way. We can use it to share gospel truths and help others. For example, while writing this review I was also chatting with a missionary who was in a tough place in his life. Before the internet, he'd have had to suffer alone. But there's also a dark side—and it's not limited to pornography. Not minded carefully, it can have a subtle yet corrosive effect on relationships and church cultures. Chris Martin will help to discern and battle those effects so our people can be more effectively disciplined for Christ. 



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Classis Manitoba

September 22, 2023

On behalf of the Carman East CanRC, Rev. Carl VanDam welcomed all gathered for classis. He led the gathering in opening devotions. For memorabilia, he remembered the passing of Dr. N. H. Gootjes and his grieving family. He remembered the ongoing vacancies in Elm Creek CanRC and Niverville mission congregation. Since the last classis, Elm Creek extended a call to Candidate Mattias Schat, and Redeemer extended a call to Candidate Caleb Kos for the Niverville mission. Both of those calls were declined. Since then, both churches have extended a call to candidate Dathan Pleiter. He also called to mind the retired pastors in our classis: Rev. & sr. John & Agnes VanRietschoten, Dr. & sr. Andrew & Inge Pol, and Rev. Klaas Jonker.

All the churches were properly represented. Classis was therefore constituted. Rev. Joe Poppe was appointed President, Pastor James Slaa was appointed Vice-president, and Rev. Carl VanDam was appointed Clerk. The agenda was adopted.

Fraternal letters were received from the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS) Northern Plains Classis and from the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) Classis Central.

REPORTS & PROPOSALS

With thankfulness Classis received a report from the Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Classes/Presbyteries. Following the extensive report, Elder Rick Mostert led in intercessory and thanksgiving prayer. Classis also received reports from the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches, the Church for Auditing the Books of the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches (Carman East), and Committee for Students of Theology as per Article 20, CO. Classis was heartened that there continue to be young men in the Manitoba region who are preparing to attend seminary, and reminded the churches to keep the matter of identifying and encouraging young men to consider the ministry. We received an update from Denver that a small group remains there, worshipping together, and are currently receiving help from Rev. George Horner, a retired pastor from the RCUS.

A proposal was received from the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches (CANC). Upon the committee's recommendations, Classis decided to make the CANC an advisory committee only, with the financial responsibilities of receiving and distributing of any financial support from classis being handled by the classis

treasurer. Classis also decided that the present balance of funds under the care of the CANC be transferred to the care of the Classis treasurer. Classis requested Carman East to review the mandate of the CANC in the classical regulations, and if necessary, propose a revision of the mandate to a future classis.

Classis Manitoba, March 24, 2023, mandated the Carman West church to present a proposal to a future classis that funds for needy churches be solicited via the deacons, and to propose changes necessary to the classical regulations with respect to the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches mandate (Art. 8.2). Previously, Carman West had been instructed to advise on supporting needy churches outside of Canada. This had to do with the rules of Canada Revenue Agency, which requires that all funds donated to organizations outside the country must be registered Canadian charities. In its research it was determined that a qualified donee did not have to be a Canadian charity, but simply a registered charity. Also, it was discovered that even if donations, such as to the deacons, are not receipted for tax purposes, those funds must still be used to support a registered charity. Therefore, Carman West proposed not to make any changes but that the churches continue to operate as has been done for the last decade or more, with Classis possibly making some improvements to the documentation between the local churches, Classis, the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches, and the Needy Church itself, if deemed insufficient. It is important to show that we as local churches have control over and know how our money is being spent, that we would have a good case before the CRA, should they question it.

Carman East proposed that Classis appoint executive officers in rotation for the next classis at the previous one. Before this, only the president was suggested, and the convening church was appointed to supply a clerk. Accepting the proposal would enable those suggested to their executive officer task to come prepared to classis. It would prevent unnecessary wasting of time at classis trying to determine who the vice-president will be. It would help vacant churches as it will often be difficult for them to supply a clerk on their own. It would ensure that the various executive officer tasks are shared equally among those who usually fill them.


Question Period was held as per Article 44 of the Church Order. One church requested advice regarding admission of visitors to the Lord's Supper. Advice was given.

MISSION PRESENTATION

Representatives of the Aldergrove Brazil Mission Society, Pastor Jim Witteveen and Kevin VanDelden, were welcomed and presented their work to Classis. They informed Classis of the Society's mission statement and the structure of the Society. The missionaries are assisting the federation of the Brazilian churches (IRB), both current and future institutions, primarily through the theological college there (IJC). The missionaries preach and teach in the Brazilian churches. They participate in reaching out to and fellowshiping with contacts who express interest the Reformed faith and churches desiring to join the IRB. The mission team also deals with Reformed and Christian education of the children. The relationship within the mission team is good. Classis was also informed that Mission Board and Mission Aid have now merged into one Mission Society. Following the presentation, opportunity was given for questions. Pastor James Slaa led in intercessory and thanksgiving prayer.

The convening church for the next classis will be Carman West. The proposed date is December 8, 2023, DV, at 9:00 am. Alternate date is March 22, 2024. Classis also made suggestions for officers for the next classis.

Appointments were made for Treasurer, Church for Auditing the Books of the Treasurer, Church for Care of the Archives, Church for Inspection of the Archives, Committee for Examinations, Committee for Aid to Needy Churches, Committee for Students of Theology, Deputies for Contact with Neighbouring Churches/Presbyteries, Deputy for Contact with the Provincial Government, and Church Visitors. Classis appointed the following as delegates to Regional Synod West, to be held, DV, November 21, 2023: Elder delegates: Lawrence Toet and Norm Veenendaal; alternate delegates are Earl VanAssen and Rick Mostert (in that order). Primary minister delegates: James Slaa and Rick Vanderhorst; alternate delegates are Carl VanDam and Joe Poppe (in that order).

Personal Question Period was held. With thankfulness the president declared that censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order was not needed. The Acts of Classis were adopted, and the Press Release was approved. Rev. Poppe led in closing devotions, praying for the ministry of the office bearers and the churches of Classis. Following prayer, song was sung. Classis was closed. 

*For Classis,
Pastor James Slaa*

