

Clarion



**God's Word is
absolute**

CHURCH SNAPSHOT

CLARION KIDS

YOU ASKED



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Battling Deformation

*We need to assess the change
 according the standards of Scripture,
 confessions, and the Church Order*

The reports to General Synod Dunnville show much concern for our sister churches in The Netherlands. Evidence of deformation is put forward. This downward slide has been apparent for a number of years already and raises the question: how can we prevent the same from happening in Canada? The same destructive pressures that have been at work in The Netherlands for decades are making themselves felt in North America, also in our circles, so how can we battle deformation when it raises its ugly head?

Change vs. deformation

We need to be careful to distinguish between change and deformation. All deformation is change but not all change is deformation. Deformation is when a church (or federation) moves away from God's Word in disobedience and follows its own man-made path. On the other hand, churches may introduce positive changes that help the church grow in obedience and practice the commands of Scripture (reformation). We need to assess the change according the standards of Scripture, confessions, and the Church Order.

Why these three standards? Having the Bible as the number one rule needs no explanation – God's Word is absolute and may never be transgressed. The confessions assembled by the church, which accurately summarize Scripture, are for that reason also binding on all members. It may seem odd to include the Church Order among the standards since it's simply the set of rules by which we have decided to govern ourselves as churches within the federation. Though carefully based on biblical principles, it is even possible to change the Church Order by common consent (see Article 74). Yet since every church has voluntarily promised to abide by the Church

Order, all our duty-bound to uphold it. Deviation from the Church Order means a church is breaking its promise and is thus violating the Third Commandment. Going against any of these three standards means deformation has begun.

Vigilant congregation

Now the question is: whose responsibility is it to watch for and work against deformation? Classis? Consistory? Congregation? The answer is: all of us! There's a tendency in our age of individualism to a) not be concerned about our neighbour's "business" and b) to think that others will address any serious problems that arise. And when men with this mindset become elders, this can be a deadly combination, for if even the "watchmen on the walls" (cf. Ezekiel 33) stay silent and fail to act, who will raise the alarm?

The first line of defence against deformation lies among the brothers and sisters of the congregation. God calls us to be our brother's keeper, to address one another about sin (Matt 18:15-20). Each of us needs to be on the look-out for our neighbour's best interests – not with a constantly critical spirit or judgmental attitude, but with a humble and loving heart filled with concern. Our concern must be for our neighbour's eternal life, the spiritual health of the congregation and the honour of the Lord's Name.

If sin becomes rooted in a member's life and no repentance is forthcoming, his soul is in mortal danger. If nothing is done about it and he remains a member, other members may fall into the same trap. When sin is allowed to thrive in a congregation, God's reputation is dragged through the mud and the downward slide is underway. We have to bear in mind we are talking about

sin, not questionable choices, practices, or preferences. It may be good to discuss such things together and speak about their benefits or drawbacks, but we only admonish and discipline when we can show that a person has transgressed God's Word.

Vigilant consistory

Unrepented sins are to be reported to the consistory and then the elders have the solemn duty to take action: investigate; where

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

What would we do if we recognized deformation occurring in our church? Rev. Peter Holtvlüwer discusses the answer to this question in his editorial, "Battling Deformation."

This issue contains Rev. George van Popta's presentation to Synod Dunnville on the 2014 *Book of Praise* on behalf of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise*. In the next issue we should have the press release from this synod.

Readers will find another Church Snapshot (this time from the Grassie congregation) and a report from William of Orange School. This issue includes columns such as Treasures New and Old, Clippings on Politics and Religion, *Clarion Kids*, and You Asked. There is also a Letter to the Editor and a Press Release.

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CHURCH NEWS

the sin is verified, visit and admonish repeatedly; when a member hardens in sin, withhold from the sacraments and even excommunicate (within an appropriately patient time-frame, understood). At the same time, elders must take initiative when they discover members living in sin through their regular work of visitation.

It is a constant temptation – doubly so in our liberal, individualistic age – for elders to downplay or overlook sin. There is a quiet but powerful pressure around us not to say or do much. Elders also sometimes are bothered by the awareness of their own sins and weaknesses and think it's bordering on hypocritical to discipline others when "we all are sinners."

Consistories must not get side-tracked with such misleading feelings but find courage to obey their Lord (who knows all elders sin daily yet commands them to discipline) and exercise corrective action over members who harden themselves in sin (while being sure to repent daily of their own sins). To bring an admonition requires a clear conviction of the fear of God which over-powers any fear of man. Elders need to remind each other that the Lord will hold them accountable for the blood of any straying member whom they have failed to warn.

Keep watch

As much as the consistory must keep watch over the congregation, the congregation must also keep watch over the consistory. I say this carefully. No one should have an attitude of constant suspicion, looking for trouble. All must be patient with the weaknesses of office bearers and charitable in interpreting their intentions. But yet every member should be aware of consistory decisions (the ones made public) and analyze them in light of Scripture, confessions, and Church Order. When members notice something amiss, they should not ignore it or think, "Someone else can deal with that," but in sincerity take up the matter with the elders.

Reformed church polity is strong on the principle of mutual accountability, of checks and balances. Deformation can easily set in when a consistory makes a faulty decision and it goes unchallenged by church members. That sets the stage for further wrong choices. Members have the right *and duty* to dig deeper into decisions which appear to contradict one of those three standards. If, after a thorough discussion with the consistory, the member still believes the consistory has erred, he should make an appeal to classis via Article 31, CO.

Vigilant classis

Classis of course, is not a standing body like a consistory and has no authority in itself. A classis is, though, a temporary meeting of the churches in a local area. That meeting has a set agenda to conduct matters of church life that are held in common in that district as laid out in the Church Order. A classis, then has the duty to judge appeals and give a clear judgement whether the local consistory has erred or not (as charged and demonstrated by the member). Here too, there is temptation to refrain from judging against a neighbouring church for fear of rocking the boat. It's always desirable to keep a semblance of peace. Churches (consistories) must remind those they send to these meetings to deal with matters *impartially*, to seek true justice before the face of God and not to fear man.

Straying church

What if a local consistory makes a decision contrary to the Bible, the confessions, or the Church Order and no member brings it forward by way of appeal? What if a given consistory and congregation go astray in sync? Is there nothing anyone can do? This is where the neighbouring churches in the classis have a role to play. The deformation can come to light in one of two ways, either through a church visitation report (Art. 46 CO) or by the way the church answers the questions of Article 44 CO posed at each classis.

The most likely scenario is that the church visitors will discover something is amiss as they make their visit and ask their questions. This is always a sensitive matter since the church visitors are not there as "judge and jury," nor do they have any authority over the particular congregation or consistory. They are there on behalf of the churches in that classical district to "inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God. . . and whether the adopted order is being observed and maintained in every respect" (Art. 46). This is the main mechanism by which the churches watch over one another. Church visitors may indeed "fraternally admonish" a consistory for any negligence on its part but otherwise simply report their findings to the next classis. At that point, the churches become officially informed about a possible deformation and must then begin to deal with it.

Christian determination

Again I wish to raise a word of caution: nothing in this process should be hasty and neighbouring churches need to be ever vigilant not to “lord it over” another church (Art. 74). Churches (and church visitors), too, should be cautious, respectful, and charitable in their understanding of others. But genuine concerns should elicit a further, careful inquiry. Perhaps several church visitations may be needed and likely also the advice of regional synod deputies (Art. 48). If then it becomes clear that one of the churches has made a decision contrary to Scripture, confession or the Church Order, it is the duty of the churches, as classis, to admonish the errant church. And if (we hope things never get this far, but. . .) the church does not listen to her sister churches and repent (with appropriate patience exercised and time allowed, understood), then the errant church must be told by her sisters (as classis) that by its actions it has placed itself outside the bounds of the federation. This is what church discipline looks like at the federative level.

Such a thing is hard to contemplate and sad to think about – but is it not necessary when a local church hardens itself in its faulty decisions? Who will “discipline” the local church if not her fellow local churches to whom she has bound herself by way of the Church Order? It’s at classis that a church is received into the federation

(with all its privileges and responsibilities) and so it is at classis that a church is acknowledged, by virtue of her unfaithful action(s), as being outside the federation.

There is a quiet but powerful pressure around us not to say or do much

Here too the temptation will be great to “live and let live” rather than “stir up trouble” but what must be front and centre is the honour of the Lord and the realization that disobedience to his Word has taken root. Patient admonitions were not heeded. A certain arrogance has asserted itself. It is not the neighbouring churches that have caused trouble but the stubborn-in-error consistory. This, too, will take a persistent, clear-headed Christian determination on the part of all the churches in that district, but the alternative is to look the other way while deformation takes root in one of the churches – with the great risk of it spreading.

A look at deforming churches present and past will show a break-down in all three settings. Let us pray for wisdom and courage to maintain discipline within the local church and between local churches so that at every level we may truly be our brother’s keeper and work to keep the church of Christ pure for him. **C**





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Compelled by Christ

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Motivations are extremely important. That is why employment sectors have a keen interest in discovering fresh motivations to enhance workplace productivity and job satisfaction by offering incentives such as higher pay, greater perks, added bonuses, and better working conditions. Detectives investigating a crime also attach great importance to the plausible motives which could have incited a suspect to commit a crime. From this we learn that *what* we do matters as much as *why* we do it.

So why do we do what we do? Too often, admittedly, our motivations stem from self-interest. When mankind fell into sin, our motivations and intentions also became twisted and corrupt. Most ambition turned into selfish ambition. Sober reality confirms that the acquisition of wealth, fame, and power are what drive most people to do what they do.

However to say only this much – that all human achievement is promoted exclusively by self-interest – would be rather cynical. Many there-

fore sweeten the matter by refining our exploits with nobler motives, such as the advancement of a cause or a person. Children work hard at their schoolwork for the sake of their parents' commendation, athletes play hard for the honour of their team or country, politicians run for election to champion certain valuable causes, and spouses go the extra mile to display love and affection for the sake of one another.

And yet, these motivations are dwarfed in comparison with the highest and most supreme motivation: to live and work "for Christ." The Christian's primary aim is to please Christ and bring glory and honour to him. Hear how the Apostle Paul expresses it in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." This is irresistible logic! The new life we live today, we owe to Christ. Therefore it

is inconceivable that we should now live for ourselves! As Christians we confess that our former animosity toward God has been replaced with a new love for him and a desire to live for him.

But *how* does one love God? Christ asserted, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The one who loves God will not be slow or sluggish to obey, but swift and steadfast to do everything God requires in his Word. The test of love is whole-hearted obedience. Think of Peter (cf. Luke 5:1-11). He thought it absurd to cast the net over the other side of the boat. But, after dropping his protest and forsaking his own fishing expertise, he dropped the nets, heeding his Lord's command, and the nets filled with fish.

Every thought, word, and action is heightened and brightened if it is done "for Christ." There is no better motivation for anything we do. He acted for our sake; let us now also act for his.

For Further Study

1. In verse 14, is Paul speaking of *Christ's* love for us or *our* love for him? Or both?
2. Why is the love of Christ so compelling?
3. What is the love of Christ compelling you to do?
4. Examine deeply the motivations behind your choice of career, spouse, neighbourhood, church, entertainment, spending habits, and evaluate whether or not it was "for Christ" or for some other reason.



Presentation of the 2014 *Book of Praise*



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Address to General Synod Dunnville 2016 on behalf of the Standing Committee for the Book of Praise.

Esteemed Brothers,

On behalf of the Standing Committee for the *Book of Praise* I am honoured and pleased to present to you, and through you to the churches, the third edition of the *Book of Praise*. But allow me to preface the presentation with a few words of history.

History

When our forefathers arrived in Canada in the early 1950s they noticed the absence of an English Psalter that used the familiar and beloved Genevan tunes. There was discussion as to what to do. Should the churches use the *Psalter Hymnal* of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC)? Or should they make their own Genevan Psalter? Although the worship services were first held in the Dutch language, in which they could use the Dutch Psalter, they felt it important to develop an English one.

At the first synod (Homewood-Carman, 1954) the churches agreed that the thirty-four psalms in the CRC *Psalter Hymnal* that were set to Genevan tunes could be used. Further the synod decided to appoint deputies with the instruction to study the whole matter of the rhymed version of the psalms in the English language and to report to the churches at the next synod (Homewood-Carman, 1958).

The deputies got to work. They published a little booklet with the thirty-four psalms. The idea, at first, was not necessarily to produce a psalter set exclusively to Genevan tunes; rather, it was to produce a Calvinistic psalter. Synod 1958 instructed the deputies “to compose a Psalter in the English language including, if possible, other hymns of the Scripture. . . and to make use of material available in the Psalter of the CRC and other Psalters in as much as the versification is faithful and tunes answer the Church musical norms.” Synod 1962 said that the deputies did not

need to confine themselves to Genevan tunes; however, they needed to ensure that the psalms and hymns were faithful to Scripture and that they could be understood and sung in the churches. The rhyming had to be intelligible and the music of a high quality.

In 1961, a songbook had been published containing eighty-two psalms and fourteen hymns. To this was added, in 1967, a supplement consisting of thirty-four more psalms and nineteen hymns. Most, though not all, of the psalms were set to Genevan tunes. When I mention 1967 I think I am beginning to tap into the living memory of most of the members of the present synod.

Synod 1965 made some significant decisions. It instructed the deputies to include in the psalter (at this point and thereafter called the *Book of Praise*) hymns of other parts of Scripture and of the confessions. As to the melodies of the psalms, the synod did not restrict the deputies to Genevan tunes but said that other appropriate melodies could be used. The deputies were also authorized to publish, by way of exception, two different versions of the same psalm (one, on a Genevan tune, one on a different tune) if not doing this would possibly result in the particular psalm never being sung because of the melody.

Even though synods had said that the deputies did not need to restrict themselves to the Genevan tunes for the psalms, they, in fact, did. In their report to Synod 1968, they noted that their aim was to present to the churches a complete psalter comprising all 150 psalms using Genevan tunes and that they would no longer avail themselves of the liberty offered by earlier synods to use other tunes in addition to Genevan tunes. They observed that there were many such eclectic psalters available, and they felt it would have been a waste of time, money, and other resources if they were to produce just one more such eclectic psalter. Instead, they recommended that the churches “once and for all” forsake the concept of an eclectic psalter and proceed to the completion of a Genevan psalter. It was their conviction that a purely

Genevan psalter would be a unique contribution to the culture of our nation, which was, for the most part, unfamiliar with the magnificent Genevan tunes. From the enthusiasm with which musicologists from many quarters had already received the still incomplete psalter they concluded that they were not aiming too high – and we know that appreciation for the Genevan psalter has only increased throughout the years and across the world. This change of policy meant that the non-Genevan tunes of some psalms in the then existing *Book of Praise* would be replaced by Genevan tunes.

This has been the track upon which the Canadian Reformed Churches have been ever since, viz.: The psalter exclusively Genevan and the hymn section eclectic, a mix of Genevan and non-Genevan.

The first complete *Book of Praise* was published in 1972 by order of General Synod New Westminster 1971. It contained all 150 psalms set to Genevan tunes, and sixty-two hymns.

The second complete edition of the *Book of Praise* was released in 1984. In this edition the hymns were arranged according to the order of the Apostles' Creed and several changes were made to the hymn section to give a total of sixty-five.

Expansion

General Synod Neerlandia 2001 instructed the committee to begin the work of expanding the hymnary. The result was the publication of the *Augment* in 2007, a collection of twenty-eight hymns, nineteen of which eventually found their way into the present *Book of Praise*.

General Synod Smithers 2007 directed the committee “to initiate a thorough review of all 150 Psalms in the 1984 text of *Anglo-Genevan* Psalter in the *Book of Praise*.” This work was done in very close consultation with Dr. William Helder of Hamilton – and I think you will know that Dr. Helder has been involved with the production, revision, and improvement of the *Book of Praise* for many decades – and in cooperation with all the churches. Using the power of the Internet, revised psalms were made available to the churches via a website as they were prepared by Dr. Helder and approved by the committee. As well, hard copies of the revisions were also presented to the churches.

The committee received much valuable feedback from the churches and from several *ad hoc* sub-committees, all of which was very helpful in finalizing the committee recommendations to the churches and General Synod

Burlington 2010. In a sense the whole federation had been turned into one large super committee as we worked collaboratively on this project. The committee likes to think that this has contributed to the strong sense of ownership the membership of the churches has of the *Book of Praise*. Synod Burlington approved the Authorized Provisional Version of the *Book of Praise* which all the churches of the federation used for three years, and the definitive version was approved at the most recent synod, Synod Carman 2013. Thereupon the committee was charged with publishing the third complete edition of the *Book of Praise*.

Conclusion

As Canadian Reformed people and churches, we may be very thankful for the vision of the first synods. It is remarkable that a small and far-flung federation of Dutch immigrant churches had the somewhat audacious dream of producing an English Calvinistic psalter. The dream resulted in something unique to the world: the *Book of Praise*, the only English songbook that contains the complete collection of all the tunes used in the first Genevan psalter of John Calvin, of 1562. It is worth noting that the *Book of Praise* is truly catholic since Reformed churches throughout the world sing the Genevan Psalms in their own languages. John Calvin would have been pleased since the catholicity of the church was dear to his heart.

The committee is thankful for the feedback, encouragement, and cooperation it has received from the churches throughout the past fifteen years, as well as the good guidance and leadership given by the general synods convened during this time.

At this point I would like to remember our late Brother Christiaan Nobels of Brampton. He was also appointed by the General Synod Neerlandia 2001, and was due to retire at this present synod, but the Lord had decided otherwise. Chris, who worked tirelessly for our committee until the end, was taken up into Paradise on April 18 of last year.

Above all, praise and gratitude is due to our heavenly Father for providing the churches with a songbook that is used weekly and daily, in church, school, and home, to praise his most holy Name. Yes, that above all! May our God be “enthroned on the praises of Israel” (Psalm 22:3) also through the use of our songbook. To him alone be all glory, now and forever!

Thank you!

*On behalf of the committee,
(Rev.) George van Popta*





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Dwindling Christian Presence in the West Bank

Inside Israel, the number of Christians has been consistently rising for decades. Christian Arabs serve in the army and within the Israeli government. However, the reality in the West Bank is completely different. Back in 1990 Christians formed the majority in Bethlehem, the city of Christ's birth, but today they make up only fifteen percent. Thousands flee every year.

In the March 1, 2016 issue of *Providence: A Journal of Christianity and American Foreign Policy*, Robert Nicholson, executive director of The Philos Project which promotes positive Christian engagement in the Middle East, addressed the question: "Why are Palestinian Christians fleeing?" He notes that the separation barrier constructed by Israel to keep out suicide bombers from the West Bank is usually considered the source of the problem. This twenty-six-foot military grade wall makes life difficult. People are humiliated at the checkpoints, do not have the opportunity to improve their standard of living and therefore, if they can, they leave.

Nicholson however notes that "the Muslim population of Bethlehem is growing. Muslims, in fact, are not fleeing. They are *arriving* – in large numbers. . . . Why is the Muslim sector of Bethlehem growing while the Christian sector is falling? Both face the same exact set of circumstances. Could it be that this disparity tells the true story?"

There is indeed far more to this issue than the wall of separation. Important is not just the wall, but the reason why the wall was built in the first place: "Rising Islamism inside the Palestinian territories and bad governance on the part of the Palestinian Authority." When Israel ruled Bethlehem, it was mostly Christian. However, with the Oslo Accords, Israel let the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) rule parts of the West Bank and Gaza. The intent had been to bring peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Instead it has led to increased violence.

"The Palestinian Authority [PA] – the government created by the PLO to manage the West Bank and Gaza –

is, by its own constitution, an Islamic state that embodies the principles of shari'a. Christians living under the PA are 'accorded sanctity and respect,' but, as is the case under all shar'a-based systems, Christians are relegated to the status of second class citizens. Of course, it is illegal to convert from Islam to Christianity." This discrimination against Christians under the Palestinian Authority is not only fixed in Islamic law (shari'a), but it is also social. A Christian is constantly reminded that he or she is not a member of the majority culture.

After taking power in the West Bank, Yasser Arafat had "ensured that Bethlehem and a few other cities would always have Christian mayors. However, he also pursued policies that encouraged Muslim immigration into those same cities and thereby changed the demography from the bottom up." Life for a Christian has become increasingly difficult.

Nicholson reported that numerous Palestinian Christians describe "how Muslim terrorists would commandeer Christian homes and use them to direct sniper fire on Israeli soldiers. Others speak of systematic discrimination in hiring, housing, and education. Of course, all of these conversations take place in private meetings and hushed tones." In public, Palestinian Christians praise the happy coexistence between Muslims and Christians. They don't have a choice but to put up this brave front for they are hostages in their own city. "Christians in Bethlehem rarely interact with Muslims beyond the marketplace, and are, in fact, very much afraid."

Nicholson tries to set the record straight when he writes that America, the Obama administration, "would have us believe that Israel is forcing Palestinian Christians to flee Bethlehem because of the wall it built to stop terrorism. In reality, Christians are fleeing for the same reason they are fleeing Iraq, Egypt, and Syria: the rise of Islamic intolerance and violence against anyone who denies the revelation of Muhammad." C

Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie

The Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie, Ontario is a vibrant congregation of 530 members with a geographical area that includes the town of Grimsby and surrounding countryside – Grimsby being on the shores of Lake Ontario directly across the lake from Toronto. When instituted in 2001, it was half the size and the 265 members came from the neighbouring congregations of Smithville and Lincoln. The congregation has changed dramatically since then with families leaving the bigger cities of Toronto and Burlington and moving to Grassie territory. Most people (even locals!) have never heard of “Grassie” – really just a small hamlet in the country – so perhaps the better way to describe our church’s location is to say that it is in south Grimsby.

We were blessed to welcome our “new” pastor, Rev. Rolf den Hollander, and his family in June of 2014. A fun fact is that the welcome evening for the den Hollanders was exactly two years to the day after the farewell evening for our first pastor, Rev. Van Dam. The den Hollanders were somewhat familiar with the congregation, having been members here while attending the Theological Seminary, and have fit right back in!



Rev. R.J. den Hollander with wife, Liz, and sons Jakob, Micah, and Ethan



Kingdom Seekers girls and their counsellors

Within the congregation, there are activities for every age. The children of the congregation enjoy participating in Cadets and Kingdom Seekers. The young people have catechism classes as well as an energetic study group, led by a Leadership Team of young people and adult mentors. There are several well attended men’s, women’s and couples study groups as well as an active local choir. And, while not an official church group, the presence of Evergreen Terrace (a Christian lifestyle retirement residence) in our area means that we have a group of active seniors. There are also about a dozen members who live in Shalom Manor, a Christian long-term care facility, who are not able to attend church services but are blessed by the close proximity of the younger seniors in Evergreen Terrace and by the congregation as a whole through visits and prayers.

Grassie church is one of several Canadian Reformed churches in the Niagara Peninsula and, as such, has a reputation for being a congregation of farmers and landscapers. While there are a couple of farming families and a few landscapers, the reality is that the congregation

is made up of members with a wide variety of occupations! Small business owners, construction trades, business professionals, chartered accountants, auto mechanics, nurses, police officers, a veterinarian and a marketing guru/artist are all found in our midst. There is even a nurse who was once a home renovation contractor!

Outside of work, our members are involved in many activities that support the church federation as a whole. Several members are serving on the committee that administers the Needy Students Fund for the Theological Seminary. There are members who are serving or have served on the Campfire! Summer Bible Camp board or staff and others who are involved in Word & Deed ministries, especially as it relates to Adoration Christian School in Haiti. Others participate in Redemption Prison Ministries' work and several have gone on mission trips abroad. Our church's "official" mission work supports Rev. Edwar Dethan in West Timor, Indonesia.

While our church building is located in the country, we strive to be relevant and involved in our surrounding community. Several members volunteer at the Grimsby Benevolent Fund (GBF), a local charity and Food Bank. In 2014, some members got together to start a community garden on our church property, making use of our large property and our congregation's talents in gardening. The goal of the garden is two-fold: 1) to show Christ's love through the provision of food for the needy and 2) to build relationships with people in our community so that we can share the gospel with them. The produce is donated to the GBF Food Bank and in 2015 we hosted a cooking class for the food bank clients in our church building. The class, followed by a candle-lit dinner, was

VBS 2015 – Visiting the Egyptian “Barbershop & Salon”



a lovely time of fellowship for both the organizers and the participants – the organizers felt like they received as much or more than they gave. Other Home Mission projects include the annual Vacation Bible School. This past year over eighty children got to travel to Egypt to learn more about Joseph's journey from prison to palace and God's sovereign plan for his people! We also host an annual Community Breakfast, which has been well attended by the congregation and broader community and, with attendees encouraged to donate or bring non-perishable food items, it is another link to the GBF Food Bank and community.

That's a snapshot of Grassie church! Come visit us sometime or check us out online at www.grassiechurch.ca!



Our church building with the community garden in the foreground



Celebrating William of Orange Elementary School



A changing of the seasons: spring again

A warm, late spring day: it's 3:10 PM, the bell has rung, and the first kids come storming out through the school doors at William of Orange. A familiar sight. Some book it to the fields for a cross-grades soccer game, others to the playground under the watchful eyes of a congregation of cheerfully chatting mothers, but a few have found something far more fascinating to divert their attention: vegetables. Yes! Vegetables! Garden beds full of kale, lettuce, cucumbers, leek, potatoes, you name it! After months of dedicated and enthusiastic work on the parts of students, teachers, and parents, what started out as an exciting proposal in February of 2015 had grown into a bountiful reality just a few months later. Teachers would regularly take their classes out to check on – and learn from – growth in the garden. The garden project flourished, and along with it, the school. Welcome to William of Orange!

On a winter day, sixty-five years ago, another project was taking shape in the minds of a small group of immigrants in New Westminster, BC. The bountiful reality did not appear as quickly that time, and a lot more was at stake then. Eight members were present at the first meeting of the Reformed School Association in New Westminster, on November 27, 1951. Fifty-seven students were enrolled in the resulting school in the first year (1955). By the 1980s, that number had grown to 300, and the school was thriving. With the opening of another school and two new churches further to the east in the 1990s, the school saw a steady decline up to 2013. Now, after sixty years, the count is at eighty-seven. A lot has changed, and yet, there are still some striking similarities: a number of the children at William of Orange today are immigrants or children of immigrants; some of the familiar faces among the staff have not changed since 1981; WofO continues to be a vibrant and close-knit community – in part due to its combined grades – with many a friendly face to greet you as you wander through the hallways.

We all know that after winter comes spring. I would imagine that there are few who would not look forward to the warmer days, the longer evenings, and, with a bit of luck, the extra sunshine. At William of Orange, we could also see winter turn into spring, but in a very different way. Not too long ago, WofO was experiencing a dark winter – it was even doubted that the school would continue to exist for much longer. No, the road has not always been easy, and the school has had its share of challenges. But it seems like the bigger the challenges, the greater God's



grace when he preserves us through them. The One who looks after the changing of the seasons has also brought spring again to the school. Within the past year, ten new students have joined the school, from seven Reformed families: some come from as far away as New Westminster, others from Madagascar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and South Korea!

At William of Orange, you find yourself standing on the property of a sixty-years-old institution, and yet it feels and sounds brand-new and vibrant. The instructors seem to have become permanent fixtures, and have indisputably earned the respect the students so obviously have for them. On the other hand, a newcomer and outsider will quickly feel welcome and at home in the community. This combination of the old with the new, of respectable tradition with exciting change, is one of WofO's hallmarks and greatest strengths!



Sixtieth anniversary

This past year marked the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the school. This fact was celebrated in various ways, with typical WofO vim and vigour. The first day of school in September 2015 was kicked off with a pancake breakfast for students, teachers, and parents alike, with catering done by the school board and teachers. After the breakfast, a great novelty was introduced to the students – their very own school song (words by Kent Dykstra and Judith Souman):

William of Orange crossed over to England,
leaving the lowlands to be crowned as king.
He would maintain his faith and his kingdom,
ready to face what the future would bring.

Chorus: I will maintain, through life's stormy waters.
I will hold fast to the faith given free:
He will maintain us, our Heavenly Father
'till I am crowned in the land promised me.

Later our fathers crossed over the ocean,
seeking new life on Canadian soil.
They would maintain with hard work and devotion,
churches and schools built with much prayer and toil.
Thankful we live in this vast, peaceful nation,
growing in knowledge and wisdom each day.
Looking to history for inspiration,
and to the future in faith; He maintains!

The song made use of the motto of the House of Orange: *Je maintiendrai* (I will maintain). It has been sung numerous times since then, at special gatherings and Monday morning assemblies.

In February 2016, the annual school dinner had the anniversary as its theme. One of the highlights was the reminiscing done by Mr. Nap, a former WofO principal and master story-teller, as well as Mrs. Faber, a long-time teacher at the school. Along the walls of the gym, pictures portrayed the history of the school, taking dinner-guests on a tour through time.

Our history continues to inspire us as we look back at the many stages that William of Orange has gone through as a school and a community. Now that winter has turned into spring again, we build on our heritage with renewed energy! At WofO, we will continue to look to our history for inspiration, and to the future with a firm faith that God will provide!

For more information about the school, see: www.wofO.org.



Clarion Kids

Joseph (Part 1)

Genesis 37

Joseph was the son of Jacob and Rachel. Jacob loved him very much. He gave him a beautiful colourful coat to wear. This made his brothers jealous.

Joseph also had dreams that said his brothers would one day bow down to him. When he told them they were very angry.

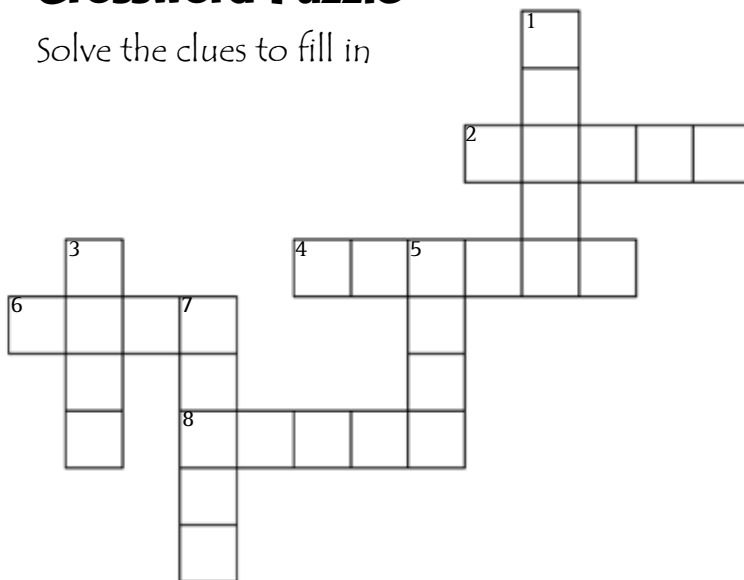
His brothers tried to kill Joseph by throwing him into a well with no water in it. Then they decided to sell him as a slave to the Egyptians instead. They lied and told Jacob that Joseph was dead. Jacob was very sad.

Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful coat to wear. Go to www.clarionmagazine.ca to print this picture and colour it in with lots of bright colours!



Crossword Puzzle

Solve the clues to fill in



Across

2. The name of Joseph's father
4. The name of Joseph's mother
6. Joseph's brothers told Jacob that Joseph was _____.
8. The country Joseph was sold to

Down

1. Joseph's brothers sold him as a _____
3. Joseph's brothers threw him into an empty _____
5. Jacob gave Joseph a colourful _____
7. Joseph had a _____ that said his brothers would bow down to him

by Emily Nijenhuis



William den Hollander
Minister emeritus of the
Bethel Canadian Reformed
Church of Toronto, Ontario
denhollanderw@gmail.com


Q In the Old Testament infant boys were circumcised. In the New Testament infant boys and girls are baptized. How does circumcision transfer to baptism this way? What of the girls in the Old Testament?

A Indeed, in the OT all boys of eight days old had to be circumcised. Regarding circumcision, the women (and girls) were *included* with the men. This did not make the women (girls) in any way *inferior* to the men though; in the OT more than in the NT this reflected the relationships among men and women (in and outside of marriage) more than in later times. Compare this if you will with the fact that the men of all tribes were included with the Levites, the Levites in turn were included in the priests, and the priests in the High Priest. This matter of inclusion of the women with the men does not mean, however, that the promises of salvation and the work of regeneration were restricted to the men. This can be seen for instance in the practice of the proselyte baptism (the baptism of men and women coming into the covenant people from the outside), in which also the women shared in this baptism. The practice of circumcision performed on the men (boys) only, has been explained as the wisdom of the LORD with a practical overtone, namely as a procedure with hygienic purposes as well. Then also the exclusion from the women (girls) in this regard may have had a practical reason; it would have affected their sexual life adversely in later life (something that we can observe as a critical reality among certain tribes in Africa today!).

In the context of this question I do not need to describe or explain the transition of this sacrament for infants from the Old to the New Testament. Colossians 2:11-12 shows a clear connection in this, especially by calling baptism the circumcision in Christ. Baptism has become an enriched circumcision. As I already indicated, the fact that the women were included in the men did *not* signify a contrast between circumcision and baptism either. It does show the *progression* in the history of redemption from circumcision to baptism. In Christ no one is included in another any longer! In him they all form a holy and royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 9). In Christ there is no longer male and female, for they are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28). Baptism, which is now also administered to women (girls), illustrates this redemptive historical progression. By baptism boys *and* girls, men *and* women, receive the sign and seal of God's grace personally!

*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
23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON LOR 1C0 

Dear Editor,

Rev. Holtvlüwer's thoughtful comments on Matthew 18 (*Clarion*, April 8, 2016) were much appreciated. As an educator in "our" system, I especially found his thoughts on teacher conduct interesting. In fact, our staff here in Langley took some time to consider the various points made in the first part of the article dealing with teacher conduct, especially as it relates to our need for fair and effective feedback.

First, I really appreciate Rev. Holtvlüwer's efforts to clarify the boundaries in applying the principles of Matthew 18 ("when your brother sins against you. . .") in the realm of education. Indeed, Matthew 18 is primarily about sin and not incompetence (though this distinction may not be as clear-cut as we might think).

I do wonder about a couple points, however. Rev. Holtvlüwer relates a typical scenario: a parent hears some negative feedback from a child about teacher performance and after "asking around" discovers that "it's the concern of many parents." This is followed by approaching the principal, or chairman of the board. I wonder if this is an acceptable method of gathering and sharing intelligence. Does not the principle of Matthew 18 at least *suggest* that a parent go directly to a teacher to seek clarification, offer advice, or share a concern?

I'm sure that many teachers (and likely some pastors, too) have not been directly contacted by concerned parents in the case of incompetence or weakness or error. Why this is so could be attributed to fear, apathy, anger, or other feelings which are part of our sinful condition. But it ought not to be! Have we lost the need for mutual exhortation? Have we as a community somehow misplaced multiple biblical directives to love our neighbour despite conflict? Should we not live out – and even teach our children – to communicate *directly* and *lovingly* when our neighbour has failed us somehow?

Naturally, I would rather have the authorities deal with my unhappiness with a teacher, coach, bus driver, pastor. In fact, I can hide behind the "lots of parents feel the same way" because I have asked around and found the same concerns. The result? Gossip has replaced up-building dialogue. The courage to exhort is lost, or passed on to boards and consistories.

I sincerely hope that even if our schools do not quote Matthew 18, their protocols for conflict resolution *nonetheless insist* that parents approach the "offending" teacher first – if only to ascertain that their concern is

in fact true. Then a brotherly and collaborative solution can be sought, irrespective of the nature of the offence.

*With warm greetings,
Ron de Haan*

Reply

I am grateful to Br. De Haan for responding and giving opportunity to extend this important discussion. I can see that I have not convinced him that Matthew 18 has no bearing on how parents should interact with teachers about a professional concern. He discloses this in his final paragraph when he brings Matthew 18 up again and "insists" that "parents approach the 'offending' teacher first – if only to ascertain that their concern is in fact true."

To be clear, I did *not* say in my original editorial that a parent should *not* directly approach a teacher about a concern. I can indeed envision many situations where a one-on-one talk could clear matters up quite quickly. What I did say is that a parent should not be *forced* to do so by the administration *on the basis of Matthew 18*. The principles of Matthew 18 only apply to sin and church discipline scenarios. They do not apply to professional conduct in Christian schools any more than they would apply to professional conduct in Christian businesses or Christian political parties. That would be mixing up apples and oranges and would be a misapplication of Scripture.

Further, Br. De Haan says, "Naturally, I would rather have the authorities deal with my unhappiness with a teacher, coach, bus driver, pastor." He seems to imply that I was suggesting the concerned parent simply register a complaint with the administration and walk away, letting them handle it. A careful reading of my piece will show that I refrained from actually articulating any policy, preferring to leave that up to the boards to work out. To be clear, I would think that a good policy would encourage and facilitate maximum involvement of both parents and teacher so that a good resolution may be found that. While parents may feel quite able to directly approach the teacher at first, I can also envision times when the first move of the concerned parent would *not* be to approach the teacher but rather the administration.



There are times when highly sensitive or charged issues would be better dealt from the get-go through the arm's length third party which oversees, guides, and helps resolve the dispute.

Imagine a student complains to his parents that a teacher is picking on him. The parents don't believe it at first but after weeks of hearing about it and seeing various changes in the attitude of their child, they grow concerned. Would it be best to approach the teacher directly? If the child's complaint is true, is the teacher likely to admit it? And if he denies it and becomes very defensive, instantly the relationship with the parents comes under great strain and the next day the picked-on child has to face what is now likely a more volatile instructor. If the administration is now approached, they enter an extremely tense situation that will be that much more difficult to bring to a well-accepted resolution.

But had the concerned parents begun by asking the administration for help in dealing with this concern, those in charge could have worked from the beginning to defuse the situation. This does not mean the parents wash their hands and let others do the work for them. Rather, it means the administration *facilitates* a working-through of the concerns between parents and teacher. The administration, unlike the parents, is in a position to carefully gather facts, moderate a discussion, perhaps interview appropriate parties, and take other steps to ensure that the integrity and needs of *all* parties are upheld while getting to the bottom of a very sensitive matter.

Br. De Haan appears to think that first approaching the administration would be a slight to the teacher, somehow less than brotherly or Christian. I submit that in certain scenarios that approach would be the most brotherly, Christian, and respectful thing for all concerned, not least for the teacher.

Peter H. Holtvlüwer 



Press Release of the Tri-Annual Meeting of the Foundation for Superannuation

The meeting was held in the Dunnville Canadian Reformed Church on Saturday, May 14, 2016, following the first four days of Synod Dunnville.

The meeting, which started at 9:00 AM, was opened by the chairman, Rev. J. Visscher, who read Psalm 67 and led in prayer.

All those present were welcomed to the meeting.

A review of the credentials indicated that twenty-one member churches were represented at the meeting.

Secretary Br. C. Baarda was given an opportunity to present his report, which was an overview of the activities of the Foundation since the last Tri-annual meeting held in Carman, Manitoba in May 2013. In that three year period, the Lord took to himself the Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene, Rev. M. Van Beveren, and Rev. K. Stam, as well as one widow, Mrs. H. Kingma.

Five ministers retired in the same period. They were Rev. J. DeGelder, Rev. B. Nederveen, Rev. W. Slomp, Rev. J. Kalkman, and Rev. J. Moesker.

One church joined the Foundation in the period; Blessings Christian Church in Hamilton was instituted on January 4, 2015.

Treasurer Br. S. Vandermolten brought the meeting up to date on the financial position of the Foundation. His report showed that the assets of the Foundation increased by just under sixteen percent from the end of 2012 to the end of 2015. The ten percent annual increase in premiums that the member churches have paid for the last several years will end in 2016. After that the rate of increase will be held to three percent for a few years and

then two percent after that. If unforeseen events occur, changes can be made by the Foundation board as needed. The Board of the Foundation consists of the Cloverdale and Langley church councils.

Br. Vandermolten also read a guidance letter sent to all the member churches on how to report funds that the member churches receive for their emeritus ministers. He stressed that professional advice should be obtained before church treasurers issue anything other than a T4A slip to their emeritus ministers.

At the last tri-annual meeting held in Carman a review committee that had been appointed three years earlier, brought out a proposal for changes to the constitution and bylaws of the Foundation. A final version of the new governing document was to have been ready for this meeting, but because of unforeseen circumstances it could not be completed for presentation to the members before the tri-annual meeting. The current plan is to have a final draft version of the constitution and bylaws in the hands of the churches within the next year.

The foundation pays member churches and the seminary who are responsible for an emeritus minister/professor, or widow, an amount that is set each year based on the rate of inflation. A discussion on whether this amount is adequate found that the benefits paid out are considered to be adequate, although churches may supplement the amount they receive from the Foundation if they determine that it is needed.

After the usual question period, Rev. Visscher thanked everyone who attended the meeting, and asked Br. J. Homan to close in prayer. The meeting was then adjourned.

Submitted by C. Baarda, Secretary 



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Applications can be sent to

Mrs. Gwen Mast, secretary for the Board at:

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To submit an application or to receive further information about our school or about our area, please contact:

Mr. Stuart Boeve, Board Chairman

Phone: 403-223-4916, Email: sdboeve@shockware.com

Mr. Joop Harthoorn, Principal

Phone: 403-345-4891

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All correspondence should be directed to

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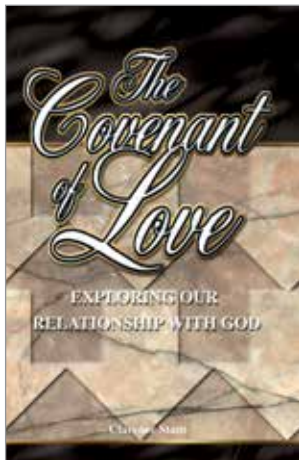
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