

# Clarion



## **The Lesson of Galileo's Trial**

**THE CHURCH AND SINGLES**  
**CHURCH SNAPSHOT**  
**YOU ASKED**

# A Lesson from Galileo's Trial



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*Mainstream science today is just as intolerant  
 as it was in Galileo's day*

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Someone wrote me some time ago that he hoped that it would not take the church hundreds of years to catch up with science in the case of evolution as it did with Galileo with his view that the earth circled the sun. The name of Galileo is brought up more often when one argues that the church should accept evolutionary teachings on the origin of the human race and so avoid future embarrassment. The background to mentioning Galileo is that in 1616 and most definitively in 1633 the Roman Catholic Church condemned Galileo's view of an earth in motion. It was generally accepted that the earth had a fixed unmoving position and that the sun was the body which moved. However, eventually in 1992 the Roman Catholic Church restored Galileo's reputation. So, the moral of the story is that the church should not prevent science from doing its work and take its findings seriously. Today that means: accept evolution because science has determined that this is how mankind was placed on earth. But is this really the lesson of Galileo's trial? This famous dispute has spawned an unbelievable amount of scholarly literature and the topic still remains contentious. But what can we as Reformed people learn from the trial as such?

## What was the issue?

The confrontation between Galileo, a scientist, and the Roman Catholic Church is often pictured as a conflict between inquisitive reason and the dogma of a narrow-minded church, or between current science and faith in an outdated book. It was however not quite that simple and there are good reasons to challenge this sort of understanding. Galileo was a serious Christian who had a high regard for the Bible, but severely limited its authority when it came to science. He did not want to be seen as contradicting God's Word. Furthermore, he was well regarded by the church and initially had the support of influential clergy for his scientific views. As a matter of fact, challenging the idea that the earth was at the centre of the universe had already begun prior to Galileo's time, mostly quietly and secretly. Then what was it that triggered this enormous conflict? The church did not begin the battle against Galileo. That was done by the academ-

ics at the universities. It was the scientific community that did not want to hear of the latest discoveries. There was an academic inertia coupled with the fear that their edifice of learning, painstakingly put together over many years, might collapse. The tension was further aggravated by Galileo's difficult character and his not being able to give sufficient proof for his ideas. Added to the mix were church politics and personal jealousies.

At the heart of the conflict was Galileo's challenge to the reigning Aristotelian worldview. He even issued this challenge in the language of the people, Italian, and not in scholarly Latin. In proposing and defending for a very wide audience the notion that the sun and not the earth was the physical centre of the universe, he was opposing the widely accepted Aristotelian paradigm of the day. This angered the leading scientists, who urged the church to intervene. It did. First, in 1616, Pope Paul V through Bellarmine asked Galileo not to hold or defend his scientific ideas until he could prove them. When he apparently did not do so, he was called to stand trial in 1633 for disobeying the pope. Rome took the challenge of Galileo's new ideas very seriously. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church had embraced Aristotelianism in its dogma and it could not tolerate any challenge on that score. One needs to remember that at the time the authority of Rome was also under considerable pressure from the Reformation and any further perception of its authority being undermined was not to be tolerated.

So the trial of Galileo was at bottom a clash between an Aristotelian worldview that was not particularly Christian, but championed by the scientific establishment as well as the church, and a scientist who on the basis of his observations and experiments proposed a different view of reality. Galileo was convinced that his ideas could be interpreted as being in harmony with Scripture. The church however disagreed and tried to retain the Aristotelian worldview on society by all the means at its disposal, including banning books it considered dangerous and prosecuting "heretical" teachers. It was a conflict between worldviews and not a struggle between science and faith.

## The situation today

In one way the situation today is very similar to that of Galileo's time. Today the Roman Catholic Church and most mainline liberal Protestant churches also support the reigning scientific paradigm, which is evolution. And mainstream science today is just as intolerant as it was in Galileo's day. Those who think differently and creatively and want to break out of the evolutionist model of science find themselves under attack, marginalized, and generally not taken seriously by evolutionists. It does not matter whether one is a Christian who accepts the plain sense of Genesis 1 and 2 or an agnostic holder to intelligent design (ID), they get the same basic cold shoulder. Such scientists are not given the same intellectual freedom that their mainstream colleagues enjoy. Too much is at stake for those who have heavily invested in the current evolutionist scientific paradigm. Their worldview is at stake and so they are hostile to all who oppose the evolutionist framework.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Our issue begins with an editorial from Dr. Cornelis Van Dam entitled, "A Lesson from Galileo's Trial." The article takes a look at lessons we may learn concerning science and evolution today.

Issue 4 brings readers an article originally published in *New Horizons*, "The Church and Singles." There is also a report from ECHS in Fergus of their 2015 graduation.

Columns such as Clippings on Politics and Religion, Church Snapshot, Treasures New and Old, and You Asked are all on the pages of this issue. There is also a canticle and a press release.

Laura Veenendaal

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## ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

CLARION  
Premier Printing Ltd.  
One Beghin Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB Canada R2J 3X5  
Phone: 204-663-9000, Fax: 204-663-9202

**Subscriptions** subscriptions@clarionmagazine.ca

**Advertisements** ads@clarionmagazine.ca

**Website** www.clarionmagazine.ca

## 2016 SUBSCRIPTION RATES

			Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada			\$49.00*	\$ 82.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds			\$69.00	\$102.00
International			\$98.00	\$171.00

**\*Applicable GST, HST, PRT taxes are extra.**

GST/HST no. 890967359RT

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## PUBLISHER

Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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We acknowledge the financial support of the   
Government of Canada through the Canada  
Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

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One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

In another way, the situation today could not be more different from Galileo's time for conservative churches and Christians who reject the theory of evolution as being contrary to Scripture and to nature. Whereas the church in the days of Galileo supported the mainstream scientists of its time and tried very hard to impose the reigning Aristotelian scientific paradigm on scientists who thought differently, scientists today are trying to impose their evolutionary worldview on conservative churches. Like those opposed to Galileo, mainstream scientists today have little tolerance or patience with those who disagree. In light of this situation, there is some bitter irony when people today appeal to the Galileo trial as a reason for the church to be more tolerant and accepting of evolution. The intolerance today is with the scientific establishment. Even a Christian organization like Biologos tells Christians to agree to evolution. But remember, it was Galileo who was challenging the status quo. Today it is the scientist who takes Genesis 1 and 2 seriously and the Intelligent Design scientist who are challenging the status quo and who are being condemned for not sticking to the current scientific paradigm. Establishment science uses every means at its disposal, especially public education on all levels as well as mainstream media, to maintain its hegemony. And Biologos spends large amounts of money in trying to convince conservative Christians to embrace theistic evolution. In light of the Galileo trial, this insistence on maintaining the reigning scientific paradigm is reactionary. Biologos should be encouraging scientists who think outside the current evolutionist box and try to do science in keeping with biblical truth and principles as they see it.

### The question of proof

Prior to his trial, the pope had asked Galileo for proof that the earth moved and the sun remained in a fixed position. Until such was forthcoming, he had to hold his peace on his theories as absolute truth. Now due to the nature of the case, an absolute proof for the position that either the sun or the moon is the fixed centre of our universe is impossible. One would have to stand outside the physical universe on an absolutely fixed point of reference to observe whether the one or the other or neither is a fact. On a scientific level the issue is ultimately rather inconsequential. For practical reasons astronomers today also use the earth as their centre of reference.

Today, the dominant scientific paradigm is evolution. It too cannot be established as being true. Evolution purports to deal with origins and how the present world came to be. But when it comes to trying to prove evolution, science really is in an area outside its competence. Science

can speculate but it can never prove anything with regards to origins. More modesty as to what is certain would be appropriate. It is therefore a sad day when Christians are imposing an evolutionist paradigm of origins on the opening chapters of Genesis. Speculative human ideas are forced on the clear authoritative Word of God to try to make it say what today's scientific paradigm wants to hear. This is not how to interpret Scripture. Let us rather celebrate the fact that God has told us how the heavens and the earth were created and encourage scientists to work on that basis. It is an incredible gift of God that he has told us in his Word what science can never reveal.

### In conclusion

One cannot appeal to the Galileo trial in order to urge the church to be more accepting of science. To the contrary. The trial showed how the reigning scientific paradigm was imposed by the church and the leading scientists of the day on Galileo so that he was forced to recant and disown his views. The Galileo trial highlights an intolerance that sought to impose a worldview that had its roots in pagan thinking and as such had no biblical warrant. The trial provides absolutely no rationale for the church to cave in to the current evolutionary consensus and so be "up to date." The church at the time was "up to date" to its shame by embracing the reigning scientific paradigm.

The trial does underline the need to work carefully with the Word of God so that scientific theories and worldviews foreign to Scripture are not imposed on it. This imposition is unfortunately what happened on both sides in Galileo's time leading to strained exegesis. That mistake is being repeated today especially by those who interpret Scripture with an eye to making it compatible with the reigning evolutionist paradigm. When the next revolution of scientific thinking occurs, their exegesis will have to be rewritten, just as the Aristotelian exegesis of the time subsequent to Galileo had to be redone. Now any interpreter is in a sense a child of his times. But every precaution must be taken so that as much as possible the Word speaks for itself.

Given the nature of Scripture and its Author, we need to accept its plain and obvious meaning. We must also let the Word interpret itself so that if there is a question, such an issue is resolved by comparing other biblical passages that deal with the same subject. Our understanding of the Bible must never be forced by the artificial constraints of a scientific theory of one sort or another. The plain sense of the Word is clear for God is an excellent communicator. Let us accept it with a true faith.







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# Let me take that from you!

*The teachers of the law tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. (Matthew 23:4)*

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)*

Have you ever seen someone carrying something very heavy, and said to them, "Here, let me help you with that! Let me take that from you!"

Every Sunday morning in our worship services the Ten Commandments are read to us. Hearing them, we might become discouraged. The pastor will often urge us to examine our lives in the mirror of God's law. When we do that, we see our own sinfulness, weaknesses, shortcomings, and failures. Our Lord Jesus' brother James, in his epistle, writes, "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (2:10). And we then realize that when we don't keep the law, it is sufficient to keep us sep-

arated from God forever. The burden of guilt threatens to crush us.

In Jesus' day, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law placed all kinds of burdens on God's people. They created a legal system that discouraged God's people. They insisted that to be right with God you needed to do all sorts of things. They made a show of their piety. The Law said that there needed to be tassels at the corners of the robes – they made theirs especially long. God's Word said that the Law needed to be bound on people's foreheads – they made little leather boxes, put miniature Ten Commandments inside, and tied them to their foreheads. Their demands made it impossible for the people to even begin to understand the reason for God's law. They created a whole series of laws so that people might not break the law. As they put it, they "put a fence around the law." And they taught their laws without mercy. They didn't lift a finger to ease the burden they put on people. Think only of what the chief priests and the elders of Israel said to Judas, when filled with remorse, he wanted to return the thirty pieces of silver they gave to him for betraying Jesus to them. Judas said, "I have

sinned, for I have betrayed innocent blood." They replied, "What is that to us? That's your responsibility" (Matt 27:4). He had gone to the wrong place for help.

We must not consider the law to be a burden or a hard yoke that we must bear. Life before God is not to be a wearisome journey. The message of our Lord Jesus is this: He sees us weary and burdened with a heavy load, and in mercy he says, "Here, let me help you with that! Let me take that from you!" He sees the burden of guilt that the law of God lays upon us. He knows that we cannot keep its just demands. He also knows our frailty, for he has shared in our humanity in every way except sin. He therefore went the way of perfect obedience and took up the burden of our guilt to Calvary. There all our iniquity was laid upon him. He took up the burden of your cross – your punishment for sin – from you. He has lifted the burden of keeping the law as our own way of being right with God. For he alone is the way. He sees your heavy load, and every day, in mercy, he says, "Let me take that from you! Come to me and find rest for your soul!"



## For Further Study

1. Why might we find the reading of the Law to be burdensome?
2. Why do we so often think we need to carry our own guilt?
3. Do you pray that you might find rest in Jesus, taking up his yoke and his burden, as he takes up yours?

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# The Church and Singles

*Peter and Ginger Wallace*  
Peter Wallace, an OP minister,  
serves as stated supply for  
Michiana Covenant Presbyterian  
Church, PCA, in Granger, Ind.  
Ginger Wallace is his wife

*This article was originally published in New Horizons, January 2016.*

This is the first thing that the church needs to say to singles, repeating words of the Apostle Paul: “To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am” (1 Cor 7:8).

Certainly marriage is an honourable estate, and, as Paul puts it, “if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (1 Cor 7:9). Marriage is a fine thing, but “finding a spouse” should *not* be the focus of how singles function in the life of the church.

Notice how we said that: “How singles function in the life of the church” – *not* how “we” should incorporate singles into the life of the church (as though singles were somehow outsiders who need to be “brought in”).

At the same time, it is appropriate to talk about the church’s ministry to singles – just as we talk about the church’s ministry to those who are married. The purpose of ministry to singles in the church is to equip and strengthen them in their single-minded devotion to Christ. If God should happen to call them to marry along the way, that is fine (and we have helped some of our singles find spouses!) – but that is not the *goal* that Paul gives us.

Paul is very clear that “the unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord” (1 Cor 7:32). He can serve Christ with undivided focus – something that a married man cannot do. Let us repeat that: a married man *cannot* be single-minded in his efforts to please Christ. As Paul says, “The married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided” (vv. 33-34). Notice that Paul does not say that this is wrong. It is right for a married man to have divided interests. And Paul says the same thing for single women: “The unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit” (v. 34).

Do our churches have this attitude toward singleness? Do we value the contributions and gifts of singles in the life of the body? Some of the most faithful and

dedicated members of our congregation have been our single men and women who understand and practice this to great effect.

The key is for the whole people of God, whether single or married, to live as the body of Christ together. Since we tend to gravitate toward “people like us,” the constant temptation is to separate into cliques. When we give in to this temptation, we fail to love one another as Christ has loved us. The solution is rather simple: repent and believe the gospel – and demonstrate our repentance and faith in our love for one another!

While there are lots of specific issues and challenges related to the various types of singleness (those who are widowed, those who are divorced, and those who have never married), we believe that these basic principles can be applied to each particular case.

## Leadership and service

One way that the church can utilize the gifts of single men is by ordaining them. At Michiana Covenant Presbyterian Church, we had a lifelong bachelor, the late Rolf Caylor, as an elder for twelve years. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he had spent sixty-six years in the PCUSA, watching as his church (in his words) “downgraded the role of Christ, and upgraded the role of the human race in the work of salvation.” When he found MCPC, he found a home, and within five years he was ordained as a ruling elder. Psalm 113 speaks of how God gives to the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. There is a very real sense in which God gave Rolf Caylor a home, making him the joyous grandfather of the dozens of children in the church.

In the same way, five of the sixteen men who have served as deacons at MCPC were single at the time of their ordination. In the words of one formerly single deacon, “Singles should be treated like married people who happen to have more time on their hands.” On the one hand, the church needs to identify and train those men. On the other hand, single men need to pursue these opportunities to serve.

Likewise, there have been several single women whose gifts and service have profoundly shaped the life of our congregation. Our Women's Ministry Team has often included single women because they have the time and energy to devote to this work. One of our divorcees has devoted herself to teaching a children's Sunday school class for twenty years. She found a place where she was needed, and she filled it – and so generations of children have called her blessed.

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We don't pretend that we have figured out some special way to minister to singles. Quite frankly, there is nothing special about it. Indeed, our goal has always been *not* to treat any group with special privileges – which requires us to be careful not to privilege our own “married with children” group! We highlight this because when the leadership of the church is all married with children, the tendency is to privilege families with children and orient church programs around them.

### Daily life in the church

So how does the church organize her daily life? First, we need to *decenter* the family. If Jesus has broken down the walls between Jew and Gentile and established one new family in himself, then the nuclear family should not be the centre of church life. Rather, the family of God is the centre. As Paul says in Ephesians 5:31–32, the whole point of Genesis 2:24 (“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”) is that it speaks of Christ and the church: “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” Too often we become obsessed with having “family time,” by which we mean *only* the nuclear family.

One formerly single deacon describes it well: “I really liked the way Michiana tended to basically bring kids along for the ride for whatever the adults happened to be doing. If it was corporate worship, there they were. If it was a fellowship meal or cookout, the kids were basically

### CALLED

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of Langley, BC

## CHURCH NEWS

left to their own devices, which seemed to bother them not at all. This both keeps the focus away from catering to kids' activities all the time, and treats kids as junior members of the church rather than alien potentates who must be catered to at every opportunity. That's good for everybody.”

Here are some practical tips for married people: Include singles in what your family is doing! Invite them over for dinner, and ask them to stay for family worship. Welcome them into your household and treat them like just another adult in the family. To quote another MCPC single, “The main difference [between singles and married folk] is a heightened risk of loneliness, and heightened temptation to self-absorption, leading to selfishness. The cure for both of these is hospitality and incorporation: being invited to participate in everyday life, and being expected to contribute to everyday life – in the church and in particular families in the church.”

And two tips for singles.

- (1) Look for ways to serve in the church. Can you take charge of such things as organizing church workdays or organizing the church's ministry to a soup kitchen or food pantry? What are some ways that you can serve *because* you are single?
- (2) Seek out families that you would like to be part of. Take an interest in the children around you! We will never forget two of our single men who came over for lunch one day. We went to the kitchen to get lunch ready, and when we came back to the living room, we found them reading books to our preschoolers! These children will be the singles of the church in a few years.

The point is that the church *is* the family of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is *the church* (not married people) that provides a home where all of us find the stability and rootedness that we need.





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# Challenging the Redefinition of Marriage

Last June, the American Supreme Court decreed with a vote of five to four that marriage be redefined throughout the land to include same-sex relationships (*Obergefell v Hodges*). In an unprecedented move, all four opposing justices wrote their own dissents and so left for the record their absolute opposition to the majority ruling. Central to the dissent was the conviction that “judges have the power to say what the law is, not what it should be.” The majority decision was “a naked judicial claim to legislative power,” and an abuse of the court’s authority. Canada faces a similar challenge with judicial activism when our Supreme Court does what properly belongs to Parliament.

As could be expected, Christians rightly condemned the decision of the American Supreme Court as endorsing sin. God ordained marriage and no human has the right to redefine it. Last fall, in a rare move more than sixty prominent legal scholars called on public officials and ordinary citizens to resist the Supreme Court’s ruling. According to their statement as found on the website of American Principles Project, “The Court’s majority opinion eschewed reliance on the text, logic, structure, or original understanding of the Constitution, as well as the Court’s own interpretative doctrines and precedents, and supplied no compelling reasoning to show why it is unjustified for the laws of the states to sustain marriage as it has been understood for millennia as the union of husband and wife.” The decision lacked “anything remotely resembling a warrant in the text, logic, structure, or original understanding of the Constitution.” It must therefore “be judged anticonstitutional and illegitimate.”

These legal experts then mentioned four grave consequences. First, society will be harmed by being denied the right to hold out as normative the only type of human relationship that every society must cultivate for its perpetuation. There is strong evidence to support that children fare best when raised by their married mother and father who are both responsible for bringing them into the

world and who provide maternal and paternal influences and care. Second, those who hold to the biblical notion of marriage “will be vilified, legally targeted, and denied constitutional rights in order to pressure them to conform to the new orthodoxy.” Third, “the new jurisprudence of dignity is unlimited in principle and will encourage additional claims to redefine marriage and other long-established institutions.” Fourth, the high-handed manner in which the court has imposed its view of marriage on the population means that “the right of all Americans to engage in democratic deliberation, and ultimately self-government, will be decisively undermined.”

These experts reminded all American office holders that they have promised to uphold the constitution of the United States and “not the will of five members of the Supreme Court.” They therefore called on all federal and state officeholders to refuse to accept this decision as a binding precedent, to recognize the authority of the states to define marriage, to pledge legal and political assistance to anyone who refuses to follow the Supreme Court’s decision for constitutionally protected reasons, and to begin a broad and honest conversation by which Americans “may constitutionally resist and overturn the judicial usurpations” evident in this decision. The statement emphasizes that the course of action being advocated is neither extreme nor disrespectful of the rule of law.

These necessary efforts remind us that much is at stake. But it remains to be seen whether they will succeed. Real meaningful change will only come if the civic culture abandons its quest for “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” to quote the American Declaration of Independence, according to humanistic ideals and submits to The Way and The Truth that leads to true life, freedom, and joy. May the Lord bless the ongoing proclamation of the gospel and the public Christian witness with respect to cases such as these both in America and in Canada. **C**



*A longtime  
grateful member*

# Allow Me to Introduce: Langley Canadian Reformed Church

Langley could be called one of the middle churches in the beautiful Fraser Valley. Langley has the best of both worlds: embedded in BC's horse country, yet urban enough to have all the amenities found in Vancouver proper.

Since its institution in 1980, Langley has survived some pruning (Willoughby and Aldergrove) and grown to a membership of 774 as this is written – including 480 communicant members. Yes, that makes us the largest congregation in the entire federation! Two pastors, eighteen elders, eight deacons, and a whole lot of committees all speak to the size and scope of this vibrant congregation.

Revs. Ryan deJonge (since 2009) and Doug Vandenburg (2014) serve our congregation as pastors, and one could say that they have their hands full. While sharing preaching duties, they capably pastor in areas of teaching and leading, with the assistance of a number of elders, who are involved with small-group catechism instruction.

It is safe to say that the entire gamut of church life is found in our congregation: In terms of demographics, we have lots of seniors (100 over sixty-five years of age); singles (fifty over twenty-five years of age); and children (eighteen babies per year over the last fifteen years).

Langley's proximity to both Credo elementary (across the street) and high school (same parking lot) makes it an attractive place to settle in for the long haul. In fact, despite rising real estate prices, young families are not deterred. Even though there is a slow move to the eastern end of the Fraser Valley, many stay in this central location; we have over 400 members living within three kilometres of the church.

In Langley, the church is packed full every Sunday, with the overflow/foyer used every morning. Meeting space is at a premium, and the facilities are abuzz pretty much every night: concerts, meetings, choir practices,

small meetings, and more. Even catechism classes are held at Credo High, given the demand for meeting space.

Many activities and programs populate our life as a congregation: Christianity Explored (for newcomers to the faith), Stephen Mentors (to support those who need a listening ear), Youthlight (for teens), Cadets and Gems (for preteens), and the Seniors' Fellowship, among others. Bible studies, home groups, ladies aid, and the usual list of Council-appointed committees all add to the lively flavour of our congregation.

One might surmise that it is easy to slip between the cracks in a congregation such as ours. This may be so, but there are a host of members whose mission it seems is to make newcomers feel welcome.

Of course, energy, vibrancy, and a welcoming atmosphere are nice, especially as an exercise of the true communion of saints; what is central, however, is the spiritual life of our fellowship as an act of worship of our God and King. We in Langley are grateful to God for his goodness and for the many blessings showered upon us as a congregation.

At the same time, as fallen people we need God's providence every day of every week. For that reason we are thankful for faithful preaching, teaching, and leading from our pastors, elders, and deacons, as well as the dedication to God's Word in church attendance and Bible study. It is these essential elements which make any congregation truly faithful.

If you have not yet visited this area, please do and be sure to check us out. BC is beautiful, the Fraser Valley is stunning, and Langley is wonderful. You are welcome to join us for a visit, or for the long term.

**C**



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## Christ Will Come Again in Glory

1. Christ will come a - gain in glo - ry with the an - gels at his side.  
 2. Christ is faith - ful to his prom - ise, he will al - ways keep his word.  
 3. No more weep - ing, no more sor - ow, on - ly joy and full de-light.  
 4. Let us praise the Lord, our Sav - iour, Je - sus Christ, our God and King,

5 He will raise up all his peo - ple, for they are his pre - cious bride.  
 Have no doubt a - bout your Sav - iour for he is your God and Lord.  
 No more death or an - y sad - ness as we live in glor - y bright.  
 for his love and grace and fav - our— to our Bride-groom, glor - y sing.

9 Though our souls were safe - ly with him —with our Lord in Par - a - dise—  
 Christ will re - cre - ate the heav - ens and a new earth for his bride.  
 Bless - ed - ness be - yond all meas - ure as no heart has e'er con - ceived!  
 No one like him! None so gra - cious! He, our Shep - herd and our guide!

13 he has prom - ised full per - fec - tion, that our bod - ies, too, would rise.  
 We will dwell there with our Bride-groom, ev - er - more with him a - bide.  
 We will praise our God for - ev - er, from all mis - er - y re - lieved.  
 He will lead and we will fol - low. In his arms we safe - ly hide.

Text: George van Popta, © 2015

Tune: Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824; arr. Edward Hodges, 1864

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HYMN TO JOY



# Graduation 2015 at ECHS, Fergus, ON: God Equips You

A chill was creeping into the air, but warm yellow light blanketed the earth as the sun began to set on the evening of October 2, 2015. Lakeside Church in Guelph offered a picturesque and inviting atmosphere against this autumnal background. The sound of friendly chatter spilled outside and bade everyone to come in and join the circus of suit jackets and dresses, for this was an evening of celebration.

The Emmanuel Christian High School graduating class of 2015 gathered together to celebrate the accomplishments of completing high school and of commencing the next phases of their lives. Together with their parents and the staff, graduands enjoyed a lovely dinner full of food and fellowship. Many thanks go out to those who helped with the dinner, especially Mrs. Anita Bouwman, Mrs. Diane Jonker, and Mr. Neil vanWeerden, who captained its organization and execution. The traditional Jeopardy game held during the dinner bruised a few egos (sorry), brought back many memories, and gave occasion for much laughter.

After eating and catching up, graduands were ushered off to don their academic regalia while staff and parents made their way to the church's auditorium to prepare for the formal ceremony. The seats quickly filled with friends and family of the former students.

As Ms. Cailey VanVeen began to play "Pomp and Circumstance" on the piano, the soon-to-be alumni entered the auditorium. Once they were seated, we were blessed to open the evening with Scripture, song, and prayer in worship to our Heavenly Father, just as the graduands had opened every day at Emmanuel. The Board Chairman, Mr. Andrew Westrik, led this opening and offered words of welcome to "forty-three graduates and a whole lot of people who love them very much."

Mr. Menco Wieske, principal of Cornerstone Christian School and father of one of the graduands, offered

the keynote address reminding the audience that, although they go out into Babylon, God goes with them and equips them for this journey. Through his guidance, they are able to be like Daniel and enact the plans that the Lord has for them.



Before the presentation of diplomas, Emmanuel's principal, Mr. Henk Nobel, also addressed the graduating class. He began by telling them that they were not so very great, and that this blunt truth is not necessarily a bad thing. The students going forth from ECHS are ordinary people who will live ordinary lives, but will be given an extraordinary reward through the ultimate humble servant, our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus loved God, loved his neighbor, humbled himself to the utmost, and received the greatest honour. Forty-three graduates then received their academic reward.

Each student to walk across the stage brought unique gifts and talents into and outside of the classroom to create the class of 2015. Awards given represented not only academic excellence, but leadership, sportsmanship, servanthood, and stewardship.

Scott Okkema (known to some as Batman) offered a valedictory address to the group. He focussed on his classmate's athletic abilities, particularly in dodging the eye contact of teachers when questions were posed in class. He also highlighted their skill in completing homework mere minutes before class began!

Graduates – congratulations. You are now officially alumni of Emmanuel Christian High School. As you go forward in your lives of faith, remember the name of your alma mater and the astounding promise which it carries. Emmanuel – God with us!

### Honours Achievement Award

Megan Baron  
Elise Hoebeke  
Scott Okkema  
Martin Westrik

Reuben Breukelman  
Aileen Hoeksema  
Adrien Tamminga  
Lenora Wieske

Gregory Brouwer  
Darion Hulst  
John VanderLoo  
Alicyn Wildeboer

Christina Feenstra  
Karys Kuizenga  
Lori VanVeen  
Willem Wildeboer

### Post Farm Structures Award

Nicole Westrik

### Royal LePage RCR Realty Business Excellence Award

Willem Wildeboer

### L. Martin Toet Memorial Athletic Scholarship

Christian Mans      Nicole Westrik

### Governor General's Award

Willem Wildeboer

### Jordan Hutchinson Memorial Academic Proficiency

Willem Wildeboer

### Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award

Tali Jonker

### Golden Eagle Award

Nicole Westrik  
Reuben Breukelman

### Citizenship Award

Jared Swaving

### Stewardship Award

Alicyn Wildeboer



### Graduates

Megan Baron  
Shirley DeJong  
Fiona Hopman  
Jordan Kamphuis  
Daryl Kroezen  
Miranda Niezen  
Kevin Prinzen  
Esther Tenhage  
Damian Vanleeuwen  
Lori VanVeen  
Alicyn Wildeboer

Reuben Breukelman  
Christina Feenstra  
Darion Hulst  
Martin Kingma  
Matthew Kruizenga  
Krista Nijenhuis  
Jared Swaving  
John VanderLoo  
Lucas Vanleeuwen  
Martin Westrik  
Willem Wildeboer

Gregory Brouwer  
Elise Hoebeke  
Tim Janssen  
Derek Knot  
Karys Kuizenga  
Jamie Nordeman  
Adrian Tamminga  
Benjamin Vanderpol  
Alexandra VanSydenborgh  
Nicole Westrik

Jacob Brouwer  
Aileen Hoeksema  
Tali Jonker  
Katie Kottelenberg  
Christian Mans  
Scott Okkema  
Brittany Tenhage  
Bronte Vanderwoude  
Kirsten VanSydenborgh  
Lenora Wieske







William den Hollander  
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## Do we as Canadian Reformed Churches consider the ministry as a calling or a career?

A

It is a good thing that the questioner narrows the question to the way the ministry is considered in the Canadian Reformed Churches. In the world of Reformed churches, the matter of someone's calling for the ministry is considered with a wide range of standards, requirements, and indicators. Some consider it necessary that the candidate for the ministry be able to describe the time and way in which the Lord called him directly and personally. Others make a distinction between internal and external calling, also requiring at least some form of a personal and spiritual (or internal) motivation as qualification for the admission to the ministry (or even for the admission to the studies at their Theological Seminary). Churches that set up such or similar standards make it very difficult for men who aspire for the ministry to be admitted to their Theological Seminary. Besides, it is unclear on what basis in God's Word these standards and required testimonies and evidences of calling are established!

In our Canadian Reformed Churches the situation is in comparison somewhat more sober and realistic. Then I should begin by stating in answer to the question that there is (or should be) *no dilemma* in this regard between calling and career. A *career* is someone's "course of professional life or employment," as the dictionary defines it. In a previous answer to a question (*Clarion*, Volume 64, No. 22), I highlighted that every career is a calling to carry out our labours-in-the-Lord. The ministry of the gospel is no exception in that regard. Just as everyone needs to employ all his gifts and talents in the job, vocation, and profession he chooses, so does the man who aspires for the ministry! Everyone is called to "carry out the duties of his office and calling as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven" (HC, LD 49).

Having said this, there may be a special and more direct aspect in the case of the calling to the ministry of the gospel. Even though the (young) man *aspires* for the ministry and *chooses* to go to our Theological Seminary in the pursuit of a "career" as pastor and teacher in the midst of the churches, there is an element of *uncertainty* related to this aspect of "*calling*." He may *aspire* for the office of minister, which as Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3:1 means that he "*desires* a noble task," yet it will only become evident *after* his four years of study at the seminary *and* the subsequent exams at one of our classes whether he will become *eligible* for call! Yes, and even if he becomes eligible for call, it depends on the leading of the Lord by means of a local congregation whether the *Lord* wants to call him to the office of minister of the Word! Once he has considered this explicit call from one of our congregations, and passed his peremptory examination in the classis of the church to which he is called, then the calling to the ministry will be effectuated. Then, and only then, can he in truth answer the question whether *he feels in his heart* "that *God himself*, through his congregation, has *called* him to this ministry." That's then an internal calling based on the external evidence and leading of the Lord to the ministry, i.e. to the *career* for which he aspired with the desire to use his gifts and talents (and training) for the honour and glory of God and for the benefit and well-being of his church!

*Is there something you've been wanting to know?  
An answer you've been looking for?*

### Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. den Hollander  
[denhollanderw@gmail.com](mailto:denhollanderw@gmail.com)

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0



## Press Release of the Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary held on Jan. 14, 2016.

The Board of Governors met at CRTS in Hamilton, Ontario on Jan. 14, 2016. All the governors were present at the meeting except Br. F. Oostdyk, who was absent with notice. Since Dr. G.H. Visscher could not attend, the vice-principal, Dr. J. VanVliet, took his place. Rev. R. Aasman opened with the reading of Phil. 2:1-11 and prayer.

### Memorabilia

The following was remembered: Srs. K. Deddens and J. Faber, Dr. J. de Jong and his wife, Dr. N. Gootjes and his wife, Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. C. Van Dam, the passing away of Br. Herman Faber and Rev. K. Stam.

### Minutes and agenda

The minutes of the Board meeting held on Sept. 10, 2015 were adopted. The agenda for the meeting was established.

### Receipt of reports – material agenda items

- a. A letter was received from the Australian Deputies informing the Board of the decision of their most recent synod regarding theological education. Of importance for CRTS is the task of their deputies of ascertaining the feasibility of establishing an Australian Theological Seminary in the future.
- b. Reports on Key Initiatives #2 (Facilities - Future Plan), # 5 (CRTS Church Survey Results), and # 7 (Evaluation of Sabbatical Program) were presented, and feedback provided.
- c. Report on Visits to the Lectures at the CRTS on Oct. 20 and Nov. 13, 2015 were received from Rev. E. Kampen and Rev. J. Ludwig. These reports gave reason for thankfulness since the students are being taught in faithfulness to the Word of God and the Three Forms of Unity.
- d. The Governance Committee submitted items with suggested changes and additions (e.g. Privacy Policy,

Board-Committee Operating Protocol) to the College Handbook.

- e. The results of the Board's Self-Evaluation and the Senate's Evaluation of the Board 2015 were discussed.
- f. Reports by the following professors were received for information:
  - i. Genesis Recast Conference by Dr. T. Van Raalte
  - ii. Sixteenth Century Society and Conference by Dr. T. Van Raalte
  - iii. Conference of Evangelical Theological Society by Dr. G. H. Visscher and Dr. J. VanVliet;
  - iv. Conference of the Evangelical Homiletical Society by Dr. A. De Visser;
  - v. Conference of the Evangelical Missiological Society by Dr. A. De Visser;
  - vi. McMaster Religious Studies Graduate Conference – Religion and Law – by Dr. C. Van Dam.
- g. The Board decided that the Seminary would not become a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada since the Board is not convinced that membership in that Fellowship fits with CRTS's Statement of Institutional Purpose.
- h. Four Board members have completed their term: Brs. A. Bax and H. Kampen, and Revs. E. Kampen and A. Pol. Thankfulness was expressed for their dedication and work.
- i. A cover letter, along with confidential appendices, was added to the Report to General Synod 2016 and sent to the convening church.
- j. Date of the next Board Meeting: Sept.8, 2016.

### Press Release and closing

The completion of the Press Release was delegated to the Vice-Chairman in consultation the Executive and the Principal, and Rev. J. Ludwig closed the meeting with prayer and thanksgiving.

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

*Rev. J. Ludwig,*  
*Vice-Chairman/Corresponding Clerk* 